MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE AS AN ALTERNATIVE: THE MUNICIPALITY OF BARCELONA AND THE CIUTAT REFUGI PLAN

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Abstract: This paper analyses the response of the Municipality of Barcelona to the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe as an alternative solution that challenges the national government's restrictive approach. This response introduces the Ciutat Refugi Plan with a city-to-city network at the municipal level that involves other European cities in creating safe routes for refugees at the local government level. In line with multi-level governance theory, I argue that central governments' inaction has pressured local governments to take action during the Syrian refugee influx. Relying on the influence of local government networks, the Municipality of Barcelona uses discourse as a tool of action in opening discursive spaces for humanitarian political responses to the refugee crisis. Using critical discourse analysis, I test this argument by examining in-depth interviews, speeches of people in power that have appeared in news articles, and statements on official websites.

Keywords: multi-level governance, local government, inter-city network, refugee, discourse analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Following the uprisings of the Arab Spring in 2011, Syrians revolted against the Assad Regime with the goal of transforming the government into a democracy. However, with the severe response from Bashar al-Assad, the revolts turned into an ethnic conflict and resulted in an aggravated civil war in Syria. Fleeing the country in increasing numbers, Syrians have become the largest refugee population since the Second World War. Surrounded by countries that are not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention (Lebanon and Jordan) and Turkey, which is a signatory to the Convention; however, accepted it with a geographical limitation provided in the Convention that resulted in does not recognizing people outside of Europe as refugees, Syrian refugees hope to reach the member states of the European Union (EU) for a descent life and a better future.

Syrians have been fleeing the country and seeking refuge in the EU since the start of the war. However, during 2014, along with first-time applicants, the asylum-seekers' number

skyrocketed in the European Union (Eurostat, 2016). Most of the arrivals were irregular and occurred through sea routes, while refugees spread to different destinations. However, treating the political instability in Syria as temporary, the EU did not adopt expanded, long-term measures to offer a humanitarian, welcoming solution to the influx of people. Eventually, the response of EU member states has been to secure their borders with increased detention (Fargues and Fandrich 2012, 11). Although the EU's attitude is not novel (Hatton 2004), it raised further questions given the mass atrocities that the Syrian refugees faced.

As an alternative solution to the current refugee influx into Europe, the Municipality of Barcelona (MoB) introduced the Ciutat Refugi Plan (I use this original name, which translates into English as "Barcelona, Refuge City"), which aims to establish a city-to-city network for securing the safe arrival of refugees and offering well-designed reception policies to the state-centric political system. Based on inter-city networks at the municipal level, this Plan formed as a reaction to the inaction of central governments in responding to the current Syrian refugee influx. Enabled by multi-level governance (MLG), which has been introduced as an alternative decision-making and authority allocation system in Europe, local governments gained a greater role, voice, and recognition along with action and participation at the supranational level. Therefore, the MoB's Ciutat Refugi Plan offers an alternative through its action-oriented inter-municipal approach and humanitarian politics. Although the nation-state still occupies a crucial place in the current political system with regard to asylum policies and remains the ultimate decision-maker, this inevitable rise of municipalities represents a challenge to the policies of the state-driven system, particularly policies on humanitarian issues.

In this research, I focus on the role of local governments and their networks in relation to the current asylum policies of central governments and whether the repercussions of this interaction can offer an alternative solution at the subnational level to the impasse that dominates state-level policies. In line with MLG theory (Marks 1993), I argue that the inaction of central governments has caused municipalities to respond to the current refugee influx by establishing transnational networks. As states' current inaction has exacerbated the aggravated humanitarian crisis of this refugee influx, I attach particular importance to the humanitarian context in regard to the actions that result from municipal-level responses to state-

imposed migration and asylum policies. Given the need to emphasize this interaction, I endeavour to contribute to the existing literature on MLG by mapping its humanitarian dimension in particular.

The article unfolds in three parts. The first part offers a review of the existing literature on the theory of MLG and its relation to local governance and humanitarian crises. To offer a better understanding of this theory and its relationship, I focus on the European context. In the second part, I describe the Ciutat Refugi Plan of the MoB, its city-to-city network basis, and its most significant features in order to delineate a case study. The third part empirically tests the argument by relying on critical discourse analysis focusing on collaboration and cooperation discourse, hospitality discourse, and inaction-pressure dynamics in order to discern the factors that drive local government action. These analyses include in-depth interviews with people in positions of power, their speeches, news articles about the authorities, documents, and other written materials of the MoB on the Ciutat Refugi Plan. The article concludes by evaluating the importance of these findings for understanding the local governments' formation of city-to-city networks as a reaction to central government inaction. Because of the lack of approval by the Spanish government, this paper intends to explore the potential opportunities of the Plan rather than its implementation process. Therefore, this article analyses the Plan and its inter-city network component without involving the integration element of refugee reception. Accordingly, I intend to demonstrate the potential of the case study as a challenge by local governments to the central government. This study does not examine previous asylum or reception policies in Barcelona and Spain. Rather, it analyses the role of local government discourses in creating an inter-city network as a response to central government inaction through the case of the Ciutat Refugi Plan of the MoB.

REVIEWING MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE, LOCAL GOVERNANCE, AND THEIR ENCOUNTERS DURING HUMANITARIAN CRISES

In this paper, I use MLG as the main theoretical framework. Marks (1993: 392) defined MLG theory as "a system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers [...] as a result of a broad process of institu-

tional creation and decision reallocation that has pulled some previously centralized functions of the state up to the supranational level and some down to the regional and local level". MLG is particularly applicable to the EU. By incorporating both vertical and horizontal dimensions, Hooghe and Marks (2001: 1) aimed to offer, first, alternative decision making and, second, an authority-sharing approach to the state-centric focus of the literature. This approach enables actors from different levels to contribute to the decision-making process while interacting with one another on various levels, which diminishes the role of national governments. By establishing "interdependency" (Delmartino 2012: 185), MLG allows supranational and subnational actors to be perceived as "transnational" actors while separating them from and within each level rather than the central government serving as an intermediary between the supranational and subnational levels (Hooghe and Marks 2001: 4; Bache and Flinders 2004: 197). Building on the initial definition, Hooghe and Marks (2003, 215) defined these actors as "networks and negotiations", which enabled them to be perceived as "interconnected" rather than "nested" in policy-making analyses (Hooghe and Marks 2001: 3), particularly for subnational actors[1]. Further contributing to this theory, Rosenau states that governance styles can be formal, informal, or both formal and informal; authority styles can be single direction, multiple directions, and matrix (Rosenau 2004: 41-42; Zito 2015: 21). MLG is thus situated within different spheres of governance that enable other actors to play a role and influence the existing system and vice versa.

Before proceeding in the analysis, I briefly describe Type I and Type II MLG as introduced by Hooghe and Marks (2003; 2011) to offer a better theoretical framework. Type I MLG is portrayed as "system-wide governing arrangements in which the dispersion of authority is restricted to a limited number of clearly defined, non-overlapping jurisdictions at a limited number of territorial levels, each of which has responsibility for a 'bundle' of functions" (Bache 2010: 2). This type involves "general-purpose governance" (Zurn, Sonja, and Henrik 2011: 4) with a more permanent basis and support from institutionalized establishments. By contrast, Type II MLG enables actors to develop task-specific, problem-solving, complex, fluid, and specialized jurisdictions (Hooghe and Marks 2003: 10-15; Bache 2010: 2; Zurn, Sonja, and Henrik 2011: 5). Hassel (2011: 156) states that "Type II is associated

with a public policy response to new societal problems, for which there is no predefined level of problem solving". While scholars tend to agree that the EU represents Type I MLG, its subnational actors constitute an important part of Type II (Jachtenfuchs 2011: 205). Marks and Hooghe (2004: 23-29) highlight Type II MLG as evolving into inter-city agencies driven by problem-solving motives. Arguing the capacity of inter-city networks to act in response to the states' inaction, I borrow from both types of MLG in explaining the Ciutat Refugi Plan and its city-to-city network basis to support the argument about its development of an alternative solution to the current Syrian refugee influx into the EU.

However, a number of scholars criticize MLG theory. Two types of criticisms arise: first, MLG describes the existing structure rather than answering the questions of why and how this structure is established, and second, because MLG includes various concepts, it is not a theory but an extended model (Hassel 2011; Jordan 2001; Ongaro 2015; Piattoni 2015). Parallel to these thoughts, Jordan (2001) emphasizes the descriptive element of MLG and reiterates its non-theory aspect by stating that it "lacks a testable set of hypotheses" (113). Emphasizing its weakness to demonstrate the causal relationship between MLG and its outcomes, Piattoni (2015: 325-327) demonstrates that democracies cannot involve every actor in the decision-making process. Following the debate related to democracy, Peters and Pierre (2004: 76) note that despite its enhanced problem-solving capacity through networks, MLG can potentially circumvent democratic methods of negotiating just to negotiate without considering the risks during the process. Although these criticisms challenge the theoretical aspect of MLG, this theory is still widely accepted in the literature as defining, explaining, and analysing the relations within different layers of authorities within the EU.

Before presenting an in-depth analysis of the "Ciutat Refugi Plan" and the MoB through inter-city alliances, I consider some other important theoretical aspects of MLG in direct relation to local governments. As discussed in the criticisms of MLG, subnational actors and their influence on the repercussions of their actions at the national and supranational levels is debated. However, the policy-specific element of MLG allows latitude for local governments. To this end, I assert that the concept of "subnational mobilization" delineated by Jeffery (2000) and the methods of interaction between local governments and national and supranational actors in-

troduced by Hooghe and Marks (2001: 78-81, 2003: 215-217) are noteworthy contributions to this research. Jeffery asks the question of whether interactions such as establishing trans-local associations, demanding further information from central governments, and restraining them and their ability to sign treaties occur through or beyond the nation-state (Jeffery 2000: 4, 19). He does so to examine the possibility of making a difference in the state-centric authoritative decision-making system and links this possibility to the constitutionally strengthened framework. In support of this view, Hooghe and Marks (2001: 114) accentuate the importance of "using partnership to challenge their national governments". These interactions allow subnational actors to bypass their central government in order to establish a voice and other relationships.

Along these lines, Peters and Pierre (2004: 75-79) claim that despite an existing hierarchy and set of rules, MLG allows subnational authorities to engage directly with their supranational counterparts through networks while allowing different levels to act with one another in a combination of "exchange and collaboration". Acknowledging the separation of subnational and supranational actors through the development of horizontal coordination is a crucial contribution of MLG theory (Peters and Pierre 2004: 84). Reinforcing the recognition of subnational actors at every level of interaction demonstrates the ability of subnational governments to form and pursue relations in order to achieve their desired goals, which could not have been recognized from a state-centric viewpoint. This approach has allowed European subnational actors to be agents in the decision-making process, not only by becoming party to solutions but also by interacting directly with EU committees both hierarchically and horizontally.

However, the literature identifies two major challenges to the influence of local governments within MLG: uneven power distribution among local governments and the existing role of nation-states as key actors in negotiating treaties. Addressing the first issue, George (2004: 116) demonstrates that while increasing the influence of subnational actors, MLG leads to uneven distribution of the involvement of subnational actors. Similarly, Bauer and Borzel (2011) demonstrate that subnational actors have varying influence, as integration has failed to beget a harmonized development of regional governance. However, this does not mean that subnational actors cannot form alliances with the possibility of making changes or developing influential frameworks with the goal of change. In sup-

port of this view, Bauer and Borzel (2011: 260) argue that the involvement of subnational actors can effectively increase the problem-solving capacity of the EU; they emphasize the "expertise" component of policy-specific endeavours. With regard to the second issue, the role of national governments as the key decision-maker diminishes the perceived influence of local governments at both the international and domestic levels. In Spain, local governance and its relation to national actors occur through four levels of governance (state, autonomous communities, provinces, and municipalities). Explained in detail by Villalta Puig (2013: 281-285), Spain constitutionally guarantees the autonomy of municipalities, and its system allows network development at the municipal level within Spain; however, the central state still has a certain level of power to control municipal functions. Moreover, in regard to policies over which the national government has sole decision-making capacity, such as migration and asylum policies, municipalities are bound by the Spanish government's decisions. Related to the argument on the ability of local governments to influence national governments, Fairbrass and Jordan (2004: 152) state that a local government's ability to bypass central governments does not equate to its ability to determine the desired consequences. However, Hooghe and Marks (2003: 6-9) argue that although national governments form an authority over local governments, local governments have the opportunity to participate and exchange information at the EU level through MLG. In turn, this transnational interaction creates a space for mobilization that shifts these actors' roles upwards to the national and supranational levels.

Based on the literature, MLG theory can be used to address challenges arising during humanitarian crises. Therefore, I examine the humanitarian perspective on refugees and asylum-seekers in the EU and the discrepancies that have arisen in its discourse, laws, and practice. Considering the theoretical approach of Kantian cosmopolitanism, Bekemans (2012: 165) highlights the importance of the objective of cosmopolitanism "to overcome dualities of the global and the local, the national and the international". These theoretical approaches have been translated into practice regarding border checks, asylum, and immigration in Article 80 of the Treaty of the EU, which establishes solidarity and burden sharing as major principles among the EU member states during crises (Xuereb 2012: 60). However, in practice, the opposite approach has been adopted by the EU since the beginning of the war in Syria. Ben-

habib (2004: 20-22) defines this as "the paradox of democratic legitimacy", which reveals the discrepancy of these democracies in expanding this statement of universal human rights on the one hand and developing policies to tighten borders on the other hand. Supporting this point, Gibney (2004) argues that Western liberal states, through laws and treaties, adopt the principle of solidarity and assistance to asylum-seekers, while in practice, they seek ways to prevent those refugees from arriving in their territories. Therefore, asylum stands as a contradictory concept in itself for these liberal states by illuminating the contradiction between protecting sovereignty and adopting humanitarian measures.

Parallel to Benhabib's "paradox", EU member states facing a massive influx of Syrian refugees have reacted by encouraging first-response countries (e.g. Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan) to host Syrian refugees while tightening the their own borders, despite being signatories to the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees. Hatton (2015: 612) states that being a signatory does not eliminate the ability of individual member states to create stricter border controls, add strict measures to the evaluation of refugee status, or highly scrutinize the application process of refugees by limiting their access to basic rights and needs. Despite the increasing harmonization and integration of the EU on this issue, particularly through the establishment of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) that emphasizes burden-sharing and multilateral cooperation at both the national and supranational levels, it is fair to argue that nation-states make the major decisions regarding national asylum policy (Hatton 2004, 2009, 2015; Thielemann 2006; Kofman 2005; Czaika 2009). According to Czaika (2009: 90), the EU member states have adopted more restrictive actions in order to control asylum-seekers and the resulting protection costs arising from asymmetries between member states. Furthermore, Facchini, Lorz, and Willmann (2006: 415) explain that the evolution of EU asylum policies, despite their intended cooperative development, is arbitrarily dependent on the nation-states that tend to have restrictive asylum policies. Demonstrating that member states continue to act independently, this situation can also be interpreted as indicating that member states have the option of not acting, which I refer to as the "option of inaction".

A focus on local governments through MLG emphasizes the importance of cities and the potential influence of the networks that they establish during humanitarian crises.

Hooghe and Marks (2001) rely on integration, the shift from the national to the supranational level, and regionalization (i.e. the shift from the national to the subnational level) to explain the roles of EU actors in developing MLG to establish networks. Moreover, to obtain a better and more comprehensive understanding, Papisca's (2012: 28-29) conceptualization of "inclusive cities" may provide another perspective on how the local is attached to the multi-level through the incorporation of a humanitarian component demonstrating that cities establish means of disintegration from the territorial sovereignty of their states in search of recognition during humanitarian emergencies. Hence, the very act of recognition leads to a bifurcating relationship between the state and cities, as local governments are the authorities that directly face the consequences of humanitarian crises. Moreover, cities are expected to react with a sufficient level of assistance while relying on states to offer them sufficient autonomy and authority to act upon these needs. Summarizing the main motivation behind this research, I demonstrate the search for recognition by the MoB through its actions as opposed to the inaction or impasse caused by the central government of Spain.

MAPPING THE CONTEXT: THE MUNICIPALITY OF BARCELONA AND THE CIUTAT REFUGI PLAN

In 2011, most countries, including those in the EU, expected Syrian refugees to return to Syria after a short amount of time. However, the situation worsened as the EU externalized its borders to Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. As these countries lack the comprehensive laws or institutional capacity to recognise Syrians as "refugees" and thus fail to offer them basic rights along with a long-term resettlement programme, Syrians continued to migrate to the EU (Oner and Genc 2015; Kirisci 2014; Carrion 2015; Dahi 2014; Akram et al. 2015). The attitude of the EU became more litigious after the signing of the "EU-Turkey Agreement", which aims to circumvent the reception of unwanted arrivals into the EU despite its official discourse on increasing the resettlement of Syrian refugees (Collett 2016). In this way, the EU designated Turkey as a gatekeeper between Syria and itself and left the refugees in a particularly vulnerable position as a result.

Barcelona has always been and still is a city of immigration. "Declaration of Barcelona", which was signed in 2014

and stressed the role of cities in receiving migrants, was de-
signed to voice the demands of immigrants, prepare a coher-
ent legislation regarding migration, and protect the decent life
conditions (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona – Call for Barcelona).
However, this declaration covered mostly the economic mi-
grants that arrived in Barcelona willingly. In addition to its
own history of Catalan refugees during the Spanish civil war
(Pujol i Casademont, 2009), issues regarding refugees were
overlooked until September 2015. Combined with these and
the aforementioned factors and triggered by the inaction of
the EU member states, the MoB along with a number of Eu-
ropean local governments launched the Ciutat Refugi Plan in
September 2015. The Plan aims to create "an inter-municipal
space" by establishing Red Europea de Ciudades de Refugio
(in English, "European Network of Cities of Refuge"). It pro-
poses to provide assistance for the arrival and reception of
refugees in Barcelona with bilateral and multilateral arrange-
ments made with other municipalities in the network to pro-
vide necessary services, guarantee rights, and call on states to
respect and comply with the humanitarian law (Ayuntamiento
de Barcelona: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi – The Plan; Comas et
al. 2016). Ciutat Refugi is based on four principles: driving
political initiatives; launching an effective reception strategy
and its own comprehensive model; bolstering city services,
resources, and networks; and collaborating with city organiza-
tions (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi –
The Plan). Positioning Barcelona and its urban facilities as the
driving force behind the Plan emphasizes the assertive influ-
ence of the local government. Ciutat Refugi and its inter-city
network's four strategies – the reception model, care for refu-
gees already in Barcelona, citizen participation and infor-
mation, and action abroad (*ibidem*) – constitute the inter-
municipal space of interaction and cooperation, particularly
with regard to the fourth strategy. This network involves the
cities of Lesbos, Lampedusa, Athens, and Paris, which were
the first signatories to the declaration, as well as later signato-
ries Leipzig, Bristol, Wadowice and Slupsk, A Coruña, Ma-
drid, and the autonomous governments of Generalitat Valen-
ciana, the community of Navarra, and the Bask Country (Co-
mas et al. 2016: 3), followed by more than fifty-five municipal-
ities in Spain (Torres Reyes, 2016). In addition to its own city-
to-city network, the MoB has utilized other international net-
works to which the municipality is a party, including Euroci-
ties, Medcities, Metropolis, and the Global Network of Cities,

Local, and Regional Governments (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi – Action Abroad). The network component of the Plan targets municipalities in promoting cooperation, offering them mutual support during ongoing emergencies, and exchanging information and good practices (*ibidem*.) as they are caught between the increasing number of incoming refugees and the inaction of central governments.

DISCUSSING THE POTENTIAL AND CONSTRAINTS: LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S DISCOURSE OF ACTION

This section examines the different ways in which municipalities have taken action as a result of the inaction of central governments in responding to the current Syrian refugee influx. Because of the process of the Plan and the lack of approval from the central government of Spain, the MoB has the power of discourse. To pursue this discussion, the following research question can serve as the starting point of inquiry:

> What discourses used by the Municipality of Barcelona drive its city-to-city network as an alternative solution to the current Syrian refugee influx into the EU?

In developing alternatives through MLG to the state-dominated structure, as explained by Van Dijk (2001, 354-355), the main role of discourse is reproducing and challenging domination, and critical discourse analysis primarily focuses on this domination. Similarly, Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 13) frame "power" as both a source of domination and a productive force in itself, as it creates the discourse of domination. I focus on the MoB's domination attempts by emphasizing actions taken that create a discursive space in ameliorated conditions for refugee reception by challenging the central government of Spain. I follow Wodak (2001: 10-11) and his belief that the use of language becomes more powerful when used by powerful people. Therefore, I choose to focus on discourses from interviews, news articles, and official statements on the website of the municipality from people in positions of power: Ada Colau, the Mayor of Barcelona; Mariano Rajoy, the Prime Minister of Spain; Ignasi Calbo, the Director of the Ciutat Refugi Plan; and other authorities working in the local and central government[2].

The discourse of collaboration and cooperation

Constituting the first and most important component of action taken by municipalities as a result of the inaction of central governments, the discourse of collaboration and coop-eration with the Ciutat Refugi Plan is expressed in two ways: collaboration with other municipalities in the EU and cooper-ation between different levels of government in Spain. On 13 september 2015, while introducing the Plan, Ada Colau, along with the Mayors of Paris and Lesbos, declared as follows: "Europe's credibility is currently at stake. We cannot remain indifferent […]. We, the cities of Europe, are ready to become places of refuge. We want to welcome these refugees. States grant asylum status but cities provide shelter" (Colau et al. 2015). By emphasizing "we" and "cities", this statement demon-strates the collaborative discourse of transnational alliances and horizontal interaction in line with MLG in order to chal-lenge the central governments' inaction. Similarly, this dis-course complies with Type II MLG in establishing a problem-solving network. During her speech at the UN Headquarters in New York, Ada Colau stated:

> We must cooperate rather than compete. We need to work more in the network by putting objectives ahead of individual interests… It is not ap-propriate for cities and the states that want to be from the First World, that want to be the example of democracy and human rights. If Europe wants to continue to be the reference of democracy and human rights, it needs to change its policy radically (Peiron, 2016).

Both of these statements respond to the indifference and inaction of EU states by explaining the collaborative solution of cities as an alternative to the refugee influx. Having a direct connection with MLG theory in developing networks, negoti-ations, and interdependency, city-to-city network discourses rely on the will of local governments to create inter-municipal space, implying a lack of will on the part of central govern-ments.

Constituting the second element of this discourse, the Ciutat Refugi Plan is innovative not only in proposing a novel approach to solidarity among local governments but also in establishing cooperation between local governments and the national government of Spain. During our interview, Ignasi Calbo explained the place of local governments within the state-centric asylum policy system as follows: "The states make the treaties, but cities receive the people" (Calbo 2016). He

continued, "what we offer complements the State's refugee reception plan" (Calbo 2016), which will give local governments the ability to support the central government not only administratively but also financially. According to the law, the Spanish state offers assistance from zero to six months (in some cases, nine months); under the Plan, this time frame can be expanded to twenty-four months with the assistance of the MoB. Similarly, Ada Colau states, "we want to share the responsibility, we want to do more, and we can do more" (Colau et al. 2015). Again from her speech at the UN, Colau said, "we need the United Nations to help us convince the states of Europe to radically change their existing policies" (*ibidem*.). By offering a complementary design, these discourses acknowledge the role of central governments and improve the existing system. Furthermore, these statements put the concept of inclusive cities into practice by implicating the differences in roles between the central and local governments and explaining the motives behind the search for recognition and the action discourse of the MoB in engaging cities in offering assistance. Additionally, as previously discussed by Hooghe and Marks (2001), local governments have the power of partnership to challenge their national governments. Furthermore, the discourse of the MoB that re-emerges in MLG is the partnership between subnational and supranational actors against national governments. Especially in this case, emphasizing the humanitarian aspect in calls to action constitutes a basis for cooperation between different government levels.

Because it is directly related to cooperation and collaboration, I also focus on the burden-sharing discourse to complement this section. Taking advantage of the dispersion of authority in Type I MLG and the task-specific approach of Type II MLG in establishing a flexible and problem-solving structure, the MoB and Ciutat Refugi Plan incorporated municipalities both outside and inside Spain to allocate people and resources aimed at providing maximum efficiency and humanitarian assistance. Offering a comprehensive literature review on the relationship between burden-sharing and unequal distribution between member states, Czaika (2009: 93) highlights the insufficiency of country-specific conditions to offer a cooperative and collaborative solution. Therefore, as stated by Ignasi Calbo (2016):

After the pact with Athens, we (MoB) have decided to share the burden and the responsibility. So, if Barcelona has hundred people and Athens

has 20,000, we will distribute the refugees. This is why it is a system at the local level. It is about sharing the burden between the cities of Europe.

Despite the aforementioned criticism on the uneven power distribution at the subnational level with MLG, following these discourses, I argue that this unevenness can become an advantage to be used by the networked municipalities in sharing responsibility on financial, political, and social levels that can be equalized through various measures. Although this Plan requires approval of the central government to be implemented, through the creation of an inter-municipal space, the MoB and municipalities in the network target trans-local and transnational interaction and focus on the ability of the municipalities to generate similar programmes that will contribute to the problem-solving role of local governments (Comas et al. 2016: 17). Therefore, the Ciutat Refugi Plan and its inter-city network have the potential to build direct cooperation and collaboration, which could balance the asymmetric country cooperation system in the context of asylum burden sharing.

The discourse of hospitality

In explaining the initiative to take action in the discourses of the MoB and the Ciutat Refugi Plan, hospitality discourse is particularly important in contributing to the humanitarian aspect of this paper. To explain this discourse, I adopt the concept of "unconditional hospitality" from Derrida and Dufourmantelle (2000). Although this conceptualization portrays the "other" as the "guest" and perceives hospitality as an interruption to the host by reiterating the subordination between the citizen and the foreigner (Kelz 2015; Westmoreland 2008), this concept emphasizes the ethical obligation of helping "others" beyond "our" borders for an infinite amount of time by abolishing the limits of hospitality. To offer this timeless hospitality, the MoB offers, according to the description of the Plan on its website, "to equip Barcelona with its own permanent, comprehensive reception model. That can serve us now and in the future. The refugees are already here, but they will keep coming. And most of them will not be able to return home in the short term" (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi – The Plan). In this discourse, the Plan expands the scope of action of hospitality beyond the period

of the Syrian refugee influx to other humanitarian crises, irregular migration flows, and non-Syrian asylum seekers that require long-term solutions. In support of this view, Ada Colau stated: "Capacity, we have. What is missing is the political will" (Noain, 2016). Emphasizing the ability of Barcelona to offer needed hospitality in various discourses enables the MoB to represent itself with the capacity to host and attend to refugees. This appears to be a direct demonstration of taking action and a direct challenge to the inaction of the central government of Spain.

In emphasizing this discourse of hospitality, I must explain the humanitarian discourse of the MoB to demonstrate the "paradox" of the EU and the discrepancies between "practice" and "action" attitudes of the member states. This use of humanitarian discourse stands at the core of the Plan in bolstering hospitality as an ethical obligation aimed at ensuring the safe arrival component of the reception policy of the Ciutat Refugi Plan in cooperation and collaboration with other cities through inter-municipal space. Ada Colau states: "While death stalks our beaches daily, while thousands of families fleeing war in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia crowd our ports, stations, trains, and roads, waiting for a humanitarian response from Europe" (Colau et al. 2015). While addressing the United Nations Headquarters in New York, Ada Colau declared as follows: "We are deeply ashamed that there are thousands of boys and girls, elderly and sick, men and women drowning in our Mediterranean Sea [...] at the borders of Europe" (Mars, 2016). Similarly, by addressing the nations of the world through humanizing refugees rather than speaking of them in numbers, this discourse can be noted for its potential to be reproduced by powerful people in significant locations. Using hospitality as an ethical obligation, which I have demonstrated as humanitarian, distinguishes the MoB from the discourses of the EU and the central government of Spain by recognizing the long duration of the Syrian refugee influx and its willingness to accept refugees with a long-term commitment and offering "unconditional welcoming".

Inaction-pressure dynamic

In discerning the constraints of the discourses of the MoB and the Ciutat Refugi Plan, we must consider the inaction-

pressure dynamic between the central government of Spain, representing the former component, and the local government of Barcelona, representing the latter component. Although discourse is the strongest tool of the MoB, it has no legal enforcement. As stated by the MoB, this inter-city network offers humanitarian action both by establishing networks and by using these networks to pressure the authorities, primarily the central governments in the EU, to comply with humanitarian law (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi – Action Abroad). As a response to the question on whether the MoB and the Ciutat Refugi Plan believed that they had the capacity to pressure the central government into reconsidering their asylum policies, Ignasi Calbo (2016) responded as follows:

> Yes, if not, we would not be doing this, because it costs us a lot. The city network has a very significant symbolic load, it has a very significant political load, and also, it has a very important political pressure to put on the government. If there had not been the pressure from the cities, the government would not have accepted any refugees.

In support of this statement, since the initiation of the Ciutat Refugi Plan, the Spanish government discourse on "accepting refugees" under various circumstances has changed from "not speaking" to "emphasizing the need to take action". An editorial in El Pais titled "Other Spain: The change of the Government on refugees should translate itself into true solidarity" states as follows:

> The Spanish Government has taken longer than the expected to react, but yesterday (4 september 2015), Mariano Rajoy, announced that there will be a change regarding the policies on refugees. Rajoy, referring to the moral duty of Europeans, said: You cannot give up, in any way, granting these people asylum when they are entitled to it under international law (El Pais, 2016a).

All these discourses emphasize the need to take action. The discourses at the local level are caused by the inaction of the central government, and the discourses at the national level of the Spanish government, which acknowledge the gravity of the problem and recognize the "right to asylum", stem from the inaction of EU member states. Creating the inaction-pressure dynamic between the discourses of the MoB and the central government of Spain, these discourses are good examples of the struggle for domination over discourses of authori-

ty-dispersion, decision-making mechanisms, and the subnational-national interdependency of MLG.

However, since the initiation of the Ciutat Refugi Plan, no direct practical action has been taken by the central government of Spain; this inaction constitutes the major constraint in implementing the Plan. In examining the abovementioned statements, although Rajoy's statement encourages action, we can observe that it addresses the "other" member states and does not indicate Spain as a responsible party needing to take action. Despite the need to provide an explanation after a long period without any discourse, the central government of Spain, regardless of its discourses, chooses the "option of inaction" as established by the state-centric nature of European asylum policies. Targeting the central government, Colau stated, "we cannot settle people if there is no state authorization" (Blanchar, 2016). Following a similar criticism two months later, Colau accused the central government of being the "main obstacle in the path of turning Barcelona into a city for refugees", defining the actions of the central government as "immoral and illegal" (El Pais, 2016b). Hence, the MoB aims to pressure the central government through discourses to establish interdependency, networks, and negotiations; however, subnational mobilization, transnational alliances, and the horizontal coordination elements of MLG are highly constrained by central governments as they have the sole authority over decision-making, given the evaluation of the inaction-pressure dynamic.

CONCLUSION

The role of the Municipality of Barcelona suggests an alternative framework by introducing the Ciutat Refugi Plan to demonstrate how local governments, triggered by central government inaction, can develop city-to-city networks. Throughout this examination, benefiting from alternative perspectives on the theory of MLG, local governments, and the use of MLG during humanitarian analyses, I have first demonstrated that MLG enables the MoB to form alliances aiming to create an inter-municipal space. Although MLG does not guarantee the desired outcomes that the local governments desired, in light of this ability to form municipal-level alliances, I have delineated the discourses through the ways in which this inaction can be articulated at the subnational, national, and supra-

national levels. Considering collaboration and cooperation discourses, hospitality discourse, and the inaction-pressure dynamic, I analysed the reasons for the MoB action as a reaction to the inaction of nation-states. I have argued that the use of discourse by powerful people constitutes a discursive space for the MoB in which it reproduces the power of domination in order to challenge the policies of the state-driven system, particularly policies on humanitarian issues. By adopting this approach, I have endeavoured to add a humanitarian dimension to the question of the position of local governments in relation to central governments in the current context of asylum policies.

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NOTES

[1] In the literature, the term "subnational" is used to describe the regional and local government levels (Panara 2015). Because I focus on local governments in this paper, I use this term to describe local governments and governance rather than other regional entities.
[2] The research regarding news articles and the interviews were conducted in Spanish and translated into English.

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