

#The Route Of Solidarity (TROS)_4th meeting

Lesvos, 23-29 May 2018

REPORT: Description, Evaluation, Common message & action

I. Description of the Lesvos meeting

The 4th TROS meeting was held in Lesvos island, Greece, during the 23rd to 29th of May 2018. The meeting's foremost aim was to inform and familiarize the participants with the various aspects of the refugee issues in Lesvos and Greece.

The meeting was attended by **22 participants** -activists, volunteers and staff working in NGOs- 7 out of which came from **Italian** organisations (Un Ponte Per..., Liberi Nantes, Laboratorio 53, Refugees Welcome Italia, Baobab); 5 from **Spanish** ones (APDHA, Elin, Entrefronteras, Pachamama, Sos Racismo) and; 5 from **Croatian** (PANK, AYS, JRS). The 5 members of the ANTIGONE team were responsible for the overall planning, organization and co-ordination of the meeting.

The agenda of the meeting was based on a '**mapping**' approach; it was attempted to 'map' **the arrival and the route** of refugees in Lesvos; **the constraints** and **their everyday life** as well as; **the intertwined relations** among the various refugee populations, the locals, the european and international activists, volunteers and professionals, the official institutions, stakeholders etc. Thus, during the 5-days, the participants had the chance to visit spaces and initiatives of interest; to be informed by local key-actors; to discuss with refugees, migrants and locals and; to actively participate in workshops and actions.

Short Presentation of the 5 Days

Each day was an 'exploration' on different issue: i) the recent history and **present**; ii) **the refugee routes** on the island; iii) good practices of **integration** and **sybiosis**; iv) the **personal and collective trauma** and; v) the **challenges of the future**.

_Wednesday, 23/05_Arrival day

A spontaneous decision emerged concerning to attend the **local anti-fascist assembly** where local activists discussed about the [violent anti-refugee attacks](#) of 22nd of April organized by far-right wing people, as well as their own counter-actions.

Thursday, 24/05 'Mapping the 'here & now''

The agenda included a **welcome** and **introductory** session followed by an attempt to *map* each other as participants in the meeting, via the **ice-breaking** workshop. We went on to *map* the main **variables** concerning the refugee *scape* in Lesvos and Greece, therefore, we attended a presentation

followed by a discussion about **the phases of the refugee flows** of the last 10+ years; we attended a presentation about the **Greek legal framework**, focusing on the aftermath of the E.U. – Turkey deal and finally; we participated in a [workshop](#) about **education** as a tool for **integration**. All the activities of the day were held in [Lesvos Solidarity](#) (Open Refugee Camp), thus, both its staff and several of the refugees currently living there contributed to the activities of the first day.

Friday, 25/05 ‘Mapping integration and common living’

We had the chance to spend the entire day in [MOSAİK](#) Support Center for Refugees and Locals; this gave us the opportunity to learn about its activities – language, IT, story-telling courses, workshops etc. We were also introduced to the [Safe Passage Bags](#) and the [Upcycling](#) Workshops which employ refugee population. What is more, we participated in a **workshop** about **Social & Solidarity economy**, during which we shared our experiences regarding our initiatives’ funding tools, while we explored new ways to achieve that. We also attended **group discussions** concerning the **‘Regularization of exception situation in EU border policies’**, as well as the **‘Activism & slogan on Lesvos walls’**. Lastly, we conducted an **open discussion**, titled **‘Integration in everyday life: a reality or a myth?’** which was attended by people outside the TROS group; activists, locals, refugees and migrants living in Mytilene and Lesvos island. The day closed with the documentary [‘Janus Legacy: Refugee Passage to Europe’](#) together with a nice buffet, light drinks and discussions.

Saturday, 26/05 ‘Mapping the refugee routes’

Embarking on a reverse course, we began mapping the refugee route by going to the **Moria hot-spot**. Currently **over 7,000 are being held** there, while the official capacity is estimated at 2,000 people. It was more than evident that the living conditions there are inhumane –and this was confirmed by both refugees who stay there and shared their stories with us, as well knowledgeable NGO staff. As expected, the **violent clashes** between different **ethnic groups** within the Moria camp are occurring more and more often – as a matter of fact, a clash between Kurdish and Syrian refugees took place the night before our visit! What is even more disheartening is that the **information** concerning such incidents is almost **impossible** to be **verified**; we therefore could not easily establish whether there were fatalities among those who got injured during the day.

Back on the route *mapping*, we went on visiting **Sykamia** and **Molyvos**: this is where both local and international activists set up their DIY relief and reception centers, during the 2015-2016 refugee influx. We therefore had activists **narrating** and **presenting** their experience from that time, as well as their **actions** and **vision** regarding the **integration** process. In between those discussion, we visited the **life-savers landfill** in Molyvos, which was proven to be one of the **highly charged** moments of the days, where our team proceeded to an activist protest.

Sunday, 27/05 ‘Mapping ourselves & ‘activism’

During the **‘Co-traumatization of activists: Institutionalisation & compassion fatigue’** workshop we explored the concepts of both **personal** and **collective trauma**; we went into depth discussing the different stages our **minds** and **bodies** go through when they have a traumatic experience – and how we can **overcome** it. Other than that it was a day for self-reflection and rest – something that was much anticipated and appreciated.

In the meantime the LeSol Open Refugee Camp has been declared in a state of emergency as it had to take in hundreds of refugees who were obliged to flee Moria after the Friday night clashes.

Monday 28/05 'Mapping 'now' towards the future'

We have had the chance to visit the **'One Happy Family'** community center, which is being visited by refugees, coming from Moria and Kara Tepe, in order to attend language courses, participate in recreational activities, have lunch and dinner under proper conditions etc. We then visited the **'Kara Tepe Refugee Camp'**, where refugees who meet the **highest vulnerability criteria** are being transferred from Moria; it was clear to see that the Kara Tepe Refugee Camp provide its residents with relatively decent living conditions, regarding both its facilities and activities. However several international NGOs have been pulling out of the camp, making it harder to predict its future. What is more the **'vulnerability'** notion as a pre-condition for being chosen as a Kara Tepe instead of a Moria residents, as well as the overall contrast between those two 'refugee camps' was highly debated during the afternoon.

The TROS Lesvos **concluding sessions** included an **evaluation workshop; reflections and discussions** in order to form **an activist message from/for Lesvos** as well as **ideas/proposals for TROS common message & action.**

II. Evaluation

In four small groups we evaluated the meeting on the base of some categories and the TROS objectives.

Categories of the evaluation

_Presentation / visits / activities at and with local organisations

- We had a very deep / good knowledge of the Island and what happens there
- Getting to know about local and national context
- Helpful for the full image of the island: the trip to Skala Sykamia
- The contact with migrants / refugees
- Handouts missed

_Workshops

- Lectures and workshops very appreciated
- Co-traumatization workshop was helpful
- Too much space for academic discussions

_Group dynamic

- Good networking

- Good group dynamic: interacting with each other, in the discussions, in the feedback
- We shared our stories
- Convenience of the group
- Exchange missed, what we are doing in our countries
- Greatfulness to be a part of a common

_Networking potential

- More time needed to share and compare our (european) realities
- The agenda should be more flexible: letting group discussions, when they find their common necessity (missing of more discussions in the group)
- Mixing the group more often in the workshop
- More socializing with refugees wished
- Necessity of sharing more informations
- Potential in networking seen, although it is difficult with the rotation system of the project

_General progress for the project in the meeting / Common message

- We should use the strength of being an international team (making advocacy in the future)

_Organisation / Accommodation / Meals

- Good welcoming, organisation and accomodation
- We felt very well cared!!!

_Time management / work environment

- Need of more free time after stressful experiences

III. Ideas & Proposals for TROS common message & action

Introduction: methodology & message until now

As discussed in previous meetings, during the last TROS activity in Seville (February 2019) we are supposed to deliver a message to European decision makers through a web action. It would be good if this output would be **the results of the different meetings' discussions** as they usually involve different participants as well as they could reflect and incorporate the analysis of the participating groups, collectives and associations.

In Seville's meeting a first short exercise has been done in order to start the discussion about a potential **common message**. A brainstorming has been done and different proposals have been

discussed using the **SMART analysis**¹. The exercise consisted in considering the potential message as a goal of a campaign and processing the proposal through a SMART analysis. These are the proposal resulted by the group's discussion:

- *Dignity for all at the border* (Weak specificities)
- *Open Borders* (Weak specificities, Weak in realism)
- *Reduce Funding for Border Control* (Not convincing message)
- *Safe Passage in Europe* (Too much exploited)
- *No violence in the borders* (can be SMART)
- *Respect right of legal access for refugees* (can be SMART)".

#TROS Lesvos meeting

During Lesvos meeting, the discussion about common message advanced also on what kind/type of action could be useful and interesting to organize about the last meeting in Seville. The first ideas that emerged included the following criteria:

-there is a **need for structured & public advocacy** for refugees & migrants from part of the TROS project as well as from each partner-organisation-group etc. participating in the meetings;

-it is important; **to go beyond romantic, humanitarian representations** of the refugee and migrant populations and individuals; **to recognize them as autonomous, active subjectivities with their own motives, behaviors, anxieties and contradictions** and; in addition, **to integrate their opinions, ideas and political views in the common discourse and practice.**

Brainstorming...

Some really important ideas emerged after Lesvos's various meetings and discussions with people, organisations, institutions etc. for **the message deriving from & for Lesvos:**

- *Moria is NOT 'a village'* (this is a direct reference to the Kara Tepe Head's description of Moria hot-spot as 'village'...)
- *Not 'refugees'* (referring to many refugees' own opinion that they don't want to be named like that because the concept is burdened with negative connotations)
- *Stop EU-Turkey Deal* (reaction to the most important agreement that has affected & still does the fate & life of refugee populations 'stuck' in Lesvos & Greek territory)
- *Keep Human Dignity* (emerged from the TROS Lesvos meeting visit to the Moria hot-spot)
- *Good Networking* (emerged from the good experience we all had from the TROS Lesvos meeting)
- *Share Stories* (the same...)
- *Be inclusive* (emerged from the various discussions during the TROS Lesvos meeting)
- *Common Spaces* (the same...)

¹ The SMART analysis is based on the following scheme: Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Results-focused and; Time-bound.

- *Build Bridges* (the same...)

Parallel to them and after reflecting on the previous messages created in the Seville's meeting, the brainstorming **for the TROS message** collected the following ideas:

- ***Stop the shit in Middle East!!!*** (the basic and foremost message!)
- ***#Genocide#*** (a provocative message referring to the thousands of people's deaths)
- ***#Crisis is now#*** (many participants highlighted that 'the refugee crisis' was not during 2015 but now, since thousands of refugees are enclosed in hot-spots in Greece and camps all around Europe)
- *Law is not justice* (speaking on concepts of 'law' & 'justice'...)
- *Freedom* (an overall message applying at the all occasions)
- ***Dignity, Equality & Equity*** (apart from Dignity we added 'Equality' & 'Equity')
- *Diversity* (more values...)
- *Multi- & Inter- Culturality* (more values...)
- *Not only for refugees but **for all!*** (we are fighting for all exploited people!)
- ***Borders & Route*** (not only in the borders but also in their 'route'!)
- *Respect for **decent living*** (apart from legal access we fight for decent living!)
- *Decent living means **basic needs fulfillment** (water, meals, housing, health care, sanitation/hygiene, safety); **language & education; access to services; access to employment and; building bridges with society.***

TROS Lesbos common message...

After reflecting on the SMART methodology we concluded to the following proposals for **TROS common message**:

- **Freedom 4 all!**
- **Dignity, Equality & Equity 4 all!**
- **Respect Rights 4 all for legal access and; decent living!**
- **Solidarity to freedom of movement; basic needs fulfillment; language & education; access to employment!**
- **Keeping on connecting & networking; keeping on with TROS's project!**
- **Respect ourselves & relax!** (after the trauma workshop!!!)
- **#GROUND#** (we are fighting for initiatives & movements from the ground!)
- **#Put a SEED to make the GROUND#** (TROS project may be this kind of SEED!)
- **#(Me)Moria** (memory, 'mora': nightmare in Croatian, 'morrir': die in Spanish, 'moros': the being of impending doom, who drives mortals to their deadly fate in Greek). MeMoria is representing the '**shame**' happening in Greece, 'the mother' of Europe. At the same time, 'a mother' can give birth to the new; thus, apart from the 'shame' that this memory brings, there is also a promise for '**transformation**'!!!

TROS Lesvos (short- & long- term) actions...

- **A Press Release for current Moria hot-spot situation** has been already released!!!! (Angela, Edna, Tea, Sergio (video)).
- **'MeMoria' blogspot**; the virtual meeting & sharing space where experiences and stories of refugees, migrants as well as activists, volunteers and workers in Moria hot-spot and European camps. The blogspot will be updated with material (texts, photos, videos etc.) from users & it will contribute to the Pula's meeting for the finalization of the web-action (Naya, Artemi, Eleonora, Davide, Alberto, Iva, Renata).
- **A mapping of active stakeholders in Lesvos**; since many participants observed a fragmentation among the organisations, initiatives, groups etc. currently in Lesvos they proposed this kind of action. The mapping's aim is the creation of **an online version of the Data-Base** together with a **SOS telephone line** which will serve as a re-direction to the suitable support service, organisation etc. depending on the need. Basic requirements are: i) to agree on the structure of this proposal, ii) to do it in collaboration with the local stakeholders, active refugees etc. and; iii) to financial support the initiative via a crowd-funding campaign.
- **A visual message/protest**; based on a collection of photos -from Moria hot-spot, camps and borderspaces that have been visited during TROS- and which will be projected on public walls/spaces. The aim of this **'wall-projection'** will be to visibilize the unhuman living conditions inside Moria hot-spot as well as of other camps and borderspaces around Europe. Since refugees' issues in many European countries -and foremost in Greece- seem not to be in the media frontline, this **'visual mapping'** can be a strong **provocative and political message for what happening 'in our neighborhoods & names'**. The proposal is, during the final Seville meeting, to make **a common visual protest** by projecting the photos at the same time in all TROS partners' & meetings' cities!!!