

# CROSSING BORDERS!

## movements and struggles of migration

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It is almost impossible to answer the question: what happened to those young people who rised the British riots one year ago? A generation with a history of migration took the centre of the scenes, transforming a condition defined as »marginal« by social assistants and politicians into a central one. Many paid the price of their revolt. Most of all seems to be hidden into the folds of the British society, doing what young migrant and sons of migrants do every day in Europe. The so called »second generations«, however, refuse to remain hidden in the small spaces imposed to them. From the UK (p. 2) to Patras (p. 3), crossing Italy (p. 4), Germany (p. 4) or France (pp. 2-3), thousands young are forcing the borders of citizenships and the States, the borders of their social exploitation. They are living crossing the borders...

## Generations in movement

Crossing borders is the condition that all migrant experiences have in common. **Being in movement accompanies generations of migrants**, producing gashes in the borders designed to keep us in a fixed place: as a low cost commodity to be placed on the labour market.

**The regime of governance of migrations is not subtle in its approach. Fathers are the mirrors for their sons**, because the latter will be reserve army of the former. But migrants do not always move in the same way, because the borders designed to ensnare them vary. The first border that the migrant parents encounter is the one that surrounds Europe, but for those born here the crossing of that border is a given fact, despite the risk of being expelled hangs over the entire family. **The new generations however have no intentions of turning back. Their gaze is set to the future, but it inevitably encounters new borders.**

**The borders of school, where the ever increasing cost of education becomes a class barrier** which would condemn the new generations to unstable, poorly paid jobs. They shouldn't get any strange ideas: they need to learn how to stay in their place, they say. **But the new generations neither want nor know how to stay in their place.** And they don't accept the position that racial profiling would assign them: young proletarians of colour who tend toward delinquency. **Tearing down borders, both class and racial, is thus the message of rupture expressed by the English summer riots.**

In Italy there is another form of profiling, that uses legal means to force the new generations to accept precarious and underpaid jobs once they have reached adult age. **To this precarity that awaits them, they respond by reaffirming that they are in movement:** they demand citizenship, but are aware it can become a new, insidious border. This legal profiling would like to put them in a row, ordered and waiting for their turn. **But their objective is not that of becoming third or second class citizens, but to have a say in their own lives and the society that surrounds them.**

The static nature of citizenship risks being an obstacle to the movement of the new generations, anchoring them to a space drawn by class domination

There where only *ius soli* exists, like **in France, the children of migrants, while being French citizens or on the verge of becoming citizens, live in neighbourhoods abandoned by an administrative machine** that works only when it has to flex its muscles. On the other hand, citizenship will never be able to deal with the transnationality of the migrant condition. **The unaccompanied minors of Patras are there to remind us.** They come from Afghanistan as they see Greece as the gateway to Europe. Without a hint of European unionist rhetoric: Greece is just a passageway, a point in which to begin again moving, setting the world in movement. It is the movement negated by the camps that "host" the refugee **minors arrived in Germany.** Confined in modern-day lagers, they cannot go to school or look for work. **The border thus becomes a daily experience that the "Youth without Borders" seek to subvert.**

**The complexity of a generation in movement is the measure of its political potential.** This is due to the different amounts of pressure it places on borders, as it is for the different ways in which that pressure is applied. **You can move with riots as with music**, producing confusion for those who would like to frame the phenomenon in one, reassuring category: preferably "delinquents" ore "humiliated and offended youth".

But that complexity is also indicative. **The different rhythms with which the new generations move are also dictated by the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the borders with which they clash.** The overcoming of a border seems to produce another, in a multiplication of fortresses that tries to fix their place in society. Taking apart this logic is the political challenge that generations in movement have before them. **Crossing borders, young migrants politicize their own condition, because they are never in the place that they have been assigned. A perpetual movement, but at a rhythm and speed beyond measure.**

# The summer riots in the UK and the racist politics of stop and search

In the summer 2011 hundreds of people from poor areas of the UK, many of whom were British citizens with migration background, got involved in riots with the police, streets fires and looting. The rage of the community in Tottenham where the riots first ignited was triggered by the refusal of the police to give explanation to the family of Mark Duggan about his death. Mark was a young Black Briton, shot by the police within the context of a special action against gun crime in London's black communities. Mark's is only one example of the many deaths in police custody: at least 333 since 1998 followed by no single conviction of any police officer. **The everyday realities of police mistreatment and state racism in a context of growing poverty and policing** – a typical combination under economic crises – were cited by the rioters themselves as the most important causes of the unrest.

While most of the commentators of the riots across the political spectrum preferred to judge whether these were political acts or mere expressions of violent consumerism, **what is rather relevant is to understand the more specific context in which second and third generation immigrants participated in the fight with the police and looting.**

Many have had negative experiences with the police, including being beaten up in police vans and subject to prejudiced *stop and search*. Under section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the British police have the right to search people in a defined area at a specific time when they have good reasons to believe that there is the possibility of serious violence and in order to tackle crime, anti-social behavior and 'gang fights'. **The selective and racial politics underpinning these kind of interventions is clearly apparent** in the fact that stop and search by the police was conducted 80 times more often in the borough of Haringay, where Tottenham is located, presenting among the most diverse migrant and settled minority groups in London. One then can read the summer riots as both an indication of the increasing difficulty to organize under the current condition of economic crisis (unemployment, heavy cuts in welfare and community services) and a response to the 'policing of the crisis' **where black and white working class youth and undocumented migrants become the primary targets.** **Contrary to the perception that the rioters were uneducated, many rioters were enrolled in secondary and higher education.** The austerity measures and in particular the cuts in education-with the dramatic rising in university fees and erasure of support for working class students (the EMA) – have clearly fostered disappointment amongst youth, from migrant and white working class backgrounds as they suddenly saw their educational opportunities vanishing. Even in the UK the easy-to-sell dream of social mobility has withered away for those who cannot afford access to higher education (£9,000 a year for an undergraduate course!). **That consumption is seen as a sign of moving up the social ladder, may explain the various attacks on shops and the looting during the summer riots.** Tackling the institutional racism of the state and its local branches, past social unrest might have appeared more organized:



**if at that time these activities were part of a battle against racist exclusion as much as for self-organization, the riots of today may appear to be purposeless and more individualized.** Still, exactly in the context of last summer's riots and the criminalization of the youth in the neighborhoods where they occurred, **people appeared able to set up new links and structures of solidarity.** Examples are the 'Stop Criminalizing Hackney Youth' and the 'Tottenham Defense Campaign', established very soon after the riots and police repression. Further examples of solidarity are emerging through initiatives in London, bringing together groups who worked in the education and anti-cuts movement of 2011 together with the struggles against racist policing and for freedom of movement and migration. In response to raids of migrant people by the UK Border Agency in the months since the riots, **a new anti-raids campaign was launched by the Latino migrant communities the Latin American Workers Association (LAWAS) and (trans)-local precarious activists in the capital (e.g. Precarious Workers Brigade).** The new alliances emerging in this moment of crisis, austerity and racist repression from the state, show how the forms of rebellion of working migrant people, segregated and precarious 'citizens' alike, do not simply mirror the wild phase of capitalism and its brutal response to its own crisis, but **rather engage in unexpected solidarities and new forms of self-organization.**

## From the World to the banlieus/France

A phenomenon, although quantitatively insignificant, has been widely advertised for years in France: **unaccompanied children** (mineurs étrangers isolés, ou isolated foreign minors). Among the young people who arrive in France after long and perilous journeys from China, Africa, indo-pakistani peninsula or elsewhere, all minors under 18 should be, as far as the law is concerned, completely taken charge of. This comes from a protection mechanism of endangered youth created after WWII. But **the departmental services dealing with social care for childhood, who are in charge of the of this mechanism, are more and more often using stratagems to escape their obligations:** denying the age of the youth, devising (trial) or (test) periods during which nothing is offered to them so that many them leave, refusal of actual support in order to exercise of the right to school, of asylum right...

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For several months in several departments the people in charge claim that it is impossible to welcome the youth, that it is the duty of the State since the migrant youth have no other link with the department than their chance arrival in this particular region. **In order to justify a different treatment on the sole basis that they are foreigners – thus infringing the spirit of founding texts on youth protection - every cliché on migrations is used:** the risk to create a draft, to encourage mafia networks, and of course the excessive cost for our social protection systems. Thus these unaccompanied children would be defined more as foreigner than as endangered... Slowly, insidiously, the emphasis is put on their lies, their use of counterfeit papers: **they are delinquants!**

*For the time being, these two «categories» of youth do not communicate, they have no occasion to meet, and their situation is a terrible waste of dynamism and talents. Until when?*

»I wish I was an e-mail and you could sent me to Sweden!«

Young Refugees in Patras  
(2008-2010-2012)

*Fragments of discussions, by Infomobile*



»Where are your teeth? - You see this ship? My **teeth left to Italy just now! I will follow them!**«

*8-year-old M. from Afghanistan / Patras 2010*

2008: »I was trying for three months to apply for asylum in Athens but I was told I need an address. I was homeless. Then I was told even if I apply for asylum there will be no shelter for me. I thought I have to fight by myself for my rights and that's why I quitte Athens and I came to Patras. I like Greece. I don't want to leave. Yet the conditions here don't allow me to stay. ... **I have seen many things with my own eyes in here in Patras. A child of 14 years, he or she doesn't know anything; just tries to survive and move on. They are innocent but they get beaten by the police.** I have seen this. A child of 14 years was stabbed by the port police in front of my eyes. He was stabbed several times on his back...

**The link is obvious with another category of youth, who has no sociological or juridical relation whatsoever: the youth who live in popular districts,** most of them being French or will be over 18, and who, because their parents have migrated to France, are themselves considered as migrants. Public bodies abandon whole districts, described by the medias and the politicians as ghettos, tempted by «communautarianism», where no one goes to school, places of lawlessness run by drug dealers, etc. **For the young people of these districts, as for the unaccompanied children, the «foreign» or «foreign origin» characteristic functions as a justification of the fact that they are abandoned by those in charge.** This similarity between two «categories» of youth is enough to justify their relegation to the margins of the French national territory, physical as well as juridical margins.

So, what was the fault of this dude? Don't you think this is ridiculous? Don't you think this is a problem? Don't you think that they have lost their humanity? Don't you think that they have lost their minds? **For the police I would say only one word: they are the state machines.** Nothing else. ... What I am struggling for is my freedom. **Freedom from everything.** This is why I have to leave from here. This is why we all have to leave.

*J. was 20 when we met. He is from Afghanistan. For more than two years he stayed in the informal settlement of the Afghans in Patras, which was raided and finally demolished by the Greek government in 2009. He has been recognised as refugee in France now.*

2010: »When I walk along the streets with three or four friends, the Greek young people they run away from us. **They see Afghans and they are afraid.** One time we were walking on the street and some young guys passed by on their motorbikes. They threw eggs on me. ... Is that normal? Aren't we worth anything? **I came to Europe with great hopes. But there is no future for me here. I am stuck in Greece, the door to Europe.** Nobody knows what is in my heart. Even I can't tell. **I was working since I was 6 years old.** Did you see a six-year-old working in your country? You did not have this kind of life. You had comfort. **You were playing in this age.** Later we had so many economic problems, that I had to work more: from 6 o'clock in the morning till 2 o'clock in the night. **I had to stop school so that we do not starve.** All my life until I reached Greece I got beaten. Also, here in Greece they treat me as an animal. I get beaten too. Now, I have grown from my problems. I am strong. But my thoughts are very sad.

*H. was 17 years old when we met. He is from Afghanistan. He lived many months in the fields of Patras. Finally, he managed to leave Greece in 2011. Now he has started a new life in another European country.*

2012: »**Patras is the place where I have a very bad time.** It is very far away from my family. It is like a prison. Everything bad that might occur in my life has the name Patras. The worst is what is going on in my head. Not to know if I manage to leave; not know when the police will come back and beat us again. **The worst thing is that I don't know my future.** I wish the police would not beat us. I cannot sleep at all. I always dream that the police is coming after me. There is always fear in my heart. **I am here because this is the only way out and I will try until I succeed.** I wish I was an e-mail and you could sent me to Sweden!«

*H. is 16 years old and from Afghanistan. He is trying to get to Italy since six months. From there he wants to move on to Sweden.*

# Youth without borders/Germany

**We are an initiative which was founded in 2005 in Berlin by so-called „tolerated“ refugees, who have been under deportation-threat. We ourselves took the initiative and we will go on to represent ourselves and do not need politics of proxies. We as youth without borders can describe and explain in the best way, what are our experiences in Germany and what problems and difficulties we face here by a politic, which we have to fight.**

**Since years we struggle for the right to stay for all refugees.** We fight against the status of toleration, which expires after a few weeks and which keeps us in camps (Lager) without human rights and dignity. Every year – simultaneously to the meeting of the internal ministers in Germany – we organize a conference of the youth without borders, presenting also our demands in the public

by own press-conferences.

We vote and present **the yearly »deportation-minister« to express our disagreement with their racist deportation-policy.** We are a part of Germany and we will participate in political discussions.

Youth without borders-groups exist in most of the German countries, where we organize local events as seminars, activities in schools and universities. **A lot of tolerated youth are not allowed to leave their area because of residence-restrictions. Enough is enough:** to be isolated, without permission to work, without any right on education, without freedom of movement and the right for a self-determined life. **We are the future of Germany, we will stay and shape the social reality in Germany.**



## On the Move/Italy

*Laws, governments and presidents change  
but here the winters are getting colder  
and colder  
I shiver from my problems and grind my teeth  
with a future that holds that which you  
don't expect"*  
(»1 Marzo« - Anime Confuse)

These are the words that on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 echoed in the streets of Bologna, blasting from the sound system of the Move Parade, a march of hundreds of youth, **led by the banner "No racism, No precarity. Citizenship Now!"**. They are words that express anger and desire at the same time, because there are many problems and many of them are intertwined. The racism spoken of is the institutional racism of the Bossi-Fini law that decides the lives of millions of migrants present in Italy, tying their stay in the country to their work contract; that forces those born in Italy to look for jobs as soon as they turn 18 in order to be able to stay, **that makes our existences precarious, as well as the labour of everyone, migrant and native alike.**

**Precarity is our present**, it is what we live every day. **Precarity is our past**, that which pushed our parents to move in search of a better life, a dream which we now see vanish even more because of the crisis. **Precarity is our future**, that which will guarantee us unstable and poorly paid jobs. That is why we demand »Citizenship now!«. **We are not interested in discourses on belonging, even less in those on integration. What we are interested in is having a voice in our own lives.**

We are the »second generation« migrants, the so-called 2G, those who »came later« but want to consider themselves Italian. **They tell us that in order to stay we have to behave and smile and play by their rules. But we are not second to anybody.** They teach us to be still in our pre-established places in society, our pre-established destinies, that from the classrooms of vocational institutes bring us to the factories and the cooperatives, where we do the hardest work, for little money and with contracts lasting only a few months. **They teach us to stay still and be quiet. But we are not able to stay in our place**, we don't want it, we reject it and feel its constraints. We have ambition and want to emerge, and for that reason we aren't passive observers, hoping for divine intervention or some politicians help. We move and we do it on our own terms, with our voices, without intermediaries. We are the generation in movement to take control of its own present. **We are ON THE MOVE.**

*Precarious, precarious, precarious,  
often next to the word worker  
if this is my future then we have a problem  
basic goods are more and more costly  
lower and lower the wage, especially for the  
proletarian*  
(»1 Marzo« – Mohamed a.k.a. Dies)

*Man doesn't change, observing every brother that answers the call to be labor-power  
blackmail of residency papers, I can't handle your rules,  
either things change, or in movement we are going to take what we want*  
(»1 Marzo« – Mohamed a.k.a. Dies)

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