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Gender and Community Shaping Migration Experiences: A Women's Community as a Symbolic and Material Space of Resistance

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Tesis Doctoral

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMIF…………………………………………… Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

CEDAW...Convention on the Elimination of All Forms
of Discrimination against Women

CJEU…………………………………………. European Court of Human Rights

CP…………………………………………………………...City Plaza

CW………………………………………………………….Community Workers

EC……………………………………………………….European Commission

ECB…………………………………………………... European Central Bank

ECHO……………………………………..European Community Humanitarian Aid Office

ECHR…………………………………………………. European Court of Human Rights

E.K.K.A……………………………………….... Εθνικό Κέντρο Κοινωνικής Αλληλεγγύης
(National Center for Social Solidarity) [English translation]

EU……………………………………………………………..European Union

EURODAC…………………………………………………... European Dactyloscopy

FRA………………………………………………………... Fundamental Rights Agency

FRONTEX………………………………………..European Border and Coast Guard Agency

GBV………………………………………………………………...Gender Based Violence

GCR…………………………………………………………….Greek Council for Refugees

GFM………………………………………………………………...Greek Forum of Migrants

GFR…………………………………………………………….Greek Forum of Refugees

IMF………………………………………………………….International Monetary Fund

INGO…………………………………………International Non Governmental Organization

IOM………………………………………………….International Organization for Migration

LGBTQI+….....…Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex plus other identities

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MN…………………………………………………………………...Melissa Network

MoU……………………………………………………….Memorandum of Understanding

NGO…………………………………………………Non Governmental Organization

ODK……………………………………………………………..Open Data Kit

QR……………………………………………………………….Quick Response code

RABIT…………………………………………………….Rapid Border Intervention Team

RVRN……………………………………………………Racist Violence Recording Network

SGBV………………………………………………...Sexual and Gender Based Violence

TFEU…………………………………….Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

UN……………………………………………………………...United Nations

UNFPA…………………………………………………United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR…………………………………United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF……………………………………………………United Nations Children's Fund

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A mi familia al completo por todo el cariño y apoyo.

En especial a mi madre por apoyarme en la búsqueda de conocimiento en los mejores y peores momentos, por mostrarme y poder aprender de tu inteligencia y habilidades resolutivas. Llegar hasta aquí no habría sido posible sin ti. A mi hermano y mi padre por estar siempre disponibles, enseñarme a disfrutar de las pequeñas cosas y ponerle tanto sentido del humor a la vida. A las titas, Pili y Celia por los cafés, los favores y el cariño. Gracias Celia por ofrecer un hogar para mi último retiro infernal.

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RESUMEN

Esta tesis describe el contexto migratorio actual griego acontecido los últimos 4 años y analiza los aspectos que han provocado e influido en el deterioro de la situación. Se presentan alternativas de acción directa como respuestas diferentes organizadas desde abajo, la base del tejido social, así como formas distintas de intervención. Estas alternativas son examinadas como un conjunto que se opone al enfoque humanitario tradicional y profesionalizado. Se profundiza en el análisis de Melissa Network (MN) como una de las iniciativas de base que contribuye de forma novedosa y positiva al sector humanitario y de intervención social.

Para hacer una descripción rigurosa del contexto se han revisado protocolos, convenciones, acuerdos y medidas tomadas por instituciones internacionales y la Unión Europea en particular, relacionadas con Derechos Humanos y migración, además de la lectura de artículos de investigación que analizan dichos mecanismos. Se ha practicado la observación participante continuada, apoyada en mi estancia en el campo, en la ciudad y el espacio donde se ubica Melissa físicamente, durante los cuatro años de trabajo de tesis.

El mapeo y análisis de las iniciativas de base, movimientos y colectivos sociales ha sido posible gracias a mi intervención en el contexto, como trabajadora en dos de las organizaciones de base más importantes en Grecia que realizan su trabajo con población refugiada, y mi militancia en colectivos sociales.

Por último, como contribución original y significativa se documenta el proceso organizativo de la red de mujeres migrantes y refugiadas en Grecia, Melissa Network (MN), tratando de demostrar el éxito del enfoque utilizado y diseñado por la propia red. Su meta es trabajar con las mujeres y mostrarlas como agentes de cambio, en contraste

con el discurso hegemónico, propio del sector humanitario, que insiste en presentarlas como víctimas y sujetos pasivos, receptores de violencia. Los medios utilizados para documentar y extraer las conclusiones en este aspecto han sido el análisis de los estados de ánimo y las narrativas diarias de las mujeres integrantes de la red en las sesiones, grupos y actividades gracias a la observación participante y la intervención de la autora como miembro del equipo profesional de la red. A su vez se describe el momento de los procesos en tres niveles: el individual de las mujeres que han llegado a Grecia en los últimos tres años en busca de asilo, el grupal/asociativo de las que llevan más tiempo en el país de acogida y, finalmente, el de la propia red. En este último se apoya a las recién llegadas y en proceso de organización. La red hace las veces de paraguas, ofreciendo la estructura y las bases para el desarrollo de la comunidad. De este modo, las mujeres unidas generan estrategias de resistencia y acción directa, en cuyas narrativas se aprecian capacidades y actos de subversión y cambio.

En definitiva, se presenta y analiza un problema social ubicado en Grecia, en este caso, que impacta a la población refugiada y solicitante de asilo, y a la población griega. Esta última ha tomado un papel activo en la creación y desarrollo de iniciativas alternativas que buscan aliviar la situación de las personas en busca de refugio y protección internacional. Desde la localización y situación del conocimiento y la experiencia hemos podido reconstruir cronológicamente los obstáculos a los que se enfrentan las personas solicitantes de asilo y refugiadas una vez llegan a territorio griego desde 2015, ofrecer un discurso de apoyo alternativo desde abajo, darle el valor que se merece y visibilizar los logros y buenas prácticas que funcionan y vienen de estas iniciativas, en concreto la de la red Melissa Network. La contribución particular de esta tesis es la posibilidad de replicar aspectos positivos del caso griego y de MN en otros

Estados del sur de Europa como Italia o España que conforman la frontera sur de Europa junto con Grecia.

ABSTRACT

This thesis describes the last 4 years in the Greek migration context, analyzing the aspects that have caused and influenced the deterioration of the situation. Direct action alternatives are presented as different responses organized from the grassroots, from below what we understand as the basis of the social fabric. Different forms of intervention are also presented.

Various possibilities are examined as an array of alternatives that opposes traditional and professionalized humanitarian approaches. Here Melissa Network is presented and thoroughly analyzed as one of the grassroots initiatives offering positive contributions and developments to the humanitarian and social intervention sector.

To make a rigorous description of the context, the protocols, conventions, agreements and measures taken by international institutions and the European Union (in particular related to Human Rights and migration) have been reviewed, in addition to numerous research articles that analyze these core tools. Continuous participant observation has been practiced while I was working and living in the field during the four years of this thesis work.

A mapping and analysis of grassroots initiatives, movements and social groups has been possible thanks to my engagement as a worker in two of the most important grassroots refugee organizations in Greece and the militancy in social groups.

Finally, as a special contribution, the organizational process of the network of migrant and refugee women in Greece, Melissa Network (MN), has been documented, with the aim of demonstrating the positive impact on the lives of the women and the success of the approach used and designed by the network itself. Its goal is to work with women and support them as agents of change, in contrast to the hegemonic discourse typical of the humanitarian sector, which insists on presenting them as victims, passive

subjects and recipients of violence. The means used to document and extract conclusions regarding the network's approach and contributions have included: the analysis of the states of mind of women members of the network, daily narratives in the sessions, groups and activities gathered through participant observation, and the intervention of the author as a member of the network's professional core team.

In parallel, three basic processes are described: the individual processes of the newcomers, women who arrived in Greece in the last three years seeking asylum; the group/associative processes of those who have been in the host country for a while; and, finally, the network's processes which support both newcomers and those who are in the process of organizing their own associations. Melissa Network serves as an umbrella offering the structure and the bases to help develop the community. Ultimately, it generates strategies of resistance and promotes direct actions, therefore women's narratives convey their capacities and become acts of change and subversion.

In essence, a major social challenge existing in Greece is presented and analyzed in this work. A social problem suffered by the refugee and asylum seeker population, as well as the Greek population, which has taken an active role in the creation and development of alternative initiatives aiming to alleviate the situation of people seeking refuge and international protection. By situating knowledge and experience we have, since 2015, been able to chronologically reconstruct obstacles faced by asylum seekers and refugees once they arrive in Greek territory. We are able to offer an alternative support speech from the grassroots, giving it a deserved value that should be recognized, and acknowledging the achievements and good practices that function within these initiatives, especially at the Melissa Network. The contribution based on the information provided in this work, by making visible, documenting, and analyzing the work at MN, might open up options and approaches, in order to replicate some of the positive aspects

of the Greek case. MN can become a case study to be contrasted and adapted, not only in the Mediterranean but also in similar contexts where migration is an undeniable and major reality challenging the top institutional frameworks.

My daughter
When you came up to me at five years old
and told me you wanted to be just like me when you grew up
Parents are usually filled with joy
But me
My heart dropped to the floor because I wasn't my daughter
I couldn't bear to tell you at five years old I wasn't you
Are too young and to spoiled to understand
My daughter I pray to god everyday you don't understand what it's like to be me
How it feels to work endless hours day in and day out
and still have time to spend endless nights trying to know a language
that doesn't even know how to pronounce you correctly
That tells you to go back to a country many die to escape from
My daughter I did not bring you here to be anything like me
You see the reason I push you to be a lawyer or a doctor isn't because of the money
it was never about the money
It is because we live in a system that expects nothing but less from you
so in this household I expect everything but less from you
My daughter
You are called first generation for a reason
It is because the American dream was never meant for me
It was always, always meant for you
So my daughter take my culture and our native tongue
and speak, learn, jump, fail, fall, speak, learn, jump, fail, fall, and get back up, my daughter
The best of me lives in you
So speak

The Unwritten Letter from my Immigrant Parent, Muna Abdulahi

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 21st century people newly arrived in Europe who inevitably pass through Greece experience extreme adversities when seeking international protection in the country or trying to reach other European states. This thesis focuses on a recent period (2015-2018), when Greece experienced the arrival of massive fluxes of people seeking international protection.

It has been observed that the majority of stories and narratives regarding refugee issues appearing in reports and awareness campaigns before 2016, were led by men. Most spokespersons were male also. Women were invisible. The leaders of the communities and active members of the refugee communities that constituted the Greek Forum of

Refugees (GFR) were all men, except from a single Somali woman leader of the community back in 2015.

At the beginning of the emergency response (2015), humanitarian actors did not focus on or gender issues. At that time, the camps were characterized as transit zones accommodating people during short stays in the Greek territory.

Over time, the problems of refugee women associated with their gender and situations of displacement became evident. At that time we began to talk about roles, specific needs (depending on gender and sex, such as the relationship of women with male doctors and specific needs of women related to menstruation, pregnancy...) and sexual and gender-based violence.

There were many women in the refugee camps who were sometimes actively silenced or simply not heard when they expressed needs related to health and safety issues. They were also seen in the public space because, among other things, they did not have a place to be or to be accommodated (this could be somehow a positive fact, making their presence visible in an unconscious way, and a negative fact since it represented the absence of a decent place to live).

The research question was constantly evolving; in 2016 women were visible, and assistance programs and a serious debate on gender and sexual and gender based violence had already been established. The opening of community centers by NGOs in the urban center had not yet skyrocketed, that happened later on in 2017. The community centers that offered programs in the city were those that were already in operation and run by some grassroots organizations such as the Melissa Network and the Greek Forum of Migrants.

The discovery of the work and women-only community approach of MN, set the focus on community, gender, emotions and grassroots initiatives. These are the four

pillars on which the thesis is based, it explains how the optimal combination of these has generated an initiative able to ask questions and to provide an alternative to the established way of offering emergency support and integration as characterized by the methods and approaches frequently used by the humanitarian and development sector.

In this way, grassroots initiatives are analyzed as a response to the situation based on the community support in many of them. In addition, the case of MN is presented as a community, a women-only space and a network formed by migrant and refugee women. A psychosocial support based on close accompaniment by female partners (women who have already had a similar migratory experience in the past) and conscious and sensitive professionals that support and believe in the values of the network is considered the cornerstone of the network.

This thesis starts with stories of uprooted women, which show us what it means to forcibly migrate as a generation, family and community. The migration story does not end in the host country, that story will be passed from generation to generation. The first will provide the basis for those that follow to live with dignity. M. Abdulahi's poem shows the consequences of migration, and the daily life and the obstacles that it entails.

This is the routine of women who present themselves in this thesis. From there, we will try to analyze different phases of the migratory process and women's coping strategies developed since their departure from their home countries and the ones developed in the transit place (Greece in this case).

European political decisions and actions that directly affect and hinder the lives of people seeking asylum are also questioned here, by understanding that these are the reasons for their pain, uncertainty and frustration in the current moment. This chronic distress is caused by the fact of being trapped in Greece or facing pending deportation from another EU country to Greece or from Greece to another third country.

The obstruction of the continuity of the lives of people who are in the middle of their migratory process is one of the consequences of these decisions and policies. The adversities they are obliged to face once they arrive to Greece added to their suffering in their countries of origin and during the trip, contributes to a state of uncertainty, fear and despair that affects their physical and mental health. The MN case study demonstrates a type of care that is given in response to the current immigration situation in Greece, designed and offered by migrant and refugee women communities. According to what has been observed, the network represents a response and an initiative that is resistant to the European migration policies that have generated the precarious situation in which people trapped in Greek territory are found, and more specifically, women participating in the Melissa Network.

The network and its material space are presented as a garden of Epicurus of the 21st century in today's Athens. The simile proposed makes a lot of sense given the location, Athens[1], and the structure of the space (that differs from the typical center managed by an aseptic and impersonal NGO and where non-formal education, culture and support are accessed in a special way taking into account pleasure, measure and community). The garden had a very different structure from the academies (Ακαδημία) of that time, open to slaves, women and people of all classes, where knowledge was obtained through friendship, the absence of pain and the search of pleasure. Therefore, I will try to explain how the network functions using the theory of Epicurean knowledge, nature and ethics as a structure, adapting them to the Melissa Network community (the garden of Epicurus of the 21st century) by adding new ideas and concepts, reusing terms while giving them new nuances and using other Epicurean ideas that can fit without changing in these new theories.

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[1]The garden of Epicurus was located in Athens' ancient Greece.

Through these theories we will explain Melissa Network's approach and contributions to psycho-social intervention methods and procedures used when dealing with displaced and refugee populations, based on the provision of a safe and decent space to gather and take ownership of, quality human accompaniment and access to non-formal education, art and creativity resources.

1.1. RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

The thesis tries to identify and understand the multiple obstacles and hardships that affect refugee women once they arrive in Europe, focusing on the Greek case and especially the Melissa Network participants who are the sample of the research. The aim is to establish a relationship between their needs (created and emerged from those obstacles) and the way in which the support offered by alternative initiatives, particularly the MN, meets these needs, in short, to establish what are the key elements that favor an optimal and long-term social intervention in populations of migrant and refugee women. Objectives: 1. Identify common obstacles faced by refugees and asylum seekers through the review and study of data, reports, agreements and measures taken to understand European migration policies and standards.

a) Presentation and explanation of protocols, migration policies and designed mechanisms to face the refugee situation such as the Dublin III regulation, EU-Turkey deal, European Agenda on Migration, and agreements with third countries and the relocation program.

b) Analysis of events and phenomena (2015-2018) and their impact on the European migration context, such as borders' closure, smuggling networks, trafficking networks, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and homelessness situations.

An exhaustive review of research articles on forced migration and European migration policies was carried out, in addition to the study of the international, European and national (Greek) legal mechanisms, conventions and protocols used by the Greek and European authorities to manage the migration issue in Europe. First hand information has been obtained and used, as I have witnessed, during the last four years due to my collaboration with the Greek Forum of Refugees, the Melissa Network and as a militant in some social movements to improve the conditions in which asylum seekers and refugees were living. This included the refugee sites, accommodation programs in the urban center, some squats and on the streets.

2. Analyze alternative initiatives as different ways and approaches to deal with forced migration contexts and the emotional component which galvanizes their discomfort into action. More specifically:

a) Solidarity initiatives in the Victoria Square and Exarchia neighborhoods focusing on the refugee squatting movement.

b) Grassroots organizations as a change from below.

While trying to gather information and data about the migration context in Greece, I discovered and also collaborated with some of these alternative initiatives which facilitated access to testimonials, facts and practices, which I experienced and gathered in first-hand. Being a witness and participating in some way in the context let me analyze the information not as a mere researcher but as an active subject willing to collaborate and change the situation. In this sense I had an exceptional map of initiatives, contexts and focal points to make contact with and from which to get information to study alternatives offered and proposed by social movements, social groups and grassroots organizations.

3. Document the building up of Melissa as a network composed by women that have left different countries to arrive in Greece and start to participate, to take ownership of their rights, and in some cases finally coordinate many of the processes and activities that take place in the network and in their own communities. Mainly describing chronologically:

a) The origins of the network and foundation.

b) Its evolution: from an umbrella to gather migrant women communities to the creation of a welcoming program to accompany newly-arrived refugee women.

I was able to study and describe the evolution of Melissa Network due to my role there, which allowed me to be present on a daily basis during the opening hours, follow up individual and group cases and have access to administrative issues and action plans of the network as a staff member.

4. Stand comparison with other organizations in Athens which also use community approaches when dealing with migrant and refugee groups, and which in a few cases try to focus on gender(s) as well. In this sense I will present:

a) A mapping of grassroots organizations.

b) A differentiation of areas of expertise among grassroots.

c) A description and analysis of the importance of building community to cope with adversities, develop resilience and manage emotions.

In order to understand what was Melissa's added value to the spectrum of programs that are taking place in Greece and the reason of its success, it is needed to compare its practices, services and structure with other organizations and initiatives. Again, mapping the initiatives and organizations was crucial here, along with the relations developed with other colleagues and active

militants/activists in the context that would open channels to gather data and information.

5. Envision the strategies that are most helpful when accompanying people who are trying to rebuild their lives while discovering, designing and implementing:

   a) A psycho-social support program characterized by creativity and openness.

   b) Safe space.

   c) Accompaniment.

   d) Reinforcement of community through sorority.

Another advantage of being present and working for the GFR and the Melissa Network was having access to cases and witnessing the implementation of specific actions and projects seeking to promote refugees' well-being, especially at MN. While deciding strategies and actions in every case, I could experience along with each woman the effect of those actions on her, due to the constant feedback available.

1. 2. WARNING: A FEW DEFINITIONS

Women

It is important to clarify we will be using "women", as a representation of a specific class and struggle according to Monique Wittig and her Straight Mind (1992):

> […] it is our historical task, and only ours, to "define what we call oppression in materialist terms, to make it evident that women are a class, which is to say that the category "woman" as well as the category "man" are political and economic categories not eternal ones. Our fight aims to suppress men as a class, not through a genocidal, but a political struggle. Once the class "men" disappears, "women" as a class will disappear as well, for there are no slaves without masters. Our first task, it seems, is to always thoroughly dissociate "women" (the class within which we

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fight) and "woman," the myth. For "woman" does not exist for us: it is only an imaginary formation, while "women" is the product of a social relationship (p. 160).

Subaltern

The use of the term "subaltern" will be mentioned throughout the thesis, as Spivak (1988) developed it: third country women coming from lower classes, the Others who face difficulties to speak or simply cannot. People silenced because of the oppression they are living with, who do not have channels to speak through and are not heard. Women from lower classes coming from third countries particularly correspond with her idea of subaltern. "If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak, 1988, p. 83).

The subaltern here is understood as a subject without a legal status, the Others who cannot reclaim the space. Migrants and asylum seekers´ rights are denied as long as they remain without legal documents. Their lives become "disposable" Squire (2018) after leaving their countries of origin. According to western citizens they are considered persons and subjects entitled to enjoy their rights (while they suffer casualties and Human Rights violations) in their countries of origin, but the same person once arrived in a European country should not take for granted that her/his rights will be respected or that they will have access to a proper reception system. The Other, the subaltern perhaps will enjoy her rights but in the majority of the cases only to a certain extent. In other words, to be assured of a dignified shelter and enough means to endure their daily routine are basics that have rarely been provided to those qualifying as vulnerable cases.

Participants

Participants is the term used by MN's co-founders, staff and members of the network to refer to women attending MN's activities on a daily basis and therefore shaping the community center. This is one example of the jargon created and used by the co-founders of the network in opposition to terms such as "beneficiaries" or "persons of concern", the official and impersonal terms international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) use when talking about the population they work for.

Members

Melissa's members are the ones who belong to the organized communities which compose the network and are living in Greece for a while. However, participants are also called members when referring to the whole community and are named participants when we want to make the distinction between the newly-arrived refugee women and long-term migrant women within the MN.

Agents of change

This is a term frequently used by N.C., one of the Melissa Network co-founders, in her articles about migrant and refugee women in Greece and in Melissa's description. This term is connected to the network's name, the meaning of the word *melissa* in the Greek language and its relation with bees, and the skills and abilities bees present and how migrant and refugee women present similarities with the way bees get organized.

> The name 'Melissa' stems from the Greek word for honey-bee. It stands for the women who have come here from all over the world, bringing along skills and talents, dreams and ideas, unique stories and extraordinary strengths. They are agents of change for their own lives, their families, their societies, as well as for the society that hosts them[2] (Melissa Network & Eliamep, 2019, p. 9).

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[2] "Melissa Network Integra Train" manual describes Melissa's approach.

"For us it was important not to deal with the notion of a refugee woman as a victim and as a passive recipient of services, but as an active agent of change". N.C.'s (MN co-founder) words given to Amnesty International for an interview in 2017[3].

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[3] "A safe haven for refugee women", Amnesty International available at:
https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/06/a-safe-haven-for-refugee-women-in-greece/ [25/01/20]

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

Desde principios del siglo XXI, las personas recién llegadas a Europa que inevitablemente pasan por Grecia experimentan adversidades extremas cuando buscan protección internacional en el país o intentan llegar a otros estados europeos. Esta tesis se centra en un período reciente (2015-2018), momento en el que Grecia comienza a experimentar la llegada de flujos masivos de personas en busca de protección internacional.

La mayoría de las historias y narrativas sobre asilo, refugio y migración forzosa que aparecen en informes y campañas de sensibilización antes de 2016 fueron lideradas por hombres. Los portavoces de colectivos y comunidades de personas migrantes y refugiadas eran también en su mayoría hombres. Las mujeres eran invisibles. Los líderes y miembros activos de las comunidades de refugiados que conformaban el Foro Griego de Refugiados (GFR) eran todos hombres, excepto una sola mujer líder de la comunidad somalí en 2015.

Al comienzo de la respuesta de emergencia en 2015, los actores humanitarios no se centraron ni profundizaron en cuestiones de género relacionadas con el proceso migratorio o la acogida en los campos recepción. En ese momento, los campos de recepción se presentaban como zonas de tránsito que acomodaban a personas durante estancias cortas en el territorio griego. Con el tiempo, la problemática de las mujeres refugiadas asociada a su género, así como las situaciones de desplazamiento, se hicieron evidentes. En ese momento se comenzó a hablar sobre roles, necesidades específicas (dependiendo del género y el sexo, como la relación de las mujeres con los médicos varones y necesidades concretas de las mujeres relacionadas con la menstruación, el embarazo...) y la violencia sexual y de género.

El número de mujeres en los campos de refugiados era elevado. Mujeres silenciadas o no escuchadas cuando expresaban sus necesidades relacionadas con problemas de salud y seguridad. Ellas (antes invisibles) tenían presencia en el espacio público porque, entre otras cosas, no disponían de un lugar para ser alojadas (esto podría ser de alguna manera un hecho positivo, el hacer visible su presencia de manera inconsciente, y un hecho negativo ya que significaba la ausencia de un lugar digno para vivir).

La pregunta de investigación se encontraba en constante cambio. En 2016 las mujeres un poco más visibles empezaron a formar parte de proyectos de atención activamente, puesto que se habían comenzado a implementar programas de asistencia así como un debate serio sobre género y violencia sexual en los campos de recepción. La apertura de centros comunitarios por parte de las ONG en el centro urbano aún no se había disparado, algo que sucedió más adelante en 2017. Los centros comunitarios que ofrecían programas en la ciudad eran aquellos que ya estaban en funcionamiento y eran administrados por algunas organizaciones de base como la red Melissa Network y el Foro Griego de Migrantes.

El descubrimiento del trabajo y el enfoque comunitario no mixto, sólo para mujeres de MN, puso el foco en la comunidad, el género, las emociones y las iniciativas de base. Estos son los cuatro pilares sobre los que se asienta la tesis, la cual explica cómo la combinación óptima de estos ha generado una iniciativa capaz de hacer preguntas y proporcionar una alternativa a la forma establecida de ofrecer apoyo, integración y respuestas de emergencia basadas en métodos y enfoques utilizados frecuentemente por el sector humanitario y de cooperación al desarrollo. De esta manera, las iniciativas de base se analizan como una respuesta a la situación basadas en el apoyo de la comunidad en su mayoría. Además, el caso de MN se presenta como una comunidad, un espacio y

una red conformada por mujeres migrantes y refugiadas, cuyo programa de atención psicosocial basado en el acompañamiento cercano de compañeras miembros de la red (mujeres que ya han tenido una experiencia migratoria similar en el pasado) y profesionales conscientes, críticas y sensibilizadas con la situación creyendo en los valores de la red, se considera la piedra angular de la red.

Esta tesis comienza con historias de mujeres desarraigadas, que nos muestran lo que supone la experiencia de migración como generación, familia y comunidad. La historia de migración no termina en el país de acogida, sino que se transmitirá de generación en generación. La primera proporcionará la base para que las que le sigan vivan con dignidad, como el poema de M. Abdulahi que nos muestra las consecuencias de la migración en su vida cotidiana y los obstáculos que conlleva.

Se presentan rutinas de mujeres una vez se encuentran en territorio griego. A partir de ahí, se trata de analizar diferentes fases del proceso migratorio y las estrategias de afrontamiento que las mujeres desarrollan desde la salida de sus países de origen y en el lugar de tránsito (Grecia en este caso).

Las decisiones y acciones políticas europeas que afectan y obstaculizan directamente la vida de las personas que solicitan asilo también se cuestionan aquí, al entender que estas son las razones de su dolor, incertidumbre y frustración en el momento actual. Esta angustia crónica es causada por el hecho de encontrarse atrapadas en territorio griego o enfrentarse a una deportación desde otro país de la Unión Europea (UE) a Grecia o de Grecia a un tercer país. La obstrucción de la continuidad de la vida de las personas que están en medio de su proceso migratorio es una de las consecuencias de estas decisiones y políticas. Las adversidades a las que deben enfrentarse una vez en Grecia que se suman al sufrimiento experimentado en sus países de origen y durante el viaje, contribuyen a un estado de incertidumbre, miedo y desesperación que afecta su salud

física y mental. El estudio de caso de MN demuestra un tipo de atención que se brinda en respuesta a la situación actual migratoria en Grecia, diseñada y ofrecida por las fundadoras y miembros que conforman la red de mujeres migrantes y refugiadas. La red representa una respuesta e iniciativa resistente a las políticas migratorias europeas que han generado la precaria situación en la que se encuentran las personas atrapadas en el territorio griego, y más específicamente, las mujeres que participan en la red de Melissa Network.

La red y su espacio material se presentan como un jardín de Epicuro en el siglo XXI en la actual Atenas. El símil propuesto tiene mucho sentido dada la ubicación, Atenas, y la estructura del espacio (que difiere del centro típico administrado por una ONG aséptica e impersonal) donde se accede a la educación, la cultura y el apoyo no formal de una manera especial teniendo en cuenta el placer, la medida y la comunidad. El jardín de la Grecia antigua tenía una estructura muy diferente de las academias (Ακαδημία) de esa época, abierto a esclavos, mujeres y personas de todas las clases, donde el conocimiento se obtenía a través de la amistad, la ausencia de dolor y la búsqueda del placer.

Utilizando este recurso expositivo (el jardín y las toarías epicúreas), explicaremos el enfoque y las contribuciones de Melissa Network a los métodos de intervención psicosocial utilizados en poblaciones de personas desplazadas y refugiadas. Un enfoque basado en la provisión de un espacio seguro y digno para reunirse y apropiarse de él, acompañamiento humano de calidad y acceso a recursos de educación no formal, arte y creatividad.

1. 1. PREGUNTA DE INVESTIGACIÓN Y OBJETIVOS

La presente tesis trata de identificar y comprender los múltiples obstáculos y dificultades que afectan a las mujeres refugiadas una vez llegan a Europa, centrándose en el caso

griego y especialmente en las participantes de la red Melissa Network que son la muestra de la investigación. El objetivo es establecer una relación entre sus necesidades (creadas y surgidas de esos obstáculos) y la forma en que el apoyo ofrecido por iniciativas alternativas, particularmente MN, satisface estas necesidades. En resumen, establecer cuáles son los elementos clave que favorecen una intervención social de calidad y a largo plazo en poblaciones de mujeres migrantes y refugiadas. Objetivos:

1. Identificar los obstáculos comunes a los que se enfrentan las personas refugiadas y solicitantes de asilo a través de la revisión y el estudio de datos, informes, acuerdos y medidas tomadas para comprender el funcionamiento de las normas y políticas migratorias europeas.

a) Presentación y explicación de protocolos, políticas de migración y mecanismos diseñados para responder a la cuestión migratoria, como el reglamento de Dublín III, el acuerdo UE-Turquía, la Agenda Europea de Migración, acuerdos con terceros países y el programa de reubicación.

b) Análisis de eventos y fenómenos durante el periodo 2015-2018, y su impacto en el contexto migratorio europeo, como el cierre de fronteras, tráfico ilícito de personas, redes de trata de personas, violencia sexual y de género además del creciente número de personas en busca de protección internacional en situación de calle.

Se realiza una revisión exhaustiva de los artículos de investigación sobre migración forzosa y políticas de migración europeas, además del estudio de mecanismos, convenios y protocolos legales internacionales, europeos y nacionales (griegos) utilizados por las autoridades griegas y europeas para gestionar la migración de terceros países en Europa. La información y datos primarios recogidos de 2015 a 2019 se han obtenido gracias a la colaboración

(como trabajadora) de la investigadora con el Foro Griego de Refugiados y Melissa Network, como militante en algunos movimientos sociales que luchan por la mejora de las condiciones de vida de personas solicitantes de asilo y refugiadas.

2. Analizar iniciativas alternativas como diferentes formas y enfoques de intervención en contextos de migración forzosa, así como el componente emocional que impulsa el transformar su malestar en acción. Más específicamente:

a) Iniciativas de solidaridad en los barrios de Victoria Square y Exarchia centrándonos en el movimiento *squatting*.

b) Organizaciones de base como impulsoras del cambio desde abajo.

Al tratar de recopilar información y datos sobre el contexto de la migración en Grecia, se descubrieron y se colaboró con algunas de estas iniciativas alternativas que facilitaron el acceso a testimonios, hechos y prácticas, experimentadas por la investigadora en primera persona. Ser testigo y participar de alguna manera en el contexto permitió a la autora analizar la información no como una simple investigadora, sino como un sujeto activo dispuesto a colaborar y participar en la lucha por el cambio de la situación. En este sentido, la investigadora contó con un mapa excepcional de iniciativas, contextos y puntos focales con los que se estableció contacto y desde los que se pudo obtener información para estudiar las alternativas ofrecidas y propuestas por los movimientos sociales, colectivos y organizaciones de base.

3. Documentar la construcción de Melissa Network como una red compuesta por mujeres que han salido de diferentes países para llegar a Grecia y comenzar a participar, apropiarse de sus derechos y, en algunos casos, finalmente coordinar muchos de los procesos y

actividades que toman lugar en la red y en sus propias comunidades. Se describen cronológicamente:

c) Los orígenes de la red y su fundación.

d) Su evolución: desde un paraguas para reunir comunidades de mujeres migrantes hasta la creación de un programa de acogida centrado en el acompañamiento de mujeres migrantes y refugiadas recién llegadas.

Se estudia y describe la evolución de Melissa Network debido al papel desempeñado por la investigadora en la red (psicóloga e investigadora social), condición que le permitió estar presente diariamente durante el horario de atención, hacer un seguimiento de casos individuales y grupales, y tener acceso a asuntos administrativos y planes de acción de la red como miembro del personal.

4. Comparación con otras organizaciones en Atenas que también utilizan enfoques comunitarios y que en algunos casos intentan poner el foco en cuestiones de género. En este sentido se presenta:

a) Un mapeo de organizaciones de base.

b) Diferenciación de áreas de especialización entre las bases.

c) Descripción y análisis de la importancia de construir una comunidad para hacer frente a las adversidades, desarrollo de la resiliencia y manejo las emociones.

Para comprender cuál es el valor agregado de Melissa al espectro de programas que se están llevando a cabo en Grecia y la razón de su éxito, es necesario comparar sus prácticas, servicios y estructura con otras organizaciones e iniciativas. Nuevamente, el mapeo de las iniciativas y organizaciones es crucial aquí, junto con las relaciones establecidas con compañeras militantes/activistas

activas en el contexto que facilitan canales de obtención y recopilación de datos e información.

5. Distinguir estrategias útiles de acompañamiento a personas que intentan reconstruir sus vidas mientras se descubre, diseña e implementa:

a) Un programa de apoyo psicosocial caracterizado por la creatividad y la apertura.

b) Un espacio seguro.

c) Acompañamiento.

d) Refuerzo de la comunidad a través de la sororidad.

Al ser testigo y trabajar para GFR y Melissa Network, la autora ha tenido acceso a casos reales y ha podido presenciar la implementación de acciones y proyectos específicos que buscan promover el bienestar de las personas, especialmente en MN. Al decidir estrategias y acciones en cada caso, pudo experimentar junto con cada mujer el efecto de esas acciones en ella, debido al constante intercambio de impresiones.

1. 2. ADVERTENCIA: ALGUNAS DEFINICIONES

Mujer

Es importante aclarar que se usará "mujeres" como representación de una clase y lucha específicas según Monique Wittig (1992):

> Es nuestra tarea histórica, y sólo nuestra, definir en términos materialistas lo que llamamos opresión, analizar a las mujeres como clase, lo que equivale a decir que la categoría "mujer" y la categoría "hombre", son categorías políticas y económicas y que, por tanto, no son eternas. […] Nuestra primera tarea, me parece, es siempre tratar de distinguir cuidadosamente entre las "mujeres" (la clase dentro de la que luchamos) y la "mujer", el mito. Porque la "mujer" no existe para nosotras: es solo

una formación imaginaria, mientras que las "mujeres" son el producto de una relación social (p. 74).

Subalterna

El uso del término "subalterna" se mencionará a lo largo de la tesis de la manera en que lo desarrolló Spivak (1988): mujeres de terceros países provenientes de clases populares, los Otros que se enfrentan a dificultades para hablar o simplemente no pueden. Las personas silenciadas debido a la opresión a la que son sometidas, que no cuentan con accesos y canales de expresión o simplemente no son escuchadas. **"**Si en el contexto de la producción colonial el subalterno no tiene historia y no puede hablar, el subalterno como femenino está aún más profundamente en tinieblas" (Spivak, 2003, p. 328).

Lo subalterno aquí se entiende como un sujeto sin un estatus legal, los Otros que no pueden reclamar el espacio. Los derechos de las personas migrantes y solicitantes de asilo son denegados mientras permanecen sin documentos legales. Sus vidas se convierten en "desechables" (Squire, 2018) después de abandonar sus países de origen. Según los ciudadanos occidentales, se les considera personas y sujetos con derecho a disfrutar de sus derechos (mientras sufren violaciones de los derechos humanos) en sus países de origen, pero la misma persona una vez que llega a un país europeo no debe dar por sentado que se respetarán sus derechos o que tendrán acceso a un sistema de recepción adecuado. El Otro, el subalterno, quizás gozará de sus derechos, pero en la mayoría de los casos solo hasta cierto punto. En otras palabras, garantizar un refugio digno y los medios suficientes para soportar su rutina diaria son elementos básicos que rara vez se han proporcionado a quienes se califican como casos vulnerables.

Participantes

"Participantes" es el término utilizado por las cofundadoras, el personal y las miembros de la red de MN para referirse a las mujeres que asisten a las actividades de MN a diario y, por lo tanto, dan forma al centro comunitario. Este es un ejemplo de la jerga creada y utilizada por las cofundadoras de la red en oposición a términos como "beneficiarias" o "personas de interés", los términos oficiales e impersonales que usan las ONGs internacionales cuando hablan de la población para la que trabajan.

Miembros

Las miembros de Melissa son aquellas que pertenecen a las comunidades organizadas que componen la red y viven en Grecia desde hace un tiempo. Sin embargo, las participantes también son llamadas miembros cuando se refieren a toda la comunidad y son nombradas participantes cuando queremos hacer la distinción entre las mujeres refugiadas recién llegadas y las mujeres migrantes y refugiadas que son miembros activos y con experiencia en la red.

Agentes de cambio

Este es un término usado frecuentemente por N.C, cofundadora de Melissa Network, en sus artículos sobre mujeres migrantes y refugiadas en Grecia, así como en la descripción de MN. Este término está conectado con el nombre de la red, el significado de la palabra *melissa* en griego, su relación con las abejas, las habilidades y capacidades que presentan las abejas y cómo las mujeres migrantes y refugiadas presentan similitudes con la forma de organización de las abejas.

> El nombre *Melissa* proviene de la palabra griega abeja. Las mujeres migrantes son abejas trabajadoras. Han venido de todas partes del mundo, aportando habilidades y talentos, sueños e ideas, historias únicas y fortalezas

extraordinarias. Son agentes de cambio en sus propias vidas, en sus familias, en sus sociedades, y también para la sociedad que las acoge[4] (Melissa Network & Eliamep, 2019, p. 9).

"Para nosotras era importante no abordar la noción de una mujer refugiada como víctima y como receptora pasiva de servicios, sino como un agente activo de cambio", palabras de N.C. para una entrevista a Amnistía Internacional en 2017[5].

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[4] El manual *Integra Train* describe el enfoque de MN..

[5] "A safe haven for refugee women", Amnesty International disponible en:
https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/06/a-safe-haven-for-refugee-women-in-greece/ [26/01/20].

2. SOME EXPLANATIONS OF THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this section we present the theories and methodological trends on which this research is based and which appear continuously and transversely in the different chapters that make up the doctoral thesis.

The research is divided into two parts. The first (chapters 4 and 5) explains the recent general migratory context in the Hellenic territory. It presents and analyzes different forms of organization of civil society and means of resistance that emerge in the described environment and are carried out by social movements and grassroots initiatives. The second part focuses more specifically on one of the grassroots initiatives; a community of migrant and refugee women in which a substantial number of women participate (more than 1000 as we see in chapter 10 when explaining the evolution of participation) are described and analyzed.

The thesis describes and analyzes original resistance strategies such as the implementation of a psychosocial support program characterized by its holistic and multidisciplinary approach. This approach contains various areas of action (non-formal education, individual and group psychological care, accompaniment, legal advice, access to knowledge through art and culture , provision of meals and the meeting of different needs), as well as the reactions and social relations that appear in the person, group and community under study.

2.1. GENERAL CONTEXT, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES

2.1.1. Persons

Wasted lives

On the one hand we present the situation of specific people and their experience through which we can understand the evolution of the migration issue in Greece from 2015 to 2018. We use concepts such as wasted and disposable lives, Bauman (2004), on which we rely to analyze and understand the reality of migrants and refugees upon arrival in Europe as migrants from the global south. We resort to the concept of wasted lives having seen that the paradox that Bauman presents clearly materializes in many current contexts. What happened in Greece from 2015 onwards in regard to the migration issue, such as the lack of organization and political will to respond to the emergency, including widespread exclusion and overcrowding in accommodation facilities on the outskirts of cities ... could be perfectly related to the reality presented by Bauman in his book "Wasted Lives." The author writes about the "production of a culture of human waste" which he identifies with "migrants, refugees and other outcasts".

The European Union has created human waste sites/camps within its borders, where people live in subhuman conditions. These populations concentrate hate upon which security policies are based. Migrant and refugees are instrumentalized and used as scapegoats.

> Immigrants, and especially newcomers, give off that slight smell of garbage dump that, with its many disguises, is present in the thoughts of potential victims of growing vulnerability (to the same fate). For those who hate and denigrate them, the immigrants embody in a visible, tangible, bodily way, the inarticulate, although hurtful and painful, feeling of their own disposability. One is tempted to say that, if there were no immigrants knocking on the doors, they would have to be invented ... In effect, they provide governments with an ideal "other

deviant", an objective with open arms for their incorporation into the carefully selected campaign themes (Bauman, 2004. p.78).

Subalternity

Focusing on the concept of subalternity, one of the many contributions of postcolonial theories, we can understand that migrant and refugee women mentioned in this thesis are not subalterns only in their country of origin. We use Spivak's subalternity (1985) to expose the silence of women who arrive in Europe and remain unheard by society and by European and state institutions. "If in the context of colonial production the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak, 1985, p. 83)[6].

In this way, migrant and refugee women in the host society will not be able to find their voice as subalterns and will have to fight to abandon subalternity because only there can they take ownership of their speech, be heard when they talk and have the ability to be a woman, to be a migrant , a refugee and a Muslim. This is what Spivak (1993) in his work *Outside the teaching machine* understands as "catachresis"; the space where the person recodes and loses the identity of subaltern. As the author points out in an interview for the magazine *Ñ* in 2006, "Today the subaltern must be rethought [...] The subalternity constitutes a space of non-homogeneous difference, which is not generalizable, it does not configure an identity position[7]".

2.1.2. Resistance

The most recent history regarding the defense of the right to the city, Lefebvre (1969), especially in specific neighborhoods of the city of Athens, has its origins in the

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[6] English version
[7] Author's translation.

Polytechnic uprising in 1973, events that later triggered the formation of self-managed groups and social movements in the neighborhoods of Exarchia and Victoria square.

We've rescued the right to the city as something timeless that contemporary city dwellers continue to defend for various reasons, such as the depopulation of the interior of countries or gentrification, in which we will not enter. The right to the city that we explain in the first part of this thesis unites two groups with different original needs, who become allies by supporting each other to meet their shared needs. In this case, the neighbors of Exarchia sympathize with the newly arrived migrants and refugees. They create a resilient coalition in which support and participation in groups is offered in exchange for opportunities for housing in empty buildings of the neighborhood. This means that newcomers can count on a shelter within the city where they can live and socialize (be a resident of the city), instead of being sent to refugee sites in the suburbs - where human lives risk being wasted - or ending up homeless and on the streets, which happens on many occasions when people are not accepted in the refugee sites.

Social groups and movements in the neighborhood work towards the creation and development of a self-managed space where a good standard of living prevails. Newcomers seeking international protection in the city require a roof and a space to live in the city that is close to the necessary services: health, the asylum office and the NGOs that take their cases.

Both groups defend the right to the city for different reasons, both have a need and demand a right.

Marcuse (2012) explains that Lefebvre's concept of a right is both a cry born of necessity and a demand for something more. Those two different things express:

An exigent demand by those deprived of basic material and legal rights, and an aspiration for the future by those discontent with life as they see it around them and

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perceived as limiting their potential for growth and creativity". In other words, "the demand is of those who are excluded, the aspiration is for those who are alienated; the city is for the material necessities of life, the aspiration is for a broader right to what is necessary beyond the material to lead a satisfying life (p. 31).

Marcuse's explanation, referring to the famous quote coined by Lefebvre (1969) "the right to the city is a cry and demand" helps us to understand the correlation between this quote and the example we present, since these groups advocate and work towards the possibility for people to take ownership of the city again, as Lefebvre points out.

2.2. KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING

In this second part (chapters 6, 7, 8, 9) we present guiding concepts such as community, emotion and resilience, on which an approach will be articulated that in turn draws on the background of other parts of the world and on theories and methods that combine resilience, community, emotion, and feminisms. More concretely, we rely on theories and currents of study within different disciplines such as community psychology (a branch of psychology that is considered theory and method), emotional communities (within the historiographic current that studies emotions), the Affective Turn (within Feminist Studies that consider emotion and experiences as sources of knowledge) and the theory of intersectionality.

These theories and methods shape the theoretical-methodological framework of the present investigation, which also draws on concepts that appear in the object of study of this thesis and are developed during the research process, such as sorority and community resilience. The theoretical-methodological framework helps us to concretize, study and understand in depth the realities and the subject of study presented, as well as the reactions and social relations that intervene in a complex social context, and more

specifically within a community, as facilitating tools during the process of adaptation to the new reception space.

Again the concepts and theories are interrelated when we study complex realities, reactions and social relationships between people.

2.2.1. Emotional community

The community we study is presented as an emotional community, it is necessary to understand what kind of community we are talking about in order to analyze the social relationships within it in a proper way.

Rosenwein coined the term and initiated a stream of historical research on emotions and what she calls emotional communities, becoming one of the trends chosen by academics' discussion to analyse shared emotions in various fields as (Zaragoza & Moscoso, 2017, p.4) point out.

According to Rosenwein (2002) the researcher,

Seeks above all to discover systems of feeling: what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and evaluate as valuable or harmful to them; the assessments they make about the emotions of others; the nature of the emotional ties between the people they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate and deplore (p. 14).

The author in her *Emotional communities in the middle ages* studies emotions through discourse since in her case she can only analyze the preserved speeches of that period. This thesis analyzes and studies emotions through the speeches of the women to whom we have had access, through their testimonies and contributions in the discussion groups (legal information sessions). In addition, we had the privilege of being present and accompanying the women of the network in their daily lives, something that allowed us

to make an in-depth analysis of their relationships, reactions and experiences, by virtue of being a close witness to their routines.

There are other examples of emotional communities in which we find similarities with MN but which do not share the characteristics and contributions that MN presents. MN is unusual in that the material space has been created by the members of the community themselves, who are also responsible for the design and implementation of psychosocial interventions.

We find several cases of emotional communities in Latin America from which we have chosen two as examples of resistance and reaction to fear. On the one hand, an emotional community of journalists in Mexico that have been threatened, assaulted and even killed for practicing critical journalism. Their union gives rise to a political response resistant to fear. On the other hand, a group of young people in Bogotá, Hijos e hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio (H.I.J.O.S), which is organized to defend historical memory and fight against impunity and the rejection of people who have suffered political violence in Colombia. (Aguilar-Forero, 2017, p.44).

2.2.2. Community Psychology

We present a network of migrant and refugee women, but also a psychosocial care program based on a multidisciplinary humanistic and holistic approach designed and implemented by the founders and members of the network. The program seeks to give the women who participate access to tools and support and to identify and meet their needs, both material and social, through the development of relationships, strategies, emotional management and knowledge as access generators. This explanation coincides with the aims and the field of action of community psychology. The psychosocial care program implemented in the community center is a community intervention program in

which the members of the network and professionals working in the center participate, implementing initiatives together in a harmonious and natural way.

As we have said, community social psychology is a theory and a methodology whose objective "is to catalyze the organization and the necessary actions so that the community uses its resources, recognizes and uses the power it has, or seeks other resources and develops new capacities, thus generating the process from itself [8]". (Montero, 2003, p.35). In this way, interventions ultimately promote the emergence and development of people as agents of change. We can observe the last phase of the process as presented below the women of MN often become agents of change in their own communities, as MN explains in its mission and vision founding principles.

> In this sense, we would seek to promote collective action processes based on the articulation of differences around specific events that can articulate nodes and forms of relationship, assuming diversity and dispersion and in which we could include different networks that make up the space of community work. All this based on the inspiring principles of Community Social Psychology referring to the need to generate changes to achieve higher levels of equality and social justice in the community contexts in which we carry out our work[9]. (Montenegro, Rodriguez & Pujol, 2014, p.40).

2.2.3. Community resilience

What about resilience?

The populations that are the subject of study of this thesis develop, during their process of adaptation to the new host environment, strategies of resilience that help them resist and overcome adverse experiences and situations.

There are different ways to define resilience depending on whether it is understood as resistance, recovery or transformation (Arciniega, 2013, p. 9). Resilience understood

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[8] Author's translation.
[9] Author's translation.

as resistance is what social movements and grassroots initiatives (which we analyze in this research) have developed in recent years, remaining stable, enduring adverse situations and facing them at the same time. Otherwise, women members and participants of the network develop a transformative resilience during their process of adaptation and understanding of the new environment in which they find themselves, leaving reinforced (quite frequently) thanks to the support and tools acquired. (Arciniega, 2013, p. 9). In both social movements and grassroots initiatives there is a "collective condition to overcome disasters and massive situations of adversity and rebuild their lives up on them[10]" (Suárez Ojeda *et al*., 2007, p. 83). This condition mentioned above is what we understand as community resilience.

Community resilience is one of the engines that maintains the hope of the populations in question. Hope, support and the existence of a network endow humanity with the means for its own survival.

2.2.4. The Affective Turn

As set forth in chapters 7,8 and 9, obtaining knowledge in MN is achieved through emotional management, the development of resilience and construction of support networks.

The identification of emotions allows us to know reality and managing them leads us to relate to reality docily and wisely. We can say that emotions are a source of knowledge based on the theories of the Affective Turn developed during the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

We rely on statements by Alison Jaggar and Sara Ahmed to explain how reality is understood within MN and what is the path by which knowledge is reached. We can

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[10] Author's translation.

extrapolate these processes of seeking knowledge and understanding reality (resistant nature theory, chapter 8) to other emotional communities, social groups and resilient grassroots initiatives that practice mutual support, face adverse situations and share multiple oppressions as we will explain when we talk about the theory of intersectionality.

The theories we find within the Affective Turn defend experience and emotions as producers and sources of knowledge. In this way Feminist Studies and theories of the Affective Turn:

> Invite us from their trenches to a production of knowledge that considers the role of emotions at the epistemological level, through questioning how experience forms theory, how the first reforms the second, what its contributions are, how we can recognize them and how Feminist Studies can help us to elaborate theories[11] (Domínguez & Lara, 2014, p. 282).

Alison Jaggar in her article Love and Knowledge (1989), lays the foundations of what we know as the Affective Turn in Feminist Studies, affirming that emotions are social constructs, thus denying the idea that they are presocial as Sara Ahmed will also explain (2004) in her Cultural Politics of Emotions. They are social constructs, says Jaggar, since we can see how girls and boys are deliberately taught what their home culture defines as appropriate responses to certain situations such as enjoying spicy food or being afraid of strangers. She argues that "emotions are not more basic than observation, reason or action building theory, nor are they secondary to them. Each of these human faculties reflects an aspect of human knowledge inseparable from the others" (p. 172). She suggests alternative ways to reach knowledge where our understanding of reality, emotional reactions to reality and where we locate ourselves (who we are) interconnect, allowing different ways to obtain knowledge to appear.

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[11] Author's translation

The alternative epistemological models that I suggest would display the continuous interaction between how we understand the world and who we are as people. They would show how our emotional responses to the world change as we conceptualize it differently and how our changing emotional responses then stimulate us to new insights (Jaggar, 1989, p. 170).

The women who make up the network present high levels of stress and anxiety as a result (in most of cases) of a complex combination of physical, emotional, sexual and / or economic violence. Feelings of injustice, sadness, frustration and anger appear that have to be identified and managed during the wound healing process.

The psychosocial intervention program aims to heal wounds to allow women to enjoy physical and mental health, as well as a dignified life with the support of networks of trust.

In conclusion, I want to suggest that we can rethink our relation to scars, including emotional and physical scars. It is a truism that a good scar is one that is hard to see. We would praise the surgeons for the expertise of their stitching. The skin looks almost as it did before the injury. We can even maintain the fiction that the injury did not take place as the scar does not remind us of the wounding. But perhaps we need to challenge the truism. Let me offer an alternative. A good scar is one that sticks out, a lumpy sign on the skin. It's not that the wound is exposed or that the skin is bleeding. But the scar is a sign of the injury: a good scar allows healing, it even covers over, but the covering always exposes the injury, reminding us of how it shapes the body. Our bodies have been shaped by their injuries; scars are traces of those injuries that persist in the healing or stitching of the present. This kind of good scar reminds us that recovering from injustice cannot be about covering over the injuries, which are effects of that injustice; signs of an unjust contact between our bodies and others. So 'just emotions' might be ones that work with and on rather than over the wounds that surface as traces of past injuries in the present (Ahmed, 2004, p. 201-202).

2.2.5. Intersectionality and Sorority

The community responds with empathy, compassion and sorority to the feelings of sadness, fear and uncertainty experienced by the women of the network.

We will analyze the testimonies of the community's members and the examples of support and accompaniment amongst them to demonstrate that the community is a sorority. The relationships and alliances that take place in the network, both in the material space and outside it, are the living paradigm of what Marcela Lagarde and de los Ríos (2006) defines as sorority.

> Sorority is an ethical, political and practical dimension of contemporary feminism. It is an experience of women that leads to the search for positive relationships and for existential and political alliances, hand in hand, subjectivity to subjectivity with other women in order to contribute with specific actions to the social elimination of all forms of oppression and to practice mutual support to achieve the generic power of all and the vital empowerment of each woman[12]. (p.126).

In this community members experience different types of oppressions individually, but also, taking into account that MN is a heterogeneous network in terms of the national origins, socioeconomic situations, ethnicities, functional diversities, gender and sexual orientation of the people who make it up, it is necessary to find common channels of communication and attention to needs, being aware of the diversity and complex framework, both of experiences and behaviors that the material space houses. Here is the importance to take into account the oppressions that each woman experiences. In this way we rely on the theory of intersectionality to make them visible and understand characteristics inherent to the community.

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[12]Author's translation.

The theory of intersectionality will help us understand different types of discrimination that women have suffered in their countries of origin, during their migratory journey and in the host country (in this case). It also helps us to understand, as La Barbera (2016) explains, the formal and informal processes that generate inequalities and social injustices and that are the result of interactions between systems of gender subordination, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion and origin (p. 106).

2.3. ON EPICURUS

We understand Melissa Network as an Epicurean garden in present-day Athens; not only as a material space but as a way of sharing and building community. That is why Epicurus' original theories of knowledge, nature and ethics will be adapted to what Melissa represents nowadays and to its functioning. In this way we want to clarify that Epicurean theories are not considered theories that make up the theoretical framework but rather an expository resource that we use to analyze the community. We will be using original Epicurean terms and ideas which fit with the essence of the network, but new details and modern concepts will also be added to contribute to the assembly of a set of modern Epicurean theories located and practiced in the Melissa Network microcosm.

As we have explained at the beginning, the theoretical framework is present in a transversal way in the different chapters that make up the thesis. In this way the theories and methodologies presented will reappear while offering support to the analyzes and contributions exposed in the investigation.

2. EXPLICACIONES SOBRE EL MARCO TEÓRICO

A continuación, se presentan las teorías y corrientes metodológicas sobre las que se apoya la investigación y que aparecen de forma continua y transversal en los diferentes capítulos que conforman este estudio. Aclaración en la que queremos incidir con el fin de facilitar su lectura.

La investigación se divide en dos partes, la primera (capítulos 4 y 5) explica el contexto general migratorio reciente en territorio heleno y analiza formas de organización de la población civil, resistencias que emergen en el entorno descrito llevadas a cabo por movimientos sociales e iniciativas de base. La segunda parte pone el foco en una de las iniciativas de base, una comunidad de mujeres migrantes y refugiadas en la que participan y son miembros un número sustancial de mujeres (más de 1000 como vemos en el capítulo 10 al explicar la evolución de la participación). Se describen y analizan estrategias originales de resistencia que presenta la red a través de la participación en la implementación de un enfoque de atención psicosocial holístico que contiene diversas áreas de actuación (educación no formal, atención psicológica individual y grupal, acompañamiento, asesoría legal, acceso al conocimiento a través del arte y la cultura, provisión de comidas y necesidades de distinto tipo), así como las reacciones y relaciones sociales que aparecen en la persona, el grupo y comunidad objeto de estudio.

2.1. CONTEXTO GENERAL, MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES E INICIATIVAS DE BASE

2.1.1. Personas

Vidas desperdiciadas

Por un lado, expondremos la situación de personas concretas y sus experiencias, de este modo podremos entender la evolución de la cuestión migratoria en Grecia de 2015 a 2018. Para ello utilizaremos conceptos como vidas desperdiciadas y desechables, Bauman

(2004) y Squire (2018), que nos ayudarán a analizar y entender la realidad de personas migrantes y refugiadas a su llegada a Europa como migrantes procedentes del sur global. Recurrimos al concepto de vidas desperdiciadas viendo que la paradoja que Bauman nos presenta se materializa de forma clara en numerosos contextos actuales. Lo ocurrido en Grecia desde 2015 en adelante en lo que se refiere a la cuestión migratoria, como la falta de organización y voluntad política para responder a la emergencia, la exclusión generalizada, el hacinamiento en instalaciones indignas a las afueras de las ciudades…es la realidad que presentó Bauman en su libro *Vidas desperdiciadas* ya en 2004. Nos habla de la "producción de una cultura de residuos humanos" que según el autor identifica con "migrantes, refugiados y demás parias".

De acuerdo con las ideas de Bauman, la Unión Europea ha creado campos de residuos humanos dentro de sus fronteras en los que viven personas en condiciones infrahumanas que concentran el odio y sobre las que se basan políticas de seguridad. Personas instrumentalizadas y utilizadas como chivos expiatorios según convenga.

> Los inmigrantes, y sobre todo los recién llegados, exhalan ese leve olor a vertedero de basuras que, con sus muchos disfraces, ronda las noches de las víctimas potenciales de la creciente vulnerabilidad. Para quienes les odian y detractan, los inmigrantes encarnan de manera visible, tangible, corporal, el inarticulado, aunque hiriente y doloroso, presentimiento de su propia desechabilidad. Uno siente la tentación de afirmar que, si no hubiese inmigrantes llamando a las puertas, habría que inventarlos... En efecto, proporcionan a los gobiernos un «otro desviado» ideal, un objetivo acogido con los brazos abiertos para su incorporación a los "temas de campaña cuidadosamente seleccionados" (Bauman, 2004. p. 78).

Subalteridad

Centrándonos en el concepto de subalteridad, una de las muchas contribuciones de las teorías poscoloniales, podemos decir que las mujeres migrantes y refugiadas de las que se habla en la tesis no son subalternas únicamente en su país de origen. Utilizaremos la subalteridad de Spivak (1985) para hacer visible el silencio de las mujeres que llegan a Europa y siguen sin ser escuchadas por la sociedad e instituciones europeas y estatales. "Si en el contexto de la producción colonial el individuo subalterno no tiene historia y no puede hablar, cuando ese individuo subalterno es una mujer su destino se encuentra todavía más profundamente a oscuras" (Spivak, 1985, p. 199).

De este modo, las mujeres migrantes y refugiadas en la sociedad de acogida no podrán encontrar su voz como subalternas y deberán luchar para abandonar la subalteridad porque sólo ahí podrán apropiarse de su discurso, hablar viéndose reconocidas y tener la capacidad de ser mujer, ser migrante, ser refugiada y ser musulmana. Esto es lo que Spivak (1993) en su obra *Outside the teaching machine* entiende como "espacio catacrésico", aquel en donde la persona se recodifica y pierde la identidad de subalterna. Como apunta la autora en una entrevista para la revista *Ñ* en 2006, "Hoy el subalterno debe ser repensado […] La subalteridad constituye un espacio de diferencia no homogéneo, que no es generalizable, que no configura una posición de identidad".

2.1.2. Resistencia

Resistencias desde la sociedad civil

La historia más reciente de la defensa del derecho a la ciudad, Lefebvre (1969) sobre todo en barrios específicos de la ciudad de Atenas, tiene sus orígenes en la revuelta de la Universidad Politécnica de Atenas en 1973, hechos que posteriormente desencadenaron la conformación de colectivos y movimientos sociales autogestionados en los barrios de Exarchia y Victoria Square.

Rescatamos el derecho a la ciudad como algo atemporal que en la actualidad habitantes de las ciudades siguen defendiendo por diversos motivos como la despoblación del interior de países como o la gentrificación entre otros y en los que no entraremos ya que no son objeto de estudio de esta tesis. El derecho a la ciudad que explicaremos en el contexto que describe la tesis une a dos colectivos con necesidades originales distintas y que se alían al encontrar reclamos compartidos. En este caso las vecinas y vecinos de Exarchia se solidarizan con las personas migrantes y refugiadas recién llegadas y viceversa, creando una coalición resistente en la que se ofrece apoyo y participación en los colectivos y se buscan alternativas habitacionales en edificios vacíos del barrio. El esfuerzo colectivo en la búsqueda de alternativas habitacionales es vital para que las personas recién llegadas tengan un sitio resguardado en la ciudad donde vivir y socializar (ser habitantes de la ciudad), y de este modo no ser enviadas a campos en el extrarradio o terminar en situación de calle cuando éstas no son aceptadas en los campos de retención[13], se trata de evitar en ambos casos la creación de residuos humanos.

Las personas pertenecientes a colectivos sociales del barrio trabajan en la creación y desarrollo de un espacio autogestionado donde impere el buen vivir. Las personas solicitantes de protección internacional recién llegadas a la ciudad demandan un techo, un espacio para vivir en la ciudad cerca de los servicios necesarios, como son los sanitarios, oficina de asilo, ONGs que llevan sus casos…

Ambos colectivos defienden por distintos motivos el derecho a la ciudad, tienen una necesidad y demandan un derecho.

El derecho a la ciudad es una exigencia por parte de los privados de cubrir sus necesidades básicas y derechos legales, y una aspiración hacia el futuro por parte

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[13] Término que utiliza la autora para referirse a los campos de refugiados, puesto que las personas se encuentran retenidas en los mismos cuando en muchas ocasiones no cuentan con líneas de transporte público que pasen con cierta frecuencia cerca de los campos para llevarles a la ciudad, o deben estar presentes y no abandonar el campo cuando hay controles que vigilan que los contenedores estén habitados.

de los descontentos con la vida tal como la ven a su alrededor y perciben que limita su potencial de crecimiento y creatividad[14] (Marcuse, 2012, p. 31).

Las palabras de Marcuse que explican la cita de Lefebvre (1969) "el derecho a la ciudad es un grito y una demanda", nos ayudan a entender la relación que hacemos entre esta cita y ejemplo que presentamos, pues estos colectivos defienden y trabajan por la posibilidad de que la gente vuelva a ser dueña de la ciudad como apunta Lefebvre.

2. 2. CONSTRUYENDO CONOCIMIENTO

En esta segunda parte (capítulos 6, 7, 8, 9) nos valdremos de conceptos "base" como *comunidad*, *emoción* y *resiliencia* sobre los que se va a articular un enfoque que a su vez se nutre de antecedentes en otros lugares del mundo, de teorías y métodos que combinan resiliencia, comunidad, emoción, sororidad y feminismos. De manera más concreta nos apoyamos en teorías y corrientes de estudio dentro de diferentes disciplinas como la psicología social comunitaria (vertiente de la psicología que es teoría y método), las comunidades emocionales (dentro de la corriente historiográfica que estudia las emociones), el Giro Afectivo (dentro de los estudios feministas que consideran la emoción como constructora de conocimiento) y la teoría de la interseccionalidad. Estas teorías y métodos son nuestro soporte teórico-metodológico que además se nutre de conceptos que aparecen en el objeto de estudio de la tesis y se van desarrollando durante el proceso de investigación, como son la sororidad y la resiliencia comunitaria. El soporte teórico-metodológico nos ayudará a enmarcar, estudiar y entender en profundidad las realidades y el objeto de estudio presentado (las reacciones y relaciones sociales que intervienen en un contexto social complejo, donde se sitúa la comunidad, como herramientas facilitadoras del proceso de adaptación al nuevo espacio de acogida).

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[14] Traducción de la autora.

De nuevo los conceptos y teorías se interrelacionan cuando estudiamos realidades complejas como son las reacciones y relaciones sociales entre personas.

2.2.1. Comunidades emocionales

La comunidad que estudiamos es presentada como una comunidad emocional, ya que es necesario entender de qué tipo de comunidad estamos hablando y desde ahí analizar las relaciones sociales dentro de la misma.

Rosenwein acuñó el término e inició una corriente de investigación histórica sobre las emociones y lo que ella llama comunidades emocionales, convirtiéndose en una de las corrientes de discusión y análisis de emociones compartidas en diversos ámbitos de la academia como apuntan (Zaragoza & Moscoso, 2017, p. 4).

Según Rosenwein (2002), la persona que investiga sobre la comunidad emocional "Busca sobre todo descubrir sistemas de sentimiento: lo que estas comunidades (y los individuos dentro ellas) definen y evalúan como valioso o perjudicial para ellos; las evaluaciones que hacen sobre las emociones de los demás; la naturaleza de los lazos afectivos entre las personas que reconocen; y los modos de expresión emocional que esperan, alientan, toleran y deploran"[15] (p. 14).

La autora en su *Emotional communities in the middle ages* estudia las emociones a través del discurso ya que en su caso sólo puede analizar los discursos conservados de la época. En esta investigación se analizarán y estudiarán las emociones a través de los discursos de las mujeres a los que hemos tenido acceso a través de sus testimonios y aportaciones en diversos talleres y grupos de discusión (*legal information sessions*). Además se ha contado con el privilegio de estar presentes y acompañar a las mujeres de

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[15] Traducción de la autora.

la red en su día a día, lo que ha permitido hacer un análisis profundo de sus relaciones, reacciones y vivencias siendo testigos cercanos a sus rutinas.

Podremos conocer otros ejemplos de comunidades emocionales en las que encontramos similitudes de fondo con MN. El estudio de otras comunidades nos hace entender características y contribuciones originales que presenta MN, como es el caso del espacio material y el diseño de una intervención psicosocial desde las miembros de la propia comunidad.

Encontramos varios casos de comunidades emocionales en América Latina de los que hemos escogido dos como ejemplos de resistencia y reacción al miedo. Por un lado, una comunidad emocional en Méjico de periodistas amenazados, agredidos e incluso asesinados por hacer periodismo crítico, de cuya unión surge una respuesta política de resistencia al miedo. Por otro, un colectivo de jóvenes en Bogotá, Hijos e hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio (H.I.J.O.S), que se organiza para defender la memoria histórica y luchar contra la impunidad y el olvido de personas que han sufrido violencia política en Colombia. (Aguilar-Forero, 2017, p. 44).

2.2.2. Psicología social comunitaria

Investigamos sobre una red de mujeres migrantes y refugiadas y su programa de atención psicosocial basado en un enfoque multidisciplinar humanista y holístico. Programa diseñado e implementado por las fundadoras y miembros de la red. El programa que se presenta busca que las mujeres que participen encuentren herramientas y apoyos para identificar y cubrir sus necesidades tanto materiales como sociales a través del desarrollo de relaciones, estrategias, gestión emocional y conocimiento como generadores de accesos.

Esta explicación coincide con el objetivo y campo de actuación de la psicología social comunitaria. Podemos decir que el programa de atención psicosocial que se implementa en el centro comunitario es un programa de intervención social comunitaria en el que las miembros y profesionales que trabajan en el centro comunitario participan e implementan conjuntamente de manera armónica y natural.

Como hemos mencionado, la psicología social comunitaria es una teoría y metodología cuyo objetivo "es catalizar la organización y las acciones necesarias para que la comunidad use sus recursos, reconozca y emplee el poder que tiene, o bien busque otros recursos y desarrolle nuevas capacidades, generando así el proceso desde sí misma" (Montero, 2003, p. 35). De esta forma se desarrollan intervenciones que en última instancia promueven la emergencia y desarrollo de las personas como agentes de cambio. Podremos observar que en la última fase del proceso, las mujeres de MN se convierten en muchas ocasiones en agentes de cambio en sus propias comunidades, fundando sus asociaciones o apoyando iniciativas sociales como expresan la misión y visión[16] originales de MN.

> En este sentido, se buscaría promover procesos de acción colectiva basados en la articulación de diferencias en torno a eventos concretos que puedan articular nodos y formas de relación, asumiendo la diversidad y dispersión y en los que se puedan incorporar diferentes redes que componen el espacio de trabajo comunitario. Todo esto sobre la base de los principios inspiradores de la Psicología Social Comunitaria referidos a la necesidad de generar cambios para lograr mayores niveles de igualdad y justicia social en los contextos comunitarios en los que desarrollamos nuestra labor. (Montenegro, Rodríguez & Pujol, 2014, p. 40).

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[16] La misión de una organización explica su razón de ser, actividad, campo de actuación y su visión hacia dónde quiere llegar a largo plazo.

2.2.3. La resiliencia comunitaria

Las resistencias, reacciones y relaciones de las poblaciones que son objeto de estudio de esta tesis desarrollan durante su proceso de adaptación al nuevo entorno de acogida estrategias resilientes que les ayudan a resistir y sobreponerse a experiencias y situaciones adversas.

Existen distintas formas de definir la resiliencia dependiendo de si es entendida como resistencia, recuperación o transformación (Arciniega, 2013, p. 9). La resiliencia entendida como resistencia es la que los movimientos sociales e iniciativas de base (que analizamos en esta investigación) han desarrollado estos últimos años permaneciendo estables, soportando situaciones adversas y a la vez enfrentándose a ellas.

De otro modo, las mujeres miembros y participantes de la red, desarrollan una resiliencia transformadora durante su proceso de adaptación y entendimiento del nuevo medio en el que se encuentran, saliendo reforzadas (con bastante frecuencia) gracias a los apoyos y herramientas adquiridas. (Arciniega, 2013, p.9)

Tanto en los movimientos sociales como iniciativas de base se observa una "condición colectiva para sobreponerse a desastres y situaciones masivas de adversidad y construir sobre ellas". (Suárez Ojeda *et al.*, 2007, p. 83). Condición que se define como resiliencia comunitaria.

La resiliencia comunitaria es uno de los motores que mantiene la esperanza de las poblaciones de las que hablamos. La esperanza, los apoyos y la red dotan de humanidad su supervivencia.

2.2.4. El Giro Afectivo

Como se expondrá en los capítulos 7,8 y 9, la obtención del conocimiento en MN se consigue a través de la gestión emocional, el desarrollo de la resiliencia y construcción de redes de apoyo.

La identificación de las emociones nos permite conocer la realidad y gestionarlas nos lleva a relacionarnos con la misma dócil y sabiamente. Podemos decir que las emociones son fuente de conocimiento basándonos en las teorías del Giro Afectivo desarrolladas durante finales del siglo XX y principios de XXI.

Nos apoyaremos en afirmaciones de Alison Jaggar y Sara Ahmed para explicar cómo se entiende la realidad dentro de MN y cuál es el camino por el que se llega al conocimiento. Podemos extrapolar estos procesos de búsqueda de conocimiento y entendimiento de la realidad (teoría de la naturaleza resistente, capítulo 8) a otras comunidades emocionales, grupos sociales e iniciativas de base resilientes que practiquen apoyo mutuo, se enfrenten a situaciones adversas y compartan múltiples opresiones como explicaremos cuando hablemos de la teoría de la interseccionalidad.

Las teorías que encontramos dentro del Giro Afectivo defienden la experiencia y las emociones como productoras de conocimiento. Los Estudios Feministas y teorías del Giro Afectivo:

> Nos invitan desde sus trincheras a una producción de conocimiento que considere el papel de las emociones en el nivel epistemológico a través de cuestionarse el cómo la experiencia forma la teoría, cómo la reforma, cuáles son sus contribuciones, cómo podemos reconocerlas y cómo pueden ayudarnos los Estudios Feministas para elaborar teorías. (Domínguez & Lara, 2014, p. 282).

Alison Jaggar, en su artículo "Love and Knowledge" (1989), sienta las bases de lo que conocemos como el *Giro Afectivo* en los Estudios Feministas, afirmando que las emociones son constructos sociales, negando así la idea de que son presociales como también explicará Sara Ahmed (2004) en su *Política cultural de las emociones*. Son constructos sociales dice Jaggar (1989), puesto que podemos ver cómo a niñas y niños se le enseña deliberadamente lo que su cultura de origen define como respuestas apropiadas a determinadas situaciones como disfrutar de la comida picante o tener miedo a los

extraños. Defiende que las emociones no son más básicas que la observación, la razón o la acción en la construcción de la teoría, y tampoco son secundarias a ellas. Cada una de estas facultades humanas refleja un aspecto del conocimiento humano inseparable de los otros (Jaggar, 1989). Entendemos de sus palabras que sugiere formas alternativas de alcanzar el conocimiento donde nuestra comprensión de la realidad, las reacciones emocionales a la realidad y dónde nos ubicamos (quiénes somos) están en constante interconexión, lo que permite la aparición de diferentes formas de obtener conocimiento.

> Los modelos epistemológicos alternativos que sugiero muestran la interacción continua entre cómo entendemos el mundo y quiénes somos como personas. Muestran cómo cambian nuestras respuestas emocionales al mundo a medida que lo conceptualizamos de manera diferente y cómo nuestras respuestas emocionales cambiantes nos estimulan a nuevas ideas[17] (Jaggar, 1989, p. 170).

Las mujeres que conforman la red presentan altos niveles de estrés y ansiedad, fruto de experiencias de violencia física, emocional, sexual y/o económica complejas en su mayoría. Aparecen sentimientos de injusticia, tristeza, frustración e ira que han de ser identificados y gestionados durante el proceso para sanar heridas.

El programa de intervención psicosocial tiene como objetivo hacer cicatrizar las heridas para disfrutar de una salud física y mental, así como de una vida digna con el apoyo de redes de confianza.

> En conclusión quiero plantear que podemos repensar nuestra relación con las cicatrices, incluyendo las cicatrices emocionales y físicas. Es un lugar común decir que una buena cicatriz es la que casi no se ve. Elogiaríamos a los cirujanos por su experta labor de suturación. La piel se ve casi como antes de la cirugía. Incluso podemos hacernos la ilusión de que no hubo herida, pues la cicatriz no nos recuerda la herida. Pero quizás necesitamos desafiar ese lugar común. Permítanme ofrecer una alternativa. Una buena cicatriz es una que sobresale, una señal abultada en la piel. No es que la herida esté expuesta o que la piel esté sangrando. Pero la cicatriz

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[17] Traducción de la autora.

es un signo de la lesión: una buena cicatriz le permite sanar, e incluso la cubre, *pero el cubrimiento siempre expone la herida, recordándonos como da forma al cuerpo.* Nuestros cuerpos han sido moldeados por sus heridas; las cicatrices son huellas de esas heridas que persisten en el proceso de sanar o suturar del presente. Este tipo de buena cicatriz nos recuerda que recuperarnos de la injusticia no se trata de tapar las heridas, que son efecto de esa injusticia; signos de un contacto injusto entre nuestros cuerpos y otros. Así que las "emociones justas" podrían ser aquellas que trabajan *con* y *en* más que *sobre* las heridas que salen a la superficie como huellas de lesiones pasadas en el presente (Ahmed, 2004, pp. 303-304).

2.2.5. Interseccionalidad y sororidad

Ante los sentimientos de tristeza, miedo e incertidumbre que experimentan las mujeres de la red, la comunidad responde con empatía, compasión y sororidad.

La comunidad es un ejemplo de sororidad que apreciamos a través de los testimonios, el verbatim y ejemplos de apoyo y acompañamiento entre las miembros. Las relaciones y alianzas que tienen lugar en la red, tanto en el espacio material como fuera de él, son el paradigma vivo de lo que Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos (2006) define como sororidad.

La sororidad es una dimensión ética, política y práctica del feminismo contemporáneo. Es una experiencia de las mujeres que conduce a la búsqueda de relaciones positivas y la alianza existencial y política, cuerpo a cuerpo, subjetividad a subjetividad con otras mujeres, para contribuir con acciones específicas a la eliminación social de todas las formas de opresión y al apoyo mutuo para lograr el poderío genérico de todas y al empoderamiento vital de cada mujer (p. 126).

En esta comunidad las miembros experimentan de manera individual distintos tipos de opresiones, pero además, teniendo en cuenta que MN es una red heterogénea en cuanto a orígenes nacionales, situaciones socioeconómicas, etnias, diversidades funcionales, géneros y orientación sexual de las personas que la conforman, es necesario encontrar códigos comunes de comunicación y atención de necesidades siendo conscientes de la

diversidad y entramado complejo, tanto de experiencias como de comportamientos que alberga el espacio material. Por esto es importante tener en cuenta las opresiones que experimenta cada mujer, de este modo nos apoyaremos en la teoría de la interseccionalidad para hacerlas visibles y comprender características inherentes a la comunidad.

La teoría de la interseccionalidad ayudará a entender las discriminaciones que han sufrido las mujeres en sus países de origen, durante su viaje migratorio y en el país de acogida. Entender también, como explica La Barbera (2016), los procesos formales e informales que generan desigualdades e injusticias sociales y que son fruto de las interacciones entre los sistemas de subordinación de género, orientación sexual, etnia, religión, origen... (p. 106).

2.3. SOBRE EPICURO

Entendemos Melissa Network como un jardín epicúreo en la actual Atenas; no solo como un espacio material sino como una forma de compartir y construir comunidad. Es por eso que las teorías originales de Epicuro sobre el conocimiento, la naturaleza y la ética se adaptarán a lo que Melissa representa hoy en día y a su funcionamiento. De este modo queremos dejar claro que las teorías epicúreas no se consideran teorías que conforman el marco teórico sino un recurso expositivo del que nos valemos para analizar a la comunidad. Usaremos términos e ideas epicúreas originales que se ajustan a la esencia de la red, pero también se agregarán nuevos detalles y conceptos modernos para contribuir al ensamblaje de un conjunto de teorías epicúreas modernas situadas y practicadas en el microcosmos de la red Melissa.

Como se ha explicado al principio, el marco teórico está presente de manera transversal en los distintos capítulos que conforman la tesis, de este modo las teorías y

conceptos presentados volverán a aparecer y se profundizará más en ellos mientras

ofrecen soporte a los análisis y contribuciones expuestos en la investigación.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. JUSTIFICATION OF THE DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

We have used typical techniques of qualitative research methodology for the collection of primary data. The main research practices used have been interviews, field notes[18], discussion groups and participant observation understood as an ethnographic method. All these practices are framed within participatory action research since in this case the researcher has been an observer and participant not only of grassroots initiatives, but of social and political groups through militancy and support in specific occasions, what we could call militant research during the last 4 years in Athens. We will not go further in explaining in detail the militant component of militant research, in order not to disclose ways and techniques militant researchers use. We will simply clarify that most of the information obtained and exposed here about social movements and political groups comes from her presence in several assemblies, conversations with militants and as an observer who is present in the neighborhood and lives where actions take place, as Amores (2011) sets forth:

> In my opinion, co-research (militant research, also named in this way) should remain invisible to serve its users better and to prevent the instituted order once again takes the ownership [...] If someone wants to know something else will have to become a militant and forget about University[19] (p. 190).

Knowing this, most of the information gathered comes directly from the refugee, asylum seeker and migrant population through direct contact and through the humanitarian actors (local and international), community leaders and grassroots co-founders to whom the researcher had access through collaborations with the GFR from

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[18] Daily notes and minutes of the meetings, conferences and working groups in which the researcher represented GFR or MN.
[19] Author's translation.

May 2015 to July 2016 and the MN from August 2016 to April 2019. While collaborating with them the researcher had access to the refugee sites of the Attica region, first hand information from the GFR colleagues working as community workers[20] in the refugee sites, members of the refugee communities in Greece and coordination meetings representing GFR at the refugee sites. Moreover, while working at the MN the researcher had daily contact with more than 100 refugee women participants of Melissa's Alef program as well as the community leaders and co-founders that also have migration experiences themselves. It is also important to mention the creation and maintenance of MN's database from which the researcher has drawn data and statistics (previously asked for permission).

While collaborating with both grassroots the researcher could interview some of the co-founders of different Greek grassroots organizations as well as work with them. Working with and listening to their experiences the researcher developed a special respect and sensitivity for their cause, sometimes leading to question if an "outsider", a white European woman was a suitable person to write about them. But the initiatives themselves

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[20] Community workers (CW) responsibilities' according to UNHCR Greece are explained in the following document, which describes CW's terms of reference. It was specifically written for and designed to meet the needs of the refugee population in Greece in 2016, due to the complexity of the situation they it was facing. This document was sent to me as one of the staff members of the Greek Forum of Refugees and as part of the team working with CWs in the refugee sites of the Attica region. "Community Workers add to the promotion of a calm environment in the temporary accommodation centers by assisting the management to cover the basic needs of the refugees and migrants and by also verbalising the needs and complaints of the latter. In addition, the CW may be deployed to other locations in Athens as needs for communication with refugees and migrants arise. The CW are expected to sign the Code of Conduct and to carry out their tasks upholding the principles of it. The CWs will use their provided training and field experience in order to carry out the following activities:
- Distribute and explain to refugees and migrants basic information regarding the available services for the coverage of their basic needs.
- Remain in constant contact with the management of the sites and the refugees and migrants in order to transfer messages and information coming from both sides.
- Assist in the crowd management and organization of regular activities on the sites (food or NFI distribution for example) by following the instructions of the sites' management or other organizations in charge of certain activities.
- In the absence of a dedicated interpreter, facilitate UNHCR/GCR staff to conduct legal information sessions .
- Assist UNHCR and GCR staff in the identification and referral of persons with specific needs to get further protection i.e. sensitisation on vulnerable cases as defined in the provided training.
- Assist where necessary with the transportation of refugees or migrants to appointments (hospitals, transfer to other accommodation sites etc).
- Assist in the organization of, and participate in, focus group discussions or participatory assessments organized by UNHCR and partners.
- Attend trainings and coordination meetings organized by the GFR/GCR/UNHCR for the CWs".

were the ones encouraging research about the importance of developing a strong grassroots movement, without forgetting the gender perspective and while especially documenting Melissa Network evolution process. Hence the importance of showing the work done by women migrant communities when creating a space of resistance.

"By providing a material and symbolic space where migrant and refugee women can share their stories and articulate their own visions, the overarching rhetoric of victimization is undermined. Women emerge as the primary actors in their own lives, as active agents of change in their communities. Women's narratives, when shared, become -and lead to- acts of resistance and emancipation[21]" N.C., Co-Founder of Melissa Network.

Illustration 1: Type of sources

Sources	
Coordination meetings on the refugee situation	5
Field visits (refugee sites)	13
Interviews	13
Field notes (field notebooks)	Field notes taken from 2016 to 2019
Discussion groups	37

Source: The author.

Illustration 2: Coordination meetings

Coordination meetings	Date
Greek Forum of Migrants meeting	24/02/16
Coordination meeting at Elliniko I refugee site	14/04/16
Working Group on Community work at UNHCR	04/05/16
Vistoria Square coordination meeting	21/10/16
Translators without borders coordination meeting	10/03/17

Source: The author.

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[21] Statement given to the researcher within a conversation. Field notebook. March, 14th 2018.

Illustration 3: Field visits (refugee sites)

Field visits	Date
Eleonas (refugee site)	24/02/16
Victoria Square (makeshift refugee site)	01/03/16
Pireaus port (makeshift refugee site)	03/03/16
Eleonas (refugee site)	08/03/16
Elliniko I, hockey camp (refugee site)	11/03/16
Elliniko II, former airport terminal (refugee site)	11/03/16
Elliniko III, baseball camp (refugee site)	11/03/16
Elliniko II, former airport terminal (refugee site)	13/03/16
Elliniko III, baseball camp (refugee site)	13/03/16
Pireaus port (makeshift refugee site)	24/03/16
Elliniko I, hockey camp (refugee site)	06/04/16
Eleonas (refugee site)	07/04/16
Eleonas (refugee site)	15/04/16

Source: The author.

Illustration 4: Discussion groups

Discussion groups	Attendance	Date
Legal info session: Group 6 (session 1)	9	06/02/18
Legal info session: Group 4 (session 1)	10	06/02/18
Legal info session: Group 2 (session 1)	5	07/02/18
Legal info session: Group 1 (session 1)	8	07/02/18
Legal info session: Group 5 (session 1)	3	08/02/18
Legal info session: Group 3 (session 1)	5	09/02/18
Legal info session: Group 6 (session 2)	8	13/02/18
Legal info session: Group 4 (session 2)	8	13/02/18
Legal info session: Group 2 (session 2)	4	14/02/18
Legal info session: Group 1 (session 2)	6	14/02/18
Legal info session: Group 3 (session 2)	5	16/02/18
Legal info session: Group 4 (session 3)	3	20/02/18
Legal info session: Group 6 (session 3)	10	20/02/18
Legal info session: Group 1+2 (session 3)	9	21/02/18
Legal info session: Group 5 (session 3)	10	22/02/18
Legal info session: Group 4 (session 4)	4	23/02/18
Legal info session: Group 6 (session 4)	7	27/02/18
Legal info session: Group 1+2 (session 4)	7	28/02/18
Legal info session: Group 6 (session 5)	11	06/03/18
Legal info session: Group 3 (session 3)	6	02/03/18
Legal info session: Group 4 (session 5)	6	06/03/18
Legal info session: Group 1+2 (session 5)	6	07/03/18
Legal info session: Group 3 (session 5)	5	09/03/18
Legal info session: Group 6 (session 5.2)	11	12/03/18
Legal info session: Group 4 (session 5.2)	4	13/03/18
Legal info session: Group 1+2 (session 5.2)	8	14/03/18
Legal info session: Group 6 (session 6)	10	20/03/18
Legal info session: Group 4 (session 6)	6	20/03/18
Legal info session: Group 1+2 (session 6)	6	21/03/18
Legal info session: Group 3 (session 6)	8	23/03/18
Legal info session: Groups 3+4 (session 7)	16	27/03/18
Legal info session: Groups 2+1 (session 7)	6	28/03/18
Our photo stories session 1	11	13/10/17
Our photo stories session 2	8	17/10/17
Our photo stories session 3	7	20/10/17
Our photo stories session 4	11	20/10/17
Our photo stories session 5	8	22/10/17

Source: The author.

Illustration 5: Interviews

Interview	Date
Interview (I1): Y.M. (President of GFR)	11/10/17
Interview (I2): H.O. (Member of MN and co-founder of the Club of Ukrainian Women in Greece)	07/03/18
Interview (I3): D.C.V. (Melissa Network co-founder)	15/03/18
Interview (I4): G.T. (Member of MN and founder of Kenyan Women Empowering Talents in Athens)	15/03/18
Interview (I5): Decoration shop (owner)	10/12/18
Interview (I6): Bakery(staff member)	10/12/18
Interview (I7): Photocopy shop (staff member)	10/12/18
Interview (I8): G.A. (Melissa Network clinical psychologist)	26/02/19
Interview (I9): A.F. (Melissa Network legal expert)	13/03/19
Interview (I10): S.D. (Melissa Network educator)	05/04/19
Interview (I11): V.K. (Melissa Network educator)	05/04/19
Interview (I12): Y.H. (Melissa Network participant)	05/04/19
Interview (I13): T.P. (Melissa Network psychologist and drama therapist)	17/04/19
Interview (I13): N.A. (City Plaza activist)	24/04/19

Source: The author.

3.2. SITE AND SIGHT

This thesis research project, looking at the refugee context in Greece from a gender perspective, was written before arriving in Greece in May 2015. After one month in Athens, massive fluxes of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers started to pass by the city, without knowing that unfortunately things were going to get worse.

The role of the researcher working with grassroots organizations for the last four years in Greece has changed as her role as a researcher too. The research question of this thesis has evolved along with the evolution of the migration context that the researcher was following in real time. That is why it is necessary to situate herself (the researcher), following Haraway's (1991) understanding of situated knowledge 'on the ground' in the context that she wanted to research about, while being an active actor collaborating with the Greek grassroots movements for the last 4 years.

The researcher's view to analyze the research question from a gender perspective, using a postcolonial, and intersectional feminist analysis to highlight specific oppressions related to gender but also culture, class, race and migration, is influenced by the conversations with Melissa participants and women community leaders of different

origins (more than 45 nationalities). Their intersections led her to find in postcolonial theories' concepts suitable tools to explain the reality and cultural diversity embodied in MN, and in the Greek context, since the beginning of the massive migration fluxes arriving in Greek territory in 2015. Being part of the network also made her criticize feminist ethnocentric visions (often practiced by humanitarians when working with SGBV survivors) that do not consider different articulations between gender, race, class, country of origin among others such as migration experiences taken into account in MN. As Úrsula Santa Cruz (2018) explains in a recent interview:

> As an outcome, violence against women is attributed to gender inequalities and is transformed into a universal category. In this way development agencies, NGOs, universities and white, middle-class western feminists of the so-called first world countries exported a particular theory of gender to all the regions of the world. Thus, this approach is embodied in laws, public policies, programs and intervention strategies. The sex-gender system becomes a universal tool with which inequalities between men and women in all societies and contexts are analyzed and through which women are regarded as oppressed by patriarchy due to the fact of ›simply‹ being women. This discourse, that tends to equate all women and considers them as ›sisters‹, constitutes a violent act that strips away the historicity, memory and resistance of non-white, non-European women, both in the past and in the present (p. 179).

"In Greece when you have a problem with your husband, the lawyer tells you to divorce. It would be nice to have a place where men can learn what they can do, what is forbidden and how to treat women" B. A. 21. Afghanistan. Legal information session. February, 2nd 2018. Group 3.

Melissa Network members have to deal with multi-layered facets in their routines, resulting in experiencing different kinds of discriminations and oppressions. That is why intersectional feminism plays an important role in the analysis of Melissa's participants'/members' narratives and contributions.

Women experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class, ability and ethnicity (Crenshaw,1989, p. 143).

In this case situated knowledge is crucial to understand questions posed, analysed and contributions born from specific views. As a researcher I want to show a reality in which I am an observer and an actor; as Lykke (2010) says when referring to postmodern philosophers and feminist critics of positivism, "the knower is always in *medias res*" (in the middle of) participant and in compliance with, the analyzed world" (p. 6).

I would like to insist on the embodies nature of all vision, and so reclaim the sensor system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere… I want a feminist writing of the body that metaphorically emphasizes vision again, because we need to reclaim that sense to find our way through all the visualizing tricks and powers of modern sciences and technologies that have transformed the objectivity debates. (Haraway, 1991, p. 581).

3.3. DATA CREATION

3.3.1. Quantitative data

During the first two years of implementation of the Alef project, the network had to justify its operation on a daily basis following the guidelines of one of the donors. In this way I started taking care of the daily attendance records in predetermined Excel tables that evolved into a computerized system for collecting more important data (not only assistance, but the personal data of the participants and registration of actions) at the request of the network and that several teammates and I implemented prior training. Quantitative data has been gathered through a system designed by one of the network's donors to justify how the network functions on a daily basis. The data collection computer

system is made up of a platform to which data is sent from several tablets that collect attendance, actions and contact details through the Open Data Kit (ODK) system normally used by the humanitarian community. Assistance and activities that occur are recorded daily and at the end of the day the data are sent to the online platform. The platform is used to process the data and get information such as the number of monthly assistances and the number of activities and registrations, among others.

In each activity the cultural mediators or the researcher herself registered the assistance as follows: each woman upon arrival receives a quick response (QR) code that serves as an attendance card and is scanned with the tablet. The personal data of the woman, age, nationality, name, surname, address and telephone number are saved. These data are sent to the online platform where they are stored, hence various information can be obtained prior to data processing. That is why we know that more than 1000 women have passed by MN and what the percentages of each nationality are. The Afghan nationality has been the most represented from the beginning, then Syrian and Iraqi, while women from Sub-Saharan countries were the third largest group. Percentages have changed along with the evolution of the refugee context. After one year and a half since the beginning of the Alef program, most of Syrian women have left for other European countries due to the relocation program. In 2017 the network experienced a raise in the registration of women from Sub-Saharan countries such as Cameroon, DRC (Democratic republic of the Congo) and Gabon.

In the last period, from summer 2018 to April 2019, migration fluxes also changed, with Iranian women being the nationality most represented as willing to register and be a participant of Alef program.

Illustration 6: Nationalities' distribution from 2016 to 2019
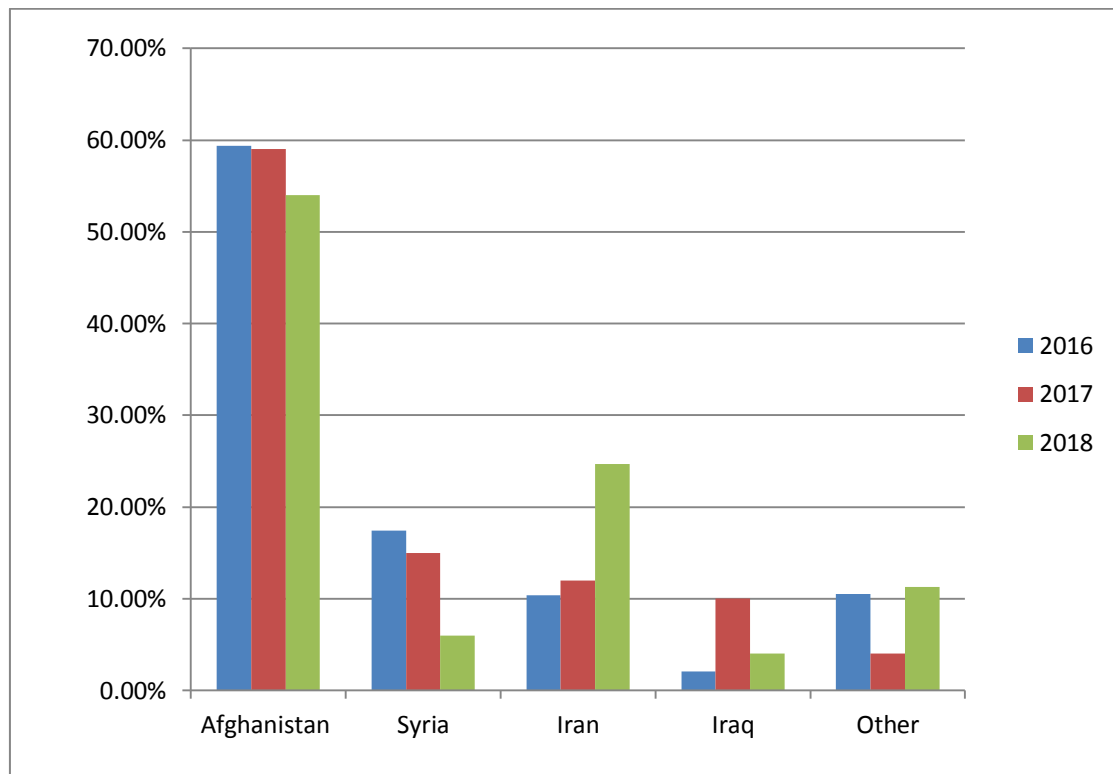
Source: Melissa Network database updated by the author.

3.3.2. Purposive sample

Confirmed by 800 refugee, asylum seeker and migrant women who attended Melissa Network community center and engaged in the ALEF program as well as the network. Ages range from 16 to 60 years old. It is a heterogeneous sample confirmed by several nationalities. The most represented are Afghani, Irani, Syrian, Iraqi, Pakistani, Palestinian, Cameroonian, Gabon and The Democratic Republic of Congo.

Illustration 7: Melissa Network nationalities' percentages
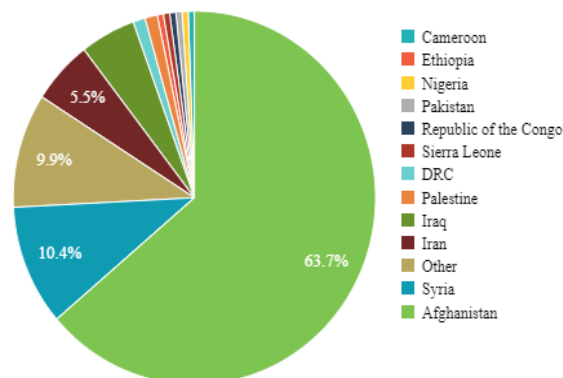
Source: Melissa Network database updated by the author.

3.3.3. Qualitative data

Most of the data used in the research is qualitative, being the predominant perspective qualitative but the researcher has also gathered some quantitative data while organizing and managing Melissa Network's database. The primary data extracted from primary sources were obtained at the community center, in the refugee camps and the grassroots initiatives with which the researcher established contact. In addition to the primary data, reference must be made to the secondary and treated treaties and to which the researcher accessed through an exhaustive bibliographic review of reports, information portals on the migration issue of the Greek government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Reading of conventions, international protocols and current measures implemented since 2015 by the EU such as the European migration agenda, the EU-Turkey agreement and revisions of the Dublin Protocol among others.

3.3.3.1. About testimonies and life stories

Most of the testimonies or qualitative information from the sample have not been extracted through questionnaires, structured or semi-structured interviews, but in a "non-directive" manner, Amores (2011), since the context and the acquisition of information through these means was not very feasible, due to the multiplicity of languages and lack of interpreters. In this way, participatory observation, discussion groups and non-directive interviews have been the practices used that adapted best to the needs or forms of expression of women. One of the most important aspects of the research is to respect, take care of the testimonies and do no harm to the study subjects. These aspects have been crucial when collecting information.

3.3.3.2. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with members and co-founders of grassroots initiatives, in the case of Melissa also with several workers-members of the network. Some of the interviews were recorded and in others notes were taken according to the preferences of the interviewee. In total 10 interviews with members, workers and activists, a focus group composed of activists belonging to various groups and supporting grassroots organizations, are presented.

3.3.3.3. Field Notes

The field notes collected during the period the researcher was present in the refugee sites and organizational meetings reflect the most institutional part of the work done in Greece and the aspects directly discussed by the humanitarian actors and authorities. Although most of these are not mentioned throughout the research work, much of the information and conclusions drawn from the management of the situation by the authorities and humanitarian actors come from my direct contact with the decision-makers or the researcher's presence in these meetings.

3.3.3.4. Discussion groups

As explained in the theory of knowledge of MN, discussion groups´ dynamics focused on raising a debate after having briefly presented the topic to be discussed in the session. The question or debate generated a dialogue between the members of the group and facilitators. The creation of the groups was the result of a project implemented by the network to find obstacles and legal gaps in the treatment of gender based violence and discrimination against refugee women. This happened after a year and a half since the beginning of the implementation of Alef program. By this time, women felt attached to the space, in the sense that they felt part of a comfortable and safe space in which they

could relate, a fact reflected in the low dropout rate. It was then the moment when groups started to take ownership of the space and women began to experience a considerable increase in the levels of trust with the workers and members of the network. In that time it made sense to conduct the discussion groups due to the sensitivity of the issues to be addressed where high levels of trust were needed.

> This is the first of the sessions in which they began to share personal things. In the previous sessions they talked about familiar stories, experiences of someone known. The relationships of the group are quite positive. There is confidence and at a time when I told them that the notes I am taking (again) are not going to be shared with their names, the women answered me. "It doesn't matter, even if you want to share our names, we trust Melissa, in Melissa they know everything and it's no problem for us." On one occasion when one of the women began to cry when she listened to others to share her thoughts related to gender based violence, one of the partners (the one in front) started talking to her without emitting sound in Farsi so she could read her lips. She tried to cheer her colleague up and offer her support, she made her laugh for a while. The women of the group are friends (some) have woven a relationship of trust, respect, and in many occasions of pure, loyal and deep friendship. Field notebook, February 23rd, 2018.

Sessions were not recorded, but the comments of the women members of the group were taken with prior permission - hence the ethnographic and participatory nature of the generated data.

3.3.4. Collection of testimonies

The collection of testimonies has been a long process. Testimonies for research purposes were not asked for from the very first moment. The process has been emerging and taking shape while the researcher has been sharing the space with the women and accompanying them.

Due to her role in MN, the researcher had direct interaction with the women, they used many times to seek how to share their concerns, ask for support and possible solutions, or simply satisfy their need to express pain or anger with an outsider.

Her role (the researcher) consisted of being present on a daily basis (Monday to Friday) during the opening hours of the community center (from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.), as a responsible focal point to meet the needs of the women. She had other duties such as welcoming, and being charge, along with another colleague, of the reception of new women. This fact allowed her to follow their cases by being present from the day of their entrance to the center. Acting as the first filter for cases that required specialization, for example, if the woman shared a concern or requested help with procedures related to her asylum application, the researcher (as a staff member of MN) would refer her to the legal expert or contact the organization specialized in legal issues. If a woman had health problems needing special treatment or accommodation through EKKA[22], she was referred to the social worker or, failing that, to the appropriate services or organizations depending on the need.

This is the reason why the cases in section 5 were not all selected from the beginning. These cases were followed up by the MN team. The choice of cases was made taking into account the type of problem faced by women, and their origin and destination, thus choosing women who represent different problems and realities existing in the Greek context in each mentioned period.

Out of all the stories and experiences of migration of more than 1000 women who went through MN in the time the researcher was present, the 4 cases presented are those ones that reflect and interconnect more clearly (without wanting to downplay the cases of

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[22] Greek National Center for Social Solidarity.

other women that we have followed in MN) the working hypothesis: "the obstacle and failure of European migration policies in people's lives".

Due to the time spent working with some of the cases, a formal provision of the testimony of these women was not needed since we had already gathered the necessary information for their writing during the intervention process (social histories, testimonies given to the staff in order to prepare their asylum claim with legal experts), as it is with cases 1 and 2. That is why the researcher decided not to ask the women to share it with me formally, in order to avoid revictimization and painful repetitions. The researcher does not present personal details just those shared with Melissa's professionals, nor their real names. However, trust with the women was gaining strength over time and almost every day during the last year participants found time to share and seek support between themselves and Melissa's staff. At the same time, trust and the level of disclosures were rising proportionally. This was what happened with cases 3 and 4 women had expressed the need to share their testimony and it was necessary due to protocol issues to send their social histories to their lawyers, since both cases required details from the professionals who supported them. In this way, the researcher asked after some time for the permission to tell their stories in the thesis and both women accepted. The researcher wrote their stories based on the information obtained while following up their cases. When finished, the researcher returned the text she wrote to them and read it with the interpreter in French and Farsi. During this feedback she emphasized they could make the corrections they wanted. Both women expressed their approval and commented that it had been a very positive exercise. This moment of return was very important; from their reactions, comments and gestures it was understood that they felt their experiences were recognized and validated. They nodded while reading the parts that connected their experiences with Human Rights violations. This work of returning their testimonies has been one of the

most interesting and most meaningful practices of all the research and support work at MN.

3.4. DOCUMENT REVIEW

Also during the beginning of the thesis an exhaustive review of research articles on forced migration and European migration policy was carried out, in addition to the study of the international, European and national (Greek) legal mechanisms, conventions and protocols used by the Greek and European authorities to manage the migration issue in Europe.

Illustration 8: Documents reviewed

Type of information	Number of reviewed documents
Articles on migration policies	40
Communications and official documents drawn from EU institutions, Governments and UN agencies	33
International NGOs' reports on the European refugee context and forced migration	31

Source: Author

3.5. THE PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

It is clear that participant observation is present in the previous practices. In fact it has been present at all times due to the researcher's involvement in some actions performed by some social groups, her position as a social psychologist working in the GFR and MN[23] and in her experience of living in the Exarchia neighborhood for 4 years during her stay in Athens.

The position and observation in addition to participating in something localized such as the Greek migration context and more specifically the community center of MN,

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[23] Belonging to organizations allowed me to meet and participate in conferences and events organized by migrant and refugee communities in Athens.

allows me to draw conclusions and analysis that can be extrapolated to other contexts and even raise them to a macro level. Here then the localized becomes universal.

Locating and observing are considered important knowledge tools in this thesis. They help to materialize concepts that can be abstract, complicated to understand or difficult to see taking shape. The non-concrete that is not located and does not know where to be located, does not interest and does not help with understanding the reality of its meaning. A non-located idea, situation or experience may have a weaker ability to influence and generate alternatives than localized examples may have. That is why we say that standing and observing is key as a knowledge development tool for both the researcher and the subjects who participate in the experiences, as well as for future readers.

By being present in the community center on a daily basis the researcher became a part of the community. The mere fact of being present and accompanying made out of me another member who was accepted due to the close relationships and treatment emanating from the women present there. It is worth noting would to highlight the importance of one of the activities in which, without realizing it at first, the researcher used the participant observation method in its purest form, as it was in the poetry workshop that she could follow and participate in the beginning by listening and writing my own verses to understand how the workshop works. As time passed and relationships among participants became more solid, new expressions and deeper ideas came to the surface, reflected in their verses and community poems. At that time the researcher simply used to sit with them at the table and observe their interactions, dialogues, gestures and reactions that are explained in section Melissa Network's theory of knowledge.

Here we add Melissa Network's (2019) poetry workshop description of poetry workshop in order to better understand the structure and methodology used by the poet Alicia Stallings:

The workshop she conducts at Melissa experiments with list and acrostic poems from the women's first names serving as identity statements beyond the names and the labels attached in the course of migration. These become their first attempts to express themselves and revalidate scattered experiences, playfully allowing for creative experimentation and enable meaningful sharing. Free-form writing is encouraged and the poems are written in English or the native languages of the refugee women. They are then translated with the help of interpreters who participate in the workshops, recited in the original and discussed. Through this process, the refugee women participating in the workshops, have developed storytelling skills and have been empowered to share their stories and experiences for a wider audience. Various poems have already been presented and published while a poetry collection is being prepared"[24] (p. 33).

By observing, the researcher has witnessed the evolution of their moods, feelings and levels of expression, being able to find healing ways to express sadness and feel released after the session.

I miss my home
The color white, the color green
Home for me makes me feel safe
The whole family lives together happily
Oranges
Unforgettable memories
Roses
I miss my home and my family and
being together
Coffee
The sea
Sweet and sour
I am waiting for it.

COMMUNITY POEM «HOME»,
POETRY WORKSHOP OCTOBER 2016

A beautiful girl, protects herself with a little
fork.
Do you know that every person who has a
character,
despite the problems and the sadness,
has a small rose that grows every day?
Give it hope.

N.A. 16. (IRAQ) MARCH 2018

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[24] Melissa Network Integra-Train manual designed and written along with the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (Eliamep).

3.6. PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

The main objective of this research is to demonstrate that collective action from civil society and the people affected is key and represents a more humane and effective alternative than traditional, formal, institutional mainstream proposals.

In this way, as a researcher the researcher does not only describe the processes that occur in the Greek migratory context and in the MN network, but also takes part in and accompanies the group under study and performs actions during the accompaniment. These actions arise from the dialogue with the collective and are constantly changing as the context evolves, affecting the collective subject of study and its problems.

Due to the constant changes in the development of the migration context, active participation in the community project is also changing; actions evolve, nuances are added and discussed. While in 2016 the main problem affecting the women participating in the network was the conditions of habitability in the camps, in 2018 the inaccessibility of the asylum system to newly arrived single women and their consequent undocumentation, exposed them to networks of human trafficking and sexual violence.

The action strategies carried out to attend and accompany the women were designed as a response to the situation of the moment, with several workers on the front line (including the researcher) who had to respond to emergencies; always maintaining communication with the co-founders and coordinators of the network as well as the rest of the team to implement suitable action plans. For example, an action protocol was created based on the identification of women in street and undocumented situations. It was created during comfortable and close dialogues between the core team[25] and the women participants, with the subsequent case referral to the social workers who undertook the case management following necessary procedures to access pre-

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[25] Conformed by cultural mediators, a legal expert and a social psychologist.

registration exercise in the asylum system and the state housing network, among other procedures. Meanwhile, the core team (due to long waiting periods to receive answers) together with the coordinators of the network designed a system of accompaniment and provision of temporary accommodation until the women were accepted into the state housing system, obtained the necessary documentation to access the asylum system and basic social benefits such as public health and education.

A daily presence in the community center for the last three years was key in understanding and participating in the individual, group and community processes of the women and the network respectively. The participation allowed the researcher to have a field diary rich in information and experiences and the possibility of being able to make an in-depth analysis of both. It also allowed her access to stories, life stories, events and incidents that otherwise she could not have reached.

Illustration 9: Databases and type of information

Qualitative	Quantitative
Refugee sites reports	Daily actions records
Minutes meetings	Daily attendance records (per session and activity)
Interviews with the MN, GFR and GFM staff, activists and community members)	Total daily attendance to the community center records
Field notebook notes	Participants' registration
Discussion groups/focus group	Case registration and follow-up
Testimonies and social histories	
* Secondary data: Review of articles and sources of official data generation such as the Greek Ministry of Migration, UNHCR, IOM, national NGOs	

Source: Author

Documents and data created as a result of the work first with the GFR and then with the MN reflect the evolution of the reality of the situation. The starting point for me begins with the reports on the situation in the Attican refugee sites that the researcher had to prepare after the visits to the field. The minutes of the meetings and working groups describe the complexity of the moment as well as the challenges and the evolution of the migratory context itself. However, in MN, the creation of the database (quantitative) and

the data generated (qualitative) day by day in the community center by stories, narratives, actions and experiences shared did not have the same objective. The former colleagues of the GFR used the data gathered in the refugee sites and meetings to inform about the situation, drafting press releases and advocacy campaigns. Data gathered at MN was used, apart from documenting the network process, as a working tool which is now implemented. This keeps track of the women's issues and cases as well as their follow-up and evolution. In addition, as we see in illustrations 28 and 29, a record of daily activities is kept, since the attendance records for each activity and the total daily attendance of the center numerically reflect the work of the network and how it has been growing in number of activities and people. These numbers show, in turn, the evolution, function and success of the network. Instead of decreasing in the number of activities and women over time, MN experiences the opposite phenomenon, activities become more stable and better organized. The number of women who want to belong to the network increases substantially by the time.

3.7. WHY A NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH?

As Esin, Fathi & Squire (2014) explain, "the narrative constructionist approach is not really interested in internal states that can be separated off from the narratives themselves. It is interested in the states produced socially by the narratives; the narratives themselves are, in such accounts social phenomena". (p,204)

According to their words, using a narrative constructionist approach will reflect the internal states of the women and the emotional states produced as a group or community by the practice of sharing their experiences in the common space; while eating together, in the drama and movement therapy sessions, discussing topics in the legal info sessions and writing their verses in the poetry workshop. The way the researcher analyzes their states is through a description of their feelings and emotions (in MN's case). As she

understood through their actions and narratives, the researcher constructed a new narrative out of the emotional expressions combination and commonalities appreciated to explain the reality she witnessed.

Respect and consciousness have been crucial in the writing and composition process of the narratives used in this thesis. Several aspects are taken into account when listening to and observing analyzed subjects and interactions, such as their backgrounds and history of their countries of origin, many times characterized by the presence of external actors (States) managing their territory and /or exploiting their resources. This can be compared with the actual context when humanitarians in Greece assist them and the whole system once again controls their lives, depending on the NGOs meals, cash card, clothes distribution… The institutional context needs to be analyzed also: Where are we? What is Melissa and what kind of institutions affect the network and the women?

It is necessary to take into account differences between cultures, languages and ways of express. For instance the majority of Syrian women participants of MN are used to expressing their ideas, emotions and opinions using metaphors constantly. Their narratives are characterized by a poetic style, while Afghani women need time and do not feel comfortable expressing clearly what they feel, or their concerns. Perhaps their way of sharing is more cryptic, but in some circumstances they experience vivid and emotional reactions when reaching their limits of resistance. Sometimes they might not be able to express their concerns or feelings, and suffer what can be called a conversion crisis[26]. Although there is no official diagnosis for all of them - and that is why I try not to label it or explicitly state they were facing conversion crises - discussions with MN's psychiatrist on this issue were central in some supervisions, concluding that most of the

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[26] "Conversion disorder (functional neurologic symptom disorder) is characterized by neurologic symptoms (eg, weakness, abnormal movements, or non epileptic seizures) that are inconsistent with a neurologic disease, but nevertheless are genuine, cause distress and/or psychosocial impairment" DSM-V definition.

symptoms presented by the women could correspond with the ones that occur with a conversion crisis. In many there was a period of psychosomatic transition; with headaches, stomach and or joint pain.

Conversion crisis might not be the best name or term to name these episodes, but surely is more respectful than the traditional term "hysteria" that has been and is still used to name these kinds of episodes, as well as the women who suffer them. I agree with Kashner, Rost & Cohen (2004) critic on both terms:

> A synonym for conversion disorder is "hysterical neurosis, conversion type." Both terms are to a degree unfortunate. The term "conversion" has its roots in psychoanalysis and connotes a specific etiologic theory that has not been substantiated. "Hysterical," though an ancient term, has so many different meanings and is such a pejorative term that it might best be allowed to rest in peace (p. 1).

In an opposite way, women from Sub-Saharan countries had more spontaneous and reactionary ways to respond to a situation or to express their concerns and anger.

"I see that people are looking at me and behaving differently with me because of my color, they do not even consider me as animal but as an Alien. So I decided to answer them, once a Moroccan guy called me "black" so I answer him "Arab" and he was so angry at me. Another time in the bus, a Greek called me "Black" and I answer him "White", all the bus was upset and wanted to make me leave the bus.[27]" T.M, 18. DRC. Legal information sessions. 5th February 2018. Group 1.

That way as Flick (2013) does when quoting Riessman (2008), we extend his dialogic narrative in various contexts: interactional, historical, institutional and discursive. (p. 205). Even taking into account all these aspects does not mean that the look or voice of the researcher tries to appear as invisible as possible. The research is

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[27] The following testimonies have been extracted from the community intervention sessions (carried out by the author as a psychologist and the legal expert of the network, A.F), focused on the discussion and provision of information on women's rights. During the intervention cycle, women freely express their experiences, realities and complaints.

characterized in part by its participatory aspect, and by the search for action by the researcher along with the group, contributing to the search for alternatives and possible solutions to the situation.

3.8. ETHICS

It is important to explain when using sensitive information (the majority of the information gathered), that the most important aspect to consider is respect; the non-instrumentalization and non-use of women as subjects to study just as stories and information providers. The close relationship with and membership of the network made me question on several occasions the use of particularly sensitive information. My fear was focused on "do no harm"[28] and on not making women feel exotic and dramatic subjects with whom researchers or journalists talk and have profound conversations looking for a story. Garcia del Soto (2008) explains the idea of doing no harm as professionals working with people in a very comprehensive way:

> Eradicating the injustices committed, and alleviating the sufferings of the refugees, is a common goal of both the refugees themselves, and the researchers and workers on refugee issues. Their shared commitment to this cause creates a bond between the two groups. Passion and suffering go together. Commitment and uncertainty is bond. We are still some steps away from achieving the goals of peace and dignity for all mankind, and the company of the survivors of the refugee experience will be essential in continuing this work. Their own voices, and the memories they will keep of our work when accompanying them in their hard march towards a more human life and freedom, represent the ultimate accountability, and the best possible testimony and evaluation of the importance of psychosocial processes". (p.5)

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[28] An aspect learnt from Arancha Garcia del Soto while attending her module on humanitarian action within the master's program of International Cooperation for Development at the University Ponticifia de Comillas. She explains in various articles the importance of "do no harm" when accompanying refugee populations.

As our intention and work was to accompany these women, the researcher was afraid to be seen as a pretentious person seeking their testimony. So much so, that until the last year of the thesis she refused to use the information and direct disclosures that she had obtained through a long process of trust building and knowledge. Nevertheless the she has decided not to add many narratives describing serious crimes related to Human Rights violations faced by the women, to not contribute to the horror pornography sometimes used by international agencies and mainstream media when informing about war conflicts, Human Rights violations and awareness campaigns.

Testimonials and verbatim have been used with prior consent, returning the testimonies as explained above. Note taking was disclosed before starting the discussion groups, women expressed their agreement and my freedom to use them. The permission to use testimonies was written in English and translated into their mother tongue on a consent form besides the interpreter's clarifications.

The ethnocentric question does not appear in the traditional way as it happens when participant observation is practiced in non-Western contexts and as an anthropological investigation itself. This context and space is a recent, non-preexisting creation that is located in a European country and a western society (although a Greek majority would refute this due to its proximity to the East, its influences, tradition and history related to the Balkan peninsula and Ottoman occupation). In this way, the creation of the material space can be characterized by a distribution and a western style decoration, daily customs such as eating, are carried out following the European reality with respect to the schedule and practice. For example, eating sat at the table at 2:00 p.m. with a knife and fork. However, emotional management, relationship building and accompaniment happen naturally, thanks to the predisposition of the members of the network and the safe and cozy atmosphere that the house represents.

The difference and multitude of nationalities and cultures leave little room for comparison with the culture of each one's own origin. There are so many nuances that what happened in my case was the triggering of the identification of common aspects.

Even with her own origin and the context in which the researcher found herself clear in my mind, that sometimes requires a mandatory adaptation to the system of reception of people in search of international protection to which they have to stick without escape, the researcher assumed that women understood somehow the context in a similar way as she did. By this, we mean the obstacles and failures of the system as she used to hear from them when they complained about procedures. In this sense, ethnocentrism appeared by taking for granted initially that women understood its functioning or at least its key elements. For example, in 2016 when the flow of women passing through MN was much higher due to the peak of arrivals in Greek territory accompanied by an incipient workforce still to be formed, it happened that one of the many women who we were following up on her legal, medical and social situation failed to speak with her social worker to arrange the documents that would give her access to health care system. After several days explaining the procedure with the interpreter over and over again, the researcher understood that the woman was not aware of what role the social worker had and what her duties were. The interpreter (half Lebanese[29]) when making a literal translation of the term did not offer a key either to the woman to understand the concept, because in Iraq the term was designated differently and she had never needed the support of this figure. At that moment, the interpreter and the researcher sat down to make a graph and explain the functions of each professional to whom she was entitled and supposedly assigned to. Thanks to the explanation she gave them the name

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[29] The nationality is mentioned just to figure out some misunderstandings that could happen due to differences in the Arabic language depending on the region.

and telephone number of the person she identified as the one who performed the functions that corresponded to those of a social worker.

"Yes, there is a lady they said (the NGO following up her case) to call when I need to go to the doctor and who would pick me up with an interpreter to go and do some paperwork needed" A.A. 38. Iraq. January 15th, 2017. Field notebook.

This moment was decisive in understanding the importance of not taking anything for granted with regard to the attention to and comprehension of the system by the women participants, even if they were attentive and affirmative. This situation could also be extrapolated to other European customs or operating systems with those that newcomers are not familiar with. This particular woman and some others never came to say that the researcher (in this case MN staff member) did not explain well or they did not understand what she was trying to tell them. From that moment clarifications, explanations and paraphrases took an essential role in accompanying women.

They have no idea what is like
to lose home and risk of
never finding home again
have your entire life
split between two lands and
become the bridge between two countries.

First generation immigrant, RUPI KAUR

4. FROM MIGRATION POLICIES TO PERSONAL STORIES: CASE STUDIES ON MIGRATION TRAJECTORIES IN GREECE

4.1. EVOLUTION OF THE MIGRATORY SITUATION IN GREECE, PERIOD 2015-2018

The series of cases presented below are stories of subaltern women that the researcher was able to follow in a very deep and intense way due to their daily presence at the Melissa Community Center as participants and members of the network. The bond of trust they had established allowed the researcher to accompany and support these women who are fighting to exercise their rights, achieve their dreams and build a fair and sustainable future for themselves, their relatives and their networks.

These are the most representative cases of the misnamed[30] "refugee crisis" among the 1000 refugee women that have passed through and participated actively in the psycho-social program at Mellisa Network' Community Center since 2016. We need to have in mind that these chosen cases, represent different periods with different needs, selected by their arrival dates and representativeness. Steps done and obstacles faced by these women are explained chronologically up until now, thus the researcher is still in contact with them and following up their situation.

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[30] The term "refugee crisis" won't be used in this thesis, since I do not agree with the way it has been used. As Xavier Alcaide points out, the word crisis has negative connotations and defines the situation simply by focusing on one side. It also blames people trying to reach Europe seeking international protection instead of questioning migratory, asylum and reception policies of the European Union Member States. European migration policies and their legal instruments are in crisis. That is why I will be using in preference the terms migratory situation or current migration context in Greece or in Europe.

In this sense, we have chosen to present two cases from Afghanistan and Syria, which represent the two largest nationalities arriving in Greece in 2016 and seeking international protection. An insightful case of a Cameroonian woman exemplifies the lack of consideration of gender based violence as grounds for asylum and the influx of women arriving in Greece after 2016 from sub-Saharan Africa, such as DRC, Congo, Cameroon and Gabon.

The final period analyzed is 2018 and is characterized by a high flow of Iranian single women arriving in Greece in the second half of that year. The presented case illustrates mainly how the lack of assessment and support available to women is leaving them at the mercy of smuggling networks.

The life stories of these women give us an overview of the obstacles faced by female refugees[31] and asylum seekers at different periods in Greece and more specifically depict Human Rights violations related to gender as well as constant barriers, burdens and additional hardships often suffered by women on the move.

*The names used are fictitious to preserve the anonymity of the testimonies shared by several women in this thesis.

4.2. CASES 2016

4.2.1. Yara Daouz, 22 years old, country of origin Syria. Arrival: April 2016

Yara Dauz was 22 years old, a new graduate in Economics, when she left Damascus in 2016. Fleeing from war, Yara arrived in Athens with her older sister after passing through Turkey and Lesvos island. They were living in City Plaza, a hotel occupied by migrant activists and academic individuals, due to the saturation of the refugee camps and the lack of shelters and accommodation in the urban center.

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[31]Data obtained while working at Melissa Network

Illustration 10: Casualties records in Damascus area from 2015 to 2016[32]

Timeline	Number of casualties in Damascus area
January 2015	More than 90 rocket and mortar strikes in one day.
February 2015	01/02/15: A bus explodes near the Old City killing at least 6 people and injuring over a dozen. 05/02/15: The heaviest attacks in over a year occur with 135 rocket and mortar attacks. Strikes were reported in the commercial and residential areas.
July 2015	Mortars and rockets are fired into several neighborhoods of Damascus City.
August 2015	In three days over 200 rockets and mortars hit Damascus.
February 2016	On February 21, a series of ISIS bombings also targeted a Shia religious site in Damascus and a civilian neighborhood in Homs, according to media reports, killing 109 and injuring 235, including children.

Source: UNHCR and Human Rights Watch (HRW) 2015 and 2016 annual reports respectively regarding the situation in Syria.

The pre-registration interview was conducted 8 months after she arrived in Greece. In addition to the waiting time and lengthy procedures when applying for asylum in Greece, the Greek asylum system misplaced her file. After 12 months waiting, in April 2017 Yara's first interview was postponed again until December 2017. This was to allow time wherein her application would be examined in order to decide if she was entitled to receive refugee status in Greece, as she did not qualify for the relocation process or family reunification. Nevertheless, once again she had to wait for an indefinite period of time, knowing her interview was scheduled for December but then there is an additional waiting time until she receives the final decision, without knowing whether she could be recognized as a refugee and therefore apply for a residence permit for the country in which her siblings were living and thus be able to leave Greece, or be rejected.

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[32]Available at:
https://www.unhcr.org/news/editorial/2016/2/56cad5a99/unhcr-syria-2015-end-of-year-report.html [15/01/20]
https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/syria# [15/01/20]

During the waiting time, her sister was eligible for family reunification and reunited with her husband in Sweden, the same country where their brother had also been living in for two years. Following the departure of her sister, Yara remained alone in Greece for 5 months while waiting for her asylum interview and the chance to see her siblings again. In July 2017, after 14 months in Greece, staying alone became unbearable for her. She was living in a squatted building in an unknown country, without a strong support network, and facing difficulties and social pressure when dealing with her own issues alone, due to the indirect control she felt by some members of her community as she was a young lady alone in Athens.

Greece had no means to provide dignified attention for those people in need of international protection, so she decided to start her journey again and took the road by herself to Sweden from Athens. She took what was the fastest alternative way to reunite with her family and continue with her life, as she had many projects and ideals to achieve. Currently a specialized lawyer is undertaking Yara´s case in Sweden as she could be returned to Greece at any moment and penalized by not being granted a passport for five years. This deportation from Sweden would mandatorily retain her in Greece for that period.

Yara´s case is one of plenty of individuals that have found themselves in this situation in Greece over the last 4 years. Asylum seekers have no choice but to opt for and use alternative routes to access other countries of the European Union in search of dignified life conditions (that are not easily available to them) and / or to reunite with their families and relatives.

4.2.2. Shakine Mohammadi, 54 year-old. Country of origin: Afghanistan. Arrival: February 2016

Shakine and her daughter Farahnaz, left Afghanistan fleeing the violence perpetrated by their male relatives and the lack of protection the Afghan State provides to women survivors of gender based violence. One of her daughters was a victim of an early forced marriage, suffering aggressions and sexist violence on a daily basis. The youngest daughter avoided the same fate by committing suicide before getting married. It is important to emphasize the complex living conditions women face in a country like Afghanistan where, according to World Health Organization (WHO) 2015 report on Gender Based Violence (GBV), keeping in mind that Shakine and Farahnaz arrived in Greece on February 2016 according to WHO (2016):

> More than 5000 cases of violent acts against women were registered in 2015, including 241 murders, according to the Afghanistan Independent Human Right Commission. However, since GBV often goes unreported due to fears of retribution, shame and stigma, the real figures are likely to be many times higher[33].

For all these reasons, Shakine had to leave Afghanistan with her daughter and two grandchildren in search of a place of safety where their rights and gender would be fully respected. They arrived in Athens in February 2016, and some months later joined the psycho-social support program at the Melissa Network while living in Eleonas refugee camp, where they were known as trustworthy and strong ladies.

Shakine and Farahnaz waited for more than ten months to register their asylum applications in Greece as they were not eligible for family reunification or for the relocation program. In December 2016, Shakine decided to cross the Macedonian border

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[33]Information extracted from the World Health Organization 2016 report on Gender Based Violence in Afghanistan. Available at: http://www.emro.who.int/afg/afghanistan-news/who-strengthens-health-response-to-gender-based-violence-in-afghanistan.html [15/01/20]

with her relatives, her daughter Farahnaz, and two grandsons. They paid a smuggler who drove them from the Greek-Macedonian border along with eight other people to a city in southern Serbia where all of them had a car accident. Shakine and another passenger lost their lives, and her daughter's two legs were amputated. Following her hospitalization, Farahnaz has been trapped in Serbia with her two children for more than a year, waiting to be reunited with her relatives in Ireland. Since there were some difficulties in establishing agreements between Ireland and UNHCR[34], Farahnaz and her kids were finally granted asylum in Sweden. The situation in Sweden is complicated for the family as they do not have a close network to support Farahnaz with her special condition after the accident. The lack of effectiveness and harmonization in the asylum system in Europe compelled Farahnaz and her children to first take a dangerous path to reach northern Europe, were she lost her mother as well as her mobility, and secondly left her living in another country without their relatives, obliged to restart her life from the scratch without having any network or support.

4.2.3. Explanations based on the migration legal context

Back then in 2016, anyone arriving at the Greek islands had to start processing their asylum application there. In the hotspots, new arrivals' fingerprints were taken and received a temporary stay document issued by the Greek police until the person completed his/her pre-registrations in the national asylum system. Then, the asylum seekers would wait to receive a date for the first asylum interview. It is important to keep in mind that the Greek asylum system has undergone several changes in recent years. The first occurred in 2013 when the Greek state created an independent Asylum authority that undertook the management of asylum in Greece instead of the Greek national police. In

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[34] UNHCR undertook the case and manage the discussions with EU member States to grant her asylum due to her special situation.

2016, European Asylum Support Office (EASO) together with the United Nations (UN) refugee agency-UNHCR designed a system for pre-registration and processing of asylum applications to support the Greek asylum authority to overcome the collapse of the system due to the increase of asylum applications. Since that time, the Greek asylum authorities have been managed by the Greek state in collaboration with two supranational agencies. In this framework, decisions and procedures applied in Greece regarding asylum matters are not the direct result of decisions by the Greek government, but depend on and are subject to directives of inter- and supra-national agencies.

The processing of asylum applications will be carried out in different ways, depending on the program the asylum seeker is eligible for. In this way, an asylum seeker can:

-Request family reunification (referred to in the Dublin protocol) in another member state with first-degree relatives such as wife or husband and minor children.

-Apply for relocation to another member state, if he/she fits specific criteria such as the date of arrival in Greece (from September 16, 2015 to March 19, 2016), and her/his nationality experiences an average recognition rate[35] of asylum of 75% or above for the entire European Union.

-Seek asylum and follow the procedures in Greece

4.2.3.1. Relocation program

A forward-looking and comprehensive European immigration policy, based on solidarity, is a key objective for the European Union. Immigration policy is intended to establish a balanced approach to dealing with both regular and irregular immigration[36]. Immigration policy factsheet 2016.

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[35] (Asylum) recognition rate is defined as the share of positive decisions in the total number of asylum decisions for each stage of the asylum procedure (i.e. first instance and final on appeal). Definition found in the Eurostat Statistics Explained, Glossary. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Asylum_recognition_rate [15/01/20]
[36] Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/152/immigration-policy [15/01/20]

This is how the migration policy factsheet of the European Union (EU) begins. The first paragraph of the migration policy factsheet of the European Union is framed and with background shading, as if this was the concept the reader must retain, that solidarity is the main concept on which European migration policy is based.

The creation of the EU we know today took place in 1992 when the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) was signed and whose art. 79 and 80 define the cornerstone of European migration policy[37].

Article 79 (ex Article 63, points 3 and 4, TEC)

1. The Union shall develop a common immigration policy aimed at ensuring, at all stages, the efficient management of migration flows, fair treatment of third-country nationals residing legally in Member States, and the prevention of, and enhanced measures to combat, illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings.

2. For the purposes of paragraph 1, the European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall adopt measures in the following areas: (a) the conditions of entry and residence, and standards on the issue by Member States of long-term visas and residence permits, including those for the purpose of family reunification; (b) the definition of the rights of third-country nationals residing legally in a Member State, including the conditions governing freedom of movement and of residence in other Member States; (c) illegal immigration and unauthorised residence, including removal and repatriation of persons residing without authorisation; (d) combating trafficking in persons, in particular women and children.

Article 80

The policies of the Union set out in this Chapter and their implementation shall be governed by the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, including its financial implications, between the Member States. Whenever necessary, the Union acts adopted pursuant to this Chapter shall contain appropriate measures to give effect to this principle.

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[37] Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=EN [15/01/20]

In order to "combat, illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings[38]" and to honor the "principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility[39]" the European Commission had to put into place mechanisms and specific measures that were described in the European Agenda on Migration of 2015[40]. The relocation program[41] was launched as a special decision from the European Council referred to in Article 80 of the TFEU for situations in which solidarity and responsibilities must be shared between the European Union member States.

The relocation program was described as the transfer of persons in need of international protection from one state to another within the European Union, provided for in article 78, section 3 of the TFEU. It can be activated when one or several states faces an emergency situation (Greece and Italy are in that situation) caused by the sudden influx of third-country nationals[42].

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[38] Article 79 TFEU

[39] Article 80 TFEU

[40] Responding to high-volumes of arrivals within the EU: Relocation

"Member States' asylum systems today face unprecedented pressure and, with the summer arriving, the flow of people to frontline Member States will continue in the months to come. The EU should not wait until the pressure is intolerable to act: the volumes of arrivals mean that the capacity of local reception and processing facilities is already stretched thin. To deal with the situation in the Mediterranean, the Commission will, by the end of May, propose triggering the emergency response system envisaged under Article 78(3) TFEU 7. The proposal will include a temporary distribution scheme for persons in clear need of international protection to ensure a fair and balanced participation of all Member States to this common effort. The receiving Member State will be responsible for the examination of the application in accordance with established rules and guarantees. A redistribution key based on criteria such as GDP, size of population, unemployment rate and past numbers of asylum seekers and of resettled refugees can be found in the Annex. This step will be the precursor of a lasting solution. The EU needs a permanent system for sharing the responsibility for large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers among Member States. The Commission will table a legislative proposal by the end of 2015 to provide for a mandatory and automatically-triggered relocation system to distribute those in clear need of international protection within the EU when a mass influx emerges. The scheme will take account of the efforts already made on a voluntary basis by Member States". Available at:
https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf [15/01/20]

[41] Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2015.239.01.0146.01.ENG [15/01/20]

[42] "European Union Foundational treaty Article 78: 1. The Union shall develop a common policy on asylum, subsidiary protection and temporary protection with a view to offering appropriate status to any third-country national requiring international protection and ensuring compliance with the principle of non-refoulement. This policy must be in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 and the Protocol of 31 January 1967 relating to the status of refugees, and other relevant treaties".

3. "In the event of one or more Member States being confronted by an emergency situation characterised by a sudden inflow of nationals of third countries, the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, may adopt provisional measures for the benefit of the Member State(s) concerned. It shall act after consulting the European Parliament". Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012E078&from=ES [15/01/20]

Afghan nationals were never among the nationalities eligible for the relocation program, therefore Shakine and her family could not apply for it. People of Syrian origin, such as Yara, could apply for relocation if they had arrived in Greece before March 20th 2016, when the EU-Turkey deal was signed[43].

This makes us wonder if programs such as relocation facilitate or hinder the processing of asylum applications. The need of asylum seekers to leave first their countries of origin and then Greece in search of opportunities or to be reunited with their loved ones, forces the same people to choose alternative routes to those offered by the European Union. Official alternatives offered by the EU had excluded them because they arrived to Greece at an unsuitable date to access the relocation program, or because they come originally from a country that does not hold a recognition rate of more than 75% for the entire European Union, such as the Afghan one.

Yara does not meet the criteria to be relocated because she arrived to Greece after March 19th, 2016. If she had been able to access the program, once her request was accepted she could have chosen the country in which her family members live as a country of asylum and perhaps have been relocated there. Instead of that, she faced more than six months waiting to receive the final decision and her passport, in addition to the previous 14 months she had been trapped in Greece. This amounts to more than 20 months to see her loved ones and a long wait alone without support in Athens.

Shakine and her family arrived before March 19th, 2016 in Greece, but they had no right to enjoy the relocation program due to their Afghan origin. She waited more than a year to receive the date of her first interview. If she could have had access to the relocation program, perhaps she could have been relocated in Ireland. Her only alternative was to ask for asylum in Greece, but her relatives are in Ireland. She wanted to meet her

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[43] Information available at: https://www.easo.europa.eu/operational-support/hotspot-relocation/relocation/questions-and-answers-relocation [15/01/20]

family and offer a future full of opportunities to her children, outside of Greece. The situation in the refugee camp and the difficulties in accessing the labor market and educational options for her daughter and her grandchildren did not comprise the future she had been longing for. Instead of remaining passive and waiting in Greece, she decided to look for an alternative way to get to Ireland.

4.2.3.2. Dublin regulation

The Dublin Regulation was created in 1990, its main purpose is to define and determine which country has the responsibility to process the asylum application once a third-country national arrives in European Union territory. This regulation was put into place in order to avoid "asylum shopping"[44] and "orbiting"[45] and specifically to prevent refugees from freely deciding which country they will seek asylum in.

The Convention underwent two revisions and finally ended up being replaced by the Dublin II Regulation and later on, in 2013, by Dublin III. Both Dublin II and Dublin III establish that the family unit should be the first criterion to take into account when making a Member State responsible for the asylum application of a third-country national. Accordingly, the country where the applicant has relatives with refugee status or in the process of asylum will be responsible for examining her/his application. If this is not the case, then the responsible party will be the State that has granted a visa or residence permit to the applicant. If the applicant does not possess such permits, then the State by which she/he has entered the European Union will be responsible. If no assumption is fulfilled,

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[44] In the context of the Dublin Regulation, the phenomenon where a third-country national applies for international protection in more than one EU Member State with or without having already received international protection in one of those EU Member States. Information available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/asylum-shopping-0_en [15/01/20]
[45] No State is responsible for examining the asylum application of a third-country national once it is within the territory of the European Union.

the State where the applicant submits his/her asylum application will be responsible for its examination.

The Dublin regulation means to maintain and preserve the family unit, as it is the main criterion to be respected when it comes to defining the state responsible for examining the asylum application[46].

The competent authorities of each State have a tool that detects to which Member State belongs the responsibility for the examination of an asylum request. The European Dactyloscopy, European Fingerprint (EURODAC) is a supporting tool that ensures the States' compliance with the Dublin regulation. EURODAC is a centralized database, accessible by all asylum authorities of the Member States, responsible for storing and recording the fingerprints of all asylum seekers and detainees when entering through the external borders of the European Union. The use of EURODAC and fingerprints collection of third-country nationals at their arrival in European Union territory as well as the reason for such practice, was something known by asylum seekers. Many individuals exposed themselves to detention due to their refusal to give their fingerprints, or burned their fingertips in order not to be recorded in the EURODAC system and compelled to undergo an asylum process in Greece as many of them expected to leave and reach central or northern Europe.

Shakine was never eligible to apply for family reunification with her relatives, settled and recognized refugees in Ireland, as they were not first-degree relatives. Currently Shakine's daughter has been declared a physically dependent person after having lost both legs and is doomed to use a wheelchair for the rest of her life. She still

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[46] "Dublin Protocol III. Article 16 – Dependent persons where an applicant is dependent on the assistance of his or her child, sibling or parent legally resident in one of the Dublin States or vice versa, States shall normally keep or bring together the parties. This must be for at least one of the following reasons: Page 18 of 46 Published for Home Office staff on 02 November 2017 • on account of pregnancy • a new-born child • serious illness • severe disability • old age You must also be satisfied that the family ties existed in the country of origin, that the other person is able to take care of the dependent person, and the parties give their consent in writing. Note: the nature and extent of the illness or disability is qualified so that it is a serious illness or a severe disability".

has not reunited with her relatives in Ireland and is now living in Sweden where she was granted asylum due to UNHCR arrangements, after being trapped for one year and a half in Serbia.

Yara was denied family reunification with her siblings, even though they are first-degree relatives, due to her age (above 18). Yara's case is now being followed up by a lawyer in order that she not be returned to Greece, since in December 2016 the European Commission made public its recommendation[47] in which Member States are allowed to return asylum seekers to Greece. Transfers have been suspended since 2011 as a result of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in the case of M.S.S. v. BELGIUM AND GREECE and the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)[48].

4.2.3.3. Social context in Greece: camps, living conditions

It is also worth noting that living conditions for those staying in refugee camps in Greece, especially during 2016, did not meet the minimum standards of habitability.

According to the statement made by the National Human Rights Commission after visiting the reception centers (December 2016)[49] Eleonas is the only refugee site out of the 12 reception centers in the Attica Region that meets the minimum conditions of

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[47]Information available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20161208/recommendation_on_the_resumption_of_transfers_to_greece_en.pdf [15/01/20]

[48] "Commission recommendation of 8.12.2016 addressed to the Member States on the resumption of transfers to Greece under Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013 : Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 292 thereof, Whereas: (1) The transfer of applicants for international protection to Greece under Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013 (hereafter 'the Dublin Regulation') has been suspended by Member States since 2011, following two judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)1 , which identified systemic deficiencies in the Greek asylum system, resulting in a violation of the fundamental rights of applicants for international protection transferred from other Member States to Greece under Regulation (EC) No. 343/2003.2 (2) The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has been monitoring the situation in Greece since the M.S.S v Belgium and Greece judgment was delivered by the ECHR in 2011 on the basis of progress reports that Greece is required to submit as evidence of the execution of the judgment and on the basis of evidence from NGOs and international organizations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), that operate in Greece. At the request of Greece submitted in June 2016, the Ministerial Committee has accepted to postpone the evaluation procedure on the basis of the argument that Greece is currently under enormous migratory pressure, that the situation is exceptional, unstable and not the same as it was when the M.S.S judgment was delivered five years ago"

[49] Information available at:
http://www.nchr.gr/images/pdf/apofaseis/prosfuges_metanastes/kentra_filoxenias_autopsia.pdf [15/01/20]

habitability, where it is possible to cover the basic needs of the people residing in the reception center.

Several international organizations denounced the deplorable conditions in which people lived in different centers all over the mainland and more specifically in the region of Attica, such as Malakasa and Elliniko, where the majority of residents come from Afghanistan.

The mission of Médecins Sans Frontières in Greece explained its concern about the situation regarding the living conditions in all these centers. In continental Greece, the preparation of areas resistant to extreme weather conditions during the winter was delayed, and in some cases never arrived. During the winter there were heavy snowfalls in northern Greece that buried fields under snow. People in the camps were running out of water and heating for days and experiencing serious problems regarding electricity and power supplies as well[50].

With regard to the Elliniko camp, in February (2017), asylum seekers residing in that center staged a hunger strike to denounce the awful living conditions and the inadequacy of the facilities. They demanded hot water, heating, food, diapers, clothes and milk for babies, and protested about the lack of interpreters available to accompany them to the hospital.

4.2.3.4. Borders' closure

A description of various factors is needed to aid understanding of Greece's particular geographical situation. The Aegean sea route is one of the various ways taken by asylum seekers to reach Europe, due to the proximity of several Greek islands to the Turkish coast and because security measures were increased at the Greek-Turkish border from 2010. In

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[50]Author's translation from Greek into English available at: https://msf.gr/magazine/einai-ntropi-i-eikona-poy-vlepoyme-simera-stoys-kataylismoys-gia-tis-ellinikes-kai [15/01/20]

that year, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) deployed its first

Rapid Border Intervention Team (RABIT)[51] at the request of the Greek ministry of citizen

protection. Two years later in 2012, a 12.5 km fence was erected across the Evros river

between Greece and Turkey, to separate both territories (Tryfon, 2012, p.199).

Up north, Greece shares borders with Albania and Macedonia, neither of which

are members of the European Union (EU), as well as the countries of the former

Yugoslavia (except Croatia) and also Bulgaria. These are members of the European Union

but not of the Schengen area.

Greece and Italy are the main gateways to Europe. Focusing on the Greek case, its

geographical situation complicates the departure and arrival of people seeking asylum in

other countries of the EU. The route to follow from Greece goes through different

countries of the Balkan Peninsula that are not members of the EU or do not belong to the

Schengen area. This situation resulted in extreme difficulty to cross the border, especially

since the first half of 2016, as in that period several countries of the Balkans route

strengthened and closed their borders.

Hungary had already closed its borders in September 2015 and raised the height

of its wire fences to obstruct the route, leaving people without access to central Europe

through Serbia, Croatia or Slovenia, its borders countries. *"In Hungary, Prime Minister

Victor Orban, already the EU's leader in anti-migration rhetoric and policy, further

tightened the country's repressive approach against refugees and migrants. In September

2015, Hungary had already effectively abstained from the EU's asylum policy. Its closure

of the border with Serbia and Croatia (by means of a fence) and a set of legislative

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[51]Detailed data about FRONTEX first mission in Greece (2010) and its RABIT operation available at:
https://frontex.europa.eu/search-results/?q=greece&p=2 [15/01/20]
http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.681.3755&rep=rep1&type=pdf [15/01/20]

amendments presented a multifaceted violation of the country's national, European, and international legal obligations"[52].

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia started to erect a fence along its border with Greece on November 28th 2015. In March 2016, the Balkan route was completely closed. Macedonia reinforced the passage of Idomeni, blocking the entrance with police after the agreement reached between the five countries (Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria) affected by the Balkans route and the heads of their police services. The Turkey-Bulgaria-Serbia route was also affected.

> Transit through Bulgaria continues despite a de facto government policy of preventing refugees and migrants from entering Bulgaria and seeking international protection by unlawful means that dates back from three years ago, when the country faced substantial migrant numbers for the first time. This policy seems to have intensified with the redirection of the entry onto the Balkan route from Greece to Bulgaria. Half of Bulgaria's 230-kilometer border with Turkey is currently fenced, with construction work underway for the remainder, including a hardly accessible forested mountain area that currently is the main point of irregular entry[53] (Weber, 2017, p. 13).

Obstruction of passages does not solve the migratory situation, but aggravates the possibility of putting at risk the lives of people on the move. Moreover, it encourages the people to resort to smuggler networks, which are the only and last alternative possibility for those mentioned above, seeking for asylum and expecting to reunite with their relatives and reach a safe space.

Shakine and her daughter's case is one of multiple tragedies that have happened across the Balkans route.

> The migration crisis in Macedonia escalated dramatically in the spring of 2015, whereby Amnesty International documented the serious abuse of migrants at the

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[52]Available at: http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/13436.pdf [15/01/20]
[53] Available at: http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/13436.pdf [15/01/20]

hands of authorities. Moreover, at least thirty migrants died in early 2015 after being struck by trains while walking along railway lines (migrants were not allowed to use public transportation[54]). On April 24, in a single incident, fourteen migrants were killed by a train, which hastened the need for the above-noted legislative amendments[55] (Sabic & Boric, 2016, p. 6).

4.3. CASE 2017

After being married at 18 years-old in her home country of Cameroon, Lara started to be physically and sexually abused by her husband. These assaults became regular and from time to time two of their neighbors were authorized by the husband to sexually abuse her as well. This extramarital sexual violence was also an excuse for her husband to reprimand her harder. Lara tried many times to report her perpetrators without success.

Her father was the head of the Bamileke[56] tribe, he was considered the spiritual, political, judicial and military leader. In order to pass over the chief's authority and file a complaint to the police, a member of the tribe shall first address to the leader to get his consent. As a way to protect the pride and honour of the family Lara's father always prevented her from speaking out loudly about her situation, thus never gave his consent to go to the police. Scared and genuinely fearing for her life, Lara one day went to the police station to complain. The police officer did not record her situation and they referred her back to the head of the tribe. The impossibility of taking legal action left her no option but to get a divorce to stop the violence spiral she had been facing for many years.

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[54] Available at: https://www.dw.com/en/death-along-the-balkan-route/a-18421868 [20/01/20]
[55] Available at: https://bib.irb.hr/datoteka/914398.At-the-Gate-of-Europe_WEB.pdf [15/01/20]
[56] "Quel est le sentiment des simples habitants à l'égard du pouvoir du chef? Quand on demande à l'un d'eux: qu'est-cc que le chef? Quelle est sa fonction dans le village? Il répond presque toujours: fo sa' la', le chef juge le village (n::J sa' (N), juger en conciliation). Ainsi, dans l'esprit des habitants, avant d'être un chef religieux ou politique, le chef est un juge, un arbitre." / "What is the feeling of ordinary people with regard to the power of the chief? When you ask one of them, what is the chief? What is his function in the village? He almost always answers: fo sa 'la', the chief judge the village (n :: J sa '(N), to judge in conciliation). Thus, in the minds of the inhabitants, before being a religious or political leader, the chief is a judge, an arbitrator." (Hurault, 1967, p.59). Author's translation.

Traditional weddings are approved by the head of the tribe as well as the divorces. On that matter, her father categorically refused to pronounced her divorce, for the same reason he did not allow her to report to the police: to protect the honor of the family. Lara's punishment for being a woman was double: to feel the physical pain of being systematically abused and to represent the shame of the family. When her father died, Lara believed she could finally start procedures to be protected from her husband, however what she had not realized until then was that the only person who could protect her from him was, paradoxically, now dead. With Lara's father gone, her husband did not have any reason not to kill her.

In 2014, after enduring almost 20 years of sexual and physical violence and witnessing the lack of legal provision regarding sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) crimes in her country, Lara did not have any other choice than fleeing her home country. She decided to leave her country of origin, where there is a lack of legal provisions and application of laws regarding SGBV crimes as well as a lack of supportive framework for survivors.

She arrived in Greece through Turkey in January 2016 at 55 years old, and applied for asylum, 3 years later her claim was still not accepted.
Lara's first asylum claim was rejected because of a serious lack of evidence regarding the facts she declared. She could then appeal this decision, however the appeal procedure in Greece is examined by a committee of three judges where the physical presence of the applicant is required by the committee. At that stage, the only possibility for Lara was to submit documents and proof to corroborate the persecutions she disclosed during her first interview. Like most of the asylum seekers in Greece, she did not have a lawyer and never submitted any documents. For these reasons, her appeal was rejected. After the rejection, during an information session at Melissa, Lara met legal experts that could refer her to a

lawyer from the Research Center for Gender Equality that supported her in submitting a new asylum application. The subsequent application is a restart of the procedure however the previous declaration still stands and only the new facts and declarations will be taken into account. The trust relationship developed with her lawyer, based on the fact that she should not be afraid and should declare everything she has experienced to strengthen her testimony, let her open up and share her past experiences to bring new information. She disclosed her past experience in detail; the sexual assaults perpetrated by two neighbors and how she was in danger at home and in her neighborhood. However, this testimony was not retained as "new element", and the Regional Asylum Office of Attica rejected again her request without taking into account these arguments.

Lara explained that she had so many issues and worries at that time and did not have the confidence and courage needed to disclose her entire story. Moreover, she declares that it was unthinkable for her, due to shame, to mention that she was a victim of sexual abuse from others than her husband. Her closest family have always pressed her to never mention what happened to her. Lara was terrified and believed that silence would protect her honor. Her arrival in Greece was extremely complicated, she needed psychological support and time to be ready to disclose her past. After having exhausted all the existing options provided by the Greek asylum authorities and getting her final decision in October 2018, the authorities considered that there are no evident reasons proving that she should receive international protection and could be safely returned to her country. At 58 years old, Lara is left without any papers in Greece and her only possibility is to bring her case in front of a court of justice. However this procedure requires a lawyer and considerable fees. Despite the Melissa Network's efforts to find a lawyer from several NGOs which provide legal support free of charge for asylum seekers, organizations refuse to undertake Lara's case as they do not have the budget to allocate a

lawyer that would need to dedicate so much time to one case. Lara is still expecting answers from lawyers hoping that one will accept to represent her. Her personal life is difficult, and as she is not allowed to work so she sells things in a street market.

4.3.1. Explanations based on the migration legal context

4.3.1.1. International protection to women on the grounds of being SGBV survivors

Still, in 2019, asylum authorities all over Europe rarely grant international protection to women on the grounds of being SGBV survivors having faced different kinds of violence in their countries of origin due to their gender.

Therefore quoting UNHCR (2002):

> There is no doubt that rape and other forms of gender-related violence, such as dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation, domestic violence, and trafficking, are acts which inflict severe pain and suffering – both mental and physical – and which have been used as forms of persecution, whether perpetrated by State or private actors.(p.3)[57]

The fact that women are not being granted refugee status based on violence and persecutions faced due to their gender proves a lack of recognition and acknowledgement of the mistreatment of women happening sometimes systematically in several third countries. All this adds up to a lack of protection for these women by the authorities, and to legislation that is clearly discriminatory and does not by any means protect these women. In many cases, asylum authorities are rejecting claims based on SGBV due to insufficient evidence of persecution, however it is important to keep in mind as the European Parliament states that "Gender-based violence occurring in the private sphere

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[57] UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection: Gender-related Persecution. HCR/GIP/02/01, 2002, para. 9. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/3d58ddef4/guidelines-international-protection-1-gender-related-persecution-context.html [20/01/20]

may be more difficult to evidence, creating credibility issues for asylum seekers with gender-related claims"(p. 35)[58].

4.3.2 Expertise in regards of assessing GBV

Moreover, it is important for asylum case worker staff to be trained on gender-related claims in order to have the sufficient tools to identify survivors and establish appropriate methods of communication with them. In Lara's case, the disclosure of most of the persecution arrived at a later stage and then were refused by the Greek asylum authorities, who argued that all evidence of persecution should have been mentioned during her first interview. Therefore:

> While the substantive asylum interview represents the claimant's main opportunity to disclose all relevant evidence, disclosure of gender-based violence at a later stage in the asylum process should not automatically count against their credibility. There may be a number of reasons why a claimant, or dependant, may be reluctant to disclose information, for example feelings of guilt, shame, and concerns about family 'honor', or fear of family members or traffickers, or having been conditioned or threatened by them. (UK Government, 2018, p.32)

As previously mentioned, the Greek asylum authorities obviously show a lack of expertise in regard to assessing GBV violence and working with its survivors. Lara's life story and experience in Greece clearly demonstrates the difficulties and the reality for many women seeking international protection in Greece, as the persecution they are fleeing is often shameful, painful, internalised and difficult to prove. Despite the fact that the Refugee Convention does not specify sex or gender as one of the grounds of persecution, gender based violence, as well as the impossibility of undertaking legal

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[58]CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS GENDER EQUALITY Gender related asylum claims in Europe A comparative analysis of law, policies and practice focusing on women in nine EU Member States.P35 par.4_____Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2012/462481/IPOL-FEMM_ET(2012)462481_EN.pdf [20/01/20]

actions, is exposing women to extremely vulnerable situations in Europe. However, the Refugee Convention considers the membership of a particular social group as possible grounds for persecution. Women seeking safety and protection from intimate partner and gender based violence are survivors on account of being part of a specific social group [women] in their home country society as described by the CEDAW Committee "to recognize gender related forms of persecution and to interpret the 'membership of a particular social group' ground of the 1951 Convention to apply to women"[59]. Lara's background, the violence repeatedly inflicted on her and the inability of the authorities to protect her from her perpetrators render her life impossible and intolerable in her home country, and should substantiate the obligation of the Greek authorities to protect and provide her with a framework of safety by granting her international protection.

4.4. CASE 2018

The following case illustrates and depicts the recent wave of women coming from Iran. This wave is characterized by intimate partner and sexual violence faced by many of these women, perpetrated by their partners and or authorities such as the regular, the morality and border corps of the Iranian police as well as the smuggling networks. From September to December 2018, the Melissa Network has undertaken more than 12 cases whose analyses lead us to the conclusion that these women are facing similar obstacles and forms of violence during their journeys or at their arrival in Greece. Unfortunately no official data regarding their experiences is recorded as it is a new modus operandi and few or no organizations have access to these life stories but Melissa Network. I witnessed survivors disclosing their experiences and most of them emphasize the gravity of the issue as a new,

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[59] CEDAW Statement on the Anniversaries of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, adopted on 19 October 2011 during the 50th session, A call for Gender Equality for Refugees and Stateless Persons.

mainstream practice. Some of the survivors assure that women affected by these situations who we deal with at MN are only the tip of the iceberg.

Nazanin arrived in Greece during the second half of 2018. She arrived with her two sons (10 and 17) fleeing from her violent husband and his powerful relations linked to his drug trafficking business. She has suffered from physical, sexual and emotional violence perpetrated by her husband. Nazanin decided to leave Iran due to the lack of alternatives and solutions available to overcome her situation there. The Iranian state does not provide suitable legislation and mechanisms to protect women from sexual and gender-based violence.

Nazanin's journey was organized by a smuggler who advised her to fly to Belgrade (due to the free visa period[60]) and then take the way to Greece on foot and by car paying other smuggler networks.

When she arrived to Athens, Nazanin found herself trapped in the smuggler's network; she had to pay them the whole amount of the trip to reach Germany. She was transferred from house to house, and pressured several times to have sexual relations with people living in those places as an exchange for being "hosted".

During the period she was trapped in this network, Nazanin was raped two times and harassed and blackmailed constantly. She arrived at MN on December 2018 asking for support. MN staff directly undertook her case, removed her from the perpetrators and accompanied her in the legal proceedings she wished to undertake against them. MN will continue to provide her with psycho-social support and accommodation until her situation becomes stable and remains completely safe. Despite her situation, it has been hard for her to get her documents as an asylum seeker due to the obstacles in obtaining an

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[60]"The Serbian government has canceled visa-free entry for Iranian passport holders just a little bit more than a year after it abolished visa regime. The decision, taken on October 8 (2018), was made known through a government decree published in the Official Gazette on Wednesday. It will take effect on October 16, eight days after its publication". https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/eu-forces-serbia-to-return-visa-regime-for-iranian-passport-holders/ [20/01/20]

appointment with the Greek asylum authorities. Without papers Nazanin does not have access to services provided by the Greek State such as accommodation, financial support and health care, among others.

Nazanin states she is not the only woman who has suffered from sexual violence perpetrated by smuggler networks in exchange for money, accommodation, documents or a trip to another European country. These series of rapes and violent incidents are frequently suffered by single women and single mothers on the move who arrive in Greece asking for international protection.

MN staff members accompanied Nazanin to report her case to the police as she requested. Two policemen specialized on trafficking issues who took her declaration for 8 hours informed her that finally she should report again to the Alien Division of Attica as it falls under "smuggling qualification".

Nazanin left the police station without protection and a safe place to live. MN is providing her with accommodation for two months, but it is not an organization entitled to do so and has no means to maintain this as a long-term solution. Despite the efforts made by the legal expert, the social worker and MN's team, Nazanin is still waiting for her documents and accommodation.

4.4.1. Explanations based on the migration legal context

4.4.1.1. Safe passage

Like Nazanin, thousands of people seeking asylum in Europe have been forced to find alternative ways to reach safe States within *Fortress Europe*[61]. The use of these extra-official pathways jeopardizes the lives of those on the move and increases the possibility

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[61] Analysts and researchers have rescued this term related with migration and obstacles faced by migrants, asylum seekers and refugees when trying to reach Europe. Originally, it was used during the second World War and referred to the European areas occupied by Nazi Germany.

of being trapped in trafficking networks, often accompanied by abuse, aggression and sexual violence. The European Union is clearly not ready or willing to establish resettlement programs directly from the third countries, that would be accessible for every individual seeking asylum[62]. A policy of resettlement would prevent the dangerous journeys that individuals have to face when fleeing for their lives to reach Europe. The European Union however, through its policies, is making the choice to simply react to and face the exodus of refugees when they reach its geographical borders, including borders of Eastern Europe; countries that are not member states of the Union. The closure of the internal borders obliges refugees to use dangerous routes, guided by smuggler networks. According to FRA and UNFPA, in these situations women and children remain unprotected[63] and vulnerable to suffer from SGBV.

> There is increasing evidence that gender-based violence is a major issue for migrant women and girls. A recent field assessment of risks for refugee and migrant women and girls identified instances of sexual and gender-based violence, including early and forced marriage, transactional sex, domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment and physical assault in the country of origin and during the journey to Europe (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016).[64]

4.4.1.2. Access to seeking asylum

During 2018, asylum seekers in Greece experienced serious difficulties in accessing the asylum authorities so as to seek asylum in Greece and obtain official identification documents. Asylum seekers need to arrange their pre-registration appointments via Skype. Hours and lines (different according to nationality) work from Monday to

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[62] "The selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status. The status provided ensures protection against refoulement and provides a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals". https://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf [20/01/20]
[63] UNFPA: Initial Assessment Report: Protection Risks for Women and Girls in the European Refugee and Migrant Crisis. Available at: https://www.unfpa.org/press/report-warns-refugee-women-move-europe-are-risk-sexual-and-gender-based-violence [20/01/20]
[64] Information drawn from FRA regular overviews of migration-related fundamental rights concerns. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/asylum-migration-borders/overviews/focus-gender-based-violence [20/01/20]

Friday[65]. In addition to the collapse of the lines and hour limitations (one, two or three hours a week depending on the language), technical problems and a lack of personnel are recurrent obstacles that people are destined to face during an indefinite period of time. Waiting averages exceed 6 months for those looking forward to receiving their asylum seeker card and a date for their pre-registration appointment.

Ilustración 11: Pre-registration Skype programme

ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ SKYPE / SKYPE PROGRAM / PROGRAMME SKYPE / برنامج سكايب / برنامه اسکاپپ					
ΩΡΕΣ HOURS HORAIRES الساعات ساعات	ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑ MONDAY LUNDI الاثنين دوشنبه	ΤΡΙΤΗ TUESDAY MARDI الثلاثاء سه شنبه	ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗ WEDNESDAY MERCREDI الأربعاء چهارشنبه	ΠΕΜΠΤΗ THURSDAY JEUDI الخميس پنجشنبه	ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ FRIDAY VENDREDI الجمعة جمعه
8:00 - 9:00	عربي اتيكى	8:00-8:30 Shqip Periferitë (përveç Janinës) 8:30-9:00 Shqip Janinë	Shqip Periferitë	Shqip Selanik	Shqip Atikë
9:00 - 10:00	عربي اتيكى	Kurmancî Herêma-Attîkî	English-Francais Attique et autres regions	پښتو ،سکایپ ،د اتن اتيکی ،ولسوالی کی	پښتو سکایپ ،د اتن اتيکی ،ولسوالی کی
10:00- 11:00	دری ولایت آتيکی و حومه (آتن و خارج آتن)	دری ولایت آتيکی وحومه (آتن وخارج آتن)	فارسی استان آتيکی (آتن)	دری آتيکی (آتن)	ქართული ატიკის რეგიონი
11:00 - 12:00	سۆرانی دوزگای ناوچمی نەئیکی(نە سینا)	عربی سالونيك رودس	11:00-11:30 عربي FAST TRACK سوريا 11:30-12:00 آتيکی	عربی اتيکی ، الاقليم خارج سالونيك ، رودس	عربی اتيکی
12:00 - 13:00	12:00-12:30 پنجابی/اردو - ديگر اضلاع (ايوانينا كے علاوه) 12:30-13:00 پنجابی/اردو - ايوانينا	پنجابی / اردو ضلع اتيکی	سۆرانی دوزگای ناوچمی نەئیکی (نە سینا)	हिंदी 12:00-12:30 थैसालोनिकी 12:30-13:00 आतिकी	Русский- украинский АТТИКА-РЕГИОНЫ

Source: Asylum service website. Skype schedule[66]

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[65]Skype schedule drawn from the Greek Asylum Service website.
[66] Available at the Greek Asylum Service website: http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Skype-programme-28-1-19-%CE%B5%CF%80%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%AF%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B7-7.08.2019.pdf [20/01/20]

Back in 2016 the Greek Asylum Service underwent a similar situation[67]; asylum seekers faced the same kind of obstacles as those seeking asylum two years later, remaining undocumented for months. As the Greek Forum of Refugees points out in its press release on the 6th of June 2017:

On 25 May 2015 the Regional Asylum Office (RAO) announced that, mainly due to staff shortage and until further notice, the RAO of Attica will be capable to register and process applications only via Skype. These choices soon proved to create serious limits to the access to the asylum procedure despite many objections, critics on several deficiencies and recommendations from civil society organizations. Unfortunately we are still witnessing, after two years, lateness and difficulties to apply for asylum through skype[68]. (GFR, 2017)

For vulnerable cases, the Melissa Network resorts to the law 4375/2016[69] stating that the registration of individuals belonging to vulnerable categories should be given priority. This article provides that direct appointment with the asylum services can be taken so that women can register faster and in person. However, this procedure is not guaranteed, a social report of the woman's situation is needed and only extremely vulnerable women are being given an appointment. In the case of Nazanin, the legal expert is trying to get her an appointment to register. The asylum authorities are still refusing however, as she needs to provide them with the exclusive custody paper for her son as well as the family certification proving that she is the mother. Nazanin does not have the same rights as a European woman regarding her children's custody, since the Iranian civil code presents myriad of obstacles to dissuade a woman from fighting for her

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[67] Greek Forum of Refugees press release. Available at: https://refugees.gr/the-skype-bottleneck/ . [20/01/20]
[68] Greek Forum of Refugees press release. Available at: https://refugees.gr/skype-call-next-life-access-asylum-skype-two-years/ [20/01/20]
[69] Law No. 4375 of 2016 on the organization and operation of the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority, the Reception and Identification Service, the establishment of the General Secretariat for Reception, the transposition into Greek legislation of the provisions of Directive 2013/32/EC. Article 51, par. 6.a. : https://www.refworld.org/docid/573ad4cb4.html [20/01/20]

children's custody. Moreover we should take into account that the Iranian legal code is based on Islamic law or *Sharia* which in many cases does not respect women's rights.

Iranian Civil Code and remarks of the Persian Educational Foundation:
"Article 1169: "A mother has preference over others for seven years from the birth of her child for the custody and maintenance of the child whose parents do not live in the same house. After the lapse of this period, custody will devolve to the father. Amendment: If there is any dispute between the parents after the child turns seven years old, it is up to the court to determine the custody according to the child's best interest. (Announced by the Expediency Discernment Council on November 29, 2003). [...] But in reality the scenarios witnessed in family courts tell a different story. The woman must go through complicated procedures to claim custody of her children and even after providing sufficient proof that the father is a substance abuser or is morally ineligible, the court often rules for a compromise or grants custody to the father on grounds of better financial capabilities".

I would like to highlight Moghadan (2004) words regarding Sharia law in Iran and its consequences in women's lives regarding child custody, "Evidently, the only true obligations that the woman has in a marriage are sexual services and childbearing. And, under the principle of patrilineality, custody and guardianship of children reside with the father and his natal family"(p.7).[70] These requests from the asylum authorities demonstrate the lack of awareness and expertise on GBV cases, as well as refugee realities. In this specific case, the bureaucracy is justified by the asylum authorities in order to protect the interest of the child, however asylum system personnel, due to their background and experience, should take for granted the absence of the documentation requested, which depends on the perpetrator's permission, when dealing with SGBV cases.

If the asylum system worked effectively, Nazanin and many other women affected by the inappropriate way in which the asylum system currently functions, would have had

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[70]Drawn from Moghadam's article "Women in the Islamis Republic of Iran". Available at: http://www.sssup.it/UploadDocs/7320_7_R_Women_in_the_Islamic_Republic_of_Iran_Moghadam_07.pdf [20/01/20]

fewer chances to experience the violent and degrading situations they underwent. The difficult obstacles faced while seeking asylum and obtaining documentation results in the impossibility of finding accommodation, obtaining a cash card allowing women to gain limited financial independence and accessing other programs addressed to asylum seekers. Having documents is an indispensable prerequisite when requesting accommodation, accessing public health services and registering children in schools, among other things. For these reasons, many women are constrained to illegal alternatives which come along with situations of flagrant sexual and physical abuse. Nazanin's case and situation illustrate precisely how a lack of papers and resources drove her to contact and stay at smugglers' places where she experienced abuse.

4.5. CONCLUSIONS

These four cases are representative examples of the current migration context in Greece, the description and analysis of these cases show the constant obstacles and Human Rights violations faced by women on the move, especially since 2015 onwards (we have focused on the 2015-2018 period) within the European and Balkan peninsula borders.

These women also represent some of the different types of cases that MN deals with on a daily basis and the backgrounds of the refugee members of the network who arrived in Greece in the last four years. It is necessary to analyze the cases in order to understand the personal situation of the women, most of them left alone without any suitable support that should be provided by the Greek authorities and European institutions, policies and legislations. The journey, combined with the Greek general migration context, has drastically changed the lives of those seeking asylum as well as the host society to which the MN' initiative/structure has reacted and responded to in order to offer the support and listening denied by the European Union and European states.

For you, the ocean is for surf boards, boats and tans

And all the cool stuff you do under there in your bathing suits and goggles
But we, we have come to be baptised here
We have come to stir the other world here
We have come to cleanse ourselves here
We have come to connect our living to the dead here
Our respect for water is what you have termed fear
The audacity to trade and murder us over water
Then mock us for being scared of it
The audacity to arrive by water and invade us
If this land was really yours,
then resurrect the bones of the colonisers and use them as a compass.

«Water», KOLEKA PUTUMA

5. GREECE MOVING SOCIAL

5.1. PRECEDENTS

It is important to mention Greece's economic crisis to understand the conditions the country was facing when it found itself facing the first massive arrivals of people seeking asylum in Europe in 2015. Knowing that, we can find similarities between the economic crisis (2009) and the migration context (2015) to get an idea of how the Greek state managed the situation.

Similarly to the case of the economic crisis, Greece asked for help from the EU and the international community to support them financially and professionally, but as previously experienced with the economic crisis, EU's support was given as "tied aid". The EU decided how to distribute the budget[71] and opted for specific channels to implement programs and projects through international NGOs mostly, according to data

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[71] Greece had no choice when deciding about its State's budget distribution after signing with the Troika the first of the three Memorandums of Understanding from 2010 to 2018.Infographics. Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/infographics/financial-assistance-to-greece-2010-2018/[20/01/20]

shared by the European Commission in May 2018 in an European Community Humanitarian Aid Office's (ECHO) factsheet:

> By April 2018, the European Commission granted funding of more than €604.5 million to Greece, implemented by three UN agencies (UNHCR, Internanional Organization for Migration-IOM and United Nations Children's Fund-UNICEF), by a pan-European consortium of Red Cross societies, and by ten international non-governmental organisations, namely the Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund, CARE Germany (NGO), the Danish Refugee Council, the International Rescue Committee, Médecins du Monde, the Mercy Corps, the Norwegian Refugee Council, OXFAM, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes, Smile of the Child and Metadrasi[72]. (p.2)

Moreover, the EU's humanitarian aid came with a tremendous pressure on Greece to control the EU's external borders and be responsible for this task. This pressure along with the tied aid could be compared to what Greek citizens had already experienced during the implementation of the adjustment policies; through social and budget cuts in terms of resource distribution and external guidelines to be followed by the Greek government[73].

5.1.1. Brief chronology

At the end of 2009, Greece suffered a series of speculative waves, raising sovereign debt interest rates to prohibitive levels. After four months, lenders lost confidence in Greece's ability to keep up with its payments and Greece admitted that it would not be able to meet the credit returns. The country's public debt reached 148.3% of GDP. This generated the closure of Greek financial markets and required interest rates exceeding 400 basis points compared to German public debt.

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[72] Emergency support within the EU: ECHO factsheet. Available at:
https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/eu_emergency_support_en.pdf [20/01/20]
[73] Adjustment policies implemented and consequences of financial crisis have still a negative impact on the population contrary to the announcement of European Institutions and Greek State in 2018. Greek citizens are still suffering the impact of the austerity policies in their salaries, access to the labor market and labor conditions among others. (Kaplanoglou & Rapanos 2018).

Due to the complexity of the situation, Greece requested a bailout package from International Institutions, European Commission (EC), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European Central Bank (ECB), (Troika). These loans were accompanied by a series of conditions including austerity measures and other economic changes, such as widespread privatizations and structural reforms, known as the Memorandums of Understanding.

Adjustment policies set by the Troika based on deregulation, privatization, the retreat of public policies and exception budgets, among others (Memorandum of Understanding-MoU), led to the suppression of economic, social and cultural rights, which translated into a significant increase in the number of people at risk of social exclusion. Greek citizens, migrants settled in the society, newcomers seeking asylum and people on the move were subjected to extreme conditions that hindered their survival in Greek territory.

The beginning of the misnamed refugee crisis started in Pedion Areos park during the summer of 2015, where hundreds of Afghans were compelled to camp in despicable conditions with no access to proper accommodation, as provided by the law for people on the move seeking asylum.

Grassroots organizations and social groups were the first ones to stand by them, by bringing assistance and offering support to those facing extreme situations due to the lack of services and action protocols to deal with such a population. More than providing the basics for these people, grassroots organizations were also the first actors to alert the authorities to the situation, urging them to provide decent and safe accommodations.

The essential role of the grassroots organizations, social groups and associations raises an important question. What are the differences between grassroots and social movements and other civil organizations such as local and international NGOs, as the

latter do not succeed in quickly responding to urgent situations by bringing adequate and sustainable solutions?

We should take into account that grassroots and social groups do not understand people on the move or seeking asylum as vulnerable and disposable subjects to assist, unlike international NGOs, Governments, European and UN agencies.

UNHCR's criteria to assist and accommodate people in their flats or shelters is based on the vulnerability of the person according to their age, gender, health conditions and on whether they are victims of torture, trafficking or classified as survivors of a shipwreck. UNHCR's data, shows that 36,921[74] people out of more than one million arrivals from 2015 to 2017 have been accommodated in the Estia program (the name of UNHCR's housing scheme)[75]. Those 36,921 were the ones selected through a vulnerability assessment[76], which when not properly applied can exclude less obvious vulnerable cases. The ones that were not selected but who were equally vulnerable were compelled to live in the refugee sites, informal camps and on the street, due to the lack of alternatives to provide a dignified shelter[77], considering housing is a Human Right.

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[74]According to UNHCR, "in total, since November 2015, 36,921 individuals have benefitted from the accommodation scheme. 14,250 people were accommodated as of the end of October 2017".Available at: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/60660 [20/01/20]

[75] Drawn from UNHCR Greece website. "More than 1 million refugees and migrants arrived in Greece in 2015 and early 2016. The number of arrivals declined after the Balkan border was closed in March 2016 and the European Union and Turkey implemented a deal designed to curb the flow of migrants into Greece". Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/greece.html [20/01/20]

[76] Vunerability domains according the UNHCR vulnerability screening tool:
-Child: Unaccompanied or separated child /Child accompanied by parent/s/other family members or guardians.
-Sex, Gender, Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation: Pregnant woman or girl, or nursing mother. •Sole or primary carer/s (of dependant child, elderly person or person with a disability)/Woman at risk of sexual or gender-based violence, or adult or child experiencing family violence, exploitation or abuse /Person at risk of violence due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (LGBTI: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex persons) Health and Welfare Concerns.
-Physical and mental health/ Risk of suicide /Disability /Elderly person/ Substance addiction /Destitution.
-Protection Needs /Refugee and asylum-seeker /Survivor of torture and trauma /Survivor of sexual or gender-based violence or other violent crime /Victim of trafficking in persons /Stateless person.
-Other:The interviewer has an opportunity to identify vulnerability factors not captured by the previous domains. (UNHCR,2016,p.3-6).Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/protection/detention/57fe30b14/unhcr-idc-vulnerability-screening-tool-identifying-addressing-vulnerability.html [20/01/20]

[77] According to Hoffmann (2017), "The right to adequate housing was first pronounced in Art 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and further elaborated in Art 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR). (It is also expressed in a number of group-specific human rights instruments, but these instruments do not substantively add to the standard of the ICESCR.) According to the principles of indivisibility and

In this sense the international community conceives people living in refugee sites in dangerous and critical conditions as wasted, Bauman (2004) and disposable lives Squire (2018), subjects with no agency; destined to receive charity and assistance, surviving (not living) in disposable structures such as tents or humanitarian containers commonly known as temporary architecture.

Disposability here is understood as Vicky Squire (2018) explains "is thus a more generalized condition, with experiences of the abandonment of lives made disposable familiar to many people arriving to the European Union (EU) [...] over recent years, whether they expected it or not".(p.117)

In the light of this abnegation of agency, it is crucial to highlight the grassroots and social movements' approach and performance when supporting people on the move and newcomers. Their approach is based on the conception of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees as persons and as subjects with agency, and beyond that as agents of change, Christopoulou and Lazaridis (2012).

5.2. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS/SOLIDARITY INITIATIVES

The mobilization of several solidarity initiatives as a response to the lack of access to accommodation or the undignified conditions in the refugee sites, found expression in the occupation of different buildings and the emergence of makeshift "shelters" which were self-managed and based on commitment and solidarity principals. As Raimondi (2019) points out when referring to Stavrides (2016), "in other words, the dominant ordered space of the camp is disrupted by the squat, characterised by commoning practices of sharing and solidarity"(p. 5).

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universality of human rights, the right to adequate housing is guaranteed to "everyone including non-nationals, such as (…) asylum-seekers."Available at: https://grojil.org/2017/10/30/the-right-to-housing-and-its-applicability-to-asylum-seekers-in-europe/ [20/01/20]

The City Plaza Hotel and Notara squat are two out of dozens of informal accommodation projects ignited by social movements. Notara 26 is the first refugee squat in Greece which opened its doors to the refugee population on September 2015. It is a self-organized project seeking to respond to refugee and asylum seekers´ needs regarding accommodation and always preserving self-determination, cooperation and steering away from charity. The City Plaza Hotel started to operate as an informal accommodation facility in April 2016 and will be presented later on in detail.

Accommodation has been one of the main issues that refugees and asylum seekers have been facing since 2015. Grassroots organizations and solidarity groups appeared during the summer of 2015 to intervene and offer support as a civil obligation felt by those who responded to the situation faced by 800 people living in Pedion Areos park (a public park located in the center of Athens). The makeshift camp proved the lack of a reception protocol for people on the move seeking asylum. Informal accommodation projects aimed at people on the move started in 2015 with the occupation of a public building known as Notara squat in the Exarchia neighborhood.

As Charalampos Tsavdaroglou (2018) explains, hundreds of people were mobilized following an open call; cooperating on a basis of self-organization and anti-hierarchy. "Different working groups were created to meet daily needs: healthcare, food supplies, kitchen, distribution, warehouse, clothing [...] In September 2015 an abandoned government building was occupied on Notara 26 (Housing Squat for Refugees and Immigrants Notara 26)" (p. 384).

These initiatives are opposed to humanitarian assistance, which is structured on a vertical basis thus contributing to the chronification of charity relations. In this sense, self-organized groups materialize efficient support through direct and coordinated actions, such as abandoned building occupations, creation of social centers and the

establishment of working groups to address the complex situation. These initiatives mainly took place in two of the neighborhoods located in the center of Athens. This phenomenon could only happen in areas as Exarchia and Victoria Square, due to their recent history and the specific characteristics of their inhabitants.

5.2.1. The importance of neighborhoods: Exarchia and Victoria Square

In order to understand the network of occupations in the area, there is a need to review the political and social history of Exarchia. This includes its role in the end of the military junta, Polytechnics School events and more recently the evolution of the neighborhood since the Grigoropoulos murder (the 15 year old boy who was shot by a police officer in 2008) and the beginning of the economic crisis. These events triggered a series of protests and riots in December 2008 which continued also during the era of the Troika.

Exarchia and leftist movements played a significant role in the period of history related to the uprising of protests against the military junta and the Polytechnic School events. The Greek military junta known as the *Regime of Colonels* (Χούντα των Συνταγματαρχών in Greek) refers to the dictatorial period that began in Greece on April 21st 1967 with the coup d'etat of the colonels led by Georgios Papadopoulos. This period ended on July 24th 1974, one year after the events of the Polytechnic University of Athens that ignited the fall of the dictatorship. As Rosa Vasilaki (2017) explains "Anarchist groups became considerably visible in the aftermath of the restoration of the democratic rule and the Polytechnic uprising in 1973 [...] a specific anarchist subculture emerged at the aftermath of the Polytechnic uprising" (p. 158).

The evolution of the anarchist movement located in Exarchia since the fall of the military junta has as determining events in its history several moments in which the movement has gained strength, and carried out remarkable actions in Greek society. An

example is the riots experienced in the early 80's as a result of the tension that had existed since the beginning of the 70s:

> In 1980, protesters Iakovos Koumis and Stamatina Kanellopoulou were clubbed to death, and in 1985, the 15-year old young anarchist Michalis Kaltezas was shot dead by a 25 year old policeman. These were critical moments that led to an ongoing vendetta between the anarchist movement, the extra parliamentary left and the police (Kornetis, 2010, p. 183).

It is also important to note the beginning of the movement to occupy buildings meant to host social centers, accommodation, as well as places reserved for organizational and assembly purposes in the late 80s, and the murder in 2008 of Alexis Grigoropoulos at the hands of a policeman and the consequent wave of protests and riots in December 2008.

Finally, one of the latest events, the beginning of the current migration context in 2015[78] with the increase in arrivals and number of asylum seekers in the European continent, as well as the consequent response of solidarity groups occupying buildings (mostly public) as housing alternatives to refugee camps, in order to accommodate people entitled to have access to a proper shelter.

This area has offered the spatial context where social movements/collectives/initiatives/leftist extra parliamentary parties have gathered and come up with ideas of resistance. As Lefebvre (1969) stated, "The Right to the City in this direction is a cry and demand"(p.158). Meaning that the right to the city and/or the neighborhood has been a stage to cry and make demand. In this recent context, the cry is for Grigoropoulos' death, the absence of respect for Human Rights since the beginning of the economic crisis and the mistreatment of people seeking refuge in Europe suffered by EU migration policies. As for the demand, this is expressed as a call for justice, for

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[78] Choosing 2015 as a starting point in the wake of the massive camping in Pedion Areos Park.

access and for respect of people's rights to overcome the economic and misnamed refugee crisis.

It is worthwhile noting that Exarchia has become the area known by the refugee population as a solidarity-based space and a solution to resort to when the humanitarian system and NGOs fail. Exarchia has been known as a place of resistance since the Polytechnic events as explained below, and as a place where self-organized initiatives have evolved and created a network based on solidarity, social justice, anti-oppression and alternative economy values among others.

While Exarchia is the space conquered by social movements, Victoria Square has been the place where local, small NGOs and grassroots organizations decided to install their offices and community centers. This was due to the large size of the migrant population living there, especially since 2015, when Victoria Square became the migration neuralgic centre. It was the spot newcomers knew as a place to camp and wait for the buses to Idomeni[79] or to refugee sites in Attica region for those who could not leave to cross the border the same day of their arrival to Athens.

This neighborhood, middle class until the 1970s, has suffered several changes in the last 30 years. Athenians living in Victoria Square moved to the suburbs to newer and bigger houses. Since the beginning of the 1980s, migrants and refugees started to transform Victoria and adjacent neighborhoods such as Kipseli and Amerikis Square, resulting nowadays into a cross-roads of cultures, origins and languages.

In 2015 it made a news overwhelmed by refugees and their traffickers and tents all over the area of the square for the purpose of accommodating all those people. At the moment, all those tents have been removed and the square has been transformed into a United Nations kind of place. If someone passes by the square can hear all

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[79] Name of the last Greek village before the Greek- North Macedonian border, also known by the enormous makeshift camp settled after the closure of the border in February 2016.

sorts of languages (Arabic, Albanian, French, Greek, Polish, Swahili…) by people who try to communicate with each other with the ultimate purpose to find a way for better life". (The Victoria Square Project ,2017,[80] words on Victoria's neighborhood).

Focusing on the most recent momentum and the one that is related to this thesis, I will analyze and explain the contributions of the recent movement focusing on the occupation of buildings as a housing alternative to the refugee sites, mainly in the Exarchia neighborhood, and other occupations in adjoining neighborhoods such as Victoria Square.

5.2.2. The beginning

In July 2015 more than 800 refugees and asylum seekers camped in Pedion Areos park (located in Athens city center between Victora Square and Exarchia) creating an informal/makeshift settlement where living conditions were not adequate.

At that time, grassroots and solidarity groups rapidly acted to intervene and offer support to the 800 people that were staying at Pedion Areos: "Different working groups were created to meet the daily needs: healthcare, food supplies, kitchen, distribution, warehouse, clothing, counter-information, cleaning, creative activities for kids…" (Tsavadaroglou, 2018 ,p.384). After that, in September 2015, an abandoned government building was occupied on Notara 26 (Housing Squat for Refugees and Immigrants Notara 26) and a building in Dervenion 56 in Exarchia to serve as multi-functioning space, warehouse, social center and a soul kitchen. From that moment on, a series of buildings have been occupied and transformed into self-organized housing alternatives by activists and refugees themselves.

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[80]Drawn from Victoria Square Project blog. Available at: https://pinelopi.wordpress.com/2018/01/09/documenta14-victoria-square-project-in-athens/ [20/01/20]

This was possible due to the neighborhood's history of distinctive social, political and artistic life open to everyone, regardless of their origin, gender, religion and identity documents. Marianthi Kotea (2013) describes the neighborhood:

> For instance there are a lot of publishing houses, printing houses, bookshops, theatres, ateliers, galleries, open-air cinemas [...] and haunts of groups with extreme left political views [...] in other words an "alternative urban space" of inhabitants and regular visitors who came from every walk of life and they held different political views but their common ground was the anti-conformism and the contestation as a way of life (p. 22).

Exarchia is a space to protest and demonstrate but also to seek and offer alternatives originated in Stekia (social centers) and assemblies, and then materialized in solidarity initiatives such as a park[81], soul kitchen and squats to be inhabited by migrants and people on the move seeking asylum, among others.

5.2.3. Archeology of the solidarity initiatives

I will be using the archeology of the recent past as a subfield that is being developed since the last third of the previous century, initiated by Foucault (1969) as a method to unearth suppressed possibilities of concepts, texts, practices etc… and which I understand as the appropriate field to frame the description and contextualization of social movements and grassroots initiatives in the Athenian context. The role of an archaeology of the recent

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[81]Explanation of the park's project drawn from its website: "The self-managed Parko Navarinou came to be on 7 March 2009 when hundreds of people living in Exarchia and in other neighbourhoods occupied a former parking lot owned by the TCG (Technical Chamber of Greece), and turned it into a green space and a space for playing games and meeting up. Since then, the Park has encompassed multiple functions: a vegetable garden, a children's playground and a place for movie screenings, discussions and other events.
The Park was and remains the outcome of decisions made by an open assembly which comprises residents from the neighbourhood and other parts of Athens. Since inception it has been based on the collective work and contribution of those participating. It has kept clear from governmental, municipal and private organisations, and its conditions of operation are collectively configured by the participants. As an endeavour, it follows on from the wider dynamic that social self-management gained in Greece during the uprising of December 2008".Available at: https://parkingparko.espivblogs.net/english/parko-navarinou-a-brief-history/ [20/01/20]

past was "to make the familiar "unfamiliar," to destabilize aspects of contemporary quotidian life that would otherwise be overlooked" (Graves-Brown, 2000, p. 6).

Why do we need an archeology of the recent past?

We need an archeology of the recent past to document and disclose recent pasts, everyday stories, a history of silence. Silence from the most recent past and "undocumented present" a term used by Dan Hicks and Sarah Mallet (2019) in their *Lande: The Calais 'jungle' and beyond*.

We also need and archeology of the recent past to uncover the subaltern as Spivak understands it and has been mentioned before. The subaltern who cannot speak, especially those undocumented women trapped in trafficking and smugglers networks currently in Athens who do not have the chance to communicate unlike Nazanin (presented in section 4) who found support in MN. Even while giving her testimony she was not listened to however, exactly as Spivak (1988) writes "even when the subaltern attempts to speak, she cannot be heard". Moreover, it is not only their voices but their presence that is suppressed, with undocumented people afraid of walking the streets and being present in the public space, such as Lara (section 5). They cannot be present, their willingness to survive is denied by obstruction and the impossibility of getting documentation and regularizing their situation. These women cannot talk, when they do it they are not listened to and what is most worrisome, they cannot be present. They are rendered dependant upon solidarity networks, humanitarian assistance or charity initiatives, destined to suffer social death, "The denning feature of social death is the cessation of the individual person as an active agent in others' lives" (Mulkay & Ernst, 1991, p. 178).

Human beings in this situation live in a hopelessness condition as they do not officially exist without documents. There is no access for them to the labor market, the

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health system (just emergencies) or the possibility of renting a house[82]. They lack any kind of alternative to their lifestyle, remaining passively coerced and unable to fight for their survival.

According to Buchli and Lucas (2001):

> In addressing the issue of the non-discursive realm the archaeological act comes directly into contact with the subaltern, the dispossessed and the abject. This is not simply in terms of the usual archaeological preoccupation with material remains, but the practical and social act of uncovering that which has once been hidden. The two converge here both literally and figuratively (p. 8).

Permanent presence of male refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in public spaces such as Omonoia, Victoria and Exarchia squares tell us an unknown and unspeakable story, the story of being homeless of living on the streets and squares located in Athens' city center. Also it makes us wonder, where are the women in the public space? Perhaps they are not homeless or have more access to shelters than men? Or maybe undocumented women do not have the "privilege" of living on the streets and instead of that the majority of undocumented women seeking asylum and without access to shelter are invisible victims of trafficking and smugglers' networks? According to the few data available and shared with NGOs and civil society "the Greek government identified 38 victims of trafficking (in 2017); 35 victims were subjected to sex trafficking and three forced to begging [...] 34 were female and 4 male" [83].

The recent past is rapidly evolving and changing as it happened during the last 4 years in Greece especially when we talk about the constant changes faced by the migrant and refugee population. From public parks and Pireaus port to refugee sites, from tents to containers, from containers to urban shelters or apartments within UNHCR´s Estia

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[82] To rent a house a contract is needed according to Greek law and thus the person needs to have documents to appear and sign the contract.
[83] Unated States Department of the State 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report – Greece, 28 June 2018, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/5b3e0b344.html [20/01/20]

housing program; all these changes to finally stop the Estia program and evict refugee camps, ending up in the starting point as a materialized oxymoron, people rendered without alternatives and led to live on the streets, "occupying" again the public space.

A contemporary archeology is what we need to understand the context, the present migratory phenomenon. How Greece's most recent history, its material scene of buildings, streets and distribution affects the lives of people in transit, and how they transform the environment in which they live.

We see it in neighborhoods like Victoria Square and Exarchia, where migration is one of the main elements that give character to the neighborhood at the culinary level; with new smells and flavors, and at linguistic, imaginary and visual levels; through clothing, traits and attitudes. The mere presence of people transforms the environment. In the architectural case, there is a transformation of the interior space either in their businesses or associations or in occupied buildings as a housing alternative opposed to the refugee camps. Access to shelter is one of the fundamental rights a State should provide to newcomers seeking asylum. I analyze access to shelter in order to explain alternatives offered by social movements and grassroots initiatives, as it is crucial and it determines the level of safety in which the person can build up her/his life. Moreover, it has been one of the major obstacles found during my work at MN, the lack of shelter available to women in danger, and the difficulties of find suitable safe places for them.

Shelters and housing facilities allow us to talk about material spaces, private and public, directly related to the survival of people on the move seeking asylum. Their presence in the public space, freedom of movement without depending on their lawful or unlawful situation, obviously determines their way of living. Depending on the inhabited spaces (refugee sites, apartments, shelters, occupied buildings…) their daily routines change, resulting in different impacts on their mental and physical health. This is

mentioned in several NGO reports, such as MSF[84], talking about a mental health emergency, as well as the restriction or evolution of their daily actions subjected to safety levels.

"Imagine like three times going to the line for food and wait every time two hours totally 6 hours. So actually I was not really doing anything just because of the food. So when I was able to provide my food a little bit was really nice for me, something very big". Y.H., 26, Iran. I13, April, 5th 2019.

In this sense I use the same interpretation that Nyers and Rygiel (2012) wrote about migrant squats "Migrant squats are interpreted here as practices and sites for contesting citizenship, intended as a category of political status; as such, they exceed the limits of this category and move beyond the boundaries of the nation state, originating practices of citizenship 'from below'"(p.9). For instance, a single woman living in a tent inside a refugee camp is at risk of being raped while trying to go to the toilet at night. During 2017, the UNHCR received 622 reports from survivors of sexual and gender based violence "Women reported inappropriate behaviour, sexual harassment and attempted sexual attacks as the most common forms of SGBV" according to Cécile Pouilly, the UNHCR's spokesperson.

Two or more families sharing a room, an apartment or a container, sharing rooms in shelter for women survivors of sexual violence, are restricted forms in accessing a healthy intimacy to live and undertake their daily tasks. In this sense, between 2016 and 2018, MN has followed up more than 20 cases related to coexistence issues in tiny spaces, which turned into high levels of stress and anxiety.

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[84] "Asylum seekers held on Greece's islands are in the midst of a mental health emergency. Many have lived through extreme violence and traumatic events. But it is the conditions they face in Greece, including the continued violence and the lack of appropriate services, which are pushing them into hopelessness and are greatly compounding their mental health suffering". MSF report :Confronting the mental health emergency on Samos and Lesvos. Available at: http://urbanspaces.msf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/confronting-the-mental-health-emergency-on-samos-and-lesvos.pdf [20/01/20]

"It was awful. The most difficult part was, we had to live in one container which was for 8 people 12 people. Very difficult. And one bathroom for 12 people, and all the time I was sick, because of the bathroom, infections" Y.H. 26, Iran. I13, April 5th, 2019.

5.2.4. Where do people live?

After one year of the misnamed refugee crisis, Greece's network of refugee sites around the country expanded becoming long-term housing alternatives, with most of them remaining open until now.

Illustration 12: Refugee sites number of guests and housing structure

Refugee site	Guests	Housing structure
Schisto	1.530	Tents
Elaionas I, II	2.415	Containers
St Andreas	174	Containers
Rafina	101	Containers
Malakasa	1.296	Tents (UNHCR)
Lavrio I yII	859	Old building and containers
Skaramagkas Dock	3.200	Containers
Merchant Marine Academy	325	Containers
Oinofyta	680	Tents (UNHCR)
Elliniko I (Hockey field)	820	Tents (UNHCR and personal)
Elliniko II (Baseball field)	1.009	Tents (UNHCR)
Elliniko III (Arrivals area, former airport terminal)	920	Tents (personal)
Piraeus Port	5000 estimation	Tents (personal)

Source: The Greek State and UNHCR (2016) [85].

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[85] Data obtained from the Coordination Centre for the Management of the Refugee Crisis in Athens (2016) Available at: https://www.accmr.gr/en/the-athens-coordination-center.html [20/01/20]

After one year and a half, Greece had a total number over 40[86] refugee sites all over the country (this is an estimation due to the existence of both formal and non formal camps) plus five hotspots located in Lesvos, Chios, Leros, Samos and Kos islands.

More than a million refugees had arrived in Greece from 2015 to the first months of 2016.The Estia[87] program has hosted 25,404 refugees from the end of 2016 until 2019, so where were the rest of the refugees and asylum seekers living[88]?

There is no estimated figure of the number of people who have been living in rented rooms related to several smugglers' networks. Besides, the majority of people who resort to this option are undocumented people constantly encountering obstacles to registering and applying for asylum (as in Nazanin's case, as explained in section 4). This results in long waiting periods of being undocumented and without access to the formal housing referral pathway. On the other hand, there are also the ones who simply prefer to reach another European country before applying for asylum in Greece.

Apart from the Estia program and other shelters managed by the State through EKKA[89] (Greece´s social services department), there are shelters run by several NGOs out of the formal referral pathway. Still, those shelters do not have the capacity to host all those waiting to be accommodated or those who are undocumented.

The third option is a network of occupied buildings that have been offering shelter since September 2015, with the opening of the first refugee squat Notara 26. Again, there

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[86] 40 reception facilities according to the Migration Minister Dimitris Vitsas.Available at:
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/10/greek-official-blows-whistle-refugee-costs-181012195955232.html
[20/01/20]
[87] "UNHCR works with the Greek Government, local authorities and NGOs to provide urban accommodation and cash assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers in Greece through ESTIA, the Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation programme, funded by the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid".UNHCR's explanation. Available at: http://estia.13ten.net/en/home/ [20/01/20]
[88] Knowing that these alternatives are only for those who qualify as asylum seekers and/or refugees.
[89] "National Center for Social Solidarity. The objective of the E.K.K.A. is the coordination of the network that provides social support services, care and solidarity to individuals, families, groups and populations experiencing crisis situations or are in need of emergency social aid (par.2, article 6, Bill 3106/2003)".Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/organisation/ekka-national-center-social-solidarity_en European Commission: Knowledge for policy Website [20/01/20]

is no estimate of the number of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers that have passed by the large network of squats, but there are some numbers known and drawn from the records of some of the social initiatives, as they belong to the network but they operate independently. According to City Plaza records, more than 2,500 refugees from 13 different nationalities have been hosted and we know that Notara 26 squat has accommodated approximately 9000 people from September 2015 to September 2019 according to their records.

> We are squatting an empty public building in Athens, 26 Notara Str., in order to territorialize our solidarity towards refugees/immigrants to cover their immediate needs (shelter, food, medical help). This project doesn't stand for philanthropy, state or private, but rather for a self-organized solidarity project, wherein locals and refugees-immigrants decide together. The decisive body is the squat's open assembly where everyone is welcome to participate with no exclusions[90] (Notara 26 opening statement, 2016).

As mentioned before, Exarchia is a particular neighborhood in which civil society and several political collectives created an alternative network of business, healthcare centres, self-organised kitchens, social centers and solidarity initiatives.

It is located in the city center close to the university neoclassical buildings and Syntagma Square; Athens' main square presided over by the Parliament. Exarchia and Victoria Square´s location represent reception and willingness to welcome newcomers, the contrary of what refugee camps represent, namely segregation, exclusion and inhuman places outside the city that use abandoned structures where living standards are quite far from being met. Most of the sites count on few means of transportation to the city center. People living in sites could be condemned to ostracism if they were living in ancient Athens just by trying to seek refuge.

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[90] Available at: https://popularresistance.org/where-refugee-solidarity-alternative-economy-converge/ [20/01/20]

Exarchia and Victoria Square are not characterized by their beauty but by the openness of the neighbors, their narrow streets are shadowy due to the strong concentration of blocks of flats. Most of the buildings correspond to a mix of neoclassical houses from the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century and an aseptic-concrete-grey style used during the 50s, 60s and 70s throughout the city. Most of the occupied buildings in Exarchia belong to the latter architectonic trend, but some of the public buildings like the University and Kaniggos squats are both neoclassical buildings.

Amidst this concrete jungle we find colorful interventions on the walls; murals, graffiti, and political messages, as well as a self-organized park and wooden benches in the pedestrian roads provided by the Exarchians. Unlike refugee sites, people living in squats are doing so in structures that were aimed at hosting people or becoming homes when they were constructed. Despite the fact that most of the places were abandoned, meaning they were empty and uninhabited for a while, migrants and refugees had the chance to make them up somehow in their own way.

Illustration 13: List of refugee squats in Athens

Name of the occupation	Neighborhood
Notara 26 (Housing Squat for Refugees and Immigrants)-	Exarchia
Gini building in Politechnio (on the university campus)	Exarchia
Themistokleus 58	Exarchia
Themistokleus 96	Exarchia
Strephi Squat	Exarchia
School-5th Likio	Exarchia
Hotel Oniro	Exarchia
Refugee housing squat Kanniggos 22	Exarchia
Trikoupi 17	Exarchia
Tsavela squat	Exarchia

New Babylon	Exarchia
Clandestina	Exarchia
Acharnon squat	Victoria Square distirct
Yasmin School	Victoria Square district
2o Filoxenio Prosfigon	Victoria Square district
Cat's Spirit	Victoria Square district
City Plaza	Victoria Square district

Source: Author's field research.

All these housing alternatives, along with the other social initiatives mentioned previously, set up a strong solidarity network within the Exarchia and Victoria Square perimeter. This network is composed of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, activists, members of different leftist political groups and locals who want to support the cause, while all of them are open to participating, engaging and intervening in different ways, depending on the project.

5.2.5. City Plaza

As explained above, there is a big list of alternative self-organized housing initiatives and each one has a different way of organizing and distributing tasks and of organizing space, but all initiatives are based on the same ideas and principles related to the fight against inequality, injustice and work on community based approaches to promote solidarity and equal relations. That is why I will illustrate the nature and scope of such initiatives in the section below. I will use the case of City Plaza as an entry point to look in detail at the dynamics of refugee squats in Exarchia and for this purpose focusing on a case study is perhaps more illuminating than simply mapping all squats hosting refugees.

City Plaza (CP) is a disused hotel located in the Victoria Square district that had been empty for seven years before its occupation. As Vicky Squire (2017) states, City

Plaza "is more than simply a refugee squat, it is occupied by a collective of refugee, student, and solidarity activists, and involves a relatively sophisticated approach to communal living and community decision making"(p.120).

In an interview with one of the participants/activists who has been present and active since the beginning of City Plaza, N.A[91] explained the reasons behind the idea to occupy the hotel in April 2016. Essentially, the decision came as a response to the signature and implementation of the EU-Turkey deal.

The idea was to create a practical example to face and respond to the situation of the EU funding injected to the Greek Government to deal with the refugee crisis and create refugee sites where basic needs were not provided as N.A explains. Privacy and safety were not guaranteed in those sites and N.A remarks that City Plaza provided a housing alternative to the camps.

The initiative seeks to create a solidarity space and to fight against unfair EU migration policies. City Plaza is an independent project which receives donations from individuals, collectives, self-organized initiatives and solidarity groups.

Empowerment is crucial according to City Plaza´s participants. From the very first moment people have their basic needs covered and they can pass over the survival mode. When shelter and food are provided, they can focus on living, finding their ways to work, learn or do anything they are looking for. N.A words suggest the way social movements and grassroots see refugees, migrants and people on the move, as subjects with agency and not passive recipients of aid, disposable lives living in disposable structures provided by international NGOs, UN and EU agencies.

People living in CP belong to different committees, they organize their own space, that is why empowerment/ownership is present from the day of their entrance. Food will

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[91] I14. April, 24th 2019.

be cooked by them and will have their private room with its toilet to be used and take care of in the way they want. The rest of the services and committees are managed by City Plaza's inhabitants.

CP is a political project; it is not a humanitarian initiative. It criticizes NGOs, Governments and the approaches used. They chose to put people in misery, in camps assures N.A

> From its inception, City Plaza was organized around two key goals: 1) To create a space for safe and dignified housing for migrants in the centre of the city, a space of solidarity and cooperation between locals and migrants. 2) To function as a centre of struggle in which political and social demands by migrants and locals will interweave and complement each other[92] […] CP proved in practice that the state policy of "hospitality" towards refugees is a mixture of harshness, incompetence, and political expediency. Where the solidarity movement, without any funding from formal institutions, without any "experts" or employees, managed to create one of the best housing spaces in the centre of the city, the state continued to abide by the trapping of refugees in makeshift camps and tents in the mainland, and by imposing a regime of refuting the rights of refugees and detaining them in hot spots on the islands, at the threat of deportation.[93]

It is also a safe space open to all nationalities, religions, all kinds of people, origins and statuses, and to families and vulnerable people. CP´s purpose and inhabitants have evolved. As mentioned in the beginning, CP´s origins are related to the massive arrivals and the EU-Turkey deal in 2016. Most of those refugees have left due to the relocation and family reunification programs. People who are living now in Plaza couldn´t leave because they didn´t qualify for those programs, resulting in their long-term stay in Greece. People show commitment and the community level of consciousness has increased through their engagement in the assemblies and efforts to maintain the harmony of the space on a daily basis.

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[92] Drawn from City Plaza's official site: https://best-hotel-in-europe.eu/ [20/01/20]
[93] Ibid.

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It is important to highlight that the experience lived in CP by those who have left remains in them and a proof of that are the groups that have been created in other European cities.

> Unfortunately City Plaza's project is not working anymore as it was based in an occupied hotel. Last July inhabitants and participants had to abandon the building and gave the keys to the former employees of the Hotel, since the furniture and equipment belong to them according to a court ruling after its bankruptcy[94]. City plaza´s end "One year on, and while the project was winding down, the expected change in the political landscape, with the imminent re-election of New Democracy, made it imperative to once more address the pace at which the project is progressing towards its close, taking into account the fact that, over the past several months, several refugees had gradually moved to safe housing. Plaza has two pending court orders for its evacuation, while high-ranking New Democracy members made daily references to the "destruction of private property" and the "lawlessness" at City Plaza. In this respect, evacuation could be used as a deterrent, while many refugees, especially those with no fixed legal status, could face disproportionate consequences (deportation, detention, etc.). Even though, for some, an evacuation by New Democracy could be seen as an "heroic exit", for which few political explanations would need to be given, nevertheless most City Plaza residents would be put in danger, especially in view of their already vulnerable and unstable status[95].

5.3. GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES IN ATHENS

The chapter aims to give a context for the emergence of such initiatives in Greece, assess the topographic and cultural factors which led to this development, to highlight the mentality of agents who promote a different understanding and practice in terms of refugees' integration, as well as to offer insights as to what would be the ideal traits for

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[94] According to CP open letter, "all mobile equipment has ultimately been adjudicated as belonging to the former City Plaza employees, therefore, even if riot police evict us from the building, the advocate will intervene in order to auction off this equipment (a process you have been blocking throughout the previous years, thereby illegally preventing the employees from getting the money which they are owed)". Available at: http://solidarity2refugees.gr/open-letter/[25/01/20]

[95] City Plaza's statement available at: https://best-hotel-in-europe.eu/ [20/01/20]

self-organized initiatives as they stem from the observation and study of existing initiatives in Greece.

Grassroots initiatives' main purpose seeks to get organized and work for social, economic and/or political changes from "below". Those who face and are affected by the impact of unequal relations and unfair situations prepare the ground to claim for justice. Their way of organizing is based on the strength of the community, that is why a strong community building process is needed for an initiative to be effective and long-lasting.

The four main grassroots initiatives in Greece addressing migrants and refugee issues have been working for years on community building, in order to create a strong movement to accompany these populations and advocate for migrants and refugee rights. They all have in common the importance given to the community approach as well as the needs of the affected, victims and survivors, to speak out and stand up for their rights (themselves). Grassroots initiatives understand compassion[96] as one of the most useful experiences to accompany and heal since they have had pass through similar processes and are able to support with a special sensitivity.

The forced (or not) migration process is full of complications, obstacles and trauma so there is the need to be understood and supported in humanistic terms, hence the key role performed by the communities to support and build up a network to rely on and trust.

5.3.1. Where do we find Grassroots initiatives in Athens?

Most of these organizations are located in the two neighborhoods we have been mentioning above, Exarchia and Victoria Square. While in Exarchia social movements take action,

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[96] Compassion understood as "a multi-textured response to pain, sorrow and anguish. It includes kindness, empathy, generosity and acceptance. The strands of courage, tolerance, equanimity are equally woven into the cloth of compassion. Above all compassion is the capacity to open to the reality of suffering and to aspire to its healing".(Feldman & Kuyken ,2011, p.144).

Victoria Square has been the place where local, small NGOs and grassroots organizations decided to operate and locate their offices and community centers due to the big size of the migrant population inhabiting Victoria Square and adjoining neighborhoods.

Community organizations in Greece are mostly self-organized and appear "when rights and freedom are denied, then any new opportunity pushes then individually and collectively to chase their dreams" according to Yonous Mohammadi's experience, president of the Greek Forum of Refugees.

As N.C, co-founder of Melissa Network, explains, "The economic crisis made a lot more important for them (migrant women) to become active and to become engaged not only to claim their rights but to create rights from below […] to use what we know like the skills sometimes we have and we just don´t pay enough attention to[97]". For Melissa's co-founders the idea was to gather and bring together different initiatives, formal and informal, and associations and solidarity networks run by women of different ethnic origins and create a platform where they could connect and try to find common solutions to common problems.

According to Y.M , GFR's president the recipe for self-organized initiatives is trust building between community members and Greek society. When there is no trust, negative attitudes make people defenseless, there is a need to feel integrated, accepted and not excluded, discriminated or marginalized. All initiatives promoting participation and inclusion are key[98]. Nowadays there are more grassroots working on these premises, other voices are heard, channels for the participation of affected people became wider, the realities on the ground are more visible and they are better able to formulate and demand solutions for Europe. That is why presenting these initiatives here is an exercise needed to understand how

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[97] Explanation given to some students visiting MN, November 2017. Data available at MN's database.
[98] Notes drawn from I1: October, 11th 2017.

many, what kind of work they do and who are the members and founders leading these alternatives.

Illustration 14: Description of several grassroots organizations in Athens[99]

Organization	Mission	Actions
Greek Forum of Migrants **Founded in 2002**	• Promoting migrant's integration by enhancing their individual and collective responsibility and participation, through collaboration with institutions, NGOs and society -on a national and European level.	• Promoting change of the Greek and European legal framework and policies. • Empowerment of migrants and their organizations for promoting their integration with individual and collective responsibility. • Contribution to the fight against discrimination and racism. • Promoting communication, collaboration and understanding between migrant communities and Greek civil society.
Generation 2.0 for Rights, Equality and Diversity **Founded in 2013** **active since 2006**	• Promoting equal participation in a diverse society, through the empowerment of communities.	Combining action and research, aiming to promote human rights, equality and diversity, fight racism, xenophobia and discrimination in general. As an organization, we have over 10 years of experience in social action, sociological & legal research, project management and cultural events.
Greek Forum of Refugees **Founded in 2010**	• Defending the rights and protecting the freedoms of refugees and asylum seekers. • Informing and raising awareness around access to refugee status, and general immigrant and refugee issues. • Creating relationships with agencies and non-governmental organizations in order to start meaningful dialogue between all institutions of government and human rights organizations. • Supporting the unity of refugees. Creating social and cultural ties between all members of the Greek Forum of Refugees, as well as between the members of each ethnic community of refugees in Greece. • Effectively lobbying with the state for the promotion of refugee issues. • Providing a platform for refugees and their communities to self-organize.	• Conducting seminars, information days, conferences, festivals, education, studies and general support, with an emphasis on vulnerable cases, young people and women. • Networking and cooperation with public and private organizations and NGOs, as well as individuals, in Greece and abroad. • Developing projects and actions against racism and xenophobia, and the promotion of the principles of multiculturalism, social justice and the equal participation. • Developing of actions to support the second generation of the aforementioned population, as well as the highlighting of gender issue, based on the principles of an intercultural approach. • Cultural exchanges with the Greek society. • Training and elaboration of relevant proposals and the participation in every kind of actions concerning the aforementioned population, only or in cooperation with other organizations, in Greece and abroad.
Melissa Network **Founded in 2014**	• Contributing to the empowerment of migrant and refugee women, making their voices heard and supporting them in becoming agents of change. We do this by providing a safe space of sharing and learning, where they can access support, information and opportunities, pursue their own initiatives and build their life strategies.	• Supporting migrant and refugee women's rights. • Promoting migrant and refugee women's empowerment and make their voices heard. • Facilitating networking among groups of diverse ethnic origins, creating an effective structure to enable their networking capacity and their inclusive attitudes promoting tolerance, mutual understanding and solidarity. • Creating a bridge of communication with the host society • Introducing new actors into the social sphere, drawing upon their grassroots experience, and encouraging participation and active citizenship. • Creating a space where migrant and refugee women can express their own aspirations and concerns. • Supporting and encourage their initiatives. • Empowering migrant and refugee women to find the means to support themselves. • Recording and encourage their 'informal strategies' as practiced, in a process of creating rights from below. • Addressing the issues confronted by crisis-ridden Greece in creative ways, informed by the women's own, diverse experiences. • Widening the advocacy pool and the participation in the public sphere by developing media and communication skills. • Raising awareness. • Promoting positive role-models.

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[99] Mapping of some of the most active and influencing Greek grassroots working on migrants and refugee issues. Information taken from informal meetings, interviews with grassroots members and each grassroots' website.

| United African Women Organization | • Create awareness of various issues concerning the African women and their children living in Greece.
• Supporting and fight for the rights of especially our second generation and at all levels.
• Creating mutual bonds of solidarity between Africans and our host the Greeks.
• Exploring and incorporate the rich African woman heritage into the rich Greek heritage.
• Working hand in hand with various social, NGOs and other Organizations that stand for justice, non racial and friendly society for all. | • Participating in antiracist festivals and events against racism.
• Raising awareness on African migrant women's problems.
• Empowering African women in Greece by informing them about their rights.
• Advocating for women's rights.
• Promoting community building, gathering African women associations and individuals to engage. |

Source: Author's field research.

5.3.2. Recent roles performed by grassroots in the refugee context (2015-2019)

Role in beginning of the 'crisis' Grassroots organizations undertook an important role during the complex migration situation in Greece, managing a spontaneous emergency self-organized response.

Along with social movements during summer 2015, both supported newcomers arriving to Pedion Areos park and later on to the Pireaus port makeshift camp. They were the first ones to advocate for asylum seekers rights, and the ones who wrote and signed the press release presented below sent to the authorities pushing for solutions. The authorities answered some days later with the announcement of the creation of the first provisional site for people in transit set up in Eleonas area within Athens.

> The Greek Forum of Refugees, following the Press Release from Afghan Community in Greece, seeks to raise awareness concerning the situation of hundreds of Afghan asylum seekers. Fleeing the war in Afghanistan and seeking for protection and safety in Europe, they arrived in Lesvos Island and ended up in Athens.
>
> Families, children and elderly people are, during the last five days, struggling to survive by camping at Pedion tou Areos' park. These refugee families do not have any mean to access potable water, food, hygiene items as well as showers. The municipality of Athens has installed some chemical toilets located at the park, but, unfortunately, regarding the amount of people this initiative is not enough. Although NGOs and citizen's initiatives are already taking place, these efforts cannot replace the obligation of the authorities to implement a proper reception of people seeking international protection, by covering their basic needs in order to

respect the dignity they deserve as human beings as well as respecting their Human Rights. In addition, as we already experienced many times till now, when authorities do not face the situation, the first reactions of solidarity and humanism of the local society, soon are being transformed in negative reactions towards refugees and a social issue could arise. The GFR tries to cope as best it can the situation. However, we believe that only through the cooperation, each attempt will have a good result. Soon we will publish more information on emergencies[100].

The Greek Forum of Refugees and Greek Forum of Migrants collaborated with interpretation and the support of members from the Afghan community translating Farsi/Dari into Greek/English. Moreover GFR, GFM along with Generation 2.0 conducted a daily need assessment in order to meet the necessities of the people camping at Pedion Areos. The Melissa network contributed with the distribution of meals, bags with NFI and food supplies its members prepared every day for those camping in the park "they began preparing 170 to 220 servings of nutritious breakfast, with a different menu every day: biscuits, carrot, banana or orange cake, fritters, sandwiches, muesli bars, etc"[101].

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[100] Greek Forum of Refugees press release about the situation of Pedion Areos Park, a makeshift camp where people seeking asylum camped during the summer of 2015. GFR along with the Afghan Community in Greece were some of the first grassroots initiatives which denounced the situation of asylum seekers in Greece in the beginning of the period characterized by massive arrivals in Greek Islands, period which started in 2015. Available at: https://refugees.gr/alarming-humanitarian-crisis-pedion-tou-areos-park/ [20/01/20]

[101] Extracted from Ekathimerini´s article about Melissa Network contribution during the events at Pedion Areos park.Available at: http://www.ekathimerini.com/200366/article/ekathimerini/community/if-we-dont-help-then-who-will [20/01/20]

5.3.3. Long-term evolution activities

Illustration 15: Grassroots' areas of expertise

Activity	Grassroots organization
Mediation	GFR intercultural mediators started to collaborate with the authorities when they needed interpretation and information dissemination. Policemen at Victoria sq, Pireaus port and first provisional refugee sites (camp managers, health professionals and medical interpretation at the hospitals)
Advocacy	GFR, GFM, G.2.0 and United African Women Organization, press releases, conferences, anti racist festivals, events.
Capacity building	Melissa Network through its psycho-social support and non formal education program, G 2.0 through career and legal counseling as well as non formal education.
Psycho-social support program	Melissa Network Welcoming newcomers, support and developing ownership skills.

Source: Author's field research

5.3.4. Why are grassroots important? They were before, they accompany in the meantime and are the ones that remain

In this case, grassroots appeared from the very first moments to bring urgent support at Pedion Areos park, Pireaus and, before these events, supporting migrant and refugee communities through their social and cultural centers, advocating for their rights and doing their utmost to meet the needs of newcomers and people on the move with the few resources they had[102].

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[102] While collaborating with the Greek Forum of Refugees before summer 2015, the researcher participated, along with other members of GFR, in the weekly visits to some refugee families that were living in abandoned houses, The purpose of those visits was to provide them with some water along with the support of the Afghan cultural solidarity center where they were filling the bottles with water and bringing them back to the families. The living conditions in these buildings were unfit for human habitation as there was no water and no electricity. This was one of the routine actions performed and still being performed by migrant and refugee grassroots organizations. This information was gathered while the researcher was writing GFR´s monthly newsletters and later on working with the GFR´s cultural mediators team at the refugee sites.

They accompany in a compassionate way through the migration process, and are the ones who still remain in the field when the eyes of the international community turn away, urging the departure of the international NGOS along with the cessation of financial support and project implementation.

Examples of accompaniment:

Melissa Network is the vivid example of accompaniment. Co-founders and members of the network are aware of the importance of having a network to rely on. That is why women who enter the center feel comfortable almost from the very first moment of their entrance, when they meet the core team who will follow up their process and have a general picture of their situation. Moreover women have access to a psycho social team of specialists compirsed of psychologists, social workers, social scientists, legal experts and a psychiatrist if needed.

Community approach is the idea behind Melissa Network. This is effectively materialized due to the awareness in which is implemented, as the co-founders and members of the network are migrants themselves and/or have a history of migration, that is why they understand the importance of community and supportive networks to deal with the migration process. The Melisssa Network will be deeply analyzed in several sections.

The Greek Forum of Migrants (GFM) has also a community center focused on providing activities and promoting cultural events to gather and help organize the communities. Although the approach is not focused at the same level on the psycho-social involvement, people find GFM as an open space where they can engage, take action, be referred to and get information about different kinds of support and organizations. GFM

is more focused on addressing the problems of migrants as individuals and collectively through public representation of migrants as well as the organizations and communities which compose the forum. They support their members with the creation and organization of groups intended to found a migrant community or association. There are 40 communities and associations that compose the forum, the members are in contact with the office on a weekly bases, with updates on ongoing activities or news related to the national legal framework or new services, for instance, new procedures to close appointment for their visa, how to enroll in the public schools etc… Members participate as well in the general assembly and vote for the GFM board every three years (to be on the board a person needs to become a representative of one community).

One of their main aims is to advocate for migrants' rights, as M.A, GFM's president explains "first generation of migrants, the newcomers who don't know the language cannot express their problems, this is a problem. So you need someone to speak on behalf of you and few NGOs are doing so"[103].

The Greek Forum of Migrants started to support migrant workers' conditions back in 2002 when they created the forum, nowadays they also focus on the integration of migrants, placing emphasis on how important communities and support networks are during the integration process[104].

The Greek Forum of Refugees has its origins in 2007, when some refugees created the first Afghan community organization in Athens, "then there were also people from Sudan and Somalia" explains Y.M current president of the Greek Forum of Refugees. Co-founders were all holding weekly meetings when some years ago they were taken to

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[103] 26-minute interview with M.A conducted by Nunu Kidane, Director of Priority Africa Network. The interview was conducted by Nunu in Athens at the People's Global Action on Migration, Development and Human Rights in November 2009.Available at: https://vimeo.com/10120436 [20/01/20]
[104] Notes taken during a debate organized by the Greek Forum of Migrants for Integrafest on December 18th 2018.

detention centers and faced serious problems with the access to seek asylum in Greece due to the inefficiency of the Greek Asylum System. According to Y.M the main challenges and reasons behind the decision to found the GFR were and still are[105]:

1. Lack of awareness of rights. Refugee groups themselves and Greek civil society do not know their rights and which rights the refugee population should be entitled to enjoy and be respected. This fact deepens exclusion, access to resources and establishment of support networks.

2. Lack of an Asylum system in the Greek state before 2010 and its collapse from 2016 onwards due to border closures, the EU-Turkey deal and the implementation of the European Agenda of Migration. "There was no willingness to set up such a system in 2001, the % recognition rate of refugees accepted was 0.01%, in 2004 ,11 people were recognized as refugees and in 2010 Greece creates and independent asylum system in paper but there were few real improvements hence the reason why to create the GFR[106]".

GFR also accompanies and supports the refugee communities which constitute the forum, many of them do not have an office due to the lack of funding to pay the rent. The forum offices are open to the communities to gather their members and host their assemblies. Moreover the GFR set up a working group five years ago open to community members to discuss common problems, challenges and future actions.

"As migrant women living in Greece, we were always active in organizing and showing solidarity to one another, mostly within our [own] ethnic community, but there was a communication gap between us. We did not know each other well enough to work together toward finding common solutions to our common problems. We needed a place where we

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[105] I1: October, 11th 2017.
[106] Y.M. I1: October, 11th 2017.

could nurture relationships in a way that feels comfortable, a venue where migrant women actively participate and a space that is both safe and empowers us", D.C.V., Melissa Network co-founder[107].

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[107] Interview with Refugees Deeply available at: http://www.develop.newsdeeply.com/refugees/community/2017/08/22/migrant-women-help-new-generation-of-female-refugee-leaders-in-athens [20/01/20]

Rosa Luxemburg, Campoamaor, Amazon war

Roman vestal, impious path to human life
Keny Arkana, Sappho, Hypatia, Parks and Hatshepsut
I invoke you, daughters of Eve, looking for a light
Looking for a light, looking for a light
I invoke you, daughters of Eve, looking for a light
Looking for a light, looking for a light
I invoke you, daughters of Eve
Since Prometheus showed them the fire trick
They subjugated our ego from Athens to Istanbul
You and how many like you against two titans
Run, go and tell him that we won't be that obedient
Imbeciles, they think they are the elite, they will fall
From their own weight when I will save Eurydice
Stone me, humiliate me, if you want to put a burka on me
Tear my voice and my clitoris out to be more tidy
Hide me, cover that impure bust well
If not, I could corrupt you or take you to the dark side
If not, I could intoxicate you with my cyanide psyche
The woman is the devil, that's for sure, be careful

And I am already falling, running aground in myself
Own civil war like Lysistrata
Without anything more to say, to contribute to the cause
A tribute to my muses who fight

«Lysistrata», GATA CATTANA

6. COSMOGONY OF A MIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN'S NETWORK SPACE

What is Melissa?

Melissa is a network for migrant and refugee women living in Greece. It aims to promote empowerment and active citizenship, to create and sustain bonds, and to build a bridge of communication with the host society. Founded in September 2014 with the direct involvement of migrant women leaders, it has members from 45 countries who live and work in Greece. It operates on the basis of a common platform, a hub where networks and individuals can meet, share their concerns and ideas, and support each other in the pursuit of their common goals[108] […] The name 'Melissa' stems from the Greek word for honey-bee. It stands for the women who have come here from all over the world, bringing along skills and talents, dreams and ideas, unique stories and extraordinary strengths. They are agents of change

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[108] Melissa's official description about the initiative which appears in the Integra-Train manual, an Integration Module funded by AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund).

for their own lives, their families, their societies, as well as for the society that hosts them.

6.1. ORIGINS OF THE NETWORK

The co-founders of MN used to see each others' faces in several meetings organized by the Greek Forum of Migrants and other assemblies. They felt the need to exchange experiences and to learn more information about each community, as well as to change prevailing dynamics of women's exclusion from the scenario and the male oriented approach adopted by the migrant communities´ movement.

The 6 co-founders from different origins; Albania, Nigeria, Philippines, Russia, Zimbabwe and Greece, decided back in 2013 to start the preparation of a network of migrant and refugee women through meetings and assemblies. The origins were complicated "as we didn't have any funding and we were meeting in cafeterias around the area'' explains D.C.V [109].

In 2014 after having received their first funding, the co-founders of the network chose a space, a neoclassical building from the beginning of the last century, in the Athenian neighborhood of Victoria Square. It was important to find a building in such a neighborhood due to the easy access to transportation and its multi-cultural environment, to be close to migrant and refugee population.

After a discussion period and several meetings, the co-founders sent invitations to 25 different communities. More than 100 women representing 30 different communities showed up to participate in a full day consultation meeting to discuss migrant women in Greece issues and concerns.

They concluded there was a need to set up a network to create a vibrant initiative and bring all migrant women together. That is how MN became operational in April 2014,

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[109] Words drawn from an interview with D.C.V. I3: March, 15th 2017.

hosting its members (female members of different migrant communities in Greece[110]), activities and community assemblies. The Victoria Square neighborhood started to be inhabited by people with different origins during the last decades of the 20th century, when Athenians who used to live in this upper-mid class neighborhood moved to other areas of the city seeking newer and more comfortable housing. That is how people from Eastern Europe and African countries reignited the neighborhood, adding diversity and activity to the area.

6.1.1. Violence and far right threats

This multicultural neighborhood and nerve center of several migrant communities, was at the time of MN's foundation in 2014 a neighborhood "intervened" in by far right extremist groups. This has been especially the case since the beginning of the Greek government-debt crisis, when these groups took advantage of the complex economic situation by blaming migrants especially as responsible for the lack of access to the labor market experienced by Greek nationals, for crime and for drawing benefits from social services. Lazaridis & Veikou (2017) explain the use of hate speech by Golden Dawn:

> In 2012, GD (Golden dawn) ran a campaign in national elections based on concerns about unemployment and austerity and on virulent anti-immigration rhetoric. Since the party's entry into official national politics (2010), it organized almost daily 'assault militias' to hunt down immigrants and their supporters […] They exposed some of the actual problems of the healthcare system, but then added a twist by criticizing the government for providing immigrants free hospital treatment. As a GD MP (member of parliament) wrote in a June 2012 letter to journalists: 'Illegal immigrants in hospitals are a shattering blow to the health care system. If Golden Dawn gets into parliament, it will storm hospitals and childcare establishments and start throwing out the illegal immigrants to replace them with Greeks. (p.208)

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[110] MN's way of functioning was different until summer 2015 when the massive influx of people seeking asylum arrived to Greece and the context changed, as well as the needs of newcomers'. As explained previously, in 2014 the network and community center was focused on hosting the assemblies and groups that belonged to the network and on providing activities and support for women coming from the migrant communities settled in Greece.

Far right groups are used to practicing hate speech as seen previously, but have also perpetrated and still commit violent attacks against migrant, refugee, LGBTQI+ (Lesbian,Gay,Bisexual,Transgender,Queer and Intersex) and Roma minorities all over the country. It is worth noting that many attacks take place in the city centre of Athens around Victoria Square, where MN community center is located.

I wanted to use this fact to show and describe the key role played by Melissa Network in the neighborhood as a resistant action against hate speech and racist violence. Adapting Foucault's (1976) idea of "where there is power there is resistance", Melissa's resistance to hate speech and racist violence consists of being present and reclaiming a space where violence, and I would say a violence with a specific gender (male), has poisoned the atmosphere. In this sense, a female initiative based on sorority, justice and solidarity and on establishing relations within the neighborhood, becomes a resistant action against racist and patriarchal violence, able to transform the context. I relate racist violence with male gender stereotypes and aggressive masculinity after reviewing the series of racist incidents occurring around Victoria Square in recent years, which are perpetrated mostly by male adults. Alicia Puleo (2000) relates gender and racist violence through a revision of modern European History and reminds us that "We must not forget that the Nazi ideology carries a mystique of virility that can especially comfort young people in times of identity crisis and transformation of the patriarchal system of domination"(p. 88)[111]. Several NGOs and the Greek Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) have documented the series of attacks against migrant and refugee population around the Victoria Square area.

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[111] Author´s translation.

Illustration 16: List of documented racist attacks in Victoria Square

Incident description	Reported by	Year
"A 17-year-old Afghan, Kazim G. was attacked in September 2011 near Victoria Square by a large group of people who hit him with a bottle and beat his body and legs with a hard implement. He told us that "when the police saw that my order to leave Greece had expired four days before, they said 'we cannot do anything for you because you are illegal here. So you can just go beat them back.' I was bleeding from the head from the bottle, and my arm was hurt but…they didn't help me."[112]	Human Rights Watch	2011
"Ibrahim had been attacked one night in October 2011 near Victoria Square by five men who hit her with a bottle"[113].	Human Rights Watch	2011
"17 migrants were injured and hospitalized due to assaults by extremists in Victoria Square (Athens)"[114].	Monitoring Extremism European Hate Crime Early Warning System	2012
"This particularly serious incident took place at Victoria Square and was recorded in Idomeni by a UNHCR officer: "The victim of Afghan origin was staying in a tent in central Athens-Victoria square during the last ten days of December. According to the victim, a group of people of Greek origin went to the square and began yelling at the people staying at the square to leave and evacuate the area. He mentioned that while the perpetrators were pushing and yelling at others they targeted his tent and set fire to it. The tent fell on him and he sustained second degree burns to the right side of his body (face, arm and leg). His wounds were not treated and according to the doctor from Praxis in Idomeni they were infected, therefore he was given antibiotics. The victim seems very vulnerable and has difficulty in trusting anyone"[115].	Racist Violence Recording Network	2015

Source: HRW, RVRN and Monitoring Extremism European Hate Crime Early Warning System annual reports.

The analysis of the attacks shows both victims and perpetrators were men in most of the cases, as described by NGOs and the RVRN. In a discussion about male prevalence in perpetrators of racist violence with Tina Stavrinaki, the coordinator of the RVRN, she stated that according to a 2017 report and data gathered by the RVRN "one of the main findings is that the majority of perpetrators are male between 19-45 years old[116]".

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[112]Along with 4 other cases during 2011 according to HRW. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/07/10/hate-streets/xenophobic-violence-greece# [20/01/20]

[113] Human Rights Watch 2011 report. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/07/10/hate-streets/xenophobic-violence-greece# [20/01/20]

[114]Monitoring Extremism European Hate Crime Early Warning System data. Available at: http://www.red-network.eu/?i=red-network.en.items&id=79 [20/01/20]

[115] Racist Violence Recording Network 2015. Available at: http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Report_2015eng.pdf [20/01/20]

[116] Literal words given to the researcher. March 4th, 2019.

Illustration 17: Analysis of the perpetrators by year according to RVRN annual reports

Analysis of the perpetrators by year according to RVRN annual reports
Perpetrators 2017: "According to the victims, in 60 incidents the perpetrators were reportedly men, in 10 incidents they were women and in 13 incidents the attack came from mixed groups. In the rest of the incidents the perpetrators were not seen by the victims (e.g. in cases of desecration of sacred spaces). In 6 incidents the perpetrators were minors, and in 21 incidents they were 19-30 years old. In 23 incidents the perpetrators were 31-45 years old, whereas in 22 incidents they were older (up to 70 years old)"[117].
Perpetrators 2016: "According to the testimony of the victims, in 65 incidents the perpetrators of the recorded attacks were men, in 12 incidents women and in 11 incidents the attack came from mixed groups of men and women".
Perpetrators 2015: "In 225 incidents the perpetrators were men, in 23 incidents women and in 19 incidents the attack came from mixed groups".
Perpetrators 2014: "In 68 incidents, the perpetrators of the recorded attacks were men and in 4 cases the perpetrators were women. In 4 incidents the attacks were committed by groups of both men and women".
Perpetrators 2013: "The perpetrators of the attacks recorded were almost always men, except for 14 cases of attacks by mixed groups where participation of women is also recorded".
The perpetrators 2012: "The perpetrators in the recorded attacks (154 incidents) were men, with the exception of 8 incidents where the perpetrators acted as a group in which the participation of women has also been recorded".
Facts about perpetrators 2011: "18 perpetrators seem to act as members of extremist groups and 26 as individual citizens. Most perpetrators are men (61 comapred to 2 women)".

Source: RVRN annual reports.

These are some examples of the violent atmosphere that used to characterize the Victoria Square neighborhood. As we see, and according to reports, the streets were property of far right extremist movements mainly consisting of male members. A survey conducted by Felix (2015) called "Crisis and Social Innovations Survey" verifies this statement, "in May 2014, 5.5 per cent of women and 11.5 per cent of men support Golden Dawn (Kapa Research, 2014). As a result, the so-called radical gender gap is 6 per cent, which is similar to the figures in 2012, when the party first entered the Parliament (Public Issue, 2012)" (p. 168).

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[117] Available at :http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Report_2017eng.pdf [20/01/20]

Although the neighborhood has been transformed in a positive way, MN was targeted three times (on three different days) the week of 8th of 2019, when MN was hosting several events to advocate for women's rights. Three half liter bottles of beer were thrown at the yard on three different days, while more than three ladies and children were sitting there. The bottles were thrown by a Greek male neighbor attempting to hurt someone, as the trajectory, the strength and the fact of previous warnings from that person suggest. The incidents were reported to the police and are being investigated.

Moreover, before MN opened its doors, male migrants and asylum seekers walking on the streets meant that the male gender was the most visible around Victoria Square. Something confirmed by local businesses that I have interviewed in order to understand their perceptions about the neighborhood and how MN has contributed to its change.

Sigma photocopy shop: "The neighborhood has changed. It brought migrant population with positive impact, mothers and kids willing to learn". K. 10 years working in the street. Interview. December, 10th 2018[118].

Maxilara, decoration shop: "I started to see more ladies in the streets and less drug addicts". Owner of the store 18 years in the neighborhood. December, 10th 2018[119].

Bakery: "Now it's more quiet compared to previous years when the neighborhood faced several problems related to street crime". M. 40 years in the street. December, 10th 2018[120].

Most of the businesses I spoke with showed a positive interest in Melissa Network's work and are aware of the changes the street has experienced since the network opened its doors. As D.C.V, co-founder of MN, assures "We have changed the flow, this used to be a silent street, very few people passed by here. Drug addicts left, even neighbors have seen a positive impact. So far there hasn't been any trouble. It has humanized the whole neighborhood[121]"   .

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[118] I7: October, 12th 2018.
[119] I5: October, 12th 2018.
[120] I6: October, 12th 2018
[121] I3: March, 15th 2018.

In this way, the network could be defined as a resilient, female community initiative against racist violence (mainly perpetrated by men) which subtly effects the recovery of the neighborhood and the public space (the street, the neighborhood). This is how a women's initiative and its particular approach transformed a neighborhood affected by high levels of typically masculine violence, something that unfortunately characterizes our world and the public space especially.

The initiative, and the way it responded to the high levels of violence reigning in a complex neighborhood, show hopeful changes and alternatives to facing violence by resisting in a non-violent way. Combating violence in the public space is one of the most powerful indicators which shows the strength and impact of an initiative that ultimately is fighting against a global system that affects us all, patriarchy. Armengol (1998) explains the relation between sex and violence:

> For some millennia, humanity has lived under the forms of patriarchy; a system of male domination and imposition that has been transmitted and developed from multiple fronts: laws, myths, norms, relations of subjectivity, family organization, work, religion... which has been based on the use of violence or the threat of using it [...] Century after century it has consolidated a patriarchal culture linked to violence[...] with which a culture that grants more value to domination than cooperation has been forged[122] (p. 9).

The enclave where the center is located and the mere fact of opening its doors to migrant and refugee women from different parts of the world that weren't visible before, constitutes itself a subversive act, a resistance to power and violence.

As N.C (MN co-founder), states in an interview given to Dokumenta 14, "Golden Dawn terrorised people by established totalitarian control of the whole neighborhood [...] It happened naturally even though no Melissa Network activist would have expected that

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[122] Explanation of how violence is related to sex translated by the author and drawn from: "El sexo de la violencia: género y cultura de la violencia". Author's translation.

the initiative can make a positive impact on the poisoned environment that surrounded them back then.[...] They all experience something positive which have started on the base trust"[123].

6.1.2. Fighting against sexual and gender based violence

Melissa network is a bastion of resistance not only to racist violence but also to sexual and gender based violence, which has been aggravated while the initiative was gaining experience. Sexual and gender based violence have always been there, the numbers grow because women are less fearful to disclose it when they feel understood and safe. The successful management of several cases and the word of mouth reports of women made Melissa Network a reference point to undertake cases and accompany women survivors of sexual and gender based violence. The growing numbers can be understood as growing numbers of disclosures due to the increase of trust.

In 2016 the network wasn't dealing with as many sexual and gender based violence cases as in 2018, when after two years of deep commitment and success stories, refugee women spread the word identifying and recommending Melissa Network as the place to go when women face extreme difficulties and grievances, especially those related to sexual and gender based violence.

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[123] How movement makes meaning available at: https://howmovementmakesmeaning.tome.press/chapter/melissa-network/ [20/01/20]

Illustration 18[124]: Identified SGBV cases by Melissa Network staff members from June 2016 to December 2018.

Indentified cases
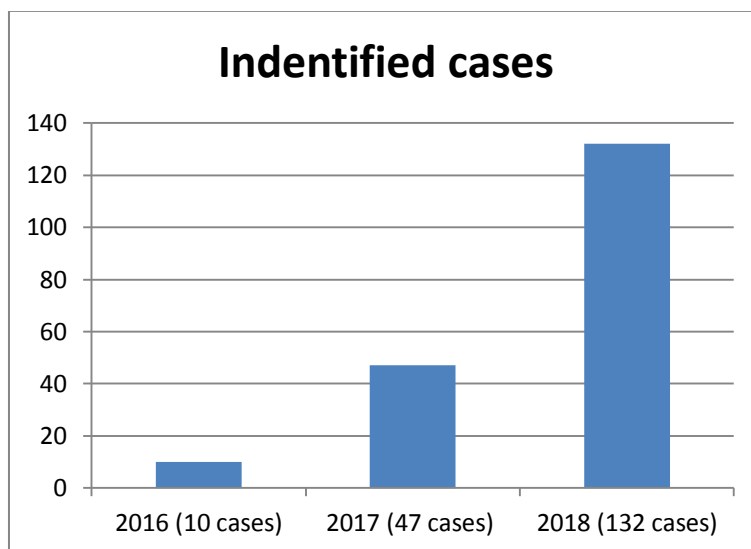
Source: Melissa Network database. Data gathered by the author.

6.1.3. Why the success?

Informal discussions with participants and members of other NGOs made the network realize that even other big local and international NGOs were referring cases to MN, despite apparently having many more resources to deal with the complex SGBV cases that MN was receiving in the last semester of 2018. Most of NGOs were not dealing with a case if the woman was undocumented, instead MN had its doors opened to every single case and tried, with different, creative and alternative ways, to undertake each one. The reason why the women themselves were suggesting others to ask support from MN was the approach; the humanity and trust given to a woman who enters for the first time into the building. This is one of the conclusions drawn from the multiple informal discussions the researcher had with Melissa's participants along with the feeling of being treated and accompanied with respect and affection.

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[124] Data obtained from Melissa Network archives monthly reports to donors and from daily records I've been keeping as a staff member to update Melissa's database.

"Melissa is a good example of kindness, no racism, no fights. It is about emotions, respect, no criticizing"… O.E. 18. Kenya. Our photo stories workshop. October 13th, 2017.

"Melissa is our house, we feel love and caring. We have good and beautiful times here. Melissa is very important to me. They support us psychologically. Children feel safe and love here". F.A.25. Afghanistan. Our photo stories workshop.[125] October 13th, 2017.

6.1.4. How has the neighborhood changed since MN opened its doors?

The MN took for granted the legitimacy of its presence in the neighborhood, establishing relationships with the adjoining shops eg. the bakery in front, the mini market on the corner, the pharmacies, the decoration shop located on the perpendicular street... Simply by being present and acting as citizens they have recovered and healed the space.

A year later in 2015, as Deborah Valencia recalls, we, as members of a network of migrant and refugee women had to come up with actions and ways of supporting newcomers that were arriving to Athens with the refugee influx of 2015. We did not have very much funding so we raised some money from our members and prepared breakfast every day for those refugees camping at Pedion Areos park. The neighbors saw our actions and came to offer support and donations. Afterwards, the media learnt about what we were doing and gave exposure to our actions. Along with other NGOs, solidarity initiatives and grassroots such as The Steki Metanaston, Pamperaiki, The Greek Forum of Refugees etc..., we started to hand out donations and perform activities in several refugee sites.

The context changed and in 2016 Melissa Network started its Alef program, operating in Athens urban center, away from refugee sites to offer a holistic approach to

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[125] Testimonies shared during several sessions of Our Photo Stories workshops one of the multiple workshops that take place at Melissa Network. The researcher has been present in some of the workshops and used to keep a record of the activities while taking notes in her field notebook.

integration and a navigation tool for those who wish to leave for another European country. It is a program designed by the network to receive newly arrived women into Athens because who knows better how to receive and accompany women newcomers than the migrant women of the network with their own migration experiences? Alef seeks to be the framework and the space wherein self-confidence and individual and community resilience can be developed. This is possible due to the importance given to coexistence and building up a community.

According to Melissa's & Eliamep (2019) official description of the program:

Alef is a community-based integration pathway for refugee women and girls. The title comes from a word that is common in many languages, including Arabic, Farsi and Dari, which is the root of the Alpha of the alphabet. It stands for what connects us all, and at the same time, for the first steps in the new life. Alef is designed as a comprehensive model, based on a holistic approach to the notion of integration as a process that leads to the empowerment of the refugee women and their access to the host society in a variety of ways that allow them to contribute to social cohesion. It is primarily based on the experience and ongoing involvement of migrant women leaders with a background in community organizing[126] (p. 11).

Knowing what Alef stands for, and the ideas on which it is based we could continue with Melissa's explanation of the program to understand its main pillars and the way it is structured.

This approach is based on a layered-learning education model, appropriate in post-trauma contexts where mainstream education models fail leading to high drop-out rates independently of the resources invested, in a way that addresses the multifaceted needs of women on the move. However, it moves beyond the typical needs-assessments and opens a space for the expression of the will, the hopes and the wishes of those involved. Furthermore, it aims to include them from an early

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[126] MN description of its ALEF program. Integra Train manual.

stage to the co-production of livelihood strategies[127] (Melissa Network & Eliamep, 2019, p. 11).

Melissa Network community center is a material and symbolic space that supports newcomers throughout the week through its Alef program. A series of activities, lessons and workshops described in section 3 are designed to support women to exchange and gain skills, find a space where they feel safe and comfortable and build support networks among the women participants and members of the network. Alef participants follow a specific program depending on their interests; every woman belongs to a group according to what kind of languages she wants to learn and activities to follow.

Groups are formed according to participants' preferences and in this way each group has a specific program which combines a language lesson and a second activity, session or workshop that varies depending on the day. There are morning and afternoon groups and every woman is invited to have lunch (participants, members and the staff eat lunch together in the living room). The ones who come in the morning can have breakfast (as coffee, tea and homemade cake are available) while the afternoon groups can also have an afternoon snack.

Sharing meals unites and helps women to start conversations, relax and feel comfortable enough to communicate with the others. That is why for the network this is one of the main aspects to take care of. The variety of activities and workshops are organized following the seven strands of activities designed by the co-founders of the network:

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[127] Ibid.

Illustration 19: Melissa Network seven strands of activities

Strand	Activities
Literacy: Literacy activities include:	• Greek • English • Other languages (i.e. German, French etc) • Homework support • Transition from illiteracy • Mother tongue activities
Psycho-social support: The psychological support scheme consists of the following elements:	• Drama and Movement Group Therapy (Sesame Approach) • Psychodrama Group Psychotherapy • Parenting Group Counseling • Individual Psychotherapy • EMDR Individual Sessions
Art and Creativity: Various workshops take place within this context:	• Visual arts • Poetry • Creative writing • Music • Hip-Hop • Film & digital storytelling • Photography • Crafts
Self-care & Community engagement	• Stress management • Acupuncture • Breathing & Meditation techniques • Mindfulness • Feldenkrais method • Yoga • Dance • Gyro-kinetics • Self-defense
Information and Referrals	• Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response - GBV Outreach - GBV Prevention - GBV Case Management, Safety Assessment and Planning • Legal Information Sessions • Medical Information
Skills & Capacity building	• Employability Support • Capacity Building & Skills Training • Information Technologies and Coding
Media & Advocacy	• Multi-media training.
* All classes are linguistically mixed, so that the participants are exposed to the notion of cultural coexistence throughout the learning process[128].	

Source: Melissa Network Integra-Train manual.

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[128] Melissa Network seven strands explanation: Integra-Train manual.

6.1.6. What about the migrant communities?

Melissa Network community center is open from Monday to Sunday. Newcomers and participants of the Alef program come on a daily basis from Monday to Friday to attend their lessons and sessions. Furthermore, the community center also opens on weekends to host assemblies, events and meetings conducted by associations and women migrant communities. Women leaders and members of communities arrange their activities and use the space for their own needs. There is a schedule where the interested group needs to sign up, so the rest of the members are updated on the availability of the space. But the importance of the network does not rely mainly on the material space (which is an important aspect to count on but does not constitute an end itself). Women migrant communities are constantly active arranging outdoor events, cooperating with other grassroots and joining forces to support each other. Communication between communities is one of the challenges expressed by Melissa co-founders, although there has been an improvement since the creation of the network, special efforts need to be undertaken still.

6.2. THE MATERIAL SPACE

Epicurus' garden in the 21st century is a women-only space situated in the centre of Athens. Melissa's building functions as an open house for those looking for a warm and dignified space. It is not a silent place like the Epicurean garden[129], but vibrant; and the sounds we find inside have nothing to do with the hustle and bustle of the area.

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[129] The garden was a quiet place away from the bustle of the city. There, its members cultivated generosity and friendship and celebrated common meals. At school they admitted people of all social classes including women (something unusual in the philosophical school). (García e Imaz ,1986)

The voices, laughter and crying of women who share emotions characterize the place, especially the living room. Different forms of sound expression give life to the building.

The space has its own garden filled with different kinds of plants, tended mostly by two caretakers of the community space and members of the Ukrainian and Nigerian communities respectively.

6.2.1. The harmony of the space: Harmony of space and soul

The word harmony as it is currently used to describe artistic compositions' balance and adjustment derives from ancient Greek Ἁρμονία, the goddess of agreement and concordance, which in turn comes from the verb αρμόζω that means connect/adjust.

In MN, the harmony of space plays a very important role. It establishes one of the bases on which the safe space, that makes women adjust and connect with themselves and their companions, is constructed.

Hence the importance of insisting on the objective harmony of the space and explaining the reasoning of its distribution, color, lighting and decoration, as well as the way in which the founders, consciously choose every detail making up the space.

6.2.2. Distribution

The main wooden door gives access to a staircase that takes us to the upper floor, where we find the entrance and the living room with its dining table, sofa and exit to an interior patio with a checkered floor inhabited by plants.

On this level we also find two bathrooms, two rooms that serve as studios, a small kitchen and a larger room set up as the main classroom, whose "neoclassical" balconies overlook Feron street. It also has a small cozy room that serves as an office aimed at hosting individual sessions of psychologists.

On the ground floor a large communal space with two working desks and a padded bench gives way to a classroom, bathrooms and a space set up for children at the end of the floor.

6.2.3. Colors

The colors used are warm colors. Light yellow prevails and gives a soft and cheerful light while trying not to generate perceptive intensities.

On the walls, decorative elements such as ethnic fabrics or tapestries of different origins are characterized by the use of bright colors and extensive chromatic ranges. Thus, the space combines soft and warm colors with more vivid elements that generate a harmonious environment. The walls speak to us through tapestries and photographs that portray members of the network. Drawings and paintings of participants' creations framed in a simple and orderly style surround the space contributing to the harmony of the place.

6.2.4. Art on the walls

At the entrance we find colorful posters with messages of re-claiming, empowerment and feminist struggle, whose discourse follows a non-pretentious line avoiding indoctrination or easy colonialist mainstream message. The messages and drawings show women from different parts of the world and different historical periods whose images convey an ideology of resistance, ownership and performative actions whose goal is to achieve the equality of rights and the deconstruction of roles, prejudices and pre-established gender rooted obstacles faced by women.

Through the description of the material composition of the space, we understand that it is consciously designed and thought out. The space acquires very personal hues as

opposed to the sterile decoration that characterizes the majority of community centers intended to offer services to migrant and refugee population.

MN is a home made up of colors, crafts from different parts of the world and artistic creations of women belonging to the network, both sculpted and drawn, as well as the plants that are present in each room and the impressive photographs that colonize the entrance and the living room. All the elements are exquisitely combined; creating a micro harmonic and homelike cosmos. The purpose is that women experience it as their home, a place where they can relax, move around and use its possibilities with confidence and ownership.

Illustration 20: Melissa Network's common space

Source: Author's document.

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

«Still I Rise», MAYA ANGELOU

7. APPLIED KNOWLEDGE FRAMEWORK AT MELISSA'S: EPICURUS AND MIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY ATHENS

7.1. A STRATEGY BASED ON AN EPICUREAN GARDEN

Epicurus' theory of knowledge, the Canonic, seeks to understand the way we know and distinguish the true from the false, how knowledge functions. The Canonic theory establishes that the basis of human knowledge is composed of sensations and feelings. When sensations and feelings appear frequently they are recorded in our minds, generating what Epicureans call "general ideas". Sensations and feelings must be endowed with sufficient clarity, just like ideas, otherwise they will lead us to error.

According to MN's approach, knowledge is understood as a wise, clear and balanced understanding and management of emotions, feelings, development of resilience and construction of support networks.

How do we do it?

Working with the women on their individual processes through the management of emotions and trauma. Underlining the importance of the group process while

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accompanying the women to strengthen the groups which help to develop resilience and construct support networks (resilience development and construction of support networks are directly interrelated). And last but not least, creating a sense of community that would be the final level of their process and which will help the women to find meaning, hope and support for their common problems and solutions.

Emotion is a process that goes from the reaction to an event to the subsequent reflection and evaluation of such reaction, Oatley (2004). Here we will try to emphasize the importance of the social component of emotions as Keith Oatley (2004) explains in The Social Life of Emotions:

> A social approach to emotion requires that we conceptualize emotions in the same way; that we stop seeing it as an individual response, and start considering it as bridge between the individual and the world that blurs the boundaries between individuals and their contexts. From this perspective, emotions are one channel through which the individual knows the social world, and social[130] world is what allows people to know emotion.(p.2)

Management of emotions, trauma and resilience development are three questions that need to be addressed in the three processes described, both the individual/personal, the group and the community. The three of them will be driven and nurtured by the material and symbolic space, the community.

The community, as well as the emotions that characterize the anxious and survival mood, will be triggering factors that propitiate individual, personal and social change.

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[130] The researcher meant to use social in a specific way related to emotions so we can understand how women depending on their social world and backgrounds express, construct, understand and manage their emotions. We highlight the social component of emotions to note that emotion must be analyzed in a historical way to specify and recognize the position in the social system and belonging to social groups, such as gender, social class, age and ethnicity, in this sense we understand emotions are produced in a social context, by interacting with other people (Lupton, 1998).

7.1.1. Why the importance of recognizing and managing emotions?

According to Bowen's theory of differentiation of self, someone is differentiated when, while experiencing emotions, is aware of and able to express them appropriately, honestly and respectfully. Part of the job is done when a person can recognize what is happening inside her or his self and find ways to express it respectfully.

Differentiation of self comes along with mutuality, that is to say the capacity to be mutual, to disclose oneself and share appropriately with another person and empathize. The mutuality in this context could be easily related to the ethical testimony of Oliver (2004), where the listener's empathy, while hearing the testimony and the act of sharing it, comes from an inner dialogue with one's self in order to share/listen to/ be with others and vice versa. According to Oliver; subjectivity, which can be a synonym for differentiation, is key.

> On my account, subjectivity is the ability to address oneself to others combined with the ability to respond to others. One can only address oneself to oneself, or respond to oneself, if one has first addressed or been addressed by and responded to others. At its core, subjectivity is relational and formed and sustained by addressability (the ability to address others and be addressed by them) and response-ability (the ability to respond to others and oneself) (Oliver, 2004, p. 84).

Subjectivity and addressability when talking about testimonies could be equivalent terms to differentiation and mutuality when talking about relations (keeping in mind that functional and therapeutic relations are made out of disclosures, testimonies and empathy). Thus, differentiation enhances mutuality and the opposite, they reinforce each other.

This is an important theory to take into account when describing the different processes women experience at MN. They might start with the individual one when trying to differentiate themselves, using the guidelines and tools offered by Drama and

movement therapy, individual therapy sessions, informative sessions and poetry workshops among all the activities MN is implementing; but there will always be the group and the community component since the material and symbolic space MN has created is rooted in the ideas of sharing and exchanging inside the groups and the community.

As explained before, every woman joins a group and the ones belonging to a specific group will attend the activities scheduled for the group together. Women also meet and share with other members of the community in the living room while eating or drinking tea/coffee, as well as when attending open activities for all the groups.

Returning to mutuality, it frequently appears in the groups, as teachers and facilitators state, especially during drama therapy sessions. According to G.A[131], one of the drama therapists, the reluctance of the beginning disappears quite fast in comparison with groups made up of Greek people. This means differentiation happens easily in these women in drama therapy as well as in other activities mentioned above. In this case drama therapists and facilitators are helping to accompany and give tools for the differentiation process. The level of differentiation they are capable of reaching sets a limit on how mutual they can be. Both are part of the same process (differentiation and mutuality). In this sense, we can emphasize the collective mutuality that emerges to surface in certain moments among the members of the group, especially in drama therapy sessions, as T.P[132], Drama and Movement therapist at MN explains (although we can find this collective mutuality in the rest of the activities, as facilitators and teachers have experienced). This mutuality comes not only from differentiation but from the commonalities found among the women, such as oppressions, past experiences and future challenges that might be quite similar no matter where they come from. Cowan and

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[131] Words drawn from an interview with G.A. I8: February, 26th 2019.
[132] Words drawn from an interview with T.P. I13: April, 17th 2019.

Rieveschl (2003) state that what has been broken in relationships can only be healed in relationships.

7.1.2. Emotions found at MN

How do we know about the emotions women experience?

Emotions felt by the women are shared and appreciable in the atmosphere, due to the reminiscences experienced during the poetry workshops, Greek language lessons, Drama and Movement therapy sessions, at the legal information sessions when talking about enjoying rights and denouncing Human Rights[133] violations and by being present in the space and accompanied by the staff. Being accompanied and finding support available in a space women feel they can rely on is one of the most important contributions of MN. Many of the disclosures of past memories, concerns and needs happen in the common spaces, like the living room, the garden or at the entrance in the front desk, when women share lots of moments with the core staff members[134] of MN, allowing them to build up relations of trust.

7.1.2.1. What are those emotions? Differentiation of basic emotions and feelings

There is a need to distinguish emotion from feeling, in order to understand different levels of reactions and profound responses when they are long-lasting. Alzina (2003) defines emotion, "emotion can be defined as a complex state of the organism characterized by an excitation or disturbance that can be strong. They are affective reactions to internal or external significant events[135]" (p. 12). It implies an assessment of the situation to get ready for action. The duration of an emotion can be from a few seconds to several hours. Richard.S. Lazarus (1991) understands feeling as the subjective or cognitive component

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[133] There are various and different kinds of activities as explained in the Cosmogony of the space section, but I have chosen these four because they constitute the core of Melissa's program, they provide the structure upon which the program can be enriched with other workshops and initiatives.

[134] Key people coordinating the space available and present on a daily basis.

[135] Author's translation.

of emotions. Taking into account the definitions of emotion and feeling, it is understood that while emotion is the reaction or direct response to external stimuli (a situation, something we see or hear) and internal ones (a memory, a thought), the feeling is an interpretation and analysis of the emotion. After the analysis the subject becomes aware of the emotion. Emotions can be learnt as we have explained in the theoretical framework Jaggar (1989), and as social constructs these women have learnt how to react to specific stimulus and situations according their culture and contexts in their countries of origin.

Basic emotions are fear, surprise, sadness, happiness, anger and disgust. In the following table emotions manifested in MN will be related to their several feelings according to MN's participants' experiences.

Illustration 21: Emotions manifested in MN

Basic emotion	Feeling
Fear	Stress, anxiety, confusion
Surprise	Curiosity
Sadness	Depression, nostalgia, frustration, unsaid things
Happiness	Patience, trust, motivation, sense of belonging

Source: Author

These are emotions and feelings identified in MN's community through interviews with facilitators, psychologists and other members of the team, coupled with the visible reactions of women observed and registered on a daily basis. The main activities in which emotions and feelings come up to the surface and are identified are analyzed below, as they constitute one of the main pillars of Melissa Network's approach, consisting of the provision of high-quality psycho-social support.

7.1.2.2. Poetry workshop

> The aim of the poetry workshop coincides with the core aim of the organization: promoting migrant women's voices and telling their stories in their own words […] Through the workshops, she (the poet) experiments with a broad range of methods and tools in order to facilitate creative writing and expression among the migrant and refugee women who participate. (Melissa Network & Eliamep, 2019, p. 33)[136] .

Poetry sessions are facilitated by Alicia E. Stallings, an acclaimed poet and translator who has led several creative writing and storytelling workshops in the past, and has received the prestigious fellowships of the Guggenheim Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation. It takes place every two weeks on Tuesday afternoon after 16:00. Women who participate in the workshop have their personal notebook/diary/journal where they write poems created in each session, compiling the notebooks with the poems written in chronological order. In this way, each woman is able to review her own creations since she started them, and appreciate the evolution of her feelings and ways to express them through poetry.

What are the emotions that appear most in the workshops?

While revising exercises and poems written during poetry workshops, feelings and emotions that constantly appear here are nostalgia, regret of things undone-unsaid, sense of belonging (family, neighborhood…), but also, due to the group cohesion and motivation, moments of hope and desire come out spontaneously sometimes, between memories from the past and future unknowns.

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[136] Description of poetry workshop drawn from Melissa Network Integra-Train Manual

I am like the rain
because rain is the start of deep feeling
because rain is clean sadness
because rain is filtered weather
because I am the universe
because I dance on glass.

H.H, 22, AFGHANISTAN. Poem published in *The Hudson Review*, "Letters from Athens: Logbook I" by ALICIA E. STALLINGS.

How do they react to the expression?

Most of the women who share their verses show feelings of release and happiness when they receive the validation and recognition of both the rest of the group and facilitator. The words of their classmates function as an abstract positive reinforcement, as well as some kind of pygmalion effect[137] that encourages them to keep on writing and expressing their deeper emotions.

"She's the new life. She's the greatest she. What do I describe? She gives birth to women who can live. She brings them to life and takes care of them. She is full of emotions. She carries the smell of the Lilly. She makes you feel like a lost child who finds her mother". A.A.21.Syria. A poem for Melissa Network written by A.A in poetry workshop. January, 15th 2019.

Illustration 22: Image taken during a poetry workshop

Source: Melissa's staff members.[138]

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[137] Robert Rosenthal defined the Pygmalion effect as "the phenomenon whereby one person's expectation for another person's behavior comes to serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy" (Rosenthal, 2010, p.1).
[138] This photo corresponds to A.A's poem. She was writing it in her journal while the interpreter translated into English and the photo was taken.

What is the general feeling of the group during the workshop?

When listening to their classmates´ poems or verses, we can appreciate a sense of surprise and admiration. They listen to the words of the others and acknowledge the quality of the verses as well as the capacity to express common emotions. There is empathy in the air and feelings of belonging and a sense of ownership at the end of the workshop when they finish the community poems. A piece of shared art has been done collectively and brings individual and group worthwhile feelings.

The Poetry workshop's effect is reflected in the committed attendance of its participants as well as in the evolution of their poems, measurable when analyzing the journals.

They start by writing a few words timidly, also copying some of the ones written on the whiteboard in English by the poet facilitator, but just the ones they recognize or feel comfortable to write, as most of the participants' mother tongue and alphabets are non-Latin scripts such as Arabic, Farsi and Urdu among others. After a while they start with their own verses or small contributions to the common poem (the aim of the session is to write a common poem with the contributions of all participants). As time passes the group´s consciousness level rises and participants start appreciating the importance of the common poem more than their individual contributions.

Individual and group processes are easily to appreciate through poetry workshop sessions, sometimes the level of individual and group consciousness can experience changes in the same session.

7.1.2.3 Greek language courses

The literacy support program has been designed and is monitored by linguists and
leading education experts, in partnership with migrant women community leaders,
in order to create an interactive teaching tool addressing the needs of a newcomer

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in Greece and facilitate communication [...] Greek language classes introduce participants to the usage of Greek through everyday life situations. The module is structured by highly specialized linguists through focus groups with migrant women leaders at Melissa, in order to identify the areas of interest. It is an interactive toolkit, providing people with basic linguistic skills. Classes are formed according to the linguistic profiles of the participants, on the basis of literacy level assessment[139] (Melissa Network & Eliamep, 2019, p. 14),

Greek language lessons take place every day. There are three different groups aimed at adult women depending on their knowledge of the Greek language (beginners, intermediate and advanced), but there is also a homework support group for teenage girls registered in secondary and high school. Lessons are facilitated by specialized linguists with pedagogical skills related to teaching Greek as a foreign language and more specifically with skills related to teaching a migrant population with a Human Rights approach. That is why teachers put effort into building trust between them and the participants while promoting openness to different cultures and countries since groups are made up of a mix of nationalities.

> To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin (Bell Hooks, 1996, p. 13).

Teachers also foster communication, the exchange of ideas and opinions using different resources like humor, talking about values and ideals and mentioning women in the class as an example. The fact that the groups are made up of women of different

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[139] Melissa Network description of its literacy support program and Greek language courses.

nationalities coupled with the lack of knowledge of any other language but their native ones encourages them to practice and communicate between them in Greek, which is the language shared by the women in the class. This way they can reproduce daily scenarios that are realistic to them wherein there is no other way for them to communicate, for example when in the classroom, school (while talking with their kid's teachers), supermarket, public bus... the language known by the persons who establish their dialogues is the Greek language.

Regarding their individual and group process, informal discussions during the lessons encourage them to create some relationships among participants while helping them realize they face common problems. Sometimes discussions about violence and despair emerge in the class spontaneously and women react in very supportive ways, advising and comforting their mates most of the times as V. K[140], one of the MN eduators, explains "For example when a girl in the class that now has left, said in the class that " I´m fighting a lot with my husband and my husband hits me" and she showed pictures of the bruises and everything,[...] all of them got angry, even the ones that they don´t speak nothing not even Greek, not even English and with gestures, like one girl from Cameroon who doesn´t speak English or Farsi and her Greek is a lower level, with gestures and other stuff, tried to convince her that she cannot tolerate it more and she has to leave him. And this in the class created a very nice, a circumstance where girls realized they are all facing something common".

Greek lessons are one of the most important activities of the center's program due to the results[141], methods used and educators. They experience one of the highest levels

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[140] I11: April, 5th 2019.
[141] Women feel more comfortable in an environment such as Melissa where they can bring their children, rest on the sofa, eat, talk to their friends... than in a school structured program where needs like child care (among others) are not met. All this results in an increase of women's motivation and thus a direct increase of their learning skills, according to many assessments such as Valerio's (2012) findings "Intrinsic motivation is a fundamental element in students' learning, with teachers having the influence to implement learning experiences that allow students to see knowledge as worthwhile and take ownership over their learning"(p.34).

of engagement and as Melissa's approach is holistic and transversal, literacy activities as well and Greek language courses especially present distinctive signs of the work done on group and community resilience. The group is key when measuring the evolution of the learning, individual-emotional and group processes.

7.1.2.4. Group psychotherapy

This consists of two different approaches: Drama and Movement Therapy and Psychodrama. According to Melissa Network's official description of its Drama and Movement Therapy:

> It is a form of psychological therapy in which all of the performance arts are utilized within the therapeutic relationship (Badth definition). In particular, the Sesame approach[142] emphasizes the importance of non-verbal expression and communication in the therapeutic context. Following the belief that the body is the symbol of the self, it allows the participants to explore their creative potential and connects them with their own innate healing capacity. (Melissa Network & Eliamep, 2019, p.18)

> Psychodrama is a group therapy method which was invented by the psychiatrist J. L. Moreno. It is the original form of group psychotherapy. In a psychodramatic group the participants have the chance to embody past, present or future points of their lives and to explore them creatively with the help of the therapist and the group. Internal thoughts, dreams and hopes come to life through the element of action and the dynamic relationships between the members of the group. Through role playing and role reversal the participants have the opportunity to embody roles that they never had the chance to experience. This empowering method has as an ultimate goal to encourage the participants' spontaneity and authentic self through the cathartic quality of dramatic expression as well as through the safe and meaningful connections among the participants. (Melissa Network & Eliamep, 2019, p.19)

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[142] "The Sesame approach has a long history in mental health settings, providing a safe place for the exploration of the participants' inner world and creating a container for the development of interpersonal relationships and connections within the group".(Melissa Network & Eliamep, 2019,p.18).

As T.P, drama therapist at Melissa Network, states in her article:

> In our community, Drama and Movement therapy offered us the soil for the creation of a new garden where everyone felt welcomed, understood and valued. MTS (Movement with Touch and Sound) liberated us from the 'borders' of our languages and connected us through our feelings, intuitions and humanity. It took us to a place where fewer differences exist between us; a place where no-one is really alone (Portokaloglou, 2018, p. 111).

According to interviews with the therapists and observation of the sessions, emotions and feelings released during the sessions follow a continuum depending on the process' moment. Women experience reluctance at the beginning of the drama therapy process, but "then quite quickly, they start playing roles, they are much into the process. They are quite willing to do things, to explore themselves through drama, through a physical way of expressing even their feelings. That is the impressive thing here. It's like a new world is opening up to them and they get into this world quite easily" explains G.A[143] one of MN drama therapists. Taking into account G.A's words, prevailing emotions at the beginning are "sorrow, sadness and memories about war then often emerge in drama therapy groups without any given stimulus, they just start remembering things or hard emotions". While analyzing drama therapy sessions we can understand the importance of the group as well as the fact of having a material and symbolic space to share what hasn't been shared before, "It is the first time they are given the opportunity to open up and share part of their feelings or thoughts in this way. And I think that is really important, not that they have the chance, that they see they have the chance" says G.A.

Emotions and feelings evolve during the process; after three or four months, sorrow, sadness and traumatic experiences from the past are not prevalent anymore. Women do

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[143] I8: February, 26th 2019.

not get stuck in the past. Spontaneously focusing and working on their pasts is the beginning of the process, but then they focus on the present.

The mid period of the process is characterized by anxiousness, worrying and curiosity about the current context. They are trying to understand how things work, from culture to how sexuality is portrayed is this society, mostly taking into account how their kids will live and "adapt" to these new codes and social norms of the western society.

Regarding the future, some of these emotions remain "They are very worried, very anxious about what the future will bring. If they will have the chance to learn languages and have the chance to work. In the overall, normal life. Some others really don't know. Things are really vague or blurred in their minds concerning the future". As emotions evolve, the sense of belonging to the group evolves too. Following the structure of the process women are able to pass from Drama and Movement Therapy to Psychodrama when their group and individual processes evolve, then they are able to face and overcome several barriers presented in the beginning related to disclosures, trust and openness to the group.

As T.P[144] explains "the first period is the Drama and Movement Therapy where they are working through the body, through sounds, through touch and they trust the setting […] When they start organically to talk about their lives because they have really trusted the group we start using psychodrama, Psychodrama again uses action and engages the body in the therapy but has the difference that it works with reality so you can work with their personal stories. So they choose someone from the group to be their mother, to be their depression and enact a relationship, while in drama therapy we will use metaphors, we don´t go through personal stories".

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[144] I13: April, 17th 2019.

The group process in Melissa works differently from other places. Melissa's represents a space to take the ownership of their process and of the space itself, as it is understood as a home where they can relax after the session and spend as much time as they want. What happens inside the sessions does not finish there because afterwards they go to the living room, drink tea and discuss about the therapy and their experiences. The sessions and process continue informally and can be extrapolated to other activities, which will also influence the therapy and provide tools to cope with fears, frustrations and unknowns. This is one of Melissa's special contributions to the therapeutic process.

7.1.2.5. Information sessions as discussion groups

Legal information sessions were designed to foster discussion and participation rather than being a lecture. It was a space and time to inform about rights, agreements or laws as an open discussion. In order to have a participative and open discussion the legal expert had to integrate their contributions. Their participation was based on their past and personal experience. In this way, the group is able to analyze and bring these experiences to the surface to link them with the legal framework and understand what can be done in terms of consequences and actions taken. Each session would address a specific topic regarding a set of rights, from access to education and the labor market to the right to choose your husband and have children.

In a holistic approach women know their rights and de facto their obligations in their new host society. This learning process gives them the opportunity to make their own choices, assess violations and get the confidence to stand for their rights and earn independence.

Structure of the sessions

The sessions use an objective approach of fundamental rights with a special emphasis on tolerance avoiding judgments or offending the cultures, religions, habits or opinions of each participant.

Legal information sessions were designed to foster active participation of the women through experience sharing and peer learning, so that the women are directly included in the process and take ownership of their rights and their own situations. The participative discussion is moderated by the legal expert and the social psychologist, who also contribute with input in the discussion. Their participation is based on their past, present and personal experience, always based on voluntary intervention. With this methodology, the group is able to bring experiences to the surface, analyze them with the group in order to link them with the legal framework and most of the time understand violations of rights and discuss about official and informal protection protocols.

Topics addressed

Through a prepared set of sessions, the focus is on addressing essential Human Rights and analyzing their impact on their daily lives as well as considering available solutions when rights are not respected or violations of such rights are experienced.

The first session was designed as an introduction to rights and Human Rights. Given the background of the participants, it seemed essential not to speak about the universality of these rights, as most of the participants never enjoyed them, but rather to mainly discuss the meaning of having these rights. Experiences and opinions expressed by participants allowed the moderators to recall the meaning of equality, the freedom from discrimination, the right to education and freedom of belief and religion.

Illustration 23: Information sessions programme

Workshop 1: Introduction to Rights And Human Rights.
1. What does it mean to have rights? What do Human Rights mean? 2. Presentation and open discussion/ Right to equality/ Right to freedom of discrimination/ Right to free movement/ Right to marriage and family/ Right to education/ Freedom of belief and religion.

Workshop 2: Women Rights regarding family
1. The right to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage and its corollary (marriage or free union, divorce) 2. The right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of children and its corollary (Legal to have children outside of the marriage or alone, Right to take contraception, right to abortion).

Workshop 3: Women Right regarding education and work
1. Right to equal access to education and studies (Education obligation, No discrimination to access school) 2. Right to work and choose freely their profession (Prohibition of forced labour, access to all professions, Hiring discrimination).

Workshop 4: Introduction to Gender Based Violence
1. Definition of Violence and description of the wide character of GBV 2. Aminata story' activity (rank characters of her story from the most offensive to the less, and justify).

Workshop 5: Assessing Gender Based Violence
1. Description of the different violence categories 2. Examining violence and rights violation to reduce it? (open questions and discussion).

Source: Melissa Network.

Sessions tried to focus on facts and rights, avoiding stigmatization of their culture, their country and what is happening in their countries of origin. Then, women would share their experiences and the legal expert would give guidance. They would always explain the illegal nature of the event described using the Human Rights framework, as well as what could be done according to Greek law in order to include the women in the process of discovering their rights. As A.F[145] (Melissa's legal expert) states, "discover their rights to claim them. To exercise them and first of all I would say to be aware of them, and to be aware of what they are, they have passed through and what they are passing through".

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[145] I9: March, 13th 2019.

Illustration 24: Activity about understanding of rights

Source: Melissa Network

Women were able to share their experiences and concerns and understand the nature of the emotions felt, by the fact of expressing the unfair situations they have passed through. This is another example of differentiation of self; how women analyze and express emotions felt due to the structure and approach used during the legal info sessions. Although the purpose of the sessions was to inform about their rights as well as support while accompanying them in the process of discovery, the way in which the sessions were designed and the legal expert and social psychologist were conducting the sessions became spontaneously another mechanism to support their differentiation process and ignite mutuality.

Mutuality appeared constantly during the sessions. Women could easily empathize with their friends as many of them have faced or have a close person who has faced similar circumstances. Mutuality leads to community resilience when the women develop ways to accept, help each other and offer support among themselves.

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"Me I found a way to avoid arguments and protect myself, when he is angry I say yes to everything and I shut up." S.J. 24, Afghanistan. Legal information session, February, 23rd 2018. Group 3.

"In the camp there was a man that beat the baby because it was a girl and he wanted to have a boy". S.S. 29, Afghanistan. Legal information session, February, 23rd 2018. Group 3.

"Men should follow the session because they are the one who hurt us, especially my brother need it". G.M. 21, Afghanistan. Legal information session, February, 23rd 2018. Group 3.

"How could we do it? We could gather them in a classroom, for example Eleonas[146], and have a man to explain them. The man should be Greek and powerful[147]." F.A. 24, Afghanistan. Legal information session, February, 23rd 2018. Group 3.

In this thesis and through the explanation of the MN's way of functioning, I try to present a vivid example which shows how emotions are one of the sources of knowledge. Emotions are identified and managed in MN through a series of specific activities and sessions, a material space and the sense of community. Their identification and management are key when facing our realities.

It is important to say however what has been developed in this section is inspired, as mentioned in the theoretical framework, by various works that are included in *The Affective Turn* within feminist theory. This is an intention to introduce new ways to reflect on gendered power relations and give the value deserved to emotions, when for centuries they have been underestimated and understood as the opposite of reason "the indispensable faculty for acquiring knowledge" (Jaggar, 1989, p. 151).

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[146] Eleonas is one of the refugee sites located in Attica region.
[147] Conversation between women during a legal informative session regarding gender based violence.

Alison Jaggar (1989), one of the pioneer authors in feminist theories of emotions tries, in her article *Love and Knowledge: Emotion in feminist epistemology*, " to show how the myth of dispassionate investigation has functioned historically to undermine the epistemic authority of women as well as other social groups associated culturally with emotion"(p.151), and we use her words to reaffirm in a theoretical way the materialized example presented.

As We explain in the next section paraphrasing Ahmed's main field of expertise (2004) emotions are "socially constructed" and their understanding would give us several prisms of analysis and information that become knowledge if understood. What has been presented in this section is a new and community path to seek knowledge through emotions.

7.2. PROCESSES OF RESILIENCE AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Resilience is the capacity to recover from difficult experiences according to Arciniega's words (2013) based on Rutter and Werner's studies.

> It refers both to individuals and the family or collective groups that are able to minimize and overcome the harmful effects of adversities and disadvantaged and socioculturally deprived contexts […] recover after having suffered remarkably traumatic experiences, natural disasters, civil wars, deportations, concentration camps (Rutter, 1993, Werner, 2003)[148] (p. 8).

Researchers and psychologists know resilience has probably been present since the origin of the human species, but analysis and research weren't conducted until the 1980s. "The idea of resilience has reinforced the most current, contextual and systemic perspective of human development at the individual and social level. A difficult, precarious and conflictive life does not inevitably lead to maladaptation and

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[148] Author's translation.

psychological disorders[149]" (Arciniega, 2013, p. 8). The resilience perspective highlights the complexity of reactions and interactions of human beings with the environment when resisting and fighting in specific occasions against biological, environmental and cultural determinism among others.

Most of the migrant and refugee women members of the Melissa Network have faced difficulties due to their migration process, the fact that they are women and migrants/refugees and/or the reasons for their departure. They present high levels of resilience just by coming to the center on a daily basis and attending language lessons or any other activity. This shows a strong motivation to learn not only languages but gain and exchange skills to integrate themselves and continue with their lives. Resilience at Melissa Network is developed within the community and then extrapolated to each woman's personal case. There is also a strong sense of belonging to the community, which although often less strong in newcomers can reach high levels that can end up encouraging women to create their own associations and communities in many cases.

7.2.1. Women migrant associations

Migrant women community leaders who are also members of the Melissa Network have a history of migration and activism. They have managed to create their own associations due to their level of community consciousness, they understand an isolated activist is less able to achieve changes than a community or a group of people working for fair solutions to unfair problems frequently experienced by migrant women. In this sense, Melissa acts as an umbrella; gathering migrant and refugee women associations that want to belong to the network, it offers the space, support, human resources and materials for their assemblies, initiatives and events when needed.

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[149] Author´s translation

The creation of the community within Melissa's umbrella is considered to be the last stage of the process, when women identify common problems and needs and organize themselves to become *agents of change* as we see in MN's mission and vision ideas. These are some examples of resilient communities within MN and ways to face difficulties:

7.2.1.1. The women of the Ukrainian community of Athens, currently immersed in the formation process of their association, use Melissa's space to meet and designate roles within the association.

The creation of the association and its desire to belong to the network of migrant and refugee women in Greece MN stems from the need for union to face the common problems that Ukrainian women have been suffering since the early 90s, with the first migratory waves coming from Eastern Europe after the breakup of the USSR. "The majority are women," says H.O[150], co-founder of the emerging "Club of Ukrainian Women in Greece" and staff member of MN's community center; and adds, "many of them, working in the care sector for the elderly and children, find themselves unable to collect the pension in Greece or in Ukraine". In this way, one of the objectives of the association focuses on the organization of various actions, including a letter to the Greek parliament in the process of drafting, so that Greece and Ukraine establish an agreement by which the right to collect the pension in Ukraine is guaranteed to people whose work life and contribution has been mostly given in Greece[151].

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[150] I2: March, 7th 2018. H.O, a graduate in economics in Ukraine, arrived in Greece in 2005. Since her arrival in Greece, she has worked as a domestic and dependent employee. She is the mother of three children and her husband is unemployed. In addition to her work in MN, she is responsible for coordinating and ensuring the economy of the family. She has a long history as an activist in Greece and collaborated with various Ukrainian and migrant women associations such as Trembita and Vyrosthenis.
[151] Currently, people of Ukrainian origin do not have the right to receive their pensions in either Greece or Ukraine if the bulk of their working life has been spent in Greece.

Their weekly assemblies also address issues related to residence permits, the lack of information on services and action protocols for women survivors of gender-based violence. H.O is well aware of the need to fight against gender-based violence in her community. She has witnessed numerous cases and has repeatedly supported and guided several women. It is for this reason that she has shared with some colleagues of the MN network her concerns about how to act when other women witness cases of gender-based violence.

Thus, through the network, the association of Club of Ukrainian Women in Greece had access to an expert on gender based violence who conducted a training session with the members of the association on how to proceed in emergencies when a member of the community suffers an episode of gender based violence and asks for help. The facilitator provided an emergency plan, a protocol to follow, ways of acting to protect the survivor and not jeopardize people who participate in the action plan. The emergency plan will be shared with other women in the community through those who attended the training.

The co-founder of the Club of Ukrainian Women in Greece states that women of the association carry out other actions such as financially supporting a women's shelter in Ukraine, organizing events and conducting Ukrainian craft embroidery and painting workshops in Athens among other activities. They also follow up the cases of several Ukrainian women imprisoned in Greece.

The MN network tries to reinforce these actions with projects and collaborations through its consolidated contacts abroad, associations or individual actors.

7.2.1.2. The Philippine women's association in Greece is also part of the MN network, and meets at the community center twice a month to hold their assemblies

The name of the association is DIWATA, which means goddess in the Filipino language. The acronym corresponds to Determined Independent Women in Action for Total Advance.

DIWATA was founded in 1994 in order to coordinate a microcredit cooperative for Filipino women which is still fully operational today. They started with a hundred female members. "The cooperative is in charge of offering loans with the common money of all and prevents Filipino women, who normally carry financial problems in Greece and the Philippines, from asking for money to lenders as they used to," says D.C.V[152], co - founder of DIWATA and the MN network.

The association, also supported by MN, is organized into different committees, such as finance, education[153] and welfare[154]. "We promote the empowerment of Filipino migrant women through their involvement in the management of the association, and we foster the leadership of the members," adds D.V.C. In addition, DIWATA is part of the European network of Filipino women BABAYLAN, whose name refers to the Philippine priestesses that existed before the Spanish colonization in the Philippines.

The babaylan were advisers, healers and leaders, women very respected by the community. The network holds a congress every two years where they share experiences and ideas and discuss different forms of oppression they face related to gender based violence. They also carry out campaigns against gender based violence, seminars and

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[152] I3: March, 15th 2018. D.C.V is one of the co-founders of the MN network and DIWATA. She arrived in Greece in the mid-80s and is a refugee of Filipino origin. After 30 years she has not succeeded in getting Greek nationality, so she still cannot step on Philippine soil, a dream she hopes will come true when she receives her Greek citizenship next year. She has a long history as an activist, is a social worker and currently one of the general coordinators of MN. The information offered by D.V.C has been extracted from an interview conducted by the author.

[153] A committee that monitors the schooling and higher education of the women's children of the association. The initiative promotes the continuation of the education of young Filipino population by offering financial aid.

[154] A committee in charge of monitoring the members' health status and ensuring that the status of their permits and the payment of taxes are in order.

workshops on the deconstruction of gender roles. Resistance is one of the main ideas on which BABAYLAN is constructed and its maxim, as D.V.C shares is "to resist is to try to find the solution and act".

7.2.1.3. G.T[155] is one of the leaders of the Kenyan women's association, KWETA, Kenyan Women Empowering Talents in Athens, also in the process of developing and part of MN

Grace arrived to Greece more than fifteen years ago and is aware of the importance of activism and the organizational movement.

She has special concerns about the mental health issues of the women members of the community. As she explains, most women do not have a life of their own, they live their lives through their daughters, sons and partners. Their workday can reach up to twelve hours when they combine two jobs, without counting the time they devote to care tasks. The result of their commitment to both work and home is reflected in the lack of time for themselves and their self-care.

One of the association's aims is to focus on the search for time dedicated to self-care and offer a space to share concerns, as well as the provision of activities that promote mental health and well-being habits. "We have started by organizing a series of workshops on basic notions of ceramics facilitated by a pedagogue, an activity that motivates and for which women have shown a lot of interest, and we have also contacted activists from a social center in Athens to collaborate with them in the creation of events through culture and gastronomy in order to make visible the challenges faced by the women of Kenya" says G.T.

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[155] I4: G.T is a native of Kenya and founder of KWETA. She arrived in Greece alone in the mid-90s to work in the care sector offering assistance to the elderly and thus be able to send remittances to Kenya where her son lives. She is one of the leaders of the Kenyan women's community, since her arrival in Greece she has been a pioneer in weaving and building solidarity networks among the women in her community.

7.2.2. What is community resilience and an emotional community?

I would like to introduce the notion of community resilience as a crucial aspect of MN. Community resilience is a Latin American concept developed theoretically by E. Néstor Suárez (2001) when observing that every disaster or calamity suffered by a community, which causes pain and loss of life and resources, often generates a mobilizing effect of the solidarity capacities that allow the individuals to repair the damage and move forward. Melissa Network can be considered a resilient community since its members have passed through or are currently facing extremely complex situations and the idea that sustains the network is community support. Community resilience relies on some pillars Ojeda (2001), that are present in MN:

- Collective self-esteem: satisfaction from belonging to the community.
Members and participants of the network experience this sense of belonging as they constantly share comments about how they feel as a part of the community:

"Melissa is a place for gathering where is always nice to take pictures. A place where we can learn things, like art. It is about Friends, diversity in countries and languages, and no fighting or problems, we are together"[156]. K.A, 26 Afghanistan. Our photo stories workshop. October, 13th 2017.

"I will start writing this words as a memory from my heart, writing for the group, the good times we have together, no preoccupations, no bad memories, One year ago I wanted to come here and learn, and now I understand that here I found the best people […] There are no differences between people from different cultures, different languages… because we share from our souls, smiles and the look in our eyes are the

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[156] Narratives obtained in several workshops where women shared and commented on photos of their routines. The workshop was called "Our photo stories".

Universal language we use. This is a big house full of beautiful people, this is my second house. Melissa embraced me and all the woman and I are very thankful for that".

A.J, 27 Syria. Our photo stories workshop. October, 13th 2017.

-Identity-interactive process: where women find their common identities and throughout its development implies the incorporation of customs, values, idioms, dances, songs etc… providing the feeling of belonging.

Some examples of the identity-interactive process are dances and songs sang frequently by MN members in the living room, as they feel at home there and comfortable enough to dance and sing with other members.

-The social humor: the ability to find comedy in the tragedy itself to overcome it. There are some dramatic or complex situations in which humor is used by the staff or members themselves. For instance a lady was giving a declaration at the police station as a survivor of sexual trafficking and after 8 hours of declaration MN's staff and the survivor took a selfie in front of the policeman and started laughing. Also elder ladies who don't understand English and try to communicate an important issue many times start laughing when using non-verbal communication.

-Solidarity: the fruit of a social bond that summarizes the other pillars. Examples of solidarity between the women happen on a daily basis, such as hosting other members of the network in their homes when they have just arrived in Athens and do not have a place to stay, exchange of presents or things needed like food or clothes between the members who are in need, and personal favors such as picking other woman's kids up from the school if the mother has other important things to do etc…

Having understood previously the importance of emotions and feelings within Melissa's approach, and especially the role they play in the community, there is a need to

introduce what the term emotional community means. According to Barbara Rosenwein (2006) emotional communities imply the identification of how as a group they reconstruct systems of feelings and emotions based on common evaluation of what is considered as harmful or benevolent for a given social group.

The Melissa Network community center, as well as the network itself, provides a material and symbolic space where shared emotions and community resilience appear, evolve and become essential for the space to function on a daily basis. On that basis I deduced that Melissa Network is a community, but in particular an emotional and resilient community. Both concepts are interconnected, since much of the personal and community work done by its members is directly related to emotional management, acceptance and development.

The MN is an emotional community in appearance (outwardly represents) and in practice a resilient community. The most intimate shared emotions and feelings (such as fear, sadness, uncertainty, despair, anxiety) are experienced by community members, who become aware of them as part of the process of flourishing. These thoughts and feelings come to light in forms of resilient action such as peer support, creation of solidarity networks and ultimately the creation of their own associations, as the examples of Ukrainian, Filipino and Kenyan[157] women associations described above.

Individual narratives (life stories, trauma, sexual violence, travels, obstacles in their new world) become part of the community when shared and experienced in the group through activities such as , among others, drama therapy, poetry, Greek language lessons, Human Rights information sessions and food (eating all together in the living room of the

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[157] It is necessary to clarify that women and Melissa Network do not promote the creation of their communities and associations by nationality in order to segregate causes/struggles/efforts, it happens spontaneously as each nationality faces some specific problems apart from the common ones related to their being women, migrants or refugees. The three examples of migrant women associations describe perfectly the priorities of and main obstacles faced by each community. The creation of their communities does not mean the obstruction of the union's forces but rather the availability to work on several fronts, since they work on common issues through their Melissa Network's membership.

community house). These experiences and emotions are blurred in the community, they are what is understood as a common primal essence that has always been latent in the network but in more diffuse way, difficult to access at first. Not wanting to pull it abruptly, the process has been flowing as the community matures until it reaches the point where the members, along with the evolution of personal processes, are able to understand and recognize the community of which they are part.

The accompaniment and community component of their processes made the author realize the similarities between MN and the example of the *Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres* when accompanying Colombian women in their process to give their testimonies for the Women's Truth Commission[158]. In this case psycho social accompaniment during the process helped to develop trust and a suitable environment where silenced women shared their Human Rights violations experiences, while being supported by professionals and their friends to deal properly with trauma, re-victimization breakdowns and other psychological impacts of violence. Community and accompaniment were key tools during the process as mentioned in the official report The Women's Truth, Victims of the Armed Conflict in Colombia (2017):

> The methodology adopted allowed women victims to be believed because collective memory breaks down the stigma and doubt surrounding each woman […] It has been a process of coming close to the victim's place and understanding more deeply her fears and admiring her strength to overcome the horror of the war. This experience forms a contribution to break the silence from a perspective of complete dignity and reparation to strengthen mutual support networks (p. 94).

Melissa's members recognize each other in their classmates and their classmates recognize themselves in them, this generates a sense of company that helps to face and

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[158] Extracted from the original document of The Women's Truth "Women's Truth constitutes a collective effort to assemble a report of victims of the armed conflict, and a truth that seeks to create pathways in this country between political discourses, academic analyses and legal approaches surrounding Human Rights violations".

overcome past, present and future adversities. This permanent feeling transformed into resilience comes from the emotion of the emotional community. Therefore, we can say that the soul of the resilient community and the base on which it is established is the original and latent emotional community that drives action to begin the process outsourced in the resilient community.

Illustration 25: Inspirational sun done by MN's members and participants

Source: Melissa Network.

7.3. PERFORMATIVITY OF EMOTIONS AND AFFECTIONS: POLITICAL ASPECTS OF MELISSA NETWORK

There is the idea amongst Melissa staff members of treating women arriving at the center as human beings and equals contrary to what happens in refugee camps and NGO programs, that see beneficiaries instead of human beings with no agency. Members are not conceived of as subjects and recipients of aid, hence affection is shown by the staff

and members of the community so they can establish horizontal[159]relations and practice affection and respect for each other. Affection is present by showing kindness, empathy, compassion and solidarity between the members.

The emotional component of MN's approach is a form of resistance, an alternative way of being close and supportive to migrant, asylum seeker and refugee women rather than assisting them. This is Melissa Network's political contribution to the humanitarian sector. Instead of simply criticizing it, MN has developed an alternative in which its members believe, putting migrant and refugee women in the centre, building community and working on resilience and emotional management to overcome trauma, injustice and uncertainty. Affections and emotions are performative tools as they are per se actions capable of altering a shared or public space. They have the power to cause immediate reactions, for instance when we see someone crying in a dramatic way we understand she or he is feeling sad and it is quite possible that we try to comfort the person by hugging or giving a tissue. An emotional environment unleashes reactions which become actions. Thinking of sorrow (one of the prevailing feelings felt by women in the beginning of their process), itself might not be able to achieve a personal and social change in a person's life, but added to the community and commonalities felt by its members, sorrow becomes a feeling projected to others being felt by the community and reacted to with supportive actions, sorrow can be transformed into self and community compassion.

Compassion helps subjects to feel validated, listened and accompanied. Community and compassion then become powerful tools to guide the healing process of an individual's life and the community, thus women members of the community receive and develop strengths to fight and find solutions to their common problems.

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[159] Having in mind that women can ask for help or information to the staff members, knowing the facilitators and staff are not service providers.

Illustration 26: Explanation of community, sorrow and compassion relations

Sorrow + community = self and community compassion
Self-community compassion + supportive reactions = strengths and activation of the collective process

Source: Author

MN's space is a source of actions happening on a daily basis, sometimes negative (perfection does not exist), many times positive, that have to be managed and worked on to be transformed, into adaptative, useful and healthy ways of coping with trauma, profound stress, depression, and into driving forces to guide migrant and refugee women's common struggle.

Let us believe,
let us believe in the dawn of the cold season.
Let us believe in the ruin of imaginary gardens,
in idle inverted scythes,
in confined seeds.
Look how it snows…
Perhaps the truth was those two young hands,
those young hands
buried beneath snow –
and in the coming year
when spring mates with sky behind the window,
fountains of green saplings will erupt—
saplings that bloom, beloved, my truest friend.
Let us believe in the dawn of the cold season…

«Let us believe in the beginning of the cold season», FORUGH FARROKHZAD

8. LIFE CHANGES AND RESISTANCE: PERMEABLE IDENTITIES IN MIGRATION

8.1. WHAT IS A THEORY OF NATURE?

According to Epicurus' physics, reality consists of two fundamental elements. On the one hand the atoms, which have form, extension and weight, and on the other the emptiness, which is nothing but the space in which those atoms move. Epicurus' atomist conception is influenced by Democritus' understanding of nature but he modifies some aspects of Democritus' theory as he doesn't agree with the idea of determinism and introduces a random movement of atoms, named *Clinamen*, a deviation from the path to assure freedom.

The resistant nature theory of Melissa Network seeks to understand the particular reality of its material and symbolic space, taking into account the way in which Epicurus understood nature, according to Lucretius' explanations in *De rerum natura*[160].

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[160] Drawn from Lucretious' translated letter to Herodotus available online in "Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes"(1999): http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/de-la-naturaleza-de-las-cosas-poema-en-seis-cantos--0/[24/01/20]

Lucretius, following Epicurus, argued that a universe consisting of an infinite number of eternal and indivisible particles in constant motion had no need for a creator and no need for a designer. The gods may exist (Lucretius seems to think they exist) but they have nothing to do with how things are. Nature itself experiences endlessly. All it takes is a minimal deviation (the Latin word of Lucretius is *Clinamen*) that causes atoms to collide with each other. Most of these shocks will leave no trace, but throughout the inconceivable extension of infinite time, everything we see (and much more, the universe is more vast than we can grasp) becomes[161].

The basis of the reality of Melissa's cosmos, of each of its members, the community, the material space and the abstract network, is shaped according to past experiences, past and present relationships, and how past and present situations and relationships were managed and are still being managed. In addition, actions present in the context, exchanges and interactions with other people that occur inside the network's space are also essential elements that shape reality.

Future plans in the short and medium term define the most immediate and synchronous present. In order to understand and generate strategies to manage and deal with present and future situations; experiences, relationships, reactions and plans are combined and operate with the context as well as other people. This is how reality is understood in MN. In this way Melissa Network's theory of resistant nature presents similarities with the original one of Epicurus. Similarly, we can correlate experiences, relationships, emotions, reactions and plans of the members such as infinite and indivisible particles (atoms of the theory of Epicurus and Democritus) that are infinite in terms of quantity, but finite in terms of variety.

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[161] Author's translation.

Illustration 27: Types of atoms present in MN's reality

5 types of atoms:
Experiencies, relationships, emotions, reactions and plans

Source: Author.

As Hermán Villarino (2014) points out, referring to the theory of the nature of Epicurus:

> Atoms are invisible, indivisible and indestructible elements endowed with
> spontaneous movement by virtue of whose clashes the solidarity emerges and gives
> rise to the macroscopic structures that we can appreciate in the sense organs, our
> body, animals' and plants´ bodies, stars and planets and everything they contain[162]
> (p. 11).

In this sense, a multitude of relationships, experiences, reactions, women's plans and their clashes and alliances, produce the aforementioned solidarity that gives rise to a macroscopic structure such as the Melissa Network.

Like Epicurus, MN seeks to move away from the determinism of Democritus so that the feasible freedom of women members of the network exists and is possible. Melissa's theory of resistant nature also seeks to move away from that determinism from which Epicurus flees. In this case the determinism can be based on their gender, cultural origins, class and race…

The researcher identifies their intersections, discriminations and oppressions as decisive categories that have determined their past, but can be turned into present strengths that will help them seek new opportunities, boosted by the access to information and alternatives which are the *Clinamen* in this new context. MN members, founders and staff understand the complexity of the diverse categories, factors and experiences that have influenced the lives of migrant and refugee women. Knowing this, MN embodies a

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[162] Author's translation.

space which hosts multiple women with their multiple intersections and migration experiences, it operates on the basis of this reality and is capable to take advantage of it and recognize its strengths. Bürkner (2012) explains the complexity related to the concept of intersectionality that the researcher relates to MN's reality:

> Today, intersectionality is integrated into a critique of identity politics (Soiland, 2008) […]This view does not merely seek to identify several strands of identity as generated by race, class, and gender in order to reconstruct one identity (Yuval&Davis, 2006). It also points at the problem of reductionism, which comes up as soon as the identity and homogeneity of one particular group is the target of analysis, whereas social practice tends to be much more complex, comprising multilayered social relations, contested concepts of identity, and multiple social roles. (p.182)

Harmful traditions in their countries of origin[163] are specific obstacles that determine women's lives, and as an example, in Afghanistan these harmful traditions are "not sanctioned either by Islamic or statutory law" […] Research has found that 70 to 80 % of Afghan women face forced marriages"[164] (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2011, p. 42).

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[163]Harmful traditions prevalent in Afghanistan (the nationality most represented in MN) as an example are child early marriage, Baad, Michilagha, Baadal, Nazer, Shir Baha and Polygamy

[164] Harmul traditions prevalent in Afghanistan are, as explained by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (2011) in the Handbook for Women´s Rights Advocates:

"Child marriages, a form of child abuse, refer to a marriage when: 1) Both involved parties are children – families will often engage their children to each other even before they are born in order to strengthen the relationship between the two families. 2) One party (female) is a child – families will marry off their young daughters to older wealthy men primarily for economic reasons. It should be noted that even though girls are the primary victims of child marriages, boys can be too.

Baad refers to the exchange of girls coming from two families in dispute to settle disagreements over serious crimes such as killings, but also over "moral" crimes like adultery and rape. This practice is common across the country, but especially in the rural areas of Afghanistan ruled by patriarchy and tribalism where governmental control is weak or non-existent. The girl given away in baad is frequently mistreated by her new family because she is associated with the crime committed.

Michilagha. Like baad, this custom uses women and girls as a commodity in tribal disputes. If fighting erupts between two families of tribes, a third party mediates to end the dispute and killings. The third party is formed of tribal elders or influential figures from the warring parties. They set conditions for the end of the dispute. Acceptance is mandatory by the warring parties. The conditions usually include a large amount of money or giving one or several girls to the affected side. If parties fail to meet the conditions and resort to violence, besides being driven away from the tribe, their houses and property are set on fire and they are forced to pay a fine. In such circumstances, women and girls are normally offered to the affected side as fines and girls are forced to marry.

Baadal is an exchange of daughters between two families. This practice is common among poor families who cannot afford the expenses associated with marriage arrangements. Two families who both have young sons and daughters agree to marry them to each other.

But obstacles are also encountered by the women once they arrive in the host countries and try to continue with their lives. Among other plenty of things there is the difficulty getting university and school degrees, certificates or their training in the host country recognized. There is no protocol or adjusted pathway to recognize and validate refugees' studies, due to the absence of documents and alternative ways to validate their training. Furthermore, in relation to professional and working life, migrant women can be typecast in work profiles such as caregivers, cooks or seamstresses, among others, when in actuality they have diverse qualifications and skills to develop. This acts as a potential and determining barrier, which can banish these women from counting on a different future.

MN tries to support women who want to be trained in a specific field to study or develop their skills by offering various options, counting on the support of the community. This is the case of F.M[165], a 20 year old from Afghanistan with a 2-year-old daughter, who began her Greek classes in MN. Due to her rapid learning and development of skills as an interpreter, she obtained a place in an evening secondary school (with the support of the Greek teacher) and had the option to finish secondary education. She also found a morning job as an interpreter (Farsi-Greek) in an NGO, which meant that she needed a place to leave her daughter in the mornings. Knowing this, MN spoke with the

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Nazer. Afghanistan is a religious country where people accept superstitions as Islamic teachings. Across the country, individuals present themselves as religious guides. Although such guides have a long background in Afghanistan's cultural history, there have been instances of this guidance going against Islamic teachings. Some guides have taken advantage of people's illiteracy and lack of education. One of their tactics is nazer, which is when a follower gives his/her daughter to the guide who will later decide to whom she should be married. The guide will sometimes marry the girl himself, disregarding her wishes.

Shir Baha. Under this custom, the family of the bride asks the groom's family for an amount of money equal to what they have spent to raise her. In some cases, the young men of legal marriage age failed to provide sums requested to the bride's family and the marriage did not happen.

Polygamy frequently results in inequality between wives, as they will have various degrees of seniority and power depending on their relationship with their husband. A woman in this type of relationship has no control over her own life and can feel degraded by the husband bringing another woman, or women, into their marriage. Further, men practicing polygamy often take an underage girl to be their second or third wife, therefore being a party to child marriage. Violence is also common in polygamous marriages".(p.42)

[165] It worth noting that F.H married when she was underage, seeking at 16 to leave Kabul, where she was confined at her aunt's house. She met an older man through a mobile phone application that offered her a "safe passage" to Greece as a reward for their marriage. F.M was an early married, child still married and with a two and a half year-old daughter.Field notebook February, 15th 2018.

community of Filipino women DIWATA, which has a multicultural kindergarten "Muntig Nyon" run by Filipino women child care educators, to find a place for F.M's daughter while she was working. The network and connections between women found a solution for F.M, Munting Nyon's child care educators are taking care of F.M's daughter free of charge until her economic situation improves.

This is a clear example of how the community and the support networks work and how important they are when it comes to supporting and facilitating the lives of MN's members, who face constant obstacles in their day-to-day life due to their being women, migrants and/or refugees[166].

The table exemplifies different actions taken by MN staff members when women asked for support regarding daily and long-term obstacles. Most of the actions are related to basic needs and fundamental rights that should be granted and respected to enable women to live a life with dignity. Fundamental rights are the basics a European State and European policies and institutions are, according to treaties and conventions signed[167], obliged to provide and ensure compliance with.

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[166] The intersectional component of MN will be explained in Ethics' section.

[167] Mentioned in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union the right to social housing, social assistance and security, education, health care and claim for asylum:

Article 14. Right to education: 1. Everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training.

Article 18. Right to asylum: The right to asylum shall be guaranteed with due respect for the rules of the Geneva Convention of 28

July 1951 and the Protocol of 31 January 1967 relating to the status of refugees and in accordance with the Treaty establishing the European Community.

Article 34.Social security and social assistance: 1. The Union recognises and respects the entitlement to social security benefits and social services providing protection in cases such as maternity, illness, industrial accidents, dependency or old age, and in the case of loss of employment, in accordance with the rules laid down by Community law and national laws and practices. 2. Everyone residing and moving legally within the European Union is entitled to social security benefits and social advantages in accordance with Community law and national laws and practices. 3. In order to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognises and respects the right to social and housing assistance so as to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, in accordance with the rules laid down by Community law and national laws and practices.

Article 35. Health care: Everyone has the right of access to preventive health care and the right to benefit from medical treatment under the conditions established by national laws and practices. A high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Union policies and activities.

Illustration 28: Data drawn from MN's daily records which show the total number of actions taken per year since 2016 and total amount up to and including March 2019[168]

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019 (January-March)	Total
Accommodation	52	77	100	27	256
Education	701	1309	2825	480	5315
Health	623	1331	220	58	2232
Legal support	79	143	660	155	1037
PSS[169]	1405	2442	166	38	4051
Women´s care	801	1760	88	16	2665
Others	1098	2002	44	23	3167
Total_year	4759	9064	4103	797	18723

Source: Melissa Network database. Author's update

This is the reason why the chance of options, the possibility to choose and access to previously inaccessible opportunities are essential elements of the theory putting women's will and freedom at the center.

"Learning is a flame, a fire for education, the best way to reach your goals. We have opportunities here, the best times and we learn our paths […] There are no walls here, and we have good times communicating from the light of our hearts". S.A 34, Palestine. Our photo stories workshop. October, 22nd 2017.

The *Clinamen*, Epicurus' deviation of atoms, is the contribution that opens the way to the explanation of freedom as expressed by Lucretius, who studied Epicurus and

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[168] These are actions registered by Melissa Network staff on a daily basis, although the number may be slightly higher due to the lack of time to register all actions taken during their shifts since the community center is a living space in which multiple issues are dealt with every day out.
[169] Psycho-social support.

his essence in De rerum natura, This deviation also makes possible human freedom "as it breaks the laws of destiny"[170]. The deviatory movement that appears in the theory of Epicurus allows the achievement of the bodies' freedom and prevents determinism. Avoidance of determinism is also an essential element of MN's theory of resistant nature.

In MN, the *Clinamen* corresponds to the possibility of freely and flexibly accessing different activities, information and opportunities that the women have not been able to access previously. Melissa goes further than providing basic fundamental rights, something that the network understands as the duty of the State and European institutions. MN focuses on the support and provision of a psycho-social support program and on human and material means to build support networks, foster capacity building and exchange skills.

Therapeutic sessions and activities are experienced by the staff itself first, in order to analyze potential harms to the participants depending on the level of intensity of the session. Following the first trial and after arrangements are made with the facilitator and the staff members, activities can be implemented and followed by the participants and by members of the communities at the same time if it is an open activity. There are also closed therapeutic and learning groups that follow a certain level and process which are attended by stable groups.

The space is opened as a source of options and experimentation in a horizontal way since all women, regardless of their "role" in the network, can participate in the sessions together. Thus, apart from the permanent activities described in the theory of knowledge, there is room for acupuncture, choir, yoga, dance therapy, film club, different craft workshops and sporadic workshops that non-members of the network offer for a

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[170] Author's translation. De Rerum Natura verse 254.

specific period as acting workshops, handling of new technologies, creation of Russian dolls (facilitated by women of the Ukrainian community), recycling etc ...

Illustration 29: Example of the quantity of monthly activities and attendances

ACTIVITIES	Total activities Jan-Feb 2018	Total attendance Jan-Feb 2018	Total participants Jan-Feb 2018
Art and crafts	2	16	14
Dramatherapy	16	192	71
English	64	630	82
English conversation	3	28	23
Film club	5	59	33
French	5	16	9
German	17	184	50
Greek - Advanced	15	143	30
Greek – Basic	18	168	53
Greek - Intermediate	31	340	46
Homework support	27	195	23
Information sessions (health and legal)	21	153	63
IT class	15	159	50
Laugh and let it go (laughter therapy)	8	79	30
Poetry workshop	3	29	23
Visual arts	7	86	33
Various workshops (yoga, collage, mindfulness, reading club)	18	146	64

Source: Melissa Network database. Author's update.

In this way, the activities described and listed above and in the theory of knowledge promote self-knowledge, knowledge development and instruction. These activities provide a series of windows and ideas that invite the participants to deviate from the path determined by places of origin, families, cultures, social norms and host countries. The host society also expects certain behaviors and attitudes in this new context. At the same time, it is taken for granted that women will eventually understand and in the "best cases" assimilate the social norms of the host society, a process that will de facto grant them the label of integrated[171].

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[171] All this expressed in a critical sense, taking into account how the host society understands the integration process.

It is understood that Melissa's space gives free rein to any type of option and combination, always trying to preserve the neutral nature of activities, that is not being influenced by western trends or customs and avoiding falling into colonizing representations by presenting refugee and migrant women as women belonging to underdeveloped countries; illiterate, oppressed and victims of their society and culture. Furthermore, the network favors the rhythm and desires of the group when facilitating the sessions, according to the participants' rhythm and desires. In several cases the facilitators are women members of the network who offer specific workshops such as visual arts among others, in which the facilitator is an Iranian-born artist who has been in Greece over 30 years. In other cases the newly arrived participants take over the process facilitating workshops and even co-facilitating opening and closing rituals in drama therapy sessions, as T.P[172] therapist of MN highlights "Sometimes they do the rituals, the beginning ritual or the ending ritual, they facilitate […] They feel the own this process, is not like I have a therapist […] it is their process, they are the teachers of the group, they take the time to talk".

Psycho social support sessions are key when referring to general indeterminism and self-determination, the activities and sessions are de facto the *Clinamen*, in other words, their destinations' deviation that in turn will be affected by the shocks, alliances and exchanges with their network mates arisen in the material space.

MN's theory of resistant nature is a hybrid, it does not become purely materialistic since in the network indivisible working atoms are not material, they are processes, ideas, experiences and emotions of non-material character although, in turn, they are conjugated with material elements necessary to understand reality. Tangible objects that make up the

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[172] I13: April, 17th 2019.

resistant network are the material space (the house) and its material components that help to perceive it as a safe and dignified space in a material, symbolic and subjective way.

8.2. ARCHEOLOGY OF EMOTIONS, EXPERIENCES, PROCESSES AND IDEAS IN MN

It is important to consider the type of emotions and processes that are explained in the theory of knowledge, since when taking into account the way in which elements are conjugated and what kind of elements appear, we can establish the type of relationships that configure the reality of MN's theory of resistant nature.

Different basic emotions and their corresponding feelings most prevalent in MN (as explained in the theory of knowledge) such as fear, surprise, sadness (basic ones) nostalgia, homesickness, uncertainty and frustration (feelings) generate different types of actions, processes and relationships within the network.

Thus, starting with fear and according to Delumeau (2005) fear has been considered concomitant of human existence because it has oriented the lives of women and men to the unknown and the uncontrollable that threatens life.

8.2.1 Fear

Fear as a basic emotion makes us react, in as much as the reactions to a stimulus or a fact that frightens are immediately triggered. We know that fear is the most dominant emotion in the modern world Delumeau (2005). The fear that appears when there is a harmful threat can be chronicled in populations that inhabit hostile places where high levels of violence and systematic Human Rights violations are common practices. These are places where the State does not offer protection or has disappeared, as in war-affected countries or failed states.

Refugee women participating in the Alef program come from places that they fled for several reasons that endangered their lives and where their rights were not respected.

Chronic fear can generate long term profound stress which activates a specific response depending on the situation and the person. Thus, there are three different ways to react when we feel fear: Fight, flight, and freeze and the three of them are mechanisms that help us survive. If we think of fighting as a reaction, this response can turn highly powerful when populations and collectives take the ownership of the emotion and transform this energy into concrete actions.

For instance, fear felt by women in MN leads them to share their experience with others (not in all cases) through drama therapy, poetry workshops and any other activity, or through the comfort of the space, that might activate their need to share and find a support network as a response to their disclosure.

A support network is a resistant network which is ready to take action when needed. Networks help to overcome fear and collective actions defeat individual fears. Various examples sustain this idea, like the journalists' networks around Mexico united to overcome fear and work together against violence and blackmail. The creation of these networks using fear as a channel to respond through actions is explained by López & López (2017) in their article about emotional communities to face state violence.

> The networks conformed throughout these years as a result of the attacks on journalists in Mexico are collective actions that have tried to conjure fear experienced individually and face the obstacles by exercising professional work. This form of horizontal articulation constitutes emotional communities that are created as a measure of protection, when journalists are exposed to threats and violence[173].(p.61)

Flight as a response to fear is the action that all women participants of Alef program have performed in the past. Otherwise they would not have been able to reach Greece.

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[173] Author´s own translation.

The flight response chosen helped them flee from the violent context where they were living. This reaction let them survive. So, with this fact in mind , we can perhaps say that the first step done by MN participants was flying from a threatening environment, and after that, once in Greece they have gradually began to fight due to the safer context.

The freezing reaction could be the most frequent one, even if we do not notice it, when a reaction is needed in front of an alarming situation. It is worth noting that the reaction of several cases that have passed by MN after an alarming situation was to freeze, but there was also an evolution of or change in the reaction after a while, when the freezing reaction vanished into another thing depending on the issue. After several cases I understood that some elements were influencing this reaction, such as the close attention, the environment and the support of the participants that are most present in the common space and are the ones who react first. The space and approach allows women to express the bad and the good, then both the space and approach are also created to allow expression, to inspire the subaltern to speak. Fear is an emotion that has defined their past, for most of them is the prevailing emotion which has led them to be in Greece today.

8.2.2. Sadness

Sadness appeared in the past but also deluges the present moment or the first period of their migration process along with nostalgia, despair and sorrow.

G.A, one of the psychologists of MN explains how different emotions appear throughout the process "prevailing emotions at the beginning are feelings related to sadness such as despair and sorrow[174]". After some drama therapy sessions they feel much more comfortable crying and expressing sadness, which is not often expressed by words or crying due to the widespread stereotype that grown up women should not cry. "They

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[174] I8: February, 2nd 2019.

need to be strong, their children should cry, not them[175]", as T. P (MN psychologist) points out. However they do not get stuck in that. The first three or four months have to do with the past, but after a while they focus on their present moment, which is characterized by the presence of a different emotion. Although women pass through various emotional phases, sadness is mostly related to the past, needless to say that it can appear constantly throughout the process as they face complex situations (explained along sections 3 and 4) on a daily basis. Moreover, as subalterns, many of the women cannot express or communicate their feelings and emotions. For instance, one of the strategies some women used in the past to cope with feelings of sadness, according to Ghafournia's[176] (2017) research, was "that whenever they were feeling desperate, lonely, and powerless they took refuge with Allah, talked to him, prayed or read the Qur'an"(p.153). They couldn't share or communicate their sadness with others and found a way to express through religion.

Then, possibly, MN participants discovered a new place and different ways to express not only their emotions but their needs, opinions and thoughts. During the process they search for a way to keep and develop these forms used in the past as well as re-thinking and adding new ones arisen within the new space in which they share and is to be used as a hub for expression.

8.2.3. Surprise

This emotion appears in most of the ladies due to their contact with a new environment and access to activities and disciplines unknown to them. It is one of the most prevailing emotions felt in the middle of the process which in many cases becomes curiosity.

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[175] I13: April, 17th 2019.
[176] Research on Muslim women and domestic violence.

Surprise is an emotion characterized by its reaction to a strange event or stimulus and it has an adaptive function: adapt the reaction to the new situation. This emotion maintained over time could become curiosity and a desire to discover, according to Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi (1998) studies, they consider human beings are curious (social) animals and without any reward, except for which it implies the satisfaction of curiosity we are activated according to the way we process the information of the environment. In this way, on many occasions the curiosity unleashed by surprise generated desires in the women to know and try new things.

Something that we have experienced with several women who come to the center, is that many times they come before or stay after the activities which correspond to their group to attend also other activities and sessions of their interest.

In addition to curiosity, we must not forget other emotions in this secondary case like uncertainty, which also appears constantly in the participants of MN. Uncertainty on the other hand, is a secondary emotion that also appears as a result of surprise in women and is intrinsic to their status as asylum seekers. The woman is waiting for a decision related to her asylum claim that never arrives and when it does arrive, the social context and the reception conditions provided by the Greek state and the European Union themselves continue generating uncertainty. Uncertainty produces high levels of stress, somatization and irritable and depressed moods that are present in the center when issues regarding their legal situation need to be managed.

8.3. RELATIONS AND PLANS

In opposition to the sadness and fear often felt by MN's participants due to their past and present uncertainties, the community develops openness, empathy, compassion and sorority. Relationships are generated through the space, activities, workshops and sessions that in turn serve as tools to manage prevalent emotions.

The social power of emotions manifests itself through social movements, politics (mainstream and non-mainstream), even to create national identities, Ahmed (2004). Ahmed invites us to consider the political implications of feeling or not feeling something. Moreover, I would add that emotions generate an engine of action that turns victims and survivors into agents of change, as Christopoulou and Lazaridis (2012) understand, and with the possibility of organizing and creating support networks that can also evolve into political influence. In the current context, as in MN, when women like Soraya (MN participant) raise their voices to denounce Human Rights violations in their countries of origin or the conditions in which they live once they arrive to Greek territory, for example.

"Women have rights. I want to decide about my future. The most important thing is to achieve this and for men to understand this too… As women, we have to fight to achieve our rights, for us and for our children. My dream for myself and for all women is to have the freedom to make our own decisions". S.J. 24, Afghanistan giving her words to Amnesty International for a special report on refugee women in Greece[177].

That is why we must understand the reality or the nature of MN besides being space for construction, action and organization for certain purposes, as a union of migrant and refugee women for a concrete struggle, the defense of women's rights, visibility of their problems, specific needs and the search of common solutions to common problems.

This reality starts from the emotions described above. Precisely emotions, and the way in which they are understood and shared by the members of the emotional community will lay the foundations of what types of relationships are created in MN. These women practice compassion naturally and such compassion causes emergence of solidarity and sorority between the members.

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[177] Interview available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2018/10/refugee-women-in-greece/[25/01/20]

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"When Farahnaz feels sad, I try to make her happy. I empathize with her. We are like sisters"[178]. M.G, 24.Afghanistan. Field notebook, April, 4th 2019.

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[178] Amnesty International also took her testimony for their report on refugee women.

And when the sun rises we are afraid
it might not remain
when the sun sets we are afraid
it might not rise in the morning
when our stomachs are full we are afraid
of indigestion
when our stomachs are empty we are afraid
we may never eat again
when we are loved we are afraid
love will vanish
when we are alone we are afraid
love will never return
and when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard
nor welcomed
but when we are silent
we are still afraid

So it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive

«A Litany for survival-», AUDRE LORDE

9. ETHICS IN EPICURUS

According to Epicurus' ethics pleasure is the most precious good for human beings. Someone finds pleasure when avoiding pain, "he dedicated himself, in the pleasant company of his friends, to live and teach his doctrines in a small plot outside Athens known as The Garden, in whose frontispiece the following was read: Here reigns pleasure"[179]. (Villarino,2014, p.244)

Pleasure is the absence of pain, the imperturbability of the soul. Epicureans called it ataraxia (ἀταραξία) and the way to achieve pain avoidance is through wisdom (wisdom and knowledge are obtained according to the MN theory of knowledge by understanding and managing emotions, trauma, developing resilience and building up support networks as we have seen in section 7).

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[179] Author's translation

When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or willful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts and of merrymaking, not sexual love, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest disturbances take possession of the soul[180](Epicurus, 2004, p. 3).

Then there are several aspects that can help human beings find pleasure (having in mind the definition of pleasure as the absence of pain) as Epicurus says, and these aspects will set the structure of this section. 1) The need to control passions: the most important virtue is prudence, 2) friendship and its importance and 3) justice and politics.

9.1. NEVER TOO FOREIGN WHEN THERE IS PAIN AVOIDANCE

Reviewing the ideas and writings of Epicureans from Ancient Greece and Rome, apart from the fact that they might have written them thinking of the context in which Epicureans lived, that is to say the garden (where regardless of their background, people living in the garden had their basic needs covered) I would say that the theory could be summarised as follows: the way in which a male citizen of the ancient Greek city (πόλις, polis), educated and with access to resources, could find pleasure. This is what I understood while reading Cicero's explanations of Epicurean ethics, that apparently only men are able to control passions, one of the main practices needed to achieve pleasure, and seek pain avoidance.

On the other hand, we denounce with righteous indignation and dislike men who are so seduced and corrupted by the charms of the pleasure of the moment, so

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[180] Epicurus letter to Menoeceus based on the translation by Robert Drew Hicks, with minor emendations by Daniel Kolak (2004).

blinded by desire, that they cannot foresee the pain and trouble that are bound to ensue; and equal blame belongs to those who fail in their duty through weakness of will, which is the same as saying through shrinking from toil and pain[…] The wise man therefore always holds in these matters to this principle of selection: he rejects pleasures to secure other greater pleasures, or else he endures pains to avoid worse pains[181] (Cicero, 2001, p. 2)

 If we bring this idea to the present moment, he would be talking about how western, middle class, educated, heterosexual and healthy men (mentally and physically speaking) could find pleasure nowadays.

Melissas's community members cannot control their passions or practice prudence in the way that Epicurus explains, exactly because they do not correspond to the target group he is referring to in his writings (as understood from Epicurean texts). That is why the theory has to be adapted to our current historical moment and context. In this sense MN's members control their passions by expressing them, taking into account that they have been silenced in the past and that this experience of being silenced has generated pain inside them, mental and physical. So finding their voices and ways in which these women as subalterns can speak, would bring them pain avoidance and consequently pleasure. Perhaps moderation here does not function, therefore sometimes extreme actions may be the ones to activate or spread the message that must be heard and visible when talking about Human Rights violations. As Spivak (1988) says even if the subaltern speaks she will not be listened to and I add, will these women be listened to unless they are integrated in the host western society? But then, what do we understand by integration? If the subaltern happens to be listened to, then, she or he won't be subaltern anymore. She states while being subaltern she won't be allowed to speak. In order to be listened to (as subalterns), integration should be understood as the majority of

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[181] 1914 translation by H.Rackham (1914)

the society understands it, following the premises and messages given by the mainstream media, Greek law[182] and populist speeches. The European Commission defines integration thus "it is a two-way process based on reciprocity of rights and obligations of third-countries nationals and host societies that foresee the immigrant full participation". Integration is conceived as a "balance of rights and obligations".

The Melissa Network is doing arduous integration work and that is why it is focused on offering and revising the idea behind integration. The members have been making huge efforts to construct their own philosophy and approach, presented below.

> Melissa's philosophy and approach to integration is based on two premises:
> • The idea that integration is a process of mutuality which cannot take place in spaces of exclusion […] all activities are taking place within the Melissa premises, in the city centre, in close interaction with the migrant communities and the local population, in an inclusive and welcoming space.
> • The idea that integration is a process; long-term, non-linear and holistic, and not a lesson to be taught to or imposed on migrants and refugees. Melissa's approach aims to support people in developing their life-strategies and contribute to social cohesion, in the context of a community of solidarity, learning and sharing. As such the needs and inquiries of members and participants, as well as their curiosity and their creativity co-shape the trainings and activities. (Melissa Network & Eliamep, 2019, p.5)

So turning to the possibility of being listened to as a subaltern, we can say that integration process is a tool to achieve pleasure and avoid pain. For this reason, MN has

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[182]" In April 2013, the National Strategy for the integration of third-country citizens, which replaced the National Strategy of 2011, was published in the Ministry of Interior. Comparing the two strategies someone can easily understand the completely different perspective on the meaning of integration in an institutional level. "Integration is a dynamic, a two-way process of mutual adaptation of both immigrants and citizens of the Member States". The meaning of integration, given by the common basic principle 1 of the EU, is adopted by the National Strategy of 2011, emphasizing the meaning of "the security regime of legal migrants who decide to stay, participate in public life through the right to vote and be voted, to do the naturalization interview and acquire Greek citizenship for the 'second generation'." On the contrary, the national strategy of 2013 defines integration "as a situation where different national groups maintain their diversity and the limits of the group they belong, but at the same time they participate *equally with the natives in basic procedures of production and distribution of goods, services and administration.*". Andromachi Papaioannou (2015) Available at: https://g2red.org/what-intergation-means-for-the-government/ [16/01/20]

its own way to understand and enact integration, which does not correspond to the mainstream idea of integration, and indeed, tries to change and fight against it. And yet there is the possibility to listen to each other among the network's members. By listening to their friends they can start upon their way to pleasure. One of the most effective resistance strategies that exists when dealing with any kind of adversity, stressful situation or pain, is the mutual support Kropotkin (1902) and union of affected people fighting for the same cause. The narratives created that are born from this union are narratives that emanate from the bonds and ties woven as a result of the association. As the anthropologist Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos (2006) points out when referring to sorority, "What would happen to women without encouragement and support in crisis situations that are so many. We would not have survived the vicissitudes of life without other known and unknown women, near or distant in time and on earth[183]" (p. 123).

We have seen that social exchange and the fact that, in a common space, women of different nationalities share their experiences of migration, their lives before the migratory period and of adaptation to the new context, results in the creation of a network of migrant and refugee women.

9.2. NEVER TOO FOREIGN WHEN THERE IS JUSTICE AND POLITICS

Justice in this context is closer to the concepts of reparation and recognition, which can be symbolic. Recognition could come through a recognition of rights and status by the authorities and the society. Symbolic reparation occurs in Melissa when a woman receives validation of what she is expressing or going through from the others. Validation and collective compassion can strengthen the community, so here community building is directly related to politics and justice. It is the path followed by the women, who are

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[183] Translated by the author

fostered by the network to get organized. Getting organized is a political act itself, and their goal apart from supporting each other is to seek justice.

At the same time, women and the network need to be conscious of what Melissa's position is regarding the approach to feminism and the way feminism takes place within the material and symbolic space of the network. Melissa Network is characterized by its decolonial[184] view, as the network is composed of women from 45 different nationalities, where differences and commonalities between cultures and origins must be taken into account to coexist and establish alliances. Members and founders work on avoiding western and white feminism by finding multiple discourses and practices that represent different experiences of oppression. The women themselves articulate and construct their own discourses in which they identify themselves through their process. This is possible through the multi-cultural community component of the initiative and the importance given placed on putting the person at the center, while trying to avoid gender bias in the meantime. I have chosen some words written by Lugones (2010) on decolonial feminism which theoretically fit with the idea presented above on how this concept is materialized in MN:

> Furthermore, feminism does not just provide an account of the oppression of women. It goes beyond oppression by providing materials that enable women to understand their situation without succumbing to it. Here I begin to provide a way of understanding the oppression of women who have been subalternized through the combined processes of racialization, colonization, capitalist exploitation, and heterosexualism. My intent is to focus on the subjective-intersubjective to reveal that disaggregating oppressions disaggregates the subjective intersubjective springs of colonized women's agency. I call the analysis of racialized, capitalist, gender oppression ''the coloniality of gender.'' I call the possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender ''decolonial feminism.''

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[184] The founders and members themselves come from countries that we would not classify as first world and/or the western world. They all have a story and experience of migration and are conscious of where to position themselves.

Women and the network are conscious of each one's position, this allows to perceive and feel the prevailing atmosphere as peaceful and tolerant. Being conscious of their differences and commonalities lets them organize in a practical way. Thus MN is a material space where intersectionality is embodied. Intersectionality proposes the study of overlapping or intersected social identities and their systems of oppression, domination or discrimination. It analyses how various biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, different abilities, sexual orientation, religion, age, nationality and other axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels. Each element or feature of a person is understood as inextricably linked with all other elements in order to fully understand one's and a collective's identity. Women's identities are built on an intersection of different kinds of abilities and developed skills to overcome oppressions and discriminations based on their country of origin, culture, sex, class, different abilities… But these oppressions and intersections are not discrete categories, we need to understand them as fusioned in order to identify their complexity and put in place resisting strategies as Lugones (2014) explains:

> Resisting at the intersection of oppressions and at the intermeshing does not undo either. We inhabit both the reality constructed categorically and the reality of fusion. But we resist as different race-gender fusions than white women. Indeed, once the categories do not determine the possibilities, one can understand a great multiplicity of resistant race/gender fusion.(p.76)

Intersectionality has been used and evolved in several discursive spaces, one of those analyzed by Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) is where we situate Melissa's initiative and the discourse adopted by this thesis:

> A third category of intersectional projects reflects the reality that while intersectionality has been the subject of disciplinary travel, it is far from being only an academic project. Both in its earliest articulations and in its subsequent travels,

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praxis has been a key site of intersectional critique and intervention. We define praxis as encompassing a wide range of phenomena, from society- and work-centered movements to demand greater economic justice for low-income women of color […] to state-targeted movements to abolish prisons, immigration restrictions, and military interventions that are nominally neutral with respect to race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, and nation but are in fact disproportionally harmful to communities of color and to women and gays in those communities (e.g., Spade 2013). As part of these efforts, scholars and activists illustrate how practice necessarily informs theory, and how theory ideally should inform best practices and community organizing. These concerns reflect the normative and political dimensions of intersectionality and thus embody a motivation to go beyond mere comprehension of intersectional dynamics to transform them (p.786).

Regarding intersectionality it is understood that women face similar obstacles in different forms for to similar reasons, the most common being racism and sexism. For instance we present two incidents that explain how a black woman from DRC faces different ways of racism from an Afghani Muslim woman, although both experience discrimination or violent acts just by being black (a woman was shouted violently inside a public bus), or wearing a hijab (the girl's hijab was removed by a man in the public space). In such cases MN staff along with the woman filled out an anonymous report form aimed to be sent to the Racist Violence Recording Network[185], to which MN belongs.

In some cases, when ladies first arrive at Melissa's premises and start their lessons in a group composed of a mix of nationalities, there are women coming from countries that do not themselves have many migrants. They may not have attended a lesson for a long time, if ever, and it may also be the first time that they share a class with people from other countries. Reactions can be different, but most of the time women are silent or timid,

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[185] The Racist Violence Recording Network primarily focuses on monitoring and recording racist attacks against refugees and migrants in Greece.
Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the network's data is used to alert authorities to changing trends or escalations in hate crime. The network also raises awareness of hate crime and methods for combating it; supports victims to report incidents formally and search for legal aid; and organises training programmes for civil society and institutional bodies on how to identify, record and combat hate crime. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights website: https://fra.europa.eu/en/promising-practices/racist-violence-recording-network [25/01/20]

glances can be an act of communication, spoken language is non-existent as they do not communicate in the same language yet and have learnt to be silent. Differences related to their origins, intersections and unavailabilities sometimes generate a timid atmosphere in the beginning. Here the teacher's pedagogical skills are key to provide insight, as the unfamiliarity is the main reason which generates fear or rejection, promoting equal treatment among nationalities is crucial. Teachers have developed several tools to work on coexistence and tolerance, engaging women to meet each other and find commonalities.

"I believe that there is a benefit from a mixed class for the learners in terms of the learning object, the Greek language and in personal terms, both of them […] I think when the teacher believes that and understands the personalities and nationalities as equals […] they become to see it, like it really works, it really has some good results [...] The role of the teacher is very important because many conflicts and stereotypes may be raised. If the teacher cannot handle this situation then. It has to be a person, a personality to talk to them, to make them feel […] that the things are as the teacher says that we are all equals and we don´t have any reason to be divided […] and when it starts like this, then everyday you build something and you see the smiles that are coming and then the smiles help, after the smiles you have their help and then you start to feel like a group"[186].S. D[187]. 44 Greece. Educator at Melissa Network.

Knowing this, they can identify common concerns and experiences to build up a strong group in which they can rely on, apart from also being learning peers. The group process helps participants to learn the importance of not being alone, so this intermediate

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[186]Extracted from an interview with the Greek teachers. Sotiria is one of the two Greek teachers at Melissa network.
[187] I10: April, 5th 2019.

process between the individual and community is crucial in establishing the bases of community awareness.

Melissa's role of supporting women to get organized (the last stage of the process) which is the most important political contribution of Melissa, exactly consists of supporting them by being available and open to accompanying them, according to their organizations or associations' needs. As we explained before in the theory of knowledge, this is possible due to the process (individual, group and community) and the role played by emotions in that process.

As Sara Ahmed defends (2004) not only the personal is political, but also the emotional is political. Emotions are public and socially organized, she explains they are constructed and meant through a collective imagination and a certain social interaction. She gives the example of a girl who encounters a bear; the fear (emotion) is not within the girl, it appears in the moment they interact. That meeting in turn is shaped by stories and previous knowledge, because she has been taught that we have to be afraid of bears. Then we can state the existence of something like emotional learning.

Anger felt by women members of the network can lead to action, to politics, to certain social alliances and support. These alliances among participants in their daily interactions reinforces the group, as V. K[188], one of the Melissa's educators, explains "once a girl in the class […] said in the class that I´m fighting a lot with my husband and my husband hits me, she showed pictures of the bruises and everything, she showed them inside the class, all of them got angry, even the ones that don't speak anything, not even Greek, or English and with gestures […] and other stuff, tried to convince her that she cannot tolerate it anymore and she has to leave him. This in the class created a very nice, a circumstance, the girls realized that they are all facing common problems".

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[188] I11: April, 5th 2019.

There is also a sense that something must be done to change injustice, we can appreciate it in phrases like this one stated during a legal information session "What does it mean to be African? Algerian consider themselves as white and not African but Algerian. In South Africa they are white with blue eyes... We have to stop talking about colors because it is not just whites and blacks, there are many colors, we will never stop if we start with this issue"[189]. T.M. 20. DRC. Legal Information session. March, 21st 2018. Group 1.

As mentioned before, Ahmed (2004) considers that the social power of emotions is manifested through politics and through social movements. This is verified by materialized examples of this idea, such as the squatter movement in Exarchia. There, from a feeling of anger, alternatives to injustice have emerged in the form of new groups and accommodation projects which are part of the grassroots movement in Greece. Melissa Network itself was born out of indignation and sadness in the face of common problems that need to be solved collectively.

9.3. NEVER TOO FOREIGN WHEN THERE IS FRIENDSHIP

We relate Epicurus' notion of friendship to community. When reading his writings, we can deduce from the descriptions of the relations between Epicureans and the form of organization of those living in the garden that it was what we can understand nowadays as a community project. We can understand this idea in his writings when he refers to friendship to touch upon the relations that took place within the community and hence the importance of building supportive and trusting relations among members.

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[189] Testimony extracted from the legal information sessions (carried out by the author as a psychologist and the legal expert of the network, A.F), focused on the discussion about and provision of information on women's rights. During the intervention cycle, women freely express their experiences, realities and complaints.

Communities formed in order to resist and obtain pleasure through their struggles are being created worldwide to face unfair situations, conditions and Human Rights violations, such as the group and emotional community named Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio (H.I.J.O.S), experiences of youth collective action that have developed various initiatives to build historical memory, alternative communication and cultural resistance in Colombia The emergence of H.I.J.O.S:

> Is a process of identity configuration that not only goes through the rationalities or the desire to claim the political militancies of past decades, but emerges from emotions, from anguishes, from fears, rages and shared pains being catalysts for union and organization. The emotional component managed to strengthen family ties, without necessarily being relatives, and enhanced the action where silence, oblivion and paralyzing fear were imposed[190].(Aguilar-Forero, 2017.p.44)

Other examples are the Networks of Journalists in Mexico mentioned before who systematically suffer from state violence.

> The networks formed throughout these years as a result of the attacks on journalists in Mexico are the collective actions that have tried to conjure the fear that is lived individually and face the obstacles in the exercise of their professional work. This form of horizontal articulation constitutes emotional communities that are created as a measure of protection, when journalists are exposed to threats and violence[191] (López & López, 2017, p. 61).

There are some examples of community initiatives that were created recently, such as the case of the PAH (Platform of People Affected by the Mortgage) in Spain, mentioned by Zaragoza (2017), to develop alternative options and pathways aimed at embracing subjects in need of support. The difference between these communities and

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[190] Author's translation.
[191] Author's translation.

other ways to get organized is the awareness of the importance to put care and emotions in the center of political action:

> It was not only to interpose the body to stop an eviction, but to create spaces, communities, which from the beginning are thought of as emotional, while the management and care of emotions are a fundamental factor. The PAH, founded in Barcelona in 2009, is an excellent example. From the beginning it is very clear that one of its main axes of action must be emotional, in what some documents call "rescue of people"[192]. (Zaragoza, 2017, p.6)

Melissa's women's testimonies make visible their level of awareness and understanding of their situation. They denounce and share among themselves Human Rights violations, crimes, situations of injustice, inequality and discrimination.

"In Afghanistan, if a woman is raped, her family put her in a square and they kill her by throwing her stones." A.S. 20. Afghanistan. Legal info sessions. March, 2nd 2018. Group 3.

"There are many groups supporting each other when a guy rapes. Worst case they will be in jail for 2 months and then they will be released." F.A. 24. Afghanistan.Legal info sessions. March, 2nd 2018. Group 3.

Their response and way of resisting (here resisting is another way to find pleasure) begins with the expression and revelation of traumatic experiences in groups and with their friends, as described in the three processes explanation (Theory of Knowledge). Sorority here means resistance and a support network. Some women have developed trusting relations with other members of the network with whom they share and help each other, "to go find your daughters to school, lend you money, stay in my house if you are afraid or have nowhere to go". N.H., 19.Iran. Field notebook. February, 8th 2018.

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[192]Author's translation.

Thus, the network constitutes in itself into an action of resistance, a space of dialogue in which the witness and she who testifies create and develop their own narratives based on recognition, validation and listening, thereby emphasizing the active and subversive role of women as survivors of experiences related to sexual and gender based violence, wars and other contexts where systematic Human Rights violations take place. They are women who dissociate themselves from the term "victim" and recognize themselves as resilient subjects of change. During the process, the members of the network detach themselves from their identity as victims as the only defining characteristic. The community and individual process of which they are part ceases to focus on the victim subject. This is achieved through the communicative practices that occur in the network by recognizing these women as Other in their ethical dimension (Fuentes & Puente, 2013).

The combination of emotions, community and peer support coming from subaltern women could be framed within community feminism, a movement that started in Bolivia in the beginning of the 90s. It was founded by indigenous women in Bolivia and one of its first communities is called *Mujeres Creando*. Community feminism is not understood as a theory but as a kind of political action that contributes to changing the oppressing and unfair context in which the women of the community are located. *Mujeres Creando* operates in Bolivia but it is a movement that has given a voice to women in other Latin American countries such as Mexico, Argentina and Chile. It seeks to build up community by taking into account the history, culture and background of its members, while recognizing differences and oppressions suffered. As Julia Paredes (2012) founder of the movement explains, *Mujeres Creando* advocates in the public space (streets, neighborhoods, associations) for women's discriminations issues and brings attention to unfair situations through artistic activism, participation in internal and local assemblies

and producing discourses published in academic and less formal journals and interviews to spread the message. Francesca Gargallo (2014) who has been studying community feminism in depth gives us a picture of what community feminism is and how it is articulated.

> The feminism that is built in community assemblies in La Paz and Cochabamba takes up the political practices of the indigenous neighborhoods of the Bolivian cities. They do not vote on the actions to be taken, they talk until they find consensus which is expressed in the street after deciding collectively […] This way of building feminist action has a slow history that, according to Julieta Paredes Carvajal, is woven with feelings of recovery of denied dignity and confrontation with bodies deprived of power and beauty and lives ignored and invisible of Aymara women. Only by recognizing each other, finding and forming a community of ideas, of wills and of people willing to become subjects of a project of collective and personal liberation, never individualistic, is it possible to recompose themselves and recompose the community at the same time[193] (Gargallo, 2014, pp.169-170).

Women in MN might not belong to the same communities but their bodies have been deprived of power and many lives have been ignored and made invisible, as with the Aymara[194] women's experiences. Melissa's space and community seek to recompose women's lives and create a new community out of the mixture of different migration stories and origins inhabiting a new place, which is Greece. In this sense MN differs from the original conception of community feminism by creating a new mixed community instead of recomposing a common and non-mixed one such as the indigenous examples in Bolivia and Guatemala. Since contexts, situations and realities are different we cannot reproduce or establish a perfect simile.

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[193] Author's translation
[194] Native inhabitants of Andean plateau since pre-Columbian times.

9.4. CHALLENGES

One of the main challenges would be including women members and participants in some decision making processes related to the space and daily tasks or issues, through establishing meetings or informal assemblies so that the ownership process gains strength and becomes more obvious for the women. This initiative allows them to experience and join in the decision making processes, take decisions and experiment in a safe space with different ways and contexts wherein to find their voices. One of the Melissa's founding principles.

Moreover although Melissa could be an amplifier to spread the messages of the women, on some occasions due to a lack of strict control of the media, their messages and pronouncements could lead into an uncomfortable and dangerous situation for the women. Special awareness around consent must be transferred to the media and to professionals who want to interview and gather testimonials in order to avoid double victimizations and recapture traumatic events that cannot be handled by a journalist or a researcher. It has happened on one occasion that once the issue was published, the network found that some materials had been misused against the woman's will, words and photographs in this case. This is an important matter to take into account since most of Alef participants are refugees and asylum seekers whose lives are at risk and could be threatened if their photos and words are exposed through social media and recognized by reaching the hands of those who may menace them. Here is the controversy of being an amplifier of women's voices and taking the risk of what happens when their messages are already spread. The network tries to control and carefully explain the purposes of the interviews, pieces, photos etc… while being inside the space, but once the material and professionals leave that space there is less chance to follow up and monitor the use of the material given by the women. Although the network and the staff present themselves as

strictly respectful with women's consent and will, it should not be taken for granted that people coming from outside understand this respect in the same way. In some cases, extra measures have been taken after the information and materials have been made public, but when the woman sees her will has been betrayed, even these extra measures will not be able to restore the specific woman's trust in the network.

From August 2015 until December 2018 Melissa Network of Migrant Women in Greece has featured in media coverage 200 times in 11 different languages (English, Greek, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, French, Ukrainian, Polish, Japanese, Swedish). If we break the numbers into years:

Illustration 30: Melissa Network media coverage

Period	Mentions
2015 August- December	28
2016	47
2017	60
2018	55
Total	200

Source: Melissa Network

9.5. ON PAIN AVOIDANCE AND THE WAY TO FIND PLEASURE

The idea of being heard and raising their voices to avoid pain and find pleasure has some obstacles in the way. When women raise their voices they are exposed to the public; the general public (people interested in listening) but also their families and other people close to them who could be in danger by being recognized by perpetrators or their States of origin. They can be at risk, resulting in feelings of fear of perpetrators of Human Rights violations not only by outsiders but even people from their own families or close environments.

Sometimes people choose to feel pain along the way because at the end they know there is a great pleasure waiting for them, as Cicero explains in his writings on Epicurean ethics:

No one rejects, dislikes or avoids pleasure itself, because it is pleasure, but because those who do not know how to pursue pleasure rationally encounter consequences that are extremely painful. Nor again is there anyone who loves or pursues or desires to obtain pain of itself, because it is pain, but because occasionally circumstances occur in which toil and pain can procure him some great pleasure. To take a trivial example, which of us ever undertakes laborious physical exercise, except to obtain some advantage from it? But who has any right to find fault with a man who chooses to enjoy a pleasure that has no harmful consequences or one who avoids a pain that produces no resultant pleasure?[195]. (Rackham,1914, p.1)

But always when talking about people whose lives are at risk, special protection measures should be taken to not endanger the women and to avoid extra pain and double victimization. The pain that is taken for granted is the one that accompanies the testimony, although sometimes disclosures can generate a feeling of release. The ideal conditions[196] must be provided so that the person does not suffer or suffers the less, just the pain implied by its expression. We talk about unnecessary pain when women are disrespected and their consent remains forgotten by misusing testimonies.

Melissa Network is an open space that receives media, journalists, writers and artists who often ask the network for permission to make the initiative visible and to obtain information and material about the space. Sometimes also women are asked to participate in the creation of a piece, work or article. Although one of Melissa's strategies of raising visibility and promoting the defense of Human Rights is the dissemination of information through these type of professionals, complications have been encountered and work has been done to strengthen measures taken to protect women.

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[195] Rackham's translation.
[196] The person who collects the testimonies or interviews must be a person prepared for and sensitive about working with testimonials; avoiding uncomfortable questions or requiring scabrous details, and avoiding value judgments or misplaced comments so as to create a comfortable space where the woman feels safe and calm.

Illustration 31: Examples of articles about MN

Source: Author

Illustration 32: Painting on a fabric, visual arts workshop by a MN's participant
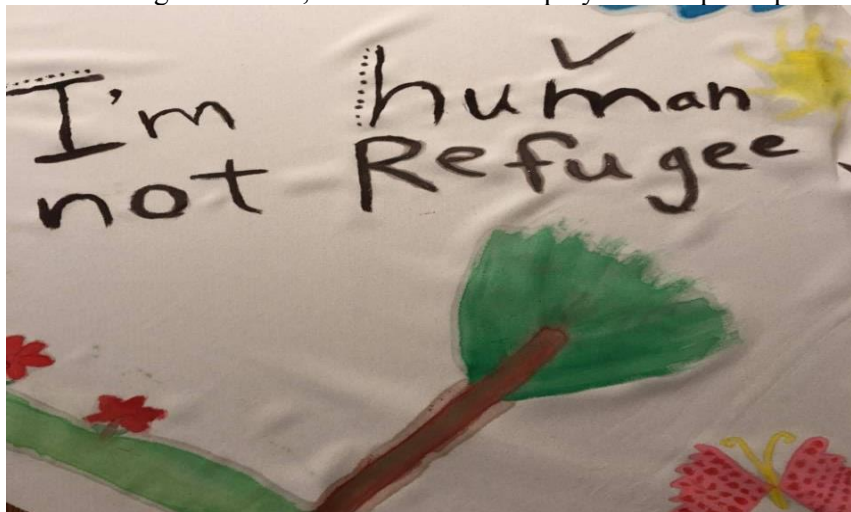
Source: Melissa Network

Being women together was not enough. We were different. Being gay-girls together was not enough. We were different. Being Black together was not enough. We were different. Being Black women together was not enough. We were different. Being Black dykes together was not enough. We were different. Each of us had our own needs and pursuits, and many different alliances. Self-preservation warned some of us that we could not afford to settle for one easy definition, one narrow individuation of self […] It was a while before we came to realize that our place was the very house of difference rather the security of any one particular difference. (And often, we were cowards in our learning.) It was years before we learned to use the strength that daily surviving can bring, years before we learned fear does not have to incapacitate, and that we could appreciate each other on terms not necessarily our own. (Lorde, 1993, p. 226).

10. FINDINGS

10.1. FAILURE OF THE EUROPEAN ASYLUM SYSTEM AND MIGRATION POLICIES

Through the review of different agreements and measures taken by the EU we can understand that so far, most of these have not been deep enough to systematically address the current European migration context. The EU's political responses both internally (European Agenda for Migration) and externally in cooperation with third countries (EU-Turkey Declaration and return agreements with third countries), are still in development and still falling short. They present difficulties in dealing with the current situation, proposing slow and outdated solutions that do not correspond to the idea of a Europe in solidarity tha is respectful of Human Rights. Instead, as Sergio Carrera, Steven Blockmans, Daniel Gros and Elisabeth Guild (2015) point out, priority has been given to security (home affairs), military concerns and interests of the EU and its member states, focusing on border controls, return, readmission and the fight against human trafficking instead of focusing on ensuring full compliance with fundamental Human Rights. This constitutes one of the Achilles' heels of the current Migration Agenda.

10.1.1. Against UN ruling = Lack of protection

The entire apparatus designed to respond to the current migration context has become a vicious circle. Despite the decrease in arrivals in Greece in 2017 (due to the measures taken by the EU in 2016) which led to the activation or increase of flow on other routes such as Libya-Italy or Morocco-Spain, the Turkey-Greece route has been re-activated in 2019, according to UNHCR numbers, 36,386 people arrived on Greek territory from January to September 8th[197].

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[197] Data available in UNHCR website on the Mediterranean situation, available at:
https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179 [25/01/20]

Illustration 33: UNHCR's official data on arrivals to Greek territory

Previous years	Sea arrivals	Land arrivals	Dead and missing
2018	32,494	18,014	174
2017	29,718	6,592	59
2016	173,450	3,784	441
2015	856,723	4,907	799
2014	41,038	2,280	405

Source: UNHCR's official data

In 2018 the rigidity of dissuasive measures such as the increase of Frontex vessels (monitoring EU external borders), return agreements with third countries such as the EU-Turkey[198] agreement with which 1,806 people have been returned to Turkey in the three years of the agreement's existence, a specific bilateral Greek-Turkish readmission protocol, other forced returns and the revival of returns to Greece by applying the Dublin III protocol that during 2018 received 9,142 incoming requests from which 233 were accepted, have failed to reduce the flows.

Illustration 34: Number of departures by deal and agreement

Type of agreement	Departures
EU-Turkey deal	1,806
Returns under the bilateral Greek-Turkish readmission protocol	600
Other forced returns	14,182

Source: Esiweb report

Moreover, the EU has focused on reducing and combating irregular migration instead of providing assistance in emergencies on the high seas and ensuring respect for human rights, as observed in the recent refusal by States to offer such relief assistance at

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[198] Data returns drawn from ESIWEB report available at: https://www.esiweb.org/pdf/ESI%20core%20facts%20-%20EU-Turkey%20Statement%20three%20years%20on%20-%2015%20April%202019.pdf [25/01/20]

sea. It also condemns asylum seekers to living in detention camps in subhuman and unworthy conditions or in a street situation, trying to access the Greek asylum system while remaining undocumented and without access to basic services.

The Greek Council for Refugees denounced recently the accommodation conditions and homelessness faced by asylum seekers, "The number of applicants who face homelessness is not known. However, due to lack of sufficient accommodation capacity on the mainland in 2018, newly arrived persons, including vulnerable groups, resort to makeshift accommodation or remain homeless in urban areas of Athens, Thessaloniki and Patra. Homelessness is a serious risk for persons who have not been identified as vulnerable and as thus are not eligible for accommodation under the UNHCR scheme, bearing in mind the lack of a clear referral pathway for mainland camps and the reported lack of capacity[199]".

All this occurs while waiting for the resolution process of their asylum claim that in most cases exceeds two years of uncertainty. In this way, by analyzing the emergency mechanisms put in place by the EU to deal with the current immigration situation and the special programs to cover the basic needs of asylum seekers, it is possible to understand the relations the EU establishes with certain countries as well as the access to programs given to some nationalities and denied to others. This implies a clear exercise of discrimination depending on the nationality of the asylum seeker. Thus, some people enjoy a faster procedure when processing their asylum application while others experience difficult access or are directly targeted for deportation. Depending on the nationality of the asylum seeker, he or she will have access to special programs such as the relocation program, or will be relegated to spend long periods waiting to receive an

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[199] Available at: https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/housing/conditions-reception-facilities [26/01/20]

answer regarding her/his asylum claim while living in detention centers, the streets, squats… and experiencing subhuman living conditions (physical and sexual violence, lack of hot water and heating, lodging in tents and food in poor condition).

Illustration 35: Nea Kavala refugee camp almost destroyed due to stormy weather, 23/09/19.

Source:ReFocus artist.

10. 2. LACK OF PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM IN EUROPE

Cases presented and data gathered through reports as well as the analysis of the situation from a participant observation perspective show us the deficient and inefficient functioning of the Greek reception system, which is supported by EASO. Asylum seekers experience:

-The inaccessibility to pre-register through Skype and long waiting periods to do the first interview as well as to receive a decision are some of the various obstacles faced by the asylum seekers when trying to exercise their right to ask for asylum.

-Inadequate facilities to accommodate people and undignified living conditions, according to various reports on refugee sites' living conditions, or the absence of accommodation facilities, thus rendering asylum seekers homeless.

-Exposure to high levels of violence, harassment and sexual and gender based violence in the reception sites but also in the streets for those homeless due to their vulnerable situation, undocumented women are a target of trafficking and smuggling networks.

-Awful functioning of the reception system constitutes one of the main reasons for the existence and high prevalence of sexual and gender based violence. This system fosters violence against women when it leads them to live in camps under inhumane conditions with the added danger of being exposed to rape, harassment and physical violence.

The same system obstructs asylum seekers from getting access to asking for asylum by the deficient functioning of the pre-registration exercise via Skype, where there are not enough professionals to answer the calls of asylum seekers. The multiple difficulties to getting documentation mean that people resort to paying smugglers in order to avoid homelessness (we must have in mind that without documents renting a house is impossible even if you have the money to pay for it). Women once again are especially exposed to transactional sex and to sexual and gender based violence. They could end up trapped in a trafficking or smuggling network, with few options to prove that they have been victims of trafficking. As we have seen, according to trained police professionals on this issue, these women do not qualify as trafficking survivors since their experience does not fit that of manuals.

10.3. BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVES: IS THERE HOPE?

It is a fact that grassroots are the ones active no matter what the momentum is, since they are themselves affected and sensitized people responding to the emergency, the first ones present and the ones who remain when everybody leaves or local NGOs become overwhelmed by protocols and thus unable to respond quickly to an emergency.

According to my experience in MN and by being in communication with other grassroots organizations, informal responses performed by grassroots groups allow for a closer, faster and more efficient range of action, such as the distribution of water by the GFR in houses occupied by refugees or the treatment of undocumented women in the case of MN (which NGOs were otherwise prohibited from doing). I say that it is a fact that the grassroots organizations are the first ones that respond and the ones that remain because knowing the dates of their foundation and their current operation they arrived before the INGOs and they have stayed. They have constantly offered an emergency response that some local NGOs were not accustomed to. They also have more experience in community outreach due to their proximity to and bonds with the newly arrived affected population. For example, GFM has the support of 40 communities and is currently reaching more thanks to the ability of the communities to approach the target population. This is also the case of MN, which has proven to be a reliable initiative during its 4 years of implementing a holistic integration program of which more than 800 women have been participants. MN has established itself as a grassroots organization for refugee and migrant women being a point of reference for SGBV case management and psychosocial support based on the community approach. We know this by the number of cases referred from other organizations (every day we were receiving an average of two referrals from other NGOs), the long waiting list of women who want to participate in the Alef program (which normally exceeds 100) and the number of appearances in the media as an incipient and satisfactory initiative, not only in the Greek media but in other European countries and even outside the continent.

The program has been evolving due to its success and low rate of drop-outs. Another indicator of its potential longevity is the continuum it provides to participants, welcoming and receiving women not only as newcomers, but accompanying and also

supporting them all the way through the self-organization process. MN serves as an umbrella, and as a material and a symbolic space to rely on. As communities won't disappear when the "refugee crisis" finishes (if it does) migrants will continue to be present in Greece, since migration is a never-ending phenomenon. Melissa's contributions will continue being meaningful and useful.

This is one of the main findings regarding the grassroots movement, that they are able to respond to emergencies through mobilization and are moved by their emotions being transformed into powerful actions which eventually can become political actions.

MN accompanies women in a humane way and then, when the emergency finishes opens the way to the self-organization that will once again serve to strengthen the associative fabric and the grassroots organizations. In many cases they will be an umbrella or reference for new communities and organizations that they accompany collectively and where the collective aspect will be more important that the individual one. By this we mean that grassroots groups adapt to the moment by being flexible, useful and knowing how to respond to the needs of the context and the moment. We can see how different grassroots organizations are a reference point depending on their expertise in areas such as capacity building, non-formal education, advocacy and psycho social support. We have seen their evolution from their foundation until now and how they have been updated with different projects and initiatives, since they are the ones that have first-hand information and know the needs of the people affected. Besides, it must be taken into account that they can communicate without losing information through interpretations, as they usually have people from different communities who speak the language and know the background of migrants' countries of origin, something that helps a lot when a more complete picture of the situation is needed.

We have understood that grassroots and social movements are triggered by emotions which are transformed into powerful actions. For instance in the squatting movement, empathy arises among migrants and refugees who are living in Greece at seeing newcomers arriving sometimes from the same countries of origin or from places with similar problems, and that are facing similar situations as those they faced in the past when they arrived to Greece. This feeling of empathy ignites a support and action mechanism. Then emotions and feelings are understood as forces for social change, this idea is drawn out of the interviews with activists, grassroots leaders and grassroots staff as well as the narratives of women members of the MN.

10.4. COMMUNITY AND HEALING: SORORITY AS AN ANSWER

The success of the community approach is one of the main results reflected in the attendance and growing participant numbers of the Melissa Network, starting with a pilot of 30/40 women and ending up in 2019 with more than 1,000 (1,119) women who have participated in or received any kind of support from MN and 100+ women are active members participating on a daily basis.

Illustration 36: MN's evolution of numbers

2016

Daily average of participants (women+kids)	Monthly average of participants (women+kids)	Other beneficiaries per day (average)	Other beneficiaries per month	Total number of members/participants accumulative	Total number beneficiaries
20 kids	30 kids	2 kids	40 kids	128 participants	218 members/participants
50 women	90 women	12 women	240 women	90 members but non participants (communities)	240 other beneficiaries
70	**120**	**14**	**280**	**218**	**458**

2017

Daily average of participants (women+kids)	Monthly average of participants (women+kids)	Other beneficiaries per day (average)	Other beneficiaries per month	Total number of members/participants accumulative	Total number beneficiaries
25 kids	30 kids	2 kids	40 kids	208 participants	398 members/participants
98 women	100 women	10 women	200 women	190 members but non participants (communities)	240 other beneficiaries
123	**130**	**12**	**240**	**398**	**538**

2018

Daily average of participants (women+kids)	Monthly average of participants (women+kids)	Other beneficiaries per day (average)	Other beneficiaries per month	Total number of members/participants accumulative	Total number beneficiaries
40 kids	80 kids	3 kids	60 kids	233 participants	836 members/participants
70 women	123 women	15 women	223 women	171 members but non participants (communities)	283 other beneficiaries
110	**203**	**18**	**283**	**404**	**1119**

Source: Melissa Network database. Author's update.

Moreover, the monthly number of success stories is an indicator of the effective functioning and success of the initiative. Then we can deduce that the success of the initiative results in the success and importance of community processes as key elements in healing, and in self-organizing processes as drivers of change, since the focus and the bases on which MN rests is community.

The flexibility of the community center is also a factor in its success, allowing the possibility to re-enroll after a period of absence (frequently due to serious personal issues). The possibility to come back and not lose their access to the space is a pull factor while other initiatives prohibit their continuation when the person does not come regularly to the activities. The group and space facilitate the learning of life skills (through activities, sessions and language lessons) that help to develop self-confidence, self-determination and independence. At the same time, these skills will allow them to have access to several contexts and opportunities such as work, for instance after having learnt

another language. These life skills and strategies can be applied and used anytime and anywhere once they are learnt, and sometimes women simply discover they are interested in and able to develop a certain skill. The center is also a safe space to test and try new skills with the community, avoiding shame and feelings of failure.

Through the sense of belonging to a group, community develops self confidence and feelings of safety, with its members knowing they have built a network to rely on. It provides grounds for stability and safety which allows the person to recover and regain trust in people. Being accompanied and experiencing their healing process with others, not only individually but as a group, makes it easier to accept and embrace loss and to overcome complex experiences and pain.

"...if women stand behind one another and support each other, they can prove to the world that women are not weak, that they are not someone else's property or wealth, and that they can't be ignored or marginalised. This said, women represent the best of the world, for they excel all. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to close by asserting that a woman can rock the cradle with one hand and shake the world with the other." R.J, 14, Afghanistan Women politics website[200].

Community also develops resilience and more specifically community resilience by sharing experiences and ways of coping together. Moreover, it contributes to the value of the network and to the support of women, based on caring practices, loyalty, availability and active listening, among others. Being conscious of that constitutes the basis of understanding the importance of collective action. Community resilience, support networks and the safe space, set the grounds for the creation of their own and new

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[200] Available at: https://women-politics.com/2017/10/06/poem/ [25/01/20]

grassroots associations and initiatives such as KWETA and Club of Ukrainian Women in Greece. Access to creative activities and new stimulus prompt well-being and self-care. Collective activities inspire curiosity and interest that help women to raise their levels of self-steem.

"They make me very strong [at Melissa]. They give me hope about the future... as a person that can do everything. Now, I feel that at first I was like a bird, but now I feel that I can be a prime-minister in the future[201]." M.J, 16. Afghanistan. Laura Flanders Show

There is an additional factor regarding the community approach and the fact of having people in the community who have faced similar experiences and processes in the past. Their participation contributes to the success of the initiative because, by having overcome the arrival in Greece and a trip under similar circumstances, co-founders and members of the grassroots initiatives, especially the Melissa Network, understand some of the participants' needs and are able to implement and provide a more adjusted treatment based on their own, personal experiences.

We have chosen some words given by D.C.V, one of the Melissa Network co-founders, in an interview to a feminist initiative, that express perfectly the finding explained above. "As migrant women, some of us embarked on the same journey. We share our own experiences of what worked and what didn't, creating a synergy between long-term migrants and newly-arrived refugees women so that a wider community of solidarity and sisterhood is formed [...] Women come to the [Melissa] centre and they know they're at home. Most of them have experienced trauma so it's been hard for them,

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[201] Available at: https://melissanetwork.org/migrant-stories/ [25/01/20]

but I think that being in a place where they feel respected creates a sense of trust[202]".

D.C.V. 70, Philippines. (Interview given to Sisters of Europe initiative).

10.5. CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGES

Nothing has been learned from the deployment of means and measures taken to address the migration situation in Greece since 2015. After four years, once the focus of attention on "the refugee crisis in Greece", lack of funds and the humanitarian emergency crisis has become old news , international NGOs have left and the situation has returned to its initial state.

Numerous groups of people arrive on a daily basis to the Greek islands closest to the Turkish coast. So far in 2019, a total of 41,940 people have arrived in Greek territory by sea and land. Taking into account the fact that the total arrivals in 2017 after the borders' closure, the militarization of Idomeni and the establishment of the EU-Turkey agreement (a period of full swing humanitarian action lead by the international community and NGOs in Greek territory) was 29,718 and 32,494 in 2018 (when international aid and funds began to leave the Greek territory) it is clearly a very high figure.

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[202] Available at: https://sistersofeurope.com/being-a-migrant-and-a-woman-is-like-double-marginalisation/[25/01/20]
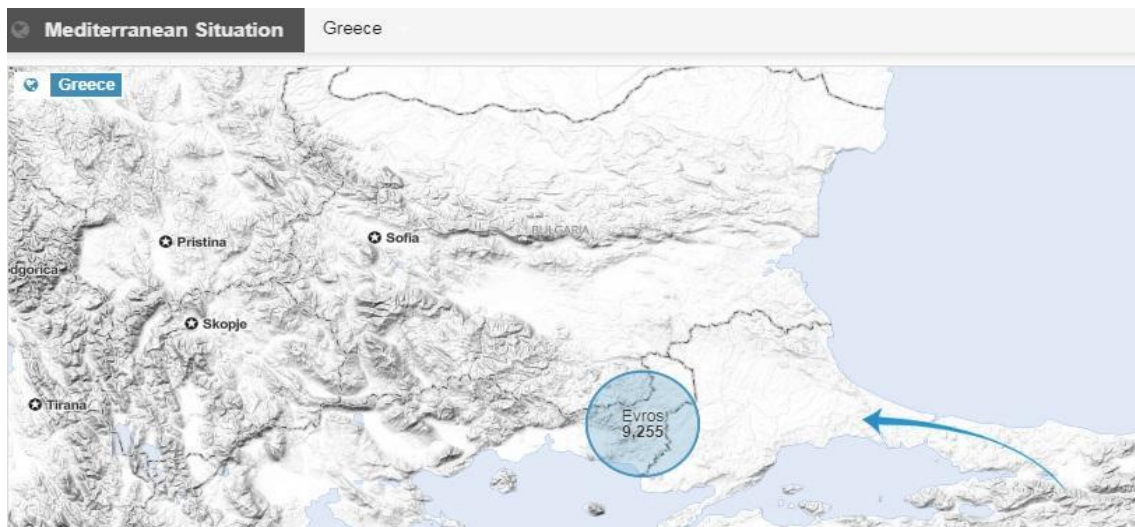
Illustration 37: Arrivals to Greek islands 2019[203]

Source: UNHCR

The land route that crosses the Greek-Turkish border through the Evros river has been reactivated, with 9,255 arrivals so far this year according to UNHCR data.

Illustration 38: Arrivals to Greek territory through the Evros river 2019

Source: UNHCR

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[203] Mapa drown from UNHCR website which monitors the Mediterranean situation showing arrivals to the Greek islands from January 1st 2019 untill September 22nd 2019.

The situation on the islands has worsened dramatically. If in previous years the living conditions in the hotspots were described by NGOs such as Human Rights Watch as unsustainable and undermining the dignity of the people who lived there, in 2019 the conditions worsen day by day as explained by the NGO Refugees International. "The situation for asylum seekers on the Greek islands is rapidly deteriorating. Twelve days ago, an unaccompanied Afghan child was killed and two others injured in a fight. It is just the latest incident in the overcrowded and tense Moria reception center on Lesvos, Greece, where on Aug. 29, 16 boats carrying more than 600 asylum seekers arrived — the most since early 2016. Many of the Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) like Moria are overcrowded, with appalling living conditions and poor security. "The detention camps are overcrowded. In the Moria hotspot, whose capacity is 3000 people, we find 9,800 people of which more than half live on the margins outside the field in makeshift tents and with no access to decent water and sanitation. Their lives do not count the same as a western human being's life, they are condemned to live on the margins of society in refugee camps which provide tents, containers or structures as ephemeral and disposable as the value placed on their lives.

Illustration 39: Moria hotspot settlement[204]

Source: Author

People who arrive in the Greek islands must spend a period of time (which sometimes exceeds a year) in overcrowded and unhealthy conditions in the detention camps, until they acquire permission to move to the mainland. But that does not imply an improvement in or acceleration of the status of their asylum application. Asylum seekers on the islands have restricted access to the mainland through strong control measures implemented in hotspots, such as the extreme delay in waiting times for the issue of their asylum triptych. This card is their identification document without which they cannot leave the island. There has been also a reinforcement of surveillance by Frontex and sanctions and obstruction of the examination of their asylum application are some of the consequences to be faced if a person leaves the island without the permission of the competent authorities (in this case the regional Greek asylum office in Lesbos).

This summer, following the change of government, an eviction operation began on the occupied buildings in neighborhoods of central Athens that housed more than 600 asylum seekers and refugees without housing alternatives. The cessation of services provided previously by NGOs that have now abandoned the country, such as health care and interpretation work, has negatively affected the refugee population living in the urban center of Athens.

A new modus operandi of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation is being developed in the Greek context. During the last year there has been an increase in undocumented people waiting for pre-registration as asylum seekers (it is important not to confuse this with the appointment for the interview that takes an average of two years). This fact forces the undocumented population to seek housing alternatives that do not require documentation and exposes people, especially women, to trafficking networks. Moreover, undocumented persons may suffer police checks and be held in cells

and detention centers for migrants as a result of the inaccessibility of the asylum system, when if it worked properly these persons should have access to making an asylum request without remaining undocumented for long periods of time.

The response of grassroots organizations and social and collective movements, has as its main triggering factor the common emotion of anger and feelings of injustice felt by some layers of the civil society and by specific groups and populations. We have seen how emotion has the capacity to act as an engine of change, generating in the case of Greece a network of long-term responses.

Social movements and grassroots initiatives' actions are taken or organized on demand by the affected. In this way, people take ownership of their destinies, giving an account of their actions to themselves, their companions and partners instead of donors and decision makers.

The dramatic social context described throughout this thesis has taught us that reality does not change with macro programs and projects but from person to person and from community to community. We need to change the units of population analysis and intervention into groups, communities and individuals. We need to build a strong social fabric and support horizontal grassroots initiatives that work with less overwhelming numbers than INGOs, in order to put the person at the center and regain a sense of humanity when dealing with people on the move and with complex migration experiences. As Del Soto (2018) states:

> Being engaged in a mission that by definition is almost lost is discouraging, and
> "not pretty", but the drive to understand, and the curiosity driven by our own beliefs
> and values of what is fair (and liked to a more beautiful world) can fill a lifetime
> of work, or at least inspire other people to become stronger and effective advocates,
> if not now, then in future generations (p. 298).

«Every woman here has problems, and when we come together
we leave behind the ugly things in the world.»

«We fall, get up and reach our goals.»

«When I am sad I come to M. and it changes my feelings, my mood.»

Testimonies of women about Melissa Network

11. CONCLUSIONS

This section contains the main contributions of the doctoral research carried out in these last four years. As an introductory summary, we would like to emphasize some fundamental ideas which underpin the conclusions of this thesis. On the one hand we have seen and it is worth highlighting how, at the macro level and based on various theories and recent realities, the organization of civil society from its bases and its support networks generates long-term human strategies and interventions. On the other, how belonging to a community, in this case one of a sororal nature, and the common identification of its members favors the development of resilience, understanding it as a tool that facilitates well-being and the enjoyment of a balanced individual and community mental health. And thirdly, the importance of emotions and their management as an engine of change, a way to obtain and develop knowledge and a means to know reality.

Focusing on the humanitarian sector, we have seen the optimal characteristics that a formal or collective organization must have in order to really function as a support structure and provide a quality and humane community social intervention in a specific population, migrant and refugee women, based on the case of initiatives in the city of Athens and more specifically in the Melissa Network.

11.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EMOTIONAL AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY

The central axis of this thesis revolves about the importance of practicing community, and in this case a sororal community comprised of women in transit, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and/or women with complex migration experiences. A community approach based on solidarity between women and mutual support which places the person and community at the centre while fostering their agency and ownership, has been presented as a successful alternative to programs and interventions implemented by the international humanitarian sector. As social animals and as a society that "progresses", we have rescued a historical idea, the mutual support of Kropotkin (1902), which makes us evolve with quality and humanity rather than competition. The community and support networks are those that help people cope with adversities and share joys in an optimal state.

Taking into account the examples of different communities, grassroots initiatives and social movements that have been analyzed and presented, we can draw as one of the important conclusions of the thesis that emotion and community are substantial elements that enable another type of intervention and an accompaniment approach, based on the accompaniment of populations with stories marked by trauma and violence.

The emotional community Rosenwein (2006), has the power to open the healing and reparation process in these populations. Emotions caused in many instances by traumatic and violent experiences are understood in a similar way by the members of the emotional community. This lays the foundations, the rhythm of the individual and community process and the framework of action of the emotional community itself.

It is important to highlight the experiences and similarities regarding the understanding of emotions by the members of the community, since this fact is what differentiates them from other types of communities as explained by Rosenwein (2014),

an emotional community is understood as that group that shares a set of rules about emotions and a common assessment of them.

We have seen that the shared emotion and enjoyment of the members of the community is a prerequisite and a necessary step for their organization and for the group strengthening that allows for the increase of possibilities of well-being and claiming rights as pointed out during the investigation while analyzing and explaining emotions shared among the community members.

11.2.COMMUNITY INTERVENTION AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS

We can state, after analysis, that a community intervention carried out successfully and meaningfully implemented in contexts of forced migration and extreme violence is capable of developing coping strategies and long-term support. In opposition to one of the historical problems of humanitarian action and aid; that assistance in emergency or development projects is often a short term solution that creates dependencies, we find community interventions that are committed to ensuring the agency of the people affected and the development of the social fabric as intervention strategies. Society and community-based initiatives are crucial when it comes to enriching the social fabric, they are also an alternative to the search of solutions and accompaniment through mutual support. Mutual support is one of the key concepts related to community psychology since most of community psychology concepts and practices are based on mutual support actions. Helping transactions between members of the community are crucial to develop individual and community resilience as well as individual and community wellbeing.

The intervention of local and international NGOs differs from the grassroots initiatives presented in this thesis in the fact that the former do not originate from affected people or involve little active participation of them. There is often deficient (sometimes

non-existent) accompanying work and the solutions implemented are short-term. Focusing on MN, the success of its approach comes from the efforts made to focus on the person, group and community simultaneously. The daily accompaniment of women in their routine tasks is possible through the provision of a material space that presents itself as a home, a welcoming place that women can use and take ownership of.

Other basic initiatives presented in this thesis also count on the presence of a space and experiential knowledge, since their founders are people with migration and integration experiences in Greece. Hence its success, but in differentiating MN we must understand the novel contributions of the community and the social intervention implemented and materialized in the network itself.

The comfortable and cozy material space, freedom of access to activities, lessons and psycho-social support, availability of previously denied (basic) resources and the provision with dignity of community meals, language classes, Drama therapy sessions, painting, poetry, ceramics, extracurricular support etc, sometimes provided by members of the network themselves, create an atmosphere of equality, with horizontal (rather than hierarchical) relationships with the staff. It is this atmosphere, perceived by the participants, that encourages the development of their independence, and the improvement of self-concept, self-esteem, emotion management and the development of resilience in depth. The network complies with the idea that psycho-social intervention provides a framework in which the dignity, culture and willingness of the person is respected.

Apart from the social intervention, we have seen that the very existence of the network and its evolution, with the entry of new participants and the personal development of its members, shapes the community that acts and relates among its members and participants as an emotional and resilient community. It is the community

itself that manages its intervention from within, with the decisions of its members, staff and founders. The program is designed and implemented by themselves with the help of professionals, hence its success and ownership.

The creation of a community that designs and develops its own social intervention is a powerful and important contribution to the community-based social intervention field. This intervention includes individual and collective support, organizational and community development, development of resilience, compassion, promotion and defense of Human Rights and concrete struggles triggered by common emotions of people with different problems and origins, able to create agents and initiatives of change.

11.3. EMOTIONS AS AN ENGINE OF CHANGE: COLLECTIVE ACTION, RESISTANCE AND SORORITY

Alternative initiatives in the Greek landscape have been doing for several years what we would call or recognize as containment work, offering solutions and support to the refugee population who, without these, would be bound to poverty and abandonment in the streets. Although it is true that grassroots organizations, movements and social groups cannot reach the whole population, the work they perform with people living on the streets frees the Greek context from chaos and an even more complex situation that would arise if these initiatives were not present. Grassroots organizations and social groups respond in real time to the precarious situation in which migrants, refugees and asylum seekers find themselves, created as we have seen by the European States and the European Union itself through the implementation of protection and deterrence measures that are presented to the public as measures based on solidarity and aid.

Communities emerge from these initiatives and movements during their creation and intervention process. But the community is something more complex than a certain group of people who try to manage common problems and rely on common, shared ideas.

If we think beyond the idea of community understood at the micro level (communities of neighbors, rural villages, mothers and fathers of a particular school, etc.), we realize that finally, in one way or another, everybody belongs to one. We constantly talk about the scientific community, or the international community, but who are these people and who belongs to these communities? These are groups that are not created from below, the social base, and yet influence the lives of individuals.

Taking as a reference communities created from the bottom up as a support initiative or common project of a social nature, a community is a material and symbolic meeting place, where commonality is the center of union and on which the foundations of community dynamics are based.

As we have seen throughout the thesis, the community is capable of healing and reweaving the ripped and torn fabric of society. From the bottom up, the community restructures social wounds unleashed by the actions of entities from above. These wounds are institutionally imposed for the sake of maintaining the established order, in this case by the international community , that is the European, global states and institutions) that design mechanisms such as migration protocols and agreements that directly affect people on the move and / or displaced. These people at some point become part of a grassroots community like Melissa, either in their neighborhood or with their migration companions in the host country. Ultimately, in one way or another, people seek networks of support in their day to day lives, in their routines, and even more fervently when they find themselves in complex and dramatic situations. In this way, borrowing Foucault's (1976) idea of resistance (previously referred to), the international community formed by the relations between States, decisions, measures taken by international organizations, legislation and intra-state conflicts would constitute a framework of complex power, not as a single Machiavellian entity but macro structures with a history and nuances that make

their identification difficult (as Foucault also states). In this sense the grassroots organizations and social movements on which the thesis focuses would be the resistance to those powers, following Foucault's idea that "where there is power there is resistance".

The importance of emotions and capacity to take action is one of the aspects that are found throughout the thesis, both at the macro level, being the engine that triggers a social movement, Ahmed (2004), and at the micro level in small communities, groups and individuals. Emotions are able to unleash a movement like the *squatting movement* in Athens, which we refer to as the occupation of empty buildings to house asylum seekers and refugees living in the streets, and to redirect the lives of women survivors of sexual violence through support, expression and management of emotions as happens with the women members of MN.

The emotion shared by a community surpasses the role of the personal emotion as the center of individual attention. Community emotion triggers actions and movements as pointed out by Hooks (1989) when it refers to the feminist movement and pain as an indispensable element that gives meaning and strength to the movement to acquire political character. But pain is not the only emotion that can be a source of identification and change, there are other emotions such as sadness, surprise and fear that allow the identification of a common problem and prepare the ground for action.

The understanding of reality, the way to achieve knowledge and reach the absence of pain (as a way to achieve ataraxia, imperturbability of the soul according to Epicurus), can be achieved while building and practicing community through experience sharing, peer support and the identification of common emotions which help the members in developing individual and common wellbeing.

One of the most effective resistance strategies practiced when dealing with any kind of adversity, stressful and / or complex circumstance is the union and mutual support

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of the affected people fighting for the same cause as mentioned before. As Lagarde (2006) explains when talking about sorority and how the intention to create positive relationships and make existential and political alliances among women contributes to the social elimination of different oppressions, we can say these ideas correspond to the alliances we have seen among MN members and participants.

We recognize sorority in the exchange between women and the fact that, in a common space, women of different nationalities share their experiences both migratory and those lived before the migratory period or time of adaptation to the new context, and in the ways in which these materialize in the creation of a network of migrant and refugee women. In this network, women do not need anyone's permission to claim their rights, express their disagreement and denounce the injustices they suffer daily because of the mere fact of being migrant and refugee women.

Their response and way of resisting begins with the expression and disclosure of traumatic experiences in groups with their peers and learning from each other. The network embodies a resistant action itself. The network constitutes an action of resistance itself, a space of dialogue in which the witness and she who testifies create and develop their own narratives based on recognition, validation and listening, thus emphasizing the active and subversive role of the woman as a survivor of experiences related to gender based violence, wars and other contexts of systematic violations of Human Rights. They are women who dissociate themselves from the term "victim" and recognize themselves as resilient subjects of change, supported by the ownership and redefined sense that they give to their rights. The prevailing sorority pushes the subaltern women Spivak (1988) members of a community or social movement to express themselves and to the personal struggle to free themselves from their oppressions.

11.4. COMMUNITY PROCESS, COMMUNITY FEMINISM AND INTERSECTIONALITY

We have observed how during the collective action processes its members detach themselves from their identity as victims as their only defining characteristic. The community and individual process of which they are a part ceases to focus on the victim subject. This is achieved through the communicative practices that occur when these women are recognized as Other in their ethical dimension (Fuentes and Puente, 2013). Taking into account the concept of Other of Lévinas (1977) that identifies with the figures of orphan, foreigner or widow, in our case the Other would be women survivors of situations of violence, foreigners in a new host country. Lévinas points out how the Other remains intact in her otherness, it is absolute. The group and community practices of which the women of MN are part allow their acceptance process to begin and respect their otherness, listen to it, as explained by Lévinas. This process is a cognition that promotes the traumatic experience within the identity of the person in a way that allows her to integrate it into her lifestyle in a healthy and therapeutic way, consisting of an act of transcendent resistance in herself. Not only an individual and introspective act, but also a group, communal act and the sum of interpersonal relationships.

This process of acceptance and personal work is accompanied by the mutuality presented in chapters 7 and 8, which explains how MN understands knowledge and which is a key element of the network's approach as an essential contributor thereof and ultimately to the individual and group process of the women participants of the network. The ability to express and to be heard by and feel the empathy of their peers implies a healing act in itself. The moment of disclosure of the quiet, the silences not previously expressed and then released over time, starts a process during which these silences evolve as strengths and experiences of resilience that nourish knowledge (since we have related knowledge with identification, management of emotions and trauma, development of

resilience and community development). Knowledge is developed through experience and practice of various tools that allow us to understand the world, the human being and their relationships with each other, while seeking our well-being. The analyzed experiences lead us to the conclusion that well-being resides in the emotions and community.

We have also seen that the network works as an emotional and resilient community that shares emotions and experiences that trigger actions, alternatives and new ways of dealing with the present and uncertain future. Practicing community feminism as has happened in Bolivia and women's groups in Latin America, is a critical awakening and a creation of a support structure that accompanies personal and group processes while nourishing women's political organization as emerged from practical activism.

The community practices a community feminism without being aware of it, since the definition and creation of a common and rigorous political discourse is not the priority at the moment due to the confluence of diverse cultures and origins and the state in which the network finds itself and its participants. The network is still in a process of working on strengthening the group and dealing with complex individual processes of its members.

Community feminism is practiced as Julieta Paredes (2010) states: by relationships, actions and discourses that occur within the network but have not yet articulated themselves a discourse of ownership and are yet to be pronounced by a community in order to externalize and transfer them to the society . It may never happen if the network decides to focus individually and collectively on its members and new members, putting all efforts and professional experience into specializing in psychosocial support and care.

Creativity, also a crucial aspect in the functioning of community feminism and its actions, is impregnated in the material and symbolic space of the network, it is an essential tool when we look for ways to manage both complex and day-to-day problems. Access to education, psychosocial accompaniment and activities of different kinds that transfer and share art and culture with the participants, represent Epicurus' *Clinamen*. They accommodate the deviation of the atoms of straying from the path that characterizes the realities of women and boycott the determinism that has hitherto prevailed in their lives. There may not be major changes, but the mere fact of having access to various information and opportunities opens new windows that, however small, change their path and make it more passable through mutual support.

As we have seen in the analysis of the context and the situation in which people are in transit, those who find their lives classified as disposable and wasted, Bauman (2005) are those that are part of the network. Social movement and community members, and specifically MN´s members newly- arrived in Greece, are a representative sample of the total number of people who have arrived in and have passed through Greece since 2015. These lives, understood by Western society as wasted, correspond to those of subjects without agency destined to receive charity and assistance. People are forced to survive (not live) in unworthy conditions, they are perceived according to the assistance received (undignified reception structures, unhealthy and inedible catering food), as numbers and as beneficiaries of programs that dehumanize people.

Migrant and refugee women who at some point have experienced a disposable life Squire (2018), make up a network that accommodates different identities and stories of oppression. Hence the Melissa network project hosts the life stories of women who unite and support each other through their need to express themselves and seek access to options that have been denied in the past, resulting in the materialization of a peripheral

and decolonial feminism. This feminism takes into account the intersection of various identities such as gender, class, race, religion and the migration experiences that migrant and refugee women have undergone in their countries of origin and in the host country. In this way, the different women who make up the network embody different stories of oppression as we have stated in MN's Ethics (justice and politics section), they also share a common feeling of injustice lived and of desire for change. Intersectional feminist theory is key when understanding the importance of a community of women with different backgrounds and stories of oppression, but in this case we have understood oppressions not as discrete categories but as Audre Lorde understands them, as "non-dominant differences," following the explanation of Lugones (2005), if we understood oppressions as discrete and separable, we would not be able to see the intersections as fluid. Therefore we would be less able to perceive and resist mixed and molten oppressions. We need to understand oppressions in this way so women can deal with mixed and molten oppressions in different contexts as we have seen with MN's participants.

The shared emotion born of their intersections will give voice to the subaltern silenced in the past, opening the possibility of expressing themselves and developing coping and mutual support strategies such as resistance.

The common emotion that unites people, together with its expression leads to action, and with its development leads to political action. Both appear as a resistance to oppression. The common emotion seeks recognition and validation in community partners as a form of restitution and reparation. In the case of MN, fear, sadness and curiosity born from the expression and disclosures of traumatic experiences in the group become the impetus which generates support, resistance and access to education, training, the labor market and so on.

The community and group experience are the elements that ignite and foster resilience, which is extremely necessary to the reconfiguration of the women's identities from victims to survivors. Again, as Ahmed (2004) points out and relating sorority with solidarity, this involves commitment and work (like that of social movements and grassroots initiatives), as well as the recognition of other's feelings, lives and bodies since we live in a "common ground ".

Sorority here means resistance, a support network where some women have created relationships of trust based on caring exchange, which is the basis of community development, personal resilience and well-being. It also means putting care at the heart of actions to recover humanity and find hope.

«Cada mujer aquí tiene problemas y cuando nos juntamos

dejamos atrás las cosas feas del mundo.»

«Nos caemos, nos levantamos y alcanzamos nuestras metas.»

«Cuando estoy triste vengo a Melissa y eso cambia mis sentimientos, mi estado de ánimo.»

Testimonios de las mujeres de Melissa Network

11. CONCLUSIONES

Las conclusiones recogen las principales contribuciones de esta investigación doctoral. A modo de guía introductoria querríamos destacar algunas ideas fundamentales sobre las que versan los cuatro puntos en los que se divide este último capítulo. Por un lado hemos podido comprobar cómo a nivel macro y apoyándonos en diversas teorías y realidades recientes, la organización desde la base de la sociedad civil y sus redes de apoyo generan estrategias e intervenciones humanas y a largo plazo. Por otro, hemos visto cómo la pertenencia a una comunidad en este caso de carácter sororal y la identificación común de sus miembros favorece el desarrollo de la resiliencia, entendiendo la misma como herramienta que facilita el día a día de las personas, su bienestar y el disfrute de una salud mental tanto individual como comunitaria equilibrada. Y tercero, la importancia de las emociones y su gestión como motor de cambio, vía para obtener y desarrollar conocimiento y medio para conocer la realidad.

De acuerdo con el sector humanitario y más concretamente, hemos identificado y analizado las características con las que debe contar una organización formal o un colectivo para que realmente funcione como estructura de apoyo y lleve a cabo una intervención social comunitaria humana y de calidad en una población específica, mujeres

migrantes y refugiadas, basándome en el caso de las iniciativas acontecidas en la ciudad de Atenas y más concretamente en Melissa Network.

11.1. LA IMPORTANCIA DE LA COMUNIDAD EMOCIONAL Y RESILIENTE

El eje central de esta tesis versa en la importancia de practicar comunidad, y en este caso una comunidad sororal cuando hablamos de mujeres en tránsito, sobrevivientes de violencia sexual y de género o mujeres con experiencias complejas de migración. Una comunidad basada en la solidaridad entre mujeres y el apoyo mutuo supone una alternativa a los programas e intervenciones que se implementan desde el sector humanitario internacional poniendo a la persona y comunidad en el centro y fomentado su agencia y apropiación. Como animales sociales y como sociedad que "progresa", hemos rescatado una idea histórica, el apoyo mutuo de Kropotkin (1902), como práctica que nos hace evolucionar con calidad y humanidad, al contrario de la competición. La comunidad y las redes de apoyo son las que ayudan a las personas a hacer frente a las adversidades y compartir las alegrías en estado óptimo.

Teniendo en cuenta los distintos ejemplos que se han analizado y hemos mostrado sobre comunidades, iniciativas de base y movimientos sociales, podemos extraer como una de las conclusiones importantes de la tesis que la emoción y la comunidad son elementos sustanciales que posibilitan otro tipo de enfoque de intervención basado en el acompañamiento de poblaciones con historias marcadas por el trauma y la violencia.

La comunidad emocional Rosenwein (2006) tiene la facultad de abrir el proceso de sanación y reparación en estas poblaciones. Las emociones originadas en muchas ocasiones por experiencias traumáticas y de violencia son entendidas de manera similar por las y los integrantes de la comunidad emocional, lo cual asentará las bases, el ritmo

del proceso y el marco de actuación durante el mismo tanto individual como comunitario de la propia comunidad emocional.

Es importante resaltar las vivencias y similitudes en lo referente al entendimiento de las emociones por parte de las y los miembros de la comunidad, ya que este hecho es el que les diferencia de otro tipo de comunidades como explica Rosenwein (2014), puesto que la comunidad emocional es entendida como el grupo o colectivo que comparte un conjunto de normas y valoraciones comunes sobre las emociones, su vivencia y expresión.

En este caso, hemos comprobado que la emoción compartida por las miembros de la comunidad y su disfrute es paso previo y necesario para la organización y fortalecimiento del grupo, lo que permite aumentar las posibilidades de bienestar y de reclamo de derechos, como hemos visto durante el análisis y explicación de las emociones compartidas por la comunidad.

11.2. INTERVENCIÓN COMUNITARIA Y SUS CONTRIBUCIONES

Hemos podido ver y analizar cómo una intervención comunitaria llevada a cabo satisfactoriamente en contextos de migración forzosa y violencia extrema es capaz de desarrollar estrategias de afrontamiento y apoyos a largo plazo. Frente a uno de los problemas históricos de la acción y ayuda humanitaria, el asistencialismo y ayuda en emergencia o desarrollo que crea dependencias y soluciones a corto plazo, encontramos intervenciones comunitarias que apuestan por la agencia de las personas afectadas y el desarrollo del tejido social como estrategias de intervención. La sociedad e iniciativas de base comunitarias son cruciales a la hora de enriquecer el tejido social, además de ser una alternativa a la búsqueda de soluciones y acompañamiento a través del apoyo mutuo y las redes de apoyo social. El apoyo mutuo es uno de los conceptos clave relacionados con la

psicología comunitaria, ya que la mayoría de los conceptos y prácticas de la psicología comunitaria se basan en acciones de apoyo mutuo. Los intercambios de apoyo y ayudas entre los miembros de la comunidad son cruciales cuando hablamos del desarrollo de la resiliencia individual y comunitaria, así como del bienestar individual y comunitario.

La intervención de las ONGs locales e internacionales se diferencia de las iniciativas de base presentadas en esta tesis en que no vienen de personas afectadas o existe poca participación de las mismas, se realiza un acompañamiento insuficiente (a veces inexistente) y generan soluciones a corto plazo. Centrándonos en MN, el éxito de su trabajo viene dado por su enfoque centrado en la persona, el grupo y la comunidad. El acompañamiento diario en la cotidianeidad de las vidas de las mujeres es posible gracias a la provisión de un espacio material que se presenta como un hogar, un lugar acogedor del que las mujeres pueden hacer uso y apropiarse.

Las demás iniciativas de base presentadas en esta tesis también cuentan con un espacio y acompañamiento desde el conocimiento, puesto que sus fundadoras y fundadores son personas con experiencias de migración e integración en Grecia. De ahí su éxito, pero diferenciando a MN debemos entender las aportaciones novedosas de la intervención social comunitaria que implementa y se materializan en la propia red.

El espacio material cómodo y acogedor, la libertad de acceso, la disposición de recursos antes denegados (básicos) y provistos de dignidad como comer en comunidad, clases de idiomas, dramaterapia, pintura, poesía, cerámica, apoyo extraescolar etc… facilitadas en ocasiones por miembros de la red, crea una atmósfera de horizontalidad percibida por las participantes que fomenta y ayuda al desarrollo de su independencia, mejora del autoconcepto, autoestima, gestión de las emociones y desarrollo de la resiliencia en profundidad. La red cumple con la idea de que la intervención psicosocial proporciona las bases de actuación en las que imperan el respeto por la cultura, la dignidad

y la disposición de la persona. No sólo se realiza una intervención social comunitaria, sino que la existencia de la red y la evolución de la misma con la entrada de nuevas participantes y desarrollo personal de sus miembros va dando forma a la comunidad que actúa y se relaciona entre sus miembros y participantes como comunidad emocional y resiliente.

Hemos podido entender cómo la propia comunidad gestiona su intervención desde dentro con las decisiones de sus miembros, personal y fundadoras. El programa es diseñado e implementado por ellas mismas con la ayuda de profesionales, de aquí su éxito y apropiación.

La creación de una comunidad que diseña su propia intervención social y se desarrolla a sí misma es una contribución poderosa e importante al sector de la intervención social comunitaria. Dicha intervención contempla el acompañamiento individual y colectivo, el desarrollo organizativo y comunitario, desarrollo de la resiliencia, compasión, la defensa de Derechos Humanos y luchas concretas desencadenadas por emociones comunes de personas con diferentes problemáticas y orígenes que son capaces de generar agentes e iniciativas de cambio.

11.3. EMOCIONES COMO MOTOR DE CAMBIO: ACCIÓN COLECTIVA, RESISTENCIA Y SORORIDAD

Las iniciativas alternativas en el panorama griego llevan haciendo durante varios años lo que llamaríamos o conocemos como labores de contención, ofreciendo soluciones y apoyos a la población refugiada que, de no contar con estos, estaría abocada a la pobreza y el abandono en las calles. Aunque es cierto que las organizaciones de base, movimientos y colectivos sociales no pueden llegar a todo el mundo, el trabajo que hacen con las personas en situación de calle e indocumentadas libra al contexto griego de un caos y una situación aún más compleja que tendría lugar si éstos no estuvieran presentes. Se han

presentado las acciones de las organizaciones de base y colectivos sociales que responden en tiempo real ante la situación de precariedad en la que se encuentran las personas migrantes, refugiadas y solicitantes de asilo. Situación, creada como hemos podido ver por los Estados europeos y la propia Unión Europea a través de la implementación de medidas de protección y disuasión que son presentadas ante la ciudadanía como medidas basadas en la solidaridad y ayuda.

De estas iniciativas y movimientos, durante su proceso de creación e intervención, emergen comunidades. Pero la comunidad es algo más complejo que un grupo determinado de personas que intentan gestionar y apoyarse en problemáticas e idearios comunes. Si pensamos más allá de la idea de comunidad entendida a nivel micro (comunidad de vecinas, rural de pueblo, las madres y padres de una escuela en concreto, etc.), nos damos cuenta de que finalmente, de una manera u otra, todas las personas formamos parte de una. Hablamos constantemente de comunidad científica, o de comunidad internacional, pero ¿quiénes son estas personas y quiénes pertenecen a estas comunidades? Agrupaciones que no son creadas desde abajo, desde la base social, y sin embargo influyen en las vidas de particulares.

Tomando como referente las comunidades creadas desde abajo como una iniciativa de apoyo o proyecto común de carácter social, una comunidad es un espacio material y simbólico de encuentro, donde lo común es el centro de unión y sobre donde se asientan las bases de las dinámicas comunitarias.

Como hemos visto a lo largo de la tesis, lo comunitario es capaz de sanar y re-tejer los descosidos y rasgados sociales. La comunidad desde abajo re-estructura y regenera las heridas sociales desencadenadas por las comunidades desde arriba, impuestas institucionalmente en aras de la funcionalidad establecida, en este caso, por la comunidad internacional, es decir los Estados e instituciones europeas y globales que

diseñan mecanismos, protocolos y acuerdos en materia de migración que afectan directamente a personas en movimiento y/o desplazadas. Personas que en algún momento llegan a formar parte de una comunidad desde abajo como Melissa, ya sea en su vecindario o con sus compañeras/os de migración en el país de acogida, puesto que al final de una manera u otra las personas buscan redes de apoyo en su día a día, en sus rutinas, y aún más fervientemente cuando se encuentran en situaciones complejas y dramáticas. De este modo y rescatando la idea de resistencia de Foucault (1976), ya mencionado, la comunidad internacional conformada por la relaciones entre Estados, decisiones, medidas tomadas por organismos internacionales, la propia legislación y conflictos intraestatales conformarían un entramado de poder complejo, no como un único ente maquiavélico, sino unas macro estructuras con una historia y matices que hacen difícil su identificación (como también expone Foucault). Y en este sentido las organizaciones de base y movimientos sociales en los que se centra la tesis serían las resistencias a esos poderes, siguiendo la idea de Foucault de que donde hay poder, hay resistencia.

La importancia de las emociones y capacidad de acción es uno de los aspectos clave de la tesis, tanto a nivel macro siendo motor que desencadena un movimiento social, Ahmed (2004), como a nivel micro en pequeñas comunidades, grupos e individuos. Ha sido capaz de desencadenar un movimiento como el *squatting* en Atenas al que nos referimos como ocupación de edificios vacíos para alojar a personas solicitantes de asilo y refugiadas en situación de calle, y de redirigir la vida de mujeres sobrevivientes de violencia sexual gracias al apoyo, expresión y gestión de sus emociones como ocurre con las mujeres miembros de MN.

La emoción compartida por una comunidad sobrepasa el protagonismo de la emoción personal como centro de atención individual, la emoción comunitaria

desencadena acciones y movimientos como apunta Hooks (1989) cuando se refiere al movimiento feminista y el dolor como elemento indispensable que da sentido y fuerza al movimiento para que adquiera carácter político. Pero no sólo el dolor como emoción es fuente de identificación y cambio; existen otras emociones como la tristeza, la sorpresa y el miedo que permiten la identificación común de un problema y son preparatorias para la acción.

El entendimiento de la realidad, manera de alcanzar el conocimiento y la ausencia de dolor (como manera de conseguir la ataraxia, imperturbabilidad del alma según Epicuro), se encuentran en la comunidad, compartiendo experiencias y apoyos a través de la identificación de emociones comunes construyendo el bienestar individual y común.

Una de las estrategias de resistencia más efectivas que existe a la hora de hacer frente a cualquier tipo de adversidad, situación estresante y/o de difícil abordaje, es la unión y el apoyo mutuo de las personas afectadas que luchan por una misma causa como he mencionado antes. Lagarde (2006), al hablar de sororidad, explica cómo la intención de crear relaciones positivas y hacer alianzas existenciales y políticas entre las mujeres contribuye a la eliminación diferentes opresiones, teniendo en cuenta sus palabras, podemos decir que estas ideas se corresponden con las alianzas que hemos visto entre las miembros y participantes de la red a través de sus testimonios y experiencias.

Hemos apreciado esa sororidad en el intercambio y el hecho de que las mujeres de distintas nacionalidades compartan en un espacio común sus experiencias, tanto migratorias como las vividas antes del período migratorio o de adaptación al nuevo contexto. De esta forma, vemos que dichos intercambios se materializan en la creación y participación en una comunidad de mujeres migrantes y refugiadas. En esta red, las mujeres no necesitan el permiso de nadie para reclamar sus derechos, expresar su

desacuerdo y denunciar las injusticias que sufren diariamente por el mero hecho de ser mujeres migrantes y refugiadas...

Su respuesta y forma de resistir comienza con la expresión y revelación de experiencias traumáticas en grupo, con sus compañeras y apoyándose las unas en las otras. La red constituye en sí misma una acción de resistencia, un espacio de diálogo en el que la testigo y quien da testimonio crean y desarrollan sus propias narrativas basadas en el reconocimiento, la validación y la escucha, enfatizando así el papel activo y subversivo de la mujer como sobreviviente de experiencias relacionadas con la violencia de género, las guerras y otros contextos de violaciones sistemáticas de Derechos Humanos. Son mujeres que se desvinculan del término "víctima" y se reconocen como sujetos de cambio resilientes, apoyadas en la apropiación y el sentido redefinido que dan a sus derechos. La sororidad imperante en un colectivo o comunidad empuja a las mujeres subalternas Spivak (1988) a la expresión y con ello a la lucha personal por liberarse de sus opresiones.

11.4. Proceso comunitario, feminismo comunitario e interseccionalidad

Durante los procesos de acción colectiva, las y los integrantes del mismo se desprenden de su identidad de víctimas como única característica definitoria. El proceso comunitario e individual del que forman parte deja de centrarse en el sujeto víctima. Esto se consigue mediante las prácticas comunicativas que se dan al reconocer a estas mujeres como Otro en su dimensión ética (Fuentes y Puente, 2013). Teniendo en cuenta el concepto de Otro de Lévinas (1977) que identifica con las figuras de huérfano, extranjero o viuda, en nuestro caso el Otro serían las mujeres sobrevivientes de situaciones de violencia, las extranjeras en un país nuevo de acogida. Lévinas señala que el Otro permanece intacto en su alteridad, es absoluto. Las prácticas grupales y comunitarias de las que forman parte las mujeres de MN permiten que se origine y comiencen su proceso de aceptación del

Otro, lo respeten y escuchen como explica Lévinas. Este proceso es una cognición que promueve la experiencia traumática dentro de la identidad de la persona de manera que le permite integrarla en su estilo de vida de forma sana y terapéutica, consistiendo un acto de resistencia trascendente en sí mismo. No solo individual e introspectivo, sino a la vez grupal, comunitario y de la suma de las relaciones interpersonales.

Este proceso de aceptación y trabajo personal va acompañado de la mutualidad presentada en los capítulos 7 y 8, que explica cómo MN entiende el conocimiento, y que es pieza clave en el enfoque de la red como elemento contributivo al mismo y en última instancia al proceso individual y grupal de las mujeres participantes de la red. La capacidad de expresar para ser escuchada y sentir la empatía de las compañeras supone un acto sanador en sí mismo, el momento de revelación de lo callado, los silencios no expresados y guardados en el tiempo son liberados y con el tiempo, durante el proceso, evolucionan como fortalezas y experiencias de resiliencia que nutren su conocimiento, ya que en hemos relacionado el conocimiento con la identificación, manejo de emociones y trauma, desarrollo de la resiliencia y desarrollo comunitario. El conocimiento se desarrolla a través de la experiencia y práctica de diversas herramientas que nos permiten entender el mundo, al ser humano y sus relaciones, a la vez que buscamos nuestro bienestar. Con las experiencias analizadas sacamos como conclusión que el bienestar reside en las emociones y la comunidad.

Además hemos entendido el funcionamiento de la red como una comunidad emocional y resiliente que comparte unas emociones y experiencias que desencadena acciones, alternativas y nuevas formas de enfrentarse al presente y futuros inciertos. La puesta en práctica de un feminismo comunitario como ha ocurrido en Bolivia y colectivos de mujeres en América Latina supone un despertar crítico y la creación de una estructura

de apoyos que acompañan en los procesos personales y grupales a la vez que nutre su organización política desde el activismo práctico.

La comunidad pone en práctica un feminismo comunitario sin ser consciente ya que la definición y creación de un discurso político común y riguroso no es la prioridad de momento debido a la confluencia de diversas culturas, orígenes y el estado en el que se encuentra la red y sus participantes, viviendo aún un momento de fortalecimiento del grupo y trabajo de los procesos complejos e individuales de las mujeres integrantes de la red.

Se practica un feminismo comunitario, como entiende Julieta Paredes (2010), por las relaciones, acciones y discursos que se dan dentro de la red, pero aún no han articulado un discurso de apropiación y denuncia como colectivo con el fin de exteriorizarlo y trasladarlo a la sociedad. Puede ser que nunca llegue a ocurrir si la red decide centrarse en acompañar individual y colectivamente a sus miembros y nuevas integrantes poniendo todos los esfuerzos y experiencia profesional en especializarse en el acompañamiento y atención psicosocial.

La creatividad, también aspecto crucial en el funcionamiento del feminismo comunitario y sus acciones, está impregnada en el espacio material y simbólico de la red, y es herramienta imprescindible cuando buscamos maneras de gestionar tanto problemáticas complejas como las propias del día a día. Los accesos a diversas actividades de distinto tipo que transfieren y comparten el arte y la cultura con las participantes, a la educación y a un acompañamiento psicosocial suponen el *Clinamen* de Epicuro, que da paso a la desviación del recorrido de los átomos que caracterizan las realidades de las mujeres y boicotean el determinismo que imperaba en sus vidas. Puede ser que no se den grandes cambios, pero el mero hecho de tener acceso a diversas

informaciones y oportunidades abre nuevas puertas que, por muy pequeñas que sean, cambian el camino y lo hacen más transitable desde el apoyo mutuo.

Como hemos visto en el análisis del contexto y la situación en la que se encuentran las personas en tránsito, sus vidas calificadas como desechables y desperdiciadas (Bauman, 2005) son las que forman parte de la red. Las personas participantes de los movimientos sociales, comunidades y en concreto de la red MN recién llegadas a Grecia son una muestra representativa del número total de personas que se encuentran y han pasado por Grecia desde 2015. Estas vidas entendidas por occidente como desperdiciadas, corresponden a las de sujetos sin agencia destinados a recibir caridad y asistencia. Personas forzadas a sobrevivir (no vivir) en condiciones indignas que se perciben en el tipo de asistencia recibida, desde el carácter de las estructuras de acogida, pasando por la comida de catering desabrida, hasta el enfoque y la implementación de programas de atención que deshumanizan a las personas reduciéndolas a números entre otros aspectos.

Las mujeres migrantes y refugiadas que en algún momento han experimentado una vida desechable (Squire, 2018) conforman una red que da cabida a diferentes identidades e historias de opresión, de ahí que el proyecto de Melissa Network acoja las historias de vida de las mujeres que se unen y apoyan bajo su necesidad de expresar y buscar accesos que han sido denegados en el pasado y se materializan en un feminismo periférico/decolonial. Este feminismo tiene en cuenta la intersección de diversos conflictos como género, clase, raza, religión e historia de migración entre otros que experimentan mujeres migrantes y refugiadas en sus países de origen y en el país de acogida. De este modo, las distintas mujeres que conforman la red personifican diferentes historias de opresión marcadas como hemos expuesto en la Ética de MN (sección justicia y política), además comparten un sentimiento común de injusticia vivida y ganas de cambio. La teoría feminista interseccional es clave para entender la importancia de una

comunidad de mujeres con distintos orígenes e historias de opresión, pero en este caso entendemos las opresiones no como categorías discretas sino como Audre Lorde las entiende, "diferencias no-dominantes". Siguiendo la explicación de Lugones (2005), si entendemos las opresiones como discretas y separables no podremos ver las intersecciones como fluidas. Por tanto, seremos menos capaces de percibir y resistir las opresiones mixtas y fundidas. Necesitamos entender las opresiones de esta manera para que las mujeres puedan lidiar con las opresiones mixtas en diferentes contextos, como hemos visto en las participantes de MN.

La emoción compartida nacida de sus intersecciones da voz a las subalternas calladas en el pasado, abriendo la posibilidad de expresarse y desarrollar estrategias de afrontamiento y apoyo mutuo a modo de resistencia. La emoción común que une, junto con su expresión, da paso a la acción y con ello acción política que viene de la resistencia a la opresión y busca reconocimiento y validación en las compañeras de comunidad como forma de reparación. En el caso de MN el miedo, la tristeza y la curiosidad se convierten en motores de cambio que generan accesos (a la educación, formación, mercado laboral…), apoyos y resistencias nacidas de la expresión y revelación de experiencias traumáticas en grupo.

La experiencia de la comunidad y el grupo son los elementos que activan y desarrollan la resiliencia extremadamente necesaria para reconfigurar las identidades de las mujeres de víctimas a sobrevivientes. De nuevo, como apunta Ahmed (2004) y relacionando sororidad con solidaridad, ésta implica compromiso y trabajo (como el de los movimientos sociales y las iniciativas de base), así como el reconocimiento de las emociones, vidas y cuerpos de las demás en nosotras y viceversa, ya que vivimos en un "terreno común".

Sororidad es resistencia, establecer una red de apoyo construida de las relaciones de confianza de las miembros basadas en el intercambio de cuidados. La comunidad sororal sienta las bases para el desarrollo del bienestar y la resiliencia tanto comunitaria como personal. Sororidad significa poner los cuidados en el centro de nuestras acciones para recuperar humanidad y encontrar esperanza.

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