

CROSSING BORDERS!

movements and struggles of migration

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Again we take the opportunity of a World Social Forum (WSF) in Africa to publish a new issue of CB!. We are even more convinced to do so as an ambitious project will take place in the weeks before. Demanding „freedom of movement and fair development“ a bus caravan with about 200 activists from Africa and Europe start a common protest tour in Bamako in Mali, arriving in Dakar in Senegal for the beginning of the WSF (see page 2).



Its not by coincident that you find a longer quotation of our 2nd issue in the opening text on migration and development – „on exit and voice“ - below. Exactly three years ago and with reference to the World Social Forum in Nairobi in January 2007 we published an open letter „to our sisters and brothers in Africa“ on our frontpage. We still keep it as an important and valid document, signed by (not only) African migrants in Europe in order to communicate their transnational approach and experiences to bridge and interconnect the struggles. Migrant struggles and solidarity campaigns are the main topics on the other pages too: the chain of actions 2010, mainly directed against Frontex (page 3); the europeanwide campaign against Dublin II, the project of a transeuropean webguide and the ongoing resistance in Italy (page 4).

Exit is Voice!

*The right to move and the right to stay...
They fight to move, they fight to stay...*

When social scientists developed the scheme of „exit and voice“ in the 70ies, both terms appeared as mutually exclusive options. „Exit“ or emigration was interpreted as an alternative to „voice“ - to participate and protest in the country of origin. They did not ask migrants, who always knew and still know that transnational migrations are defined precisely by the simultaneity and overlapping of those categories. Nevertheless we nowadays find similar discourses, when „the right to move and the right to stay“ are put into opposition. Of course it is necessary to criticize some existing myths of migration and to rediscuss ambivalences within the migration processes. But if the answer ends in a hierarchy, recommending to stay and to fight „at home“ while emphasizing the negative aspects of (e)migration, it becomes a simplification, falling back in the logic of nation states and undermining our global approach. It underestimates the impacts of transnationalisation, of exile communities, of remittances, of social and political influences between exit and voice and vice versa .. not only exit after voice, rather exit empowers voice. Exit is voice!!

The reasons that led us to leave Africa didn't lead us to forget Africa! We are looking at our motherland, and as we see huge internal migration and many borders, we also wish to see there powerful social movements developing for social justice. Our own movement, the movement of migration, and the struggles we fight every day in Europe can be one of the resources creatively used by these movements, in an attempt to build up new transnational spaces of freedom and equality.

*We freed ourselves from colonialism, today we must free ourselves from every oppression in Africa and from the exploitation of migrant labour in Europe!
We already have chosen to migrate and many more will migrate. Whoever choose this route now, aiming at freedom, must know that freedom is not a gift. We must fight for taking it. We do not want to be victims, we want to be protagonists, and the space of our freedom, today, is the space of our common struggle!*

(From the open letter, published in January 2007)

Two crucial aspects have been stressed in this open letter. On the one hand, the necessity of a deep understanding of the true aims of »cooperation« and »development« policies, particularly the implementation of European control beyond Europe and the search for a cheap labour force to be exploited through the externalization of production. On the other hand, the importance of freedom of movement and of the right to stay in the destination countries as a means of refusal of the transnational exploitation enacted by the global capital, and of the precarisation experienced by migrant workers once they are settled in Europe. Today, we know that one of the main targets of the Euro-African networking process is that of the right to stay in the countries of origin. This expresses the ambition to struggle against forced migrations, against the compulsion to move in order to react to land expropriation and the processes of impoverishment.

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This claim could be problematic for the Euro-African networks if it is not read in a strictly transnational dimension, stressing the truly globalized dimension of capitalistic exploitation. What is happening in some African countries with land grabbing and the progressive pauperization seems to be just the precondition of a new exploitation of migrant labour both in countries of origin and of destination, pushed forward by the effects of the crisis which build up new obstacles to transnational migrations in combination with the strengthening of border-controls. These obstacles have been and are one of the most important targets of the recent protests in Algeria and Tunisia, where a new generation of men and women are fighting for their future. They are claiming a politic of freedom and the opportunity to find a job in their countries, as well as their freedom of movement, which is hardly contrasted by the local governments who pretend to control and to manage the migrations of a high skilled labour force towards Europe and the United States under the umbrella of international »cooperation«.

The exploitation of migrant labour and the precarization of labour as such in Europe – but also the struggles against exploitation and precarization within and without working places – clearly show the real exploitation as the other face of the so-called development.

Of course, this does not mean that the difference between poverty and wage earning is not meaningful, but that the structurally transnational dimension of exploitation must be taken into account also when expropriation of African land is discussed. And if it is led by or at least involves also other African countries – like Libya and Mauritania – perhaps this process could be read as a differentiation and hierarchization within Africa, which is crucial also in reading protests and rebellion in Maghreb countries. We do not want and cannot juxtapose the struggles of migrants in Europe with those that are taking place in some African countries against expropriation and against the expulsion from the lands. We must ask ourselves why what is called development occurs in the first place through the despair of millions of women and men. They call it development, but it is actually the spread of migrant labor on a global scale. The development they are talking about means further precarization of life in Africa, a process aiming to produce an available workforce both for other African countries and for Europe.

For the Bamako-Dakar caravan, but also for future projects in the euro-african cooperation we need a productive combination between freedom of movement and the right to stay in the country of origin, it's a tandem in our struggle for freedom and equal rights.

From Bamako to Dakar...an Euro-African bus-tour for freedom of movement and just development

Mutual visits, common calls, simultaneous actions: the euro-african network against the EU border regime developed – as we documented in Crossing Borders continuously - a lot since 2006. With a bus caravan from Mali to the World Social Forum (WSF) in Dakar in the beginning of February a particular mobilisation of grassroots activists from both continents is under preparation now.

The foundation of the AME, the association of the deported in Mali, did not happen by chance in 1996. The cycle of struggle of sans papiers in France, which empowered the undocumented all over Europe, was led by West African migrants. In 2006, after the incidents in Ceuta and Melilla and in the frame of a part of an earlier WSF in Bamako, the self organisation was reorganised.



An important „Appeal of Bamako“ was published, and the AME became a stronger association with both a social and political program.

On the one hand the AME-activists support deportees at the airport and at the borders on a daily level, on the other hand they fundamentally criticise the externalisation policy of the EU and participate in transnational noborder activities against Frontex. They refuse to collaborate with Cigem, the EU's watchpost in Bamako (see Crossing Borders No.8, and they have been successful to block the readmission agreement between France and Mali.

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It was an initiative by the AME to propose the caravan project from Bamako to Dakar. Probably five busses will go on tour end of January, with 200 activists from Westafrica and 50 to 80 from Europe. Within the delegation from Germany, Netherlands, Austria and France are (recognised) refugees and migrants, who directly experienced the European camp and deportation system. They want to bring back their struggles from Europe, vice versa they want to learn about the fights in Africa. In the caravan, activists from Malian networks will participate who are involved in movements against landgrabbing, privatisation and exploitation of global banks and companies. The tandem approach for the right to move and the right to stay (see page 1) should push for a mutual exchange and inspire a transnational common perspective in a way as the new network calls itself: Afrique-Europe-Interact! Find a lot more information, basic texts of participating groups and the call for a donation campaign at the trilingual website: www.afrique-europe-interact.net



Against the EU-Borderregime with a focus on Frontex

Transnational chain of actions

summer 2010

Various noborder groups and initiatives all over and beyond Europe organised a series of events between May and October 2010, focussing on the European border agency Frontex. It started in May in Warsaw with a Go-In against the 5 years „celebrations“ of Frontex and an exhibition of surveillance companies could be symbolically disturbed – find a film about the protest at www.frontexplode.eu. In June protests against Frontex coordinated charter deportations took place at airports in London and Vienna, at the same time self-organised refugees and other activists organised the Caravan festival „Unite against Colonial Injustice in Memory of the dead victims of Fortress Europe“ in Jena in Germany. In July, during the European Social Forum in Istanbul with workshops against the externalisation of the EU border regime, a powerful demonstration took place in front of the detention camp in Kumkapi (see the picture). Some weeks later „swarming noborder activities“ took place on Greek islands and in Izmir – find more at www.w2eu.net. In October a nobordercamp with about 6-800 participants was organised in Brussels. Police repression was very hard, nevertheless some protests took place. For example a frontex conference was blocked, a protest with balloons and banners happened at the airport – find more at <http://www.noborderbxl.eu.org/>. In remembrance of the incidents in Ceuta and Melilla in October 2005 a conference was organized in Oujda/Morocco, where a lot of selforganized refugees participated. In December, the Greek antiracist movement organised a mobilisation to the border region in the Evros area. Since November 2010, the Rapid Border Intervention Teams of Frontex are active in the area, reinforcing the Greek border guards. The deployment is accompanied by a harsh policy of detention, leading to overcrowded prisons and shocking detention conditions. See www.w2eu.net

Greetings from Italy

An overview from the crane (above and below)

After the experience of the strike of migrant labour on March 1st 2010 (see the report on CB! n. 8), the struggles of migrants in Italy continued. One of the main targets was the so called "sanatoria truffa", i.e. the legalization of migrant workers started in 2009. The legalization was actually a means to register illegalized migrants, and paved the way for criminalization, detention and deportations. After a joint protest organized by migrant groups in Reggio Emilia and Bologna in July, migrants in Brescia started a permanent sit-in – whose tents were destroyed after two weeks by the police. During a 10,000 people demonstration on October 30 a group of migrants occupied a crane and remained there for 17 days (<http://dirittipertutti.gnumerica.org/>) while in many cities protests in solidarity were organized.



After some days, another group of migrants in Milan occupied an abandoned industrial tower (immigratiatorganizzatimilano@gmail.com), joining the protest »from above«. These struggles focused the attention of the mainstream media on the issue of the racist management of migrants' life and labour. For this reason they have been hardly repressed by the government. Some migrants, mainly the most active ones, have been deported, other detained and some freed afterwards thanks to the efforts of the supporting groups. The common engagement to bring the struggle »on the earth« must be remarked. Beyond the demonstrations in Brescia, a huge mobilization took place in Bologna on November the 13th, and more than 6,000 migrants reclaimed the end of the Bossi-Fini regime and of the growing institutional racism (www.coordinamentomigranti.splinder.com). Today, while the issue of labour is at the top of the political agenda and the workers of the FIAT are fighting for their rights against the threats of externalization, migrants are looking forward for the next 1st first of March. They know that the strike is the only way to bring their struggle back to the sky, while staying with their feet on the ground.



The inner-European Border by the name of **Dublin II** has to be abolished!

"DublinII means they play football with us, shooting us from one country to another!"
A young Afghan refugee, threatened with deportation from Sweden to Hungary, explains the functioning of this European regulation. From the beginning, Dublin II became a symbol of a new destructive inner European border regime – and led to resistance of refugees: hunger strikes, resistance against forced deportations and increasing cases of distressed self-injuries. And to hundreds of pending cases in front of the European Court for Human Rights, mostly against deportations to Greece. Most refugees had been fingerprinted there, when they entered Europe and were threatened with deportation into what various activists, human right organizations and NGOs described as a humanitarian catastrophe. Consequently within the last months more and more European countries had to stop deportations to Greece, the machinery slowed down and nearly halted. Deportations to Italy, Poland, Hungary for example, should be next to be scandalized – until everybody will be able to choose his/her country of arrival and stay!

Web: <http://w2eu.net/tag/dublin-2/>
contact@w2eu.info

w2eu.info: A Webguide for the Freedom of Movement

w2eu.info provides information to refugees and migrants that might be useful on their journey to and through Europe. The transnational web-guide in four languages (Arabic, English, Farsi and French) was born in a concrete struggle for the freedom of movement which started during the Nobordercamp on Lesbos/Greece in summer 2009. By giving access to counselling and other useful contacts, the web-guide project aims to contribute to a grass-root network for the rights of refugees and migrants all over Europe and beyond. *"I can see clearly now what Europe looks like. It sends its armies to fight us at the sea and puts us in awful prisons. Together we have to start a second journey, to another safe place that might exist in the future."* (Eritrean woman, arriving on the island of Lesbos in summer 2009) Having this in mind, we welcome all travellers on this difficult trip and wish all of us a good journey! The web-guide is still in its beginning and a work in progress. It depends on information coming from antiracist networks and the project is looking for more contributors: contact@w2eu.info