

**Transcript Ep.71: Cosmopolitan Solidarity**

[Intro] *This is the Urban Political. The podcast on urban theory, research and activism.*

[Hossein Hamdieh] Hi, you're listening to Urban Political. I'm Hossein Hamdiyeh and I will be your host for this episode.

I am actually old enough to remember the 1996 overtake of Kabul by the Taliban that led to waves of Afghan refugees washing over the city I lived in, Tehran. It was a bloody, stretched conflict that only exacerbated after years of civil war, which of course was followed by the US invasion and its fiasco of unceremonious departure. As Iran took around 2 million Afghan asylum seekers, social earthquakes followed. I can remember the unfamiliar faces, the unconventionally different dress code, the notoriety of certain neighborhoods for the community-making of refugees in them, and the usual, outworn rush to accuse the migrants whenever a gruesome crime took place. It was rather my first encounter with “the Other” stepping on my doorstep.

Yet, it was not the last, for human suffering and forced migration barely stops. And for that, as a student and a migrant myself residing in Germany, I also have lived through the 2014 so-called “refugee crisis”, as well as the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Yes, I probably, like many of you listening to this episode, have seen many such incidents. Incidents that habitually are followed by the demonization of refugees, scapegoating them for, let's say, whatever goes amiss. We are therefore all too familiar with the politicization of the question of forced migration itself, one as recently as past few months with the Rwanda scheme in the UK, the Muslim ban in the US, and the rise of AfD in Germany, or far-right in France and Holland.

However, I have witnessed, as again, you too probably have, the compassion, the solidarity, and affection given to refugees and all those who found little option but to flee from prosecution, war, climate disaster, and countless other unfortunate conditions that makes one's life in her own home unbearable. We all can remember people gathering in Frankfurt, Munich, and Hamburg's Hauptbahnhof to welcome the war-stricken. We do remember protests, mass gatherings, the signs hung behind the windows to denounce the dehumanization of refugees, and countless families took in Ukrainians before they could find permanent residency. We remember the giving, hosting, embracing, and naturalizing. We do remember the host society forcing itself to acculturate to new shapes of living, and we do remember hope. Yes, there were and still are heinous facets of hate, but there are hopes too, and in this episode we are going to talk about the latter.

[Cover Version of John Lennon - Imagine (Performed by The Bits) plays]

You were listening to Imagine by John Lennon, a track that remains relevant even today, if not always.

To dive a tad deeper into the idea of solidarity and how it shadows urban discussion, here I will be joined by Dr. Martin Jørgensen, the co-author of “Solidarity and the ‘Refugee Crisis’ in Europe”. He is a professor at the Department of Culture and Learning, Aalborg University, and also Daniel Guigui, a researcher at University College Dublin.

First, I will start with you, Martin. Thank you for giving us your time. You and your colleague, Óscar García Agustín, tried to explore the phrase “refugee crisis” in your recommendable book, which is of

course an interesting read, pregnant with captivating ideas. Please elaborate on what this phrase “refugee crisis” actually means and what sort of discussions the arrival of asylum seekers had ignited back in 2014.

[Martin Jørgensen] Yes, thanks. And first of all, thanks for having me as one of the guests in this episode. Appreciate it. Well, as you also started out by saying in your introduction to this program, I mean, this is not the first time, of course, we have seen the arrival of thousands of people in need of protection and so on. But in 2014, and what later was called “the long summer of migration”, we saw a very high number coming in, especially from Turkey, crossing the Mediterranean and coming to Greece and so on. And that spurred different discussions around Europe, of course, and many of them also then were tied up to this notion of a refugee crisis. So I'm not disputing what we saw was a crisis, of course. I mean, anyone who remembers those years will say it was a crisis. What we try to problematize in the book is the notion of refugee crisis itself, because it also comes with a number of connotations, especially from political side, right, about the Nation-State, the member States and so on being in crisis due to refugees. So what we do in the first chapter of that book is try to unpack or debunk this notion of refugee crisis and sort of investigate a little bit, I mean, what kind of crisis are we actually talking about? Because there are many other ways of framing what we saw in those years. I mean, we can easily depict it as a kind of democratic crisis, as a crisis of solidarity, as a crisis of sort of institutional support and so on and so forth. And we try to go through a number of these, yeah, of these, we could say, alternative readings of crisis-scape in the book.

In many ways, it only became a crisis for all of the European member States, especially once refugees started moving up through the Balkan corridor and so on. So suddenly it became not only a problem for Greece... Especially in Italy, when they were mainly staying there, it was not really perceived to be a crisis in, for instance, Denmark, where I'm living. It was only when they started walking on the Danish highways towards Sweden that suddenly everyone talked about the crisis and so on, right. Staying within the Danish context, we can also say that, well, if we remember back to, I mean, I'm even older than you, I think... So I can remember when the Yugoslavian Nation-State collapsed and we saw lots of refugees coming out of Yugoslavia. In Denmark, we received more refugees from Yugoslavia in the early 90s than we did of Syrian refugees during the “refugee crisis”. But no one talked about refugee crisis at that time, right.

So there's something particular, of course, connected to this crisis that has to do with many things, which I think we're also going to discuss during the episode with the difference between Ukrainian refugees and what we saw then. So basically, to come into an answer (sorry for sort of going around this in a longer way), I mean, I don't think there's anything, such thing per se, as a “refugee crisis”, but it becomes a refugee crisis when characterized repeatedly by politicians talking about a state of exemption, urgency and basically calling for rights to sort of put normal democratic incentives and basically rules out of play to deal with what was perceived to be uncontrollable and so on.

[Hossein Hamdieh] Yeah, interesting. I mean, there is a lot to chew on in your unpacking of the idea of refugee crisis, but I want to know, how would you then typologize forms of solidarity? What kind of observation you had in the face of 2014 crisis, so to speak?

[Martin Jørgensen] Yeah. So, as you, also again going back to your own introduction, I mean, it's not only a tale of despair and bleakness and so on, because what we also saw was exactly this welcoming of people on the move and so on in all across Europe. I mean, in Germany there's been a survey

showing an exceptional high number, for instance, [who] were part of the solidarity movement, sometimes only in, you know, handing out a bottle of water and so on at a train station, other times housing people for days, weeks and so on, before they moved on and so on. And we saw this all over Europe. And so in the work I did together with Oscar, we tried to theorize about these forms of solidarity, because they took quite different forms, and also implied different forms of politics. So, so in the book, we pointed to the distinction between three different types of solidarity, which is seen as... it's not like sort of that one will develop into the other and so on. So it's three distinct forms, right, and they can coexist and so on.

But firstly, we discussed the idea of autonomous solidarity, a kind of, of solidarity taking place bottom up, often without the involvement [or] collaboration with any authorities, I mean, basically being against it. And based on the belief that we ourselves, the ones part of this kind of solidarity work can establish the social and political structure that can serve as an alternative to the restrictive policies from local authorities, national authorities, European authorities and so on.

Then we talked about, like a broader form of solidarity that we see in civil society, which we termed "civic solidarity". Yeah, I mean, stemming from civil society itself. It's... we could say a less radical form of solidarity in the sense that it often can coexist with, or in collaboration with local authorities, for instance, we've seen that with many of the national versions of the Welcome Refugees Movement, where people in solidarity with newcomers help out with like, you know, basic stuff as, as simply accommodating, welcoming people, but also engaging in language classes, offering clothes, stuff like that. And it's not necessarily in intention with authorities, although it can be so. There's something perhaps to be discussed there... But it's more like forms of solidarity that can collaborate with NGOs and so on in, in civil society.

And the last form we talked about is what we call "institutional solidarity", where you've seen, not only in Europe, but that's what we focus on, local cities trying to step up and basically saying: but we can do this, we can do this in a better way. I mean, we can actually establish the social structure, support people in need. So standing in intention with, again, very restrictive national forms of politics and legislation. So in the book, we try to give different examples of these three different forms of solidarity.

[Hossein Hamdieh] Yeah, interesting. Let's dig deeper into each category. In your book, you discuss Hotel City Plaza in Athens, an autonomous local initiative for hosting the refugees, for those who did not read the book. Having that in mind, how do you frame what happened in Hotel City Plaza, especially against the broader, so to speak, discussion about border and because as I do understand, it is at the forefront of where refugees are coming from, like... Athens is like the first place that they footstep in. So in that term, it has like a sort of different character meshed into it. Can you please explain the case of Hotel City Plaza for us?

[Martin Jørgensen] Yeah, sure. Yeah, as you say, rightly, then, Athens, especially in those years, but still [now] is the case, it's the central hub for newly arrived refugees having crossed the Mediterranean. So basically, any person crossing the Mediterranean will sooner or later get through Athens. That's, that's how it's been. In the in the early days of the refugee crisis, the Greek government, I mean, tried to deal with the problem of refugees, as they've done before. They set up camps and so on, different places in and outside the city and so on, but with very poor conditions. I mean, it was very... I mean, the temperature was high, there was not enough basic supplies and so on, so forth.



So Athens has a long story of leftist and also anarchist forms of activism and political engagement. And those resources were also reactivated during the refugee crisis. So a lot of people in solidarity refugees said, again, okay, so this is not okay, we can do something better than this. So different places around the city, vacant buildings were occupied. And one of these was an abandoned hotel. The owner had more or less fled to the US to avoid paying back taxes. So the hotel was there, fully equipped with beds and everything. So a bunch of political activists took over the place and opened it up for arriving asylum seekers, which were housed in the hotel, but not as hotel guests, because the whole idea was to create some kind of reputation, that all people shared the work mutually and so on. So it was very much a political project. And also a project that took some learning because some, I mean, asylum seekers basically also believed, well, I mean, there should be some services and so on.

So I mean, such a project takes time to set up and get everyone on the same mindset, but they succeeded, right. And so it became a place of safety and sort of everyday forms of solidarity, right, with kindergarten, school, language classes, hair salons, all kinds of stuff going on at the same time, as well as political discussions and so on. So the city plaza, in a way, send a message to not only the local authorities in Athens and the Greek State, but also to the European migration regime that, I mean, we can basically do better. They were not saying that the solution to the refugee crisis was that we should simply squat our way out of everything, right. But they showed how it's actually possible, with very few means, to set up something that is far better than what was being offered the asylum seekers not only in Greece, but also other places in Europe, right. So it lasted for a number of years, and then a number of squats in Athens were closed down. And before this would happen in Athens or in City Plaza, the people living there decided simply to close it down and get people placed other places instead of going through a traumatic eviction and so on. So it started, it stopped in a very sort of nice way, in a way. It would be nicer to have it, of course, but they decided themselves when time was over to stop this experiment and basically let the world know what kind of experiences of solidarity and so on could be learned from this.

[Hossein Hamdieh] Interesting. I mean, I do understand the differences that you elaborated about the, so to speak, civic solidarity and these form of bottom up, autonomous form of solidarity. But can you more elaborate on that for us, please? Especially, what is the experience of *Venliborne* [?] if I pronounce the Danish words correctly, tells us in that regard? How do you differ in these two from each other?

[Martin Jørgensen] I mean, I don't really think we can talk too much about State-led solidarity, to be honest. I mean, accepting that people are in the country, I mean, from the perspective of the State, it's not the same as solidarity in my opinion. I mean, if we look at the discourse at the time about the Syrian refugees, in the beginning, there were this kind of almost optimism from the business sector and the politicians: "oh, Syrians are well educated and this could actually be a solution to a problem" and so on. And then when people arrived, suddenly they did not necessarily have the education that people had expected and they were problematized as so many times before and so on. So, the discourse was rather: how can we make sure that not too many choose to apply for asylum in Denmark? So, we rather see this kind of preventive measures and so on, to basically have people apply for asylum elsewhere. But that said, of course, when people are applying for asylum in Denmark, it comes with a set of rights and social services and so on. But that doesn't necessarily include any kind of, you could say, I mean, recognition and friendliness and so on.

And that's what a movement like *Venliborne*, this kind of welcome refugee movement, then tried to offer. So, people are here, they should also be respected and met with friendliness and simply, you

know, [as] part of a collective. And that was what they tried to do, include people as people, not only characterizing people as “you are a Syrian refugee”, but rather “you are a teacher, you used to teach in the Damascus area and you can help here and there” and so on. So, it's an attempt to more create a collective “we” and sense of belonging and communality and so on. And I think that's very different from the State-led kind of services that has to do with, you know, putting people in an integration program and so on once they have had their claim for asylum recognized. This is much more eye to eye and trying to include people as human beings.

That said, I mean, it can also, that kind of civil engagement can also be almost exploited because in some places it also became a cheap alternative for municipalities basically to, you know, hand over services they otherwise would have to provide because you had this suddenly, this quite big group of people who wanted to do good, who wanted to assist and help and so on. So, there's always a risk, of course, of a kind of co-optation. And what is perhaps having more political potential becomes basically a kind of unpaid service providers. But still, I think there's something, yeah, there's some interesting and rewarding experiences also for this kind of movement.

[Hossein Hamdieh] Funny that you should mention the State. I mean, we most of all would have this idea of a State as these stony-faced bureaucrats in their offices behind their desks and everything. But according to the book, the scheme Solidarity Cities may well be understood as a political try to, so to speak, to translate solidarity into conscious institutional decision making. Did that work? I mean, can you tell us about the case of Barcelona hosting the oncoming refugees and the way such institutional political decisions reshape the city?

[Martin Jørgensen] Yeah, I can try at least. So, I think, first of all, one experience is that it's perhaps easier for national elected politicians to sort of call for restrictions and say we shouldn't have more of this group and that group and so on. But if you go to the cities, I mean, people are basically there, right? I mean, so you cannot ... it's not like an abstraction. I mean, you have people living, coming to the city and so on, you need to do something about it. So, whether it's based on, you know, political visions of wanting to create more inclusive society or more pragmatist underpinning, because, I mean, you need to do something because, basically we have something here we need to deal with. It's a discussion, of course, on its own. But what we saw in Barcelona in 2015 was definitely a deliberate attempt to create a more inclusive structure for also housing newcomers. I mean, not only asylum seekers, but migrants, refugees, undocumented at large.

Again, there is a longer story to this, because at the time, Barcelona was led by *Barcelona en Comú*, this civic platform of sort coming from the social movements of 2008 during the financial crisis and so on, when we saw a lot of mobilization against the austerity measures that also set up alternative social political structures and so on. That platform gained power in Barcelona and one of the first things they did was basically to say, OK, we can also do better when it comes to creating inclusive structures for refugees, migrants. So they rebranded Barcelona as a refugee city. But not only in this course, because they actually initiated a number of deep political policies and sort of reorganizations, I mean, trying to connect to already existing initiatives in civil society, trying to say that this can only work if people are participating. So, for instance, one thing was not wanting to have people living in camps, but instead supporting and initiating that refugees were placed alongside regular people in flats and so on.

So we saw a lot of these kind of attempts to use already existing progressive frameworks to also include the people [who] arrived as refugees. They also tried to establish networks with similar minded cities,



you can say so. I mean, initiating the solidarity city network across Europe together, for instance, with Athens, Paris and other Spanish cities who were working from the same beliefs. So there was a quite progressive movement also outside Europe those years. The question is, of course, did it work? I mean, I think the experiences of the time are valuable, even though that we may not find that many other cities that reacted like Barcelona. Also, the whole idea of municipalism, which also runs strong in the case of Barcelona, that the centrality of the locality and so on, and being able to develop alternative frameworks, have been a little bit challenged, especially in the last election in Spain, where we saw a lot of the cities with more progressive constitutions turning towards the right and so on. So right now, I mean, the idea of very progressive localism or municipalism perhaps is a little bit challenged, but I think the experiences still stand as something for the future. And I'm not prepared to declare the idea of solidarity cities dead at all. I still think it's a response to still more restrictive national regimes and so on. And hopefully, we'll see a resurface of these kinds of local attempts to create alternatives again.

[Hossein Hamdieh] Thank you, Martin. That was Martin Jørgensen, Professor at the Department of Culture and Learning, Aalborg University. I thank him for his insight. We will for sure come back to you later.

["I'm Talking to You" by GOWGHA plays]

That was I'm Talking to You by Afghan Singer GOWGHA.

Now, we turn to some more recent events after the Russian aggressive attack on Ukraine, a turn of events that was met with rather more, let's say, cordial acceptance. The narrative framing and endurance were largely different, whilst difficulties caused by standing up to Russians were too much heavier to bear and felt more intimately by Europeans. My next guest, Daniel Guigui, is a researcher at University College Dublin. He focuses on the micro politics of welcoming the other with a focus on Ukrainian refugees hosted by ordinary citizens in Munich and Dublin. Daniel, it's great to have you here. Please tell us about your work, which I believe would shape your PhD dissertation. We might guess the whole package of foreign culture, language and congenital ethnic difference can cause unease for some people. So please tell us what are, according to your work, the social ramifications of mass migration as Ireland accepted Ukrainians [who] fled from war?

[Daniel Guigui] Well, first off, also, thank you very much for having me here. It's a pleasure to be able to share some of the first preliminary findings of my PhD research, which I've been engaged in over the last three years. And to not spoil the answer to your question too soon, but I can tell you one thing: it's spawned a lot of social change and ongoing social change. As people who have been reading news on what is happening currently in Ireland been familiar with, there was just last week an ongoing riot in the city centre of Dublin, which is related to migrations. And of course, also solidarities. Now with February 2022 happening and the Russo-Ukrainian war erupting, for me, it was relatively clear that I will have to, and I would want to like to do something in regards to the war and the efforts of individuals forming bonds of solidarity across national borders. It is important to mention that of the roundabout 98,000 people that arrived since February 2022, 73,000 are currently still accommodated in what is called State provision homes in Ireland, while the others are taken in by individuals. And as Martin already alluded to, great case studies for what is considered a bottom-up approach to solidarity here. With such a small country as Ireland, the distribution of the migrants, of course, or of the Ukrainians now is relatively skewed. We do see that there's around about 6,000 people in the greater



Dublin area, which is a metropolitan area that is already heavily and densely populated and was by the beginning of this year already lacking substantial amount of living space with about 3,000 accommodation spaces, too few even for people already seeking to rent or buy housing.

It is interesting to note that the people who actually host the Ukrainians are predominantly of a higher socioeconomic strata, with being on average 60 years of age and older and occupying an average of six room houses by having two adults living in there. So a lot of unused accommodation space that these people already possessed. Just to point towards who the people were that I also interviewed.

First off, and this is a very fascinating one to share, that expectations versus reality seem to have been on a diverging path when we look into what hosts actually expected of people that they would host here. So predominantly we found out that people expected Ukrainians to arrive at the porch with nothing but the clothes on their bodies, holding two Aldi bags full of clothes, and that about it. So I guess you can imagine that when the people from Ukraine arrived, that many Irish hosts were rather flabbergasted, to say the least, that these people actually, many of them still follow their jobs, their occupations in Ukraine or internationally. They continue to have an income on the side. And not only that, but they also enjoy finer things in life, as some of my interviewees have shared with me. They kind of have an issue or they find it difficult to accept that people they host are eating expensive foods such as mussels or lobsters and go shopping for luxury items, while they were prepared to basically help people who have nothing left.

That being said, on one side of expectations versus reality, now you also ask about the cultural challenges or changes related to cultural challenges. I suppose one thing that becomes rather apparent, and that is also something already I can hint to in Munich, the first three to four interviews I've conducted, sharing similar insights. When it comes to sharing local spaces, basically your own accommodation, the housing space that people share, there seems to be issues taken around ritualized practices, such as the preparation of foods, the usage of the kitchen, the washing facilities, the times attached to that. So while people generally were prepared to host others in their homes for an, at most cases, indefinite amount of time, they seem to have not adjusted or estimated the amount of time they would have to share the kitchen with these people being such an issue.

Another point of ongoing debate we found was also the raising of the kids, and that is a particularly interesting one if we consider how much raising of children is also colored by by cultural practices, by socio-historical practices, and Nation-State education regimes. And so in this particular case, we've seen that Irish people do not really appreciate the fact that Ukrainian kids in their teens, I have to say, spend a lot of time on their computers. Now that being said, it is at this stage, as this is a preliminary analysis, not completely clear if this is truly something we can attribute to cultural differences, or if this is also something more attributed to generational differences. As I already mentioned, right, people hosting Ukrainians being on average in their 60s, while the Ukrainians coming being on average in their 30s, mid-30s, with relatively young kids, these kids often still getting schooling from schools in Ukraine.

And now to the last two points that you mentioned on language and the general changes related to this whole migration spiel. Fascinatingly enough, when it came to the point of language, it doesn't seem to be an ongoing issue as technological devices have opened doors, basically, in our own homes, at the table, people who do not talk the same language are now able to communicate freely and comfortably with apps and the likes of that. That being said, on the other side, when it comes to the bureaucratic apertures, we found that there is much more work that needs to be done, as many of these papers that need to be processed, while being maybe written in Russian, might not be accessible for everybody who's reading and writing in Ukrainian. And also not every host has the time to facilitate these visits at



the municipalities, which can at times be very lengthy. So that has been an issue that there is a lack of State facilitated capacities in Ireland, basically, which, as Martin already alluded to, States, while they might not be the builder or the building blocks of solidarities, we found that they certainly can impede and hinder the development of solidarities. And I will get to that in a moment when I talk about the current cases that are rising in Dublin since last week. This is all very fresh off the press, and hasn't really found its way into my analysis, but I do feel it is something that we should address and hopefully we can address in a moment together.

So before we get to that, maybe on the nicer note of things, the emerging networks, and that is something Martin also referred to as the bottom up, and even the civic solidarities, we do see that in the case of Ireland beautifully emerging in many different ways. By, for example, the lack of capacities of civic solidarities, which were flagshipped by the Red Cross who pledged to help everybody who would arrive, but unfortunately was substantially lacking the capacities, which led people to fill in the roles and taking up the mantles themselves to go online and via Facebook and neighborhood networks and neighbors, basically found people that they ultimately host and hosted in some cases. Not only that, we did see also that there was a form of institutionalization, formalization of some of these networks. So one of the great example cases here is the Helping Irish Host organization that emerged basically as a Facebook-led initiative of a few folks wanting to help and now developed into a full-blown NGO. And then, of course, we cannot forget the great deal of work that was done also by faith-based services in the first instances, which were predominantly related to collecting donations and more material goods, but also providing spaces for people to come together and share.

[Hossein Hamdieh] Thank you, Daniel. Back to your point about the people and the bottom-up solidarity shown by the ordinary people. I, in fact, happened to attend your presentation at the International Sociology Association Conference in Melbourne. That's where we first met. And if I'm not much mistaken, you have recorded reasons narrated by participants as to why people accepted refugees on Zaytsev. Here's a snippet of one of your interviewees:

[Irish woman speaking on the recording] *"Oh, God, I haven't done anything except look after myself and look after, well, look after the family. And we were all set up. So I thought, well, I'd go out and do a job like that and then I thought I didn't have the nerve. I didn't feel that it was in me to do what my mother had done. So I probably felt a little bit of a failure in a way. I mean, it wasn't consciously in my head, it was sort of when I thought: what a selfish existence we were leading. I thought, oh, God, I could change things here. And I thought about it and did nothing about it. The war came in Ukraine. I was thinking, God, and I was really, I was in tears. Like, literally, it made me cry. Imagining seeing, and people have said to me, was it because they were white and you could relate? And maybe, I don't think it was because I've always thought, I've always been sympathetic and empathetic with people who have done nothing and yet misery is poured on top of them, whether it's losing your home or war or earthquake or whatever. So I was always conscious of it. And I genuinely did think of Afghanistan. But anyway, this all happened. And I was in tears. And I said, I have to do something here."*

[Hossein Hamdieh] Okay, that was really interesting thing to hear. Was there any theme shared by all these folks about the reasons behind the accepting outsiders into the, so to speak, private space of home?

[Daniel Guigui] Yeah, yeah, that's a great question. And of course, also one that has driven me in this whole research endeavour. And as I said, this is an ongoing analysis, as this is a huge amount of text data, as you can imagine, having 30 interviews, each of around 30 pages of transcript. But initial analyses of the Dublin sample have in fact shown certain similarities in these biographic accounts. And again, this is where biographic methodologies shine in all their beauty, because they allow us to look much, much deeper into these elements and factors of people's lives than just the mere superficial answers of interviews. So some of the points I can share with you, and I hope we can pick them up in the conversation after as well, is in terms of themes that strung themselves through our interviewees and their accounts. Were that there were religious values, of course, with Ireland being, has been for the last century, a predominantly Christian Catholic country, and that embodying particularly sets of values, which in cosmopolitan theoretical literature often relates to a shared sense of universal love and hospitality, have been embedded, in spite of the fact that we do see a strong decline in actual people attending ceremonies or worshipping in churches, we do see that these values have been transmitted from previous generations into this particular generation that is hosting now. And I will get to that in a moment, why we do see in Ireland, these strong legacy effects or generational effects of passing on certain elements and behaviours.

Another one of these similarly linked to hosting behaviours themes was the national identity. And I think it becomes rather apparent that in the course of the Irish national identity formation, which is an ongoing process, Ireland itself was positioned and has positioned itself against England, which used to be the colonial superpower, oppressing people in Ireland for far too long. And in this formation of identity against an oppressor, we do find that generations that in fact, preceded our generation of hosts now has grown up under certain circumstances that required them to be open to the other, to be open in terms of sharing solidarities across their social networks. Some of the interviewees referred to this as having an open door at home, you know, just you help each other where you can against this shared superpower oppressor. And this is to a degree also mirrored in the ongoing conflict of Russia and Ukraine, where Russia is the great international superpower, basically just wages this war against the much smaller Ukraine. And so that being one of the other points, then, of course, the socio-economic developments that were strongly linked itself to this, this historic period of oppression, as I already said, people mentioned that their parents basically to make ends meet, had to share and form bonds of solidarity across their own kin relations.

And not only that, many Irish people, as we've seen throughout history have left the country, but later come back to reestablish these kind of connections of solidarity. But whilst they were away, of course, they're also being othered in the Americas, so to say, or in other parts of Europe. So these economic elements of oppression, but also later on in the mid 90s, until the late 2000s, the boom and bust, the Celtic tiger that again, has pushed Irish people out of their own country to strangers shores, but coming back again, have definitely left some form of imprint on the biographies, not only of the people hosting, but again, of the people who preceded the families and the social groups preceding the people hosting.

And lastly, as I already mentioned, at several stages, the life stages of the peoples themselves. So our hosts being in their mid 60s, on average, have to a great deal also discussed throughout their biographies, that there is an inherent desire to pick up the mantle of what they have basically through these legacies, legacy effect of their parents and the generations before taken in to now at this stage of their life, where they're actually having the financial capital to support these causes of social solidarity, to do that to the best of their abilities and to the greatest extent.



[Hossein Hamdieh] Oh, yeah. The thing is about your work, you mentioned some reasons behind people accepting others into their homes. But before they come, the people of Ireland, for sure, the people whom you talk to had a general idea of refugees. But how hosting these refugees began to reshape the image of what refugee is, especially after the experience of close physical proximity and cohabitation?

[Daniel Guigui] Yeah, yeah. I mean, that is a fascinating point that came to the forefront in many of the interviews, as I said already, there was a somewhat shaped the image of what a refugee is and how they have to look and how they have to dress and what they can't eat or what they should not do. So in that sense, I think what became relatively clear is that people had to rethink and reconsider and re-conceptualize what a modern day refugee on the fringes of Europe can also look like, in spite of what has been given to us through State-owned and State-run news outlets and medias over the past decades, in spite of the hearsays and the populist and far right polemics. And so in that sense, there is a reconfiguration, I would say, that's taking place in the minds of people as to what refugees in our day and age can also look like. But as I also said at the very beginning of this part, this is an ongoing process. And as people now start to recognize that many of the Ukrainian refugees, in fact, might be economically and socioeconomically be on par with themselves. It also comes with new questions that it opens up as to why should these people deserve more help than us and why should they deserve more solidarity than, let's say, other groups, which... for example in the Irish case, there is an ongoing issue around what they call provisional homes, where people in the long summer of migration kind of were put into and unfortunately, in many cases still remain to this day, you know, awaiting in a form of asylum limbo and bureaucratic limbo, their fates. And so all of these somewhat more complex relations, I'd say, these complex realities now starting to merge and reshape also an understanding of who is and who's not deserving of solidarity. And as last week's riots in Dublin have shown, this process is most certainly not at an end. It's ongoing. And if it's just at a height or peaking point....

[Hossein Hamdieh] Okay. And lastly, in what way the presence of Ukrainian refugees reconfigured the neighborhood in which they resided in, in terms of like, the urban impact of them being around? What was that? Did you notice anything?

[Daniel Guigui] Yeah, I mean, I suppose in the most benign way, they reconfigured the neighborhoods by becoming somewhat of a central focal point of a neighborhood. You know, if there's somebody hosting a Ukrainian in their home, in a neighborhood of Dubliners in their mid 60s, that would know each other from across the fence, but never really had a reason to exchange more than pleasantries. All of the sudden, now there is a focal point to exchange beyond that maybe social capital in form of network capitals as well, but also financial capitals. We have here that people kind of pooled money in the neighborhood to enable the Ukrainians that are hosted in that area together to basically have a better life, have a good start. And next to that, we did see a lot of cultural exchange emerging in terms of festivities, which supposes one of the more beautiful artifacts of these kind of experiences, where Ukrainian folk festivals taking place in neighborhoods, like Dublin South, I think in Bray, they've seen some of these beautiful Ukrainian folk festivals, where it's about the cultural exchange of music, and foods, traditions... So these are definitely things we see actively taking place in the reshaping of the neighborhoods. But as I said, as well, there's also other things taking place currently that are much more, I'd say nefarious and politically directed when it comes to opening up questions of who is deserving and who's not of our solidarities. And that being causes of last week's riots as well, the

question [of] who's deserving, and who is not. Whilst we could probably all agree that most of us, if not all humans are deserving of some form of solidarity or another, if they're in need. And even if they're not in need, I suppose, they wouldn't mind feeling like they're part of a group that shares solidarity.

[Hossein Hamdieh] On that note, I might as well ask Martin to weigh in here. Martin, you already mentioned Yugoslavia before, and how the stark difference between how Yugoslavian crisis was framed in public narrative versus how was the case with the Syrians. In your book, you were focused on Easterners movement across borders, whereas Daniel's work is on Ukrainian refugees. What is, in your opinion, the difference in the way each group were perceived and welcomed? And does that change the way we ought to conceptualize the idea of solidarity, the notion of solidarity?

[Martin Jørgensen] Yeah, thanks. Yeah, it's a good question. I mean, first of all, I think there is a difference between the reception of these groups. But it also comes from the... I mean, Ukrainian refugees have not had to apply for asylum, right, because of the temporary protection given by the European Union. So basically, I mean, all these people have been allowed to cross borders and settle in the different European member States. Of course, that will expire next year, I think, or in 2025, in the spring. So this situation could become different then, right. But right now, some of the discussions that surrounded the issue of Syrian refugees, especially about, I mean, should they be granted asylum or not, which is still ongoing, right, has simply not been there in the case of Ukrainian refugees. But that said, there's also a difference in the narrative. I mean, perhaps departing from the Danish case, we see, a very large sort of mobilization and support of Ukrainian refugees that also, in many ways, exceeds what we saw in 2014-2015. I mean, if you drive around the countryside, you'll see Ukrainian flags on regular buildings and so on, and businesses and so on, all flagging to show the support. I've never seen a Syrian or an Afghan flag anywhere in Denmark in 2015 and so on, right. So there's a kind of perceived proximity to these people. I mean, they could be us, right. And of course, that also shows how the issue of entitlement and deservingness and so on also is racialized. I mean, because people feel simply closer to the Ukrainians, I think, right. It's also, I mean, they're simply framed as being much more easy to, you know, to fit into the labor market. So the business communities have been extremely supportive in creating jobs and inviting people in and so on, without necessarily, you know, any evidence that it would be more difficult including Syrian refugees and so on. But that said, I'm not sort of, I'm not trying to dismiss this kind of solidarity towards the Ukrainians. If anything, I would like to see it expanded towards other refugee groups, right.

And that's also kind of the message that the solidarity movements and so on are coming out with. I mean, what's happening to the refugee is all good. But we would like to see the same approach towards other refugee groups and not necessarily having this distinction between more deserving or closer to us, kind of, and so on. So I don't think, I don't think I would reconceptualize solidarity, because I think I would rather emphasize one facet of solidarity, which we also underlined in the book, that solidarity is not equal to humanitarianism, for instance. For me, solidarity is also a political act. It's transformative, it's generating political identities, and so on. And I think that part is worth emphasizing here. And not necessarily, I mean, equalizing what happens to the Ukrainian refugees with a kind of politicized solidarity. It could be, yes. But I would say the reason we need solidarity is exactly because it is contentious, it can speak for social and political transformation. And that's basically what we need to include all people in society.



[Hossein Hamdieh] Interesting. I mean, do you think we can say or we can talk about sort of selective solidarity in face of who is the target group, who is the subject that we are talking about?

[Martin Jørgensen] Definitely. Yeah, I would say so. I mean, we already saw that during the refugee crisis, where some of the Eastern European countries would not accept asylum seekers, for instance, if they had a Muslim background. The same countries now have been the ones taking in most Ukrainian refugees. I mean, more than two million people are living, Ukrainian refugees are living in Poland, for instance, and they would not accept any Muslim asylum seekers in 15. So solidarity is there, right. But it's highly selective. But it's also on a State level when we look at policies and so on. In some earlier work I also did together with Oscar, we talked about misplaced solidarity as well, right. I mean, kind of more reactionary right wing forms of solidarity, constructing a kind of people being in threat, pitched against, for instance, foreign workers and so on, you know, this whole "British jobs for British workers" and so on. So I think we see solidarities in many different ways, and not all of them are progressive. Some might indeed be regressive and not necessarily speak for more inclusion in society.

[Hossein Hamdieh] All right, you talked about the need to expand what the treatment that we are seeing in the face of Ukrainian crisis to all sorts of refugees, but how can we prevail against obstacles such as growing right wing populism and extremism?

[Martin Jørgensen] I'm not sure. I mean, I would wish I have the answer for that, right. I mean, I think it's just as much... it's not only an academic question. I mean, it's also a political question, and political project that we all have to engage in. And Gramsci, the Italian thinker and so on, I mean, wrote that we also need to carry hope when it's most desperate. If we only think about hope when things are going well, I mean, that's not real hope. I mean, we need to be able to see a better future also when challenged the most. So right now, I mean, yeah, I think we are seeing some developments that definitely are not speaking for more solidarity and so on. But on the other hand, I mean, I do believe that these spaces like Barcelona and so on offer some kind of hope and models for how we could see society developing. And I think all the sort of resources that were mobilized and materialized and so on during the refugee crisis in civil society and so on still is there. We probably need to expand the struggle in a way. And now I'm speaking also from personal, political, my own politics. I mean, that I think there's probably a need to not only talk about solidarity in relation to migrants, but also think about the damage done to society by climate changes and so on. So things I mean, we probably need to think more about the transversal solidarities and things that unite different struggles if we are to see a change for the better, in my opinion, in the future.

[Hossein Hamdieh] Thank you. Finally, for Daniel, I think you would like to comment on what Martin said. What do you think we can learn about experiences and practice of cosmopolitan solidarity?

[Daniel Guigui] Well, yeah, first off, I can only agree with Martin, right, that we do unfortunately not see that we're moving in that direction of a larger sense of cosmopolitan solidarity as we do see also more political divides as well as politicization of certain conflicts. And in that sense, if I would say, what can we take from this case of the Ukrainians and European solidarity towards the Ukrainians? I would say, coming from a place of hope that this, as we've seen, is a first step in a legacy of becoming more open and inclusive and less questioning of who deserves and who does not.



But I also see that there is a lot of pushback from political directives and that barriers are high. However, as my interviewees have shown greatly in their biographies, there is certain elements in life that transcend one lifetime. And before you know it, maybe the next generation can pick up where we left it and will become one step closer altogether to this idea of cosmopolitan solidarity.

[Hossein Hamdieh] On that note, we bring this episode to the end. That was Martin Jørgensen and Daniel Guigui. I thank them both for the fascinating discussion. And that is it for today. This episode is produced by Urban Political. For a treasure trove of many more urban conversations, please check our archive. I'm Hossein Hamdieh and we will be back soon.

[Outro] *Thanks to you for listening. For more information, visit our website, urbanpolitical.podigy.io. Please subscribe and follow us on Twitter.*