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Building transversal solidarities in European cities: Open harbours, safe communities, home

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**Building transversal solidarities in European cities:
Open harbours, safe communities, home**

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Abstract

Over the past years, we have seen a rise in political mobilisations in EUrope and elsewhere, by and in solidarity with migrant newcomers. This article focuses on specific examples of what we conceptualise as *transversal solidarities* by and with migrants, and rooted in the city, the focus of this special issue. The examples we explore in this article include: *Trampoline House*, a civil society organisation which provides a home to migrant newcomers in Copenhagen; *Queer Base*, an activist organisation in Vienna providing support for LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer) migrants; and finally, the *Palermo Charter Process*, a coalition of diverse groups seeking to create open harbours and ‘corridors of solidarity’, from the Mediterranean to cities throughout EUrope. While these examples are situated in and across different urban spaces, they share a common grounding in building solidarity through spaces of encounters related to ideas of *home*, *community*, and *harbour*. By exploring these distinct solidarity initiatives in tandem, we examine, on the one hand, how the production of spaces of encounters is linked to building transversal solidarities and, on the other, how transversal solidarities also connect different spaces of solidarity across different political scales.

Keywords

Transversal solidarities, migrants, solidarity movements, urban space, migration, Europe

Introduction

Over the past years, we have seen a rise in political mobilisations in EUrope¹, and elsewhere, by and in solidarity with migrant newcomers.² We have described these mobilisations previously as “forms of contentious politics with transformative potential” that are both transnational and trans-categorical in that “they are disruptive, not just of territorial borders of the nation-state and regional regimes of control, but also of the very ontological and political borders upon which notions of traditional citizenship as both a legal status and a political identity are based” (Ataç, Rygiel and Stierl, 2016: 539). Building on our earlier work, and in view of the rise of migrant solidarity activism and social movements (Della Porta, 2018; Mezzadra, 2018; Agustín and Jørgensen, 2019; Bauder, 2019), particularly since 2015’s “long summer of migration” (Kasperek and Speer, 2015), this article focuses on specific examples of what we conceptualise as *transversal solidarities* by and with migrants, and rooted in the city, the focus of this special issue.

The examples we explore in this article include: *Trampoline House*, a civil society organisation which provides a home to migrant newcomers in Copenhagen; *Queer Base*, an activist organisation in Vienna providing support for LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer) migrants; and finally, the *Palermo Charter Process*, a coalition of diverse groups seeking to create open harbours and ‘corridors of solidarity’, from the Mediterranean to cities throughout EUrope. While these examples are situated in and across different urban spaces, they share a common grounding in building solidarity through spaces of

encounters related to ideas of *home*, *community*, and *harbour*. By exploring these distinct solidarity initiatives in tandem, we examine, on the one hand, how the production of spaces of encounters is linked to building transversal solidarities and, on the other, how transversal solidarities also connect different spaces of solidarity across different political scales - from the home, or even the sea, to the city, and to cities across EUropean spaces.

Engaging our three examples in this way enables us to explore the question of how migrants transform city spaces into home, or what Blunt and Sheringham (2019) call “home-city geographies”. This is an approach to “examine the interplay between lived experiences of urban homes and the contested domestication of urban space” and “the ways in which urban homes and the ability to feel at home in the city are shaped by different migrations and mobilities” (Blunt and Sheringham, 2019: 815). We understand their collective impact as performing a subversive form to what Walters (2004) calls “domopolitics”, that is a rationality of governing fusing paradigms of national security and social security through appeals to the home and the home front.

In our discussion, we underscore the importance of space and spatial strategies in political mobilisations (Martin and Miller, 2003; Bauder, 2020), through which the city may be created as a progressive space, noting how “struggles for and around rights to movement emerge in response to strategies and spaces of control and containment, but they also provide a means to re-connect sites and scales of politics with the potentiality of creating alternative citizenship geographies and political community” (Ataç, Rygiel and Stierl, 2016: 540). We examine how *transversal solidarities* are built through these spaces of encounters, teasing out different understandings of solidarity as well as their limits. For us, spaces of encounters in the city are created through social relations and networks in ways disruptive of borders and boundaries of enclosure, whether they be territorial, ontological, or political.

Drawing from our case studies, this article explores the notion and enactment of solidarity but also, in keeping with contentious politics, points of tension, constraints, and conflicts. We do so in order to call attention to nuancing discussion to avoid potential pitfalls in approaches to solidarity in city spaces. Some of these pitfalls include romanticising the city as a space of progressive politics (especially in counter to more xenophobic national politics), downplaying the precarity of position of groups of newcomers and their legal status, or over-emphasising the city as a place of permanent settlement. We highlight that cities also constitute places of increasing polarisation, racialised inequality and violent displacement and that they may offer, if at all, merely temporary shelter to those ‘on the move’. All of this impacts the possibilities and limits of transversal solidarities in urban settings and emphasises that enactments of solidarity are ultimately experimental and “without guarantees” (Featherstone, 2012: 244).

Our article is organised into three main sections. We first review some key aspects of the EUropean border regime in order to illustrate Walter’s concept of domopolitics. We then provide a review of some recent literature on migrant solidarity struggles centred in and around the city, noting how the city comes into focus as a site of political struggle. In the second section, we explore three transversal solidarity initiatives, illustrating how they advance our understanding of providing a counter-domopolitics, and elaborate on how spaces of encounter and transversal solidarity are conceived within these initiatives. In the last section, we tease out the transversal aspects of this counter-domopolitics more collectively but then also outline considerations for thinking about the potential limits of transversal solidarity in the city.

The EU border regime as domopolitics and its contestation

The EU border regime as domopolitics

Recent figures put the number of forcibly displaced persons at a record high of 79.5 million (UNHCR, n.d.). At the same time, governments - especially those of the ‘global north’ - are investing in more restrictive migration policies and are creating a “non-entrée regime” (Hathaway and Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2014). Regularly, governments evoke a certain rationality towards governing through security that brings together the ‘diagrams’ of national security with those of political economy and social security - a rationality Walters (2004: 241) describes as “domopolitics” which “refers to the government of the state (but, crucially, other political spaces as well) as a *home*.” This trope of home “implies a reconfiguring of the relations between citizenship, state, and territory”, as might be found in notions such as Homeland Security in the US or the UK’s 2002 White Paper, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*. As Walters (2004: 232) notes, domopolitics, as its name suggests, relates also to “domo as conquest, taming, subduing; a will to domesticate the forces which threaten the sanctity of home.” He (2004: 242) adds that, frequently, domopolitics reveals a “tendency which takes it outwards, beyond the home, beyond even its own ‘backyard’ and quite often into its neighbours’ homes, ghettos, jungles, bases, slums. Once domopolitics extends its reach, once it begins to take the region or even the globe as its strategic field of intervention, then the homeland becomes the home front, one amongst many sites in a multifaceted struggle”.

In EUrope, domopolitics has long translated into attempts to turn the union into an “area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers” (European Union, 2012). In order to create communalisation through this area in which EU citizens, finances, goods, as well as services move and flow freely, a complex security and surveillance landscape - or regime - has emerged to govern such movements to and within the union. The EU border regime seeks to filter out unwanted mobilities and subjectivities, commonly thought as emanating from the outside, in order to secure and purify the ‘homey’ inside. Securing the EUropean homeland by securing its ‘external dimension’, this border regime has indeed extended ‘its reach outward’, as Walters noted. Deterring and containing unauthorised movements has coalesced with a (necropolitical) violence that, to a large degree, occurs ‘elsewhere’, in the rather inaccessible terrains of the Mediterranean Sea or the Saharan desert, and that rarely returns ‘home’.

EUropean domopolitics is enforced through “hostile environment” policies that seek to actively render spaces unliveable for migrants. These “hostile environments exist”, Pezzani (2020) writes, “at the intersection of two sets of laws: one aiming to contain and restrict people’s movement to their respective nation-states, and the other seeking to govern their social (dis-) integration.” The Dublin regulation which, in theory, prevents migrant newcomers from moving across EUrope’s internal borders to ‘asylum shop’, as derogatively phrased, has produced a regime of containment *and* forced displacement within the union where member states deport ‘irregularised’ migrants to the ostensible first country of entry. Social (dis-)integration and deterrence measures are pursued, moreover, through an ever-more restrictive asylum system in which grounds for receiving asylum are narrowed, worker and welfare rights are restricted, access to independent and qualified counselling services is limited, spaces of forcible confinement are extended and turned increasingly disciplinary and punitive (Ataç and Rosenberger, 2019). Seeking to evade controls and deportations has meant that those without regular status often seek to remain under the radar, which in turn further impedes access to vital resources, including access to healthcare, education, social welfare, and employment.

Building a counter- 'domo'- politics

In particular since 2015, forms of solidarity have surged in the European context, many of which have appealed to welcoming migrant newcomers into new 'homes'. In contrast to the top-down governmentality of domopolitics described by Walters (2004: 232), which operates by locking down borders on the home front and "taming" or "subduing (...) the forces which threaten the sanctity of home," these solidarities are built around the concept of home, to politicise the presence of those with precarious status, and to introduce practices against the exclusionary logic of European domopolitics. In looking collectively at such solidarity movements, we suggest that they provide a counter-politics contesting the logics of domopolitics, one which often focuses on opening up local spaces within the city as a way of countering more restrictive national or European border policies. Examples of such solidarity movements include mobilisations of non-citizens, mostly in urban spaces, who engage in political struggles and campaigns for the right to stay, to housing, work, education, medical care, food and clothes, and family reunification as well as against border controls, asylum policy, detention and deportation (De Genova, 2017; Fontanari, 2019; Stierl, 2019). We have also seen an upsurge in mobilisations of citizens in solidarity with newcomers and their struggles for rights and resources (Siim et al., 2018; Baban and Rygiel, 2020; King, 2016), including 'welcoming' campaigns (Karakayali and Kleist 2016), rescue operations in the Mediterranean (Stierl, 2018); anti-deportation struggles, language classes, legal support, housing and food provision, and so forth (Rosenberger et al., 2018).

The city becomes an important location for building transversal solidarity struggles by migrants and citizens to counter the European border regime. As long observed by critical citizenship, migration (including the autonomy of migration), social movement and urban geography literatures, the city is an important site of struggle for "rights to the city" and forms of "urban citizenship" (e.g. Isin, 2002; Staeheli 2003; Lefebvre, 2009; Mitchell, 2003; Purcell, 2014; and Holston, 2009). The city has, moreover, been regarded as a "migrant metropolis", the product of transnational human mobilities that form "a central and constitutive dynamic in the contemporary social production (and transformation) of urban space" (De Genova, 2015: 4). Such bodies of literature point to the importance of cities: as spaces of place-making through the appropriation of space and rights-claiming; as sites of everyday living through settlement, employment and belonging; as hubs where newcomer services are concentrated; and as centres of heterogeneity, networks and exchange.

Particularly within the current political climate in Europe and elsewhere, as national governments pursue more restrictive immigration and refugee policies (Schwartz and Schwenken, 2020), cities have become important strategic sites for circumventing or contesting restrictive border policies. The turn towards the city level of governance in order to circumvent more restrictive federal or national border policies can be seen in social movements forming around sanctuary and solidarity cities (Kron and Lebuhr, 2020; Darling and Bauder, 2019). Scholars have recently looked to cities as progressive spaces from which to fight against the unequalizing forces of capitalism, globalisation and the "neoliberal city" (Mayer, 2013), while noting the importance of not romanticising the city as necessarily a place of a more progressive politics (Keil, 2018; Misra, 2017).

Wary of idealising cities as sites of progressive politics, we draw attention to the importance of cities through the concept of spaces of encounters, which enables us to inquire into their, as of yet, settled potential as spaces in which to build transversal solidarities. De Genova (2015: 3) has argued that "migration studies research tends to be disproportionately urban in its

empirical orientation, but commonly leaves the urban question profoundly under-theorised.” Taking up his (2015: 3) invitation to think not just empirically but also theoretically about “the intersections of transnational migration and urban space” and “how migrants become involved in the production of distinct urban spaces”, we look to the types of spaces that are created through solidarity struggles, reflecting on both the potential and limits to generate progressive politics around and in solidarity with migrant newcomers.

From Home and Safe Communities to Open Harbours

The three examples we explore in this section are connected in their focus on building relationships between newcomers and locals through practices and ideas of home, building communities and harbouring within urban spaces. As we detail below, they reveal how solidarity mobilisations challenge a domopolitical rationality by building spaces of encounters in the city that connect people across different positionalities and legal statuses, traverse across different types of solidarities, and link different spaces and scales of governing that work to open up community and borders to newcomers.

Trampoline House in Copenhagen

Trampoline House is a civil society organisation that builds solidarity with migrants (asylum seekers and refugees) through housing. Rather than romanticising the city, transversal solidarity often arises from the polarisation, poverty and inequity of cities, with the right to affordable and adequate housing being a key issue. The OECD (2020) estimates that 1.9 million people are homeless in OECD countries, in addition to those without access to adequate housing. Housing is particularly important to migrant newcomers in the city, being, the “anchor point for a new start” and “the scaffolding refugees need to rebuild and feel settled” (Rose, 2016). Housing provides a foundation from which newcomers develop a sense of belonging and access health, education and employment.

Housing solidarity initiatives with migrant newcomers across European cities take a variety of forms. Some take more activist forms, or what Agustín and Jørgensen (2019: 40) call “autonomous solidarity,” such as migrant squatting (Dadusc et al 2019; Mudu and Chattopadhyay 2016), with one of the better-known examples being the self-organised Hotel City Plaza initiative in Athens (Raimondi, 2019; Squire, 2018). The Hotel squat is based on horizontal forms of participation and relations of equality, rather than charity or government support. In contrast, “civic solidarity” models (Agustín and Jørgensen, 2019:41) are based on civil society actors organising with migrant newcomers independent from the state. Examples include more charitable initiatives, such as the Christian-based *Sharehaus Refugio* in Berlin, to the more entrepreneurial models like the *Refugees Welcome* international network (Baban and Rygiel 2017). *Trampoline House* in Copenhagen is an initiative that traverses both housing models and typologies of solidarity, following somewhere in between civic and autonomous typologies of solidarity, or what Siim and Meret (2020a:4) describe this as a “hybrid” form, combining “the provision of practical support for migrants with transformative activism.” Housing initiatives are important here not only for materialising rights to the city but because they provide platforms for linking “home-making in the city” to thinking about “the city as home” (Blunt and Sheringham, 2019: 815).

Trampoline House is an independent and self-governing initiative, operating as both a support centre for refugees and asylum seekers and accommodation for newcomers alongside locals. It was formed in 2010 by a group of asylum seekers, artists, students and professionals in

reaction to the Danish government's restrictive asylum policies and punitive approaches to newcomers and to the conditions within asylum centres. *Trampoline House*'s original intention was "to create a reversed space of exception to the camp's space of exception: a reversed space in which asylum seekers would temporarily be re-equipped with their basic civil rights that they are deprived of in the camps" as well as "encourage 'the meeting between Danes and asylum seekers,'" thereby "showing to integration authorities that a 'non-profit, user-driven cultural space could function,'" and could promote "'integration, learning, and an exchange of knowledge, creating networks and mutual respect'" (Siim and Meret 2020b:-41-42). Today, *Trampoline House* offers many support activities including: asylum advocacy and support in navigating the system; job training and educational support; developing strategic partnerships with other NGOs, and companies; helping newcomers and locals develop social networks with one another; and finally, democratic practice "because active citizenship entails understanding the social contract, your rights and duties and last but not least, the Danish democratic tradition and system" (Trampoline House. n.d.). As co-founder and director, Morten Goll further explains, although *Trampoline House* is an organisation that assists newcomers with advocacy and accessing their rights to the city, the idea of solidarity differs from providing charity: "we have expelled, abandoned charity. We have prohibited charity in this house. Because charity sets up a relation of inequality" (Interview with Baban and Rygiel, Copenhagen, March 20, 2018)³.

In addition to supporting migrant newcomers' rights and daily needs, *Trampoline House* is a grassroots housing project designed to create a space of encounter based on facilitating a politics of connectivity and exchange but one that does not depend on finding common ground so much as it builds connection through what Said (1993) calls "contrapuntality". With respect to the idea of living together, contrapuntality requires "processes of translation, whereby people give up their old selves in order to become something else. That something else comes from encountering others, who are different and who, in return, also become something else, such that what becomes common is something anew to both parties" (Baban and Rygiel, 2020: 6). As such, *Trampoline House*'s living space is designed to create a space for encounters through which transversal solidarity is built. This includes building relations with people across very different walks of life, positionalities and statuses (citizen and newcomer). *Trampoline House*'s co-founder, Tone Olaf Nielsen, explains the thinking behind the project as follows:

Trampoline House as a concept was developed in collaboration with asylum seekers and migration activists during a series of workshops that Morten, myself and another artist organized in 2009. *Trampoline House*, and our use of the house as a model [and] the family as a model was a way to combine self-empowerment platforms, notions of agency, co-ownership.... It is really this idea that because people feel that, 'this is my house, it is your house, it is our house, we share this space', they are also able to put aside extremist positions and are willing to negotiate, unlearn and de-program. That's my experience here (Interview with Baban and Rygiel, Copenhagen, March 20, 2018).

This idea of *Trampoline House* as shared space, described here by Nielsen, is not one that romanticises the experiences of living together and the process of building transversal solidarity. Rather, as Nielsen explains, it is by engaging with others who are different that one is forced to "negotiate, unlearn and de-program", that is to confront and challenge one's own prejudices through the process of living together. This includes both locals and newcomers, equally challenging their prejudices to find new ways of relating to one another. Nielsen explains that the

starting point is to establish certain “ground rules”. In order to live at the house, one must agree to adhere to the rules of “No racism, no sexism, no discriminations of religious, political whatever, no hard liquor, and no violence” (Interview with Baban and Rygiel, Copenhagen, March 20, 2018). The hope is that over time, and through co-ownership of the space, the house becomes a home to locals and newcomers and provides a safe space in which to encounter one another and to learn to work through differences. *Trampoline House*’s vision is to build relations of solidarity between locals and newcomers that are supportive of both providing rights to housing beyond the camp and assisting with other rights to the city such as employment and education. The hope is that this then enables newcomers to find a sense, through homemaking, of belonging in the city, and thinking of the city as home.

Queer Base in Vienna

Queer Base was founded in 2015, just before the ‘long summer of migration’, as a reaction to the increasing number of queer migrants who faced systematic failures in the asylum system as well as homophobia and transphobia more broadly. The organisation was founded in the space of the *Türkis Rosa Lila Villa* which was established in 1982 as a political and social space for queer activism. *Queer Base* has an activist background and developed an independent organisational structure. The initiative emphasises both service delivery as well as advocacy for the rights of queer refugees. They offer legal counselling, support in processes of social inclusion and ‘coming out’, as well as medical and psychological support, provides a system of buddies (*Queer Base*. n.d.). The support offered includes also the translation of everyday stories and vulnerabilities into legal claims and the search for shelter and housing facilities. Housing poses a challenge for LGBTIQ migrants as the heteronormative conditions in the refugee accommodation centres make it difficult to live openly, revealing their sexual and gender identity, but also due to increasing rent prices in larger cities such as Vienna. A voluntary subgroup called “Housing Buddies” supports them in their search for affordable housing, helping with applications for community housing or looking for financial means for paying the deposit. By mobilising resources to include newcomers in different societal fields, these examples show that *Queer Base* contributes towards a civic model of solidarity (Agustín and Jørgensen, 2019).

Queer Base creates spaces of encounters between migrants and supporters, in particular those provided by the *Türkis Rosa Lila Villa*, which forms the basis for social encounters of care and solidarity and led to the development of strong ties between activists and migrants that crossed borders and enabled new forms of identification and belonging, by becoming part of the queer community (Interview with Ataç, Vienna, September 30, 2020)⁴. As one activist highlights, “I don’t believe that someone says to Caritas after a consultation or recognition: ‘You are my family’. And I think that is the big difference to the established welfare organisations (...), who do not have this aspect of community work, and not the aspect of activism” (ibid). In all interviews (2016, 2018 and 2020), activists from *Queer Base* described how refugees and supporters ‘become family’, how they themselves feel like ‘part of the family’. The metaphor of ‘family’ is used in the queer movement “to revise the criteria of membership in the family” (Gamson, 1995: 396), defining a common identity on the fringe. Queer scholar-activists emphasise the role of collective identities in the construction of new communities and the specific role of emotions and challenges that come with it during protest movements (Jasper, 2010).

Queer Base actively creates transversal spaces for encounters and performs extended community work. By focusing on the specific needs of queer migrants, *Queer Base* responds to

an emerging demand and a gap in the provision of existing services. They deal with special needs at the intersection of being a refugee, being queer, and arriving in a new city. The activists emphasise the racist bias in the asylum procedure and point out that street-level bureaucrats and courts rarely believe the specific experiences of LGBTIQ migrants. To overcome this, they build infrastructures for migrants “to access and participate in queer life in Vienna in whatever way the queer refugees wish for” (Interview with Ataç, Vienna, September 30, 2020). This helps them to ensure their credibility assessment in the asylum procedure. The city makes it possible to “have access to the gay community in comparison to being isolated somewhere in the country (...) For many people, the networks they come across are easier to establish in a queer or, let's say, more friendly environment” (ibid).

Queer Base acts also as a political actor, thinking transversally and contributing to community building by dealing with everyday problems of queer migrants in forms of infrastructure of solidarity (Schilliger 2020). They conduct awareness-raising activities in the community and intervene also in political debates and policymaking by making political claims and protesting for a change in the asylum and border regime. For their work they are well recognised in the LGBTIQ community and beyond (Falch 2020). This mixture of community work and activism, intertwining knowledge, not only offering consulting hours but also organising community life, constitutes the unique character of *Queer Base*. In this way, *Queer Base* constitutes also an example of autonomous solidarity as they place value on forms of self-organisation, horizontal participation and equality between citizens and non-citizens, and produce dissent in the political sphere (Agustín and Jørgensen, 2019). As in the example of Hotel City Plaza, they want to serve as a micro-example on how community work can provide a practical alternative to established forms of support.

On their way from a social movement to an established organisation, their interaction with the city of Vienna was an important milestone. The organisation has been subsidised by the city since 2016, which helped them improve the quality of support; especially housing, mental health, and legal advice is now much more advanced than in the early days of the organisation. The funding enables them to remunerate activists for their work and to build an infrastructure which leads to more professionalisation. In effect, *Queer Base* has become a more recognised voice in Viennese and in Austrian politics. And yet, are there some pitfalls to such shift toward a professionalised organisation? As Nicholls and Uitermark (2016: 32) emphasise, local governments are selective in their relations with NGOs and prioritise those with whom they can build reliable relations. Through effective policing, civil society should serve as an extension of the local government and become part of a web of governance “rather than an uncontrollable and tangled site that nourishes multiple resistances” (ibid). Recognising such danger, *Queer Base* aims to stay independent and reflexive of potential co-optation and the threat of being swallowed by the city and established NGOs, by focusing on the fight for basic rights and actively working against turning into agents that police queer migrants.

Queer Base can be considered not only a case of autonomous and civic solidarity but also one of institutional solidarity, since they connect the civil society arena with the arena of policymaking and intervene for establishing the human rights of queer migrants in the institutions of policy making (Agustín and Jørgensen, 2019). They have been recognised and are cooperating with all relevant refugee support organisations, such as Diakonie, Caritas and the social department of the city of Vienna, which has led to a change in perspective on the position of LGBTIQ migrants within these organisations. *Queer Base* started to use this power to develop an impact on institutions, for example by offering training opportunities for organisations

involved in the asylum system, such as the federal administrative court, or by engaging in a civil society dialogue with the Ministry of Internal Affairs to raise the quality standards in initial interviews and interpreter training. In doing so, *Queer Base* seeks to foster alliances and networks in order to challenge exclusionary and fragmented asylum policies that are underwritten by hetero-normative societal norms and aim for a transformation of the state’s legal framework and practices towards a more inclusive approach.

The Palermo Charter Process: From the Sea to the Cities

In Rome in late May 2018, the right-wing Italian government coalition was formed between the League and the Five Star Movement, among whose first orders of business it was to declare Italy’s harbours closed for migrants rescued in the Mediterranean Sea. At the same time, in Palermo, a coalition of a different sort came together, composed of migrant rights and community activists, sea rescuers, church groups, NGOs, and members of progressive municipalities.⁵ Hosted by the mayor Leoluca Orlando, this diverse group gathered to call for the creation of safe harbours and ‘corridors of solidarity’, stretching from the Mediterranean to cities throughout EUrope. Under the collective name *Palermo Charter Process*, inspired by the Charter of Palermo - a manifesto published in 2015 declaring the right to mobility as an inalienable human right - the participants concluded after the first meeting:

We will enact our disobedience by building a new transnational alliance, an additional counter-pole based on practical solidarity. From the external borders to the inner cities, we see contested spaces and undeterred daily struggles therein. By inventing and multiplying practices of solidarity, we want to intervene, all over Europe and beyond. (Alarm Phone 2018a)

After gathering in the Sicilian capital city, this emergent alliance met again over the following two years in cities that had declared themselves as solidarity or sanctuary cities – Barcelona, Naples, and Bologna - and later online, during the first months of the ‘Covid era’.

The central aim of the *Palermo Charter Process* was not per se to invent entirely novel means of intervention but, rather, to strengthen and connect already-existing migrant solidarity networks *from the sea to the cities*, as its slogan went. Since 2015, these networks had multiplied but also become subjected to ever-more draconian state measures seeking to delegitimise or even criminalise solidarity and humanitarian engagement. In view of “the racist and authoritarian drift carried by many governments, national parties and movements across Europe” (Alarm Phone 2018b), with right-wing parties and governments gaining more influence on migration policymaking, the *Palermo Charter Process* saw the need to tighten a transnational web of solidarity. Members of this alliance were already concretely involved in solidarity work, including through the assistance of people escaping across the Mediterranean (actors of the civil fleet), the attempt to turn places of disembarkation into ‘safe harbours’ (progressive Italian municipalities), the production of info-guides and other underground knowledge economies for precarious journeys across EUrope (exemplified by *Welcome2Europe*), the creation of ‘welcoming structures’ in transit and places of arrival (squat and church shelter projects), the campaigning for quick relocations and evacuations from hotspot and detention camps (such as *Seebücke* and German municipalities), as well as through the building of legal support structures in cases of looming detention and deportations.

We are active in municipalities and church groups, we belong to migrant communities, non-governmental organisations and human rights initiatives, we are lawyers, researchers and activists, we are self-organised and supporters. We all build and spread novel structures of disobedience and solidarity. From sea rescue to solidarity cities, from access to housing to medical care and fair working conditions, from legal counselling to protection against deportation: we prefigure and enact our vision of a society, in which we want to live. And we ask the civil society to join this process: to create corridors, spaces and projects of solidarity, crisscrossing and subverting all internal and external borders of Europe. (Alarm Phone 2018a)

Through the *Palermo Charter Process*, these different actors and political practices were meant to be stitched together more tightly, in order both to counter the increasingly proliferating bordering practices and to adapt to migratory mobilities to and throughout Europe.

The aim to reinforce corridors of solidarity was underpinned by a particular conception of solidarity, informed not so much by the intention to shape migratory realities but, instead, to be shaped by them and to build spaces of encounter. The aim to collectively foster ‘infrastructures of the freedom of movement’, rested on the acknowledgement of already-existing webs of migratory solidarity (Stierl, 2019). Such solidarity, best conceptualised as “mobile commons” (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2013) and constituted through an “invisible knowledge of mobility that circulates between people on the move”, forms a decisive, even if commonly under-acknowledged, factor in unauthorised migration. Instead of simply demanding that ‘migrants out to be escorted by us to safety’, the emphasis in the *Palermo Charter Process* was thus placed on ‘mobile commoning’ - supporting and enlarging existing migratory and solidarity infrastructures. Though related to the autonomous, civic, and institutional types of solidarity outlined by Agustín and Jørgensen (2019), mobile commoning thus engenders a practice of transversal solidarity that is cognisant of the many migratory infrastructures of solidarity ‘beyond (public) recognition’ and which manifest on different scales.

Adapting to migratory realities means viewing urban spaces as pivotal for unauthorised migration projects but not necessarily as static spaces of arrival and settlement. Rather, they often form transitory hubs of encounter where those passing through can find temporary shelter and places of rest, hiding, anonymity, (re-)orientation, knowledge exchanges, and possibly new identities. While, certainly, such “erratic presence of migrants” (Tazzioli, 2015: 10) is considerably impacted by the geographical conditions inscribed in European migration policies, such as the Dublin regulation, as well as by neoliberal market forces, it is also the expression of migratory dynamics that exceed governmental regulation. Indeed, the desire to reunite with families and friends, to join diasporas, or to find particular linguistic and cultural environments are often crucial factors in movements that continue to zigzag throughout Europe without authorisation. Adapting to, and being shaped by, migratory realities means, moreover, acknowledging what Bayat (2010: 15) has termed migratory ‘encroachment’, the ways in which urban spaces are shaped by assertions of “physical, social and cultural presence in the host societies.”

Instead of reducing expressions of solidarity to acts of welcoming ‘others’ into ‘one’s city’, the practice of mobile commoning recognises these assertions through which migrant mobility and presence continuously shape “distinct urban spaces”, even create “the migrant metropolis [through] the disruptive and incorrigible force of migrant struggles that dislocate borders and instigate a rescaling of border struggles as urban struggles” (De Genova, 2015:3).

And rather than downplaying the ability of these constitutive migratory struggles to “make and open up spaces (of liveability, of refuge, etc.) and generate unusual collective formations” (Tazzioli, 2020: 2), the *Palermo Charter Process*’ conception of solidarity is tied to a practice of strengthening rather than streamlining the infrastructures of disobedient migrant mobility (Heller, Pezzani and Stierl, 2019). Whether the creation of such transversal solidarities has been successful or not is difficult to estimate at this stage. What can be said for certain is that the many exchanges between actors struggling in distinct spaces, including at sea, at harbours and in urban centres, and on different scales, including at grassroots and institutional levels, have connected actors present along migratory pathways so as to build and strengthen forms of solidarity and encounters ‘along the way’.

Building Transversal Solidarities in and across EUropean Cities

EUropean domopolitics operates by governing movements “in the name of a particular conception of home” (Walters, 2004: 241). Through the “fateful conjunction of home, land and security” (241), governments have securitised borders and societies, often with disastrous consequences for those considered as not rightfully belonging. Above, we have explored initiatives that also appeal to ideas around home, whether through building the welcoming house, safe communities or open harbours. *Trampoline House*, *Queer Base* and the *Palermo Charter Process* are each unique examples of solidarity initiatives, located across EUrope in different city-spaces, and beyond. While these examples offer the hope for creating transversal solidarities, the enactments of solidarity are ultimately experimental and ‘without guarantees.’ Given the very real inequities and violence of city spaces, such initiatives also face obstacles and structural constraints. These limits include a lack of capacity and resources to be able to self-organise, with some financial (and other) independence from more institutionalised actors, such as governments at the municipal, national and federal levels. When city governments and other established welfare organisations are involved, they may seek to co-opt and define also the boundaries of autonomy within which such civil society actors and initiatives operate. Moreover, because these are small-scale interventions, their transformative political intervention on a larger scale is always precarious and uncertain.

Despite, these very real limitations, however, the full potential of such initiatives and their larger significance as collectively providing a counter-politics to EUropean domopolitics emerges when they are viewed in tandem, and against the background of the many other migrant solidarity initiatives taking place in the city. Focussing on home-making in the city and/or the turning of the city into a home, they enact a different understanding of “domo”-politics, one that similarly appeals to “powerful affinities with family, intimacy, place” (Walters, 2004: 241) but in ways that undermine the domopolitical rationality of governing through securitisation by enclosure and the perpetuation of a hostile environment for ‘others’. Rather, in these counter-mobilisations, the appeal is of transversal nature, calling to opening up home, harbour, city, and EUropean space to others and to creating more inclusive spatial concepts such as ‘mobile commons’ and ‘corridors of solidarity’. In these migrant solidarity initiatives, welcoming newcomers through ‘home-making’ in the city is a way of opening up spaces - spaces which have the potential to be places in which to build transversal solidarities. They enact such solidarities in the city in several ways.

First, these initiatives illustrate *a commitment to building transversal politics by transgressing ontological borders, based on bringing together people across positionalities and hierarchies.*

In the case of *Trampoline House*, this can be bringing locals and newcomers together with individuals who are positioned differently within the city of Copenhagen not only due to status of being newly arrived and long-term residents – migrant newcomers or local Danish citizens – but also because of their various intersectionalities such as gender, class, race, and sexuality. *Trampoline House* then provides a space of encounter in which to work through learning about these differences and challenging the limits that come with understanding other people who are different by committing to a common struggle for improved migrants rights to the city.

By combining a systemic critique with a practical response to newcomers' needs, *Queer Base* responds to the multi-layered difficulties queer refugees face in the asylum procedure, in their experiences of homophobia and racism in everyday life, as well as in the overpriced housing market in Vienna. They create spaces for encounters and focus on community work, which enables the consideration of specific vulnerabilities and activates participation. Through extending the idea of family in a community with activist background, migrant and non-migrant queer persons interact towards transgressing forms of solidarity by sharing joy, life, troubles and political activism.

Finally, in the case of the *Palermo Charter Process*, the emphasis is placed on building and strengthening urban infrastructures for the freedom of movement that enable encounters between locals and those who might want to stay only for a short while and move on. Instead of viewing such initiative simply as bringing (or integrating) others into one's home and building a collective identity, activists understand that transgressing ontological borders also means accepting the divergent realities and positionalities of those encountering one another. For many migrant newcomers, homemaking does not begin in the first urban space they reach, even if they encounter those who are willing to welcome them. Frequently, it means moving on disobediently to reach those who signify home, regardless of where they reside - often relatives, communities, friends.

Second, the examples are reflective of building solidarity networks that are politically transgressive of typologies of civic, institutional and autonomous forms of solidarity.

In the case of *Trampoline House*, from one perspective, the organisation provides a form of civic solidarity, organised by a civil society organisation that seeks to assist migrant newcomers with rights related to asylum but also rights to the city such as finding a job or job training. However, *Trampoline House* is more than this for it also provides a space that is potentially transformative of the very way people think and understand one another, not by eradicating differences but by living with and learning from them.

In the case of *Queer Base*, the organisation contributes to all three different forms of solidarity outlined by Agustín and Jørgensen (2019). They contribute to civic solidarity by mobilising resources to include newcomers and developing an active framework based on collaboration with authorities such as municipalities and established welfare organisations. They contribute to autonomous solidarity by placing great value on forms of self-organisation, horizontal forms of participation and equality between citizens and non-citizens as well as producing dissent in the societal sphere. Finally, they foster institutional solidarity by connecting the civil society arena with one of policymaking and by intervening for the establishment of human rights of queer refugees in the institutions of the state.

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4 Finally, regarding the *Palermo Charter Process*, the often-unrecognised solidarity that is
5 expressed through mobile commoning, that is the way in which unauthorised migration is often
6 realised through the support among those on the move, is considered central. Being politically
7 transgressive means acknowledging, and seeking to support, the migratory ‘underground
8 railroads’ without which migratory transgressions of violent borders would often not materialise
9 in the first place.

10
11 Third, *the examples are reflective of building solidarity networks that are transgressive of*
12 *territorial borders, political spaces and scales of governing.*
13

14
15 In the case of *Trampoline House*, the organisation’s model challenges distinctions between civil
16 societies operating more in the public space of the city with the idea of the private spaces of the
17 home. As Blunt and Sheringham (2019: 817) note, the focus on “home-city geographies” enables
18 us to challenge the distinction that feminist scholars have noted privileges public space as the
19 space of citizenship and political activism, drawing attention to the ways in which politics and
20 political activism also draws from more interior spaces of home and home-making. Moreover, as
21 these scholars note, “The widely held discursive separation between ‘city life’ and ‘home life’
22 rested upon the distinction between the public and the private which was a defining feature of
23 understandings of home in western bourgeois societies” (Sparke, 2008; Kaika, 2004).
24 *Trampoline House* challenges this distinction between public and private space not only in
25 defining the space of politics and who can be political but also the definition of home, offering a
26 type of platform that at once provides home but also a platform for newcomer rights within the
27 city but also beyond at the national and EUropean levels calling for more just asylum processes
28 and rights to movement across EUropean spaces.
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31 In contrast, *Queer Base* provides safe spaces for sexual expression in anti-racist settings.
32 By identifying gaps in existing service provision, providing spaces of encounters, and developing
33 a political critique, they act in through different scales. Through this, they challenge explicitly
34 the way border regimes channel migrants into ‘bare life’ and build relations between community,
35 city, and activist networks.
36

37 Finally, in the case of the *Palermo Charter Process*, the building of corridors of solidarity
38 ‘from the sea to the cities’ was understood as a political necessity in order to counteract
39 EUropean forms of domopolitical governance which has connected seemingly unconnected
40 spaces and scales. EUropean interventions in third countries to halt transiting migrants,
41 systematic interception and push-back operations at sea, as well as the detention and deportation
42 of those who have reached EUrope’s nominal space have meant that migration governance has
43 reached both deeply outward and inward. The *Palermo Charter Process* thus sought to foster
44 relationalities between the Mediterranean Sea, spaces of migrant arrival along EUropean coasts,
45 and urban centres, conscious that transversal solidarity would be required to both struggle against
46 EUrope’s diffused border regime and to assist migratory dynamics that often ‘make the road
47 while walking’ instead of following prescribed paths.
48

49 When viewed together, the examples that we have highlighted in this article challenge
50 EUrope’s domopolitics by creating solidarities that work to ‘reconfigure relations between
51 citizenship, state, and territory’ by building networks that transgress and link up people and
52 places from the home to the city to building networks between cities, the sea and across
53 EUropean spaces. Putting these seemingly disparate examples into conversation with one another
54 presses us to think transversally about the motivations and spaces in which these initiatives
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operate. They offer a glimpse into what could be conceived as a counter-politics to European domestic politics, thus transversal solidarities that are built around the concept of home but where home constitutes a space and relation that facilitates encounters, not separations.

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Notes

¹ This article speaks of ‘Europe’ throughout. In this way it seeks to problematise frequently employed usages that equate the EU with Europe and Europe with the EU and suggests, at the same time, that Europe is not reducible to the institutions of the EU.

² We use the term migrant (or at times migrant newcomer) throughout as an expansive term to include mobile groups of people often classified as irregular and regular migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and rejected asylum seekers. We do so as a way of problematising the refugee/migrant binary, which not only fails to recognise the complex realities behind the reasons, conditions and ways that people move as well as to problematise the bureaucratic management of peoples in “managing migration” (e.g. Crawley and Skleparis, [2018])

³ Interviews referred to in this section were conducted as part of a 5-year project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [435-2015-0140] “Living with others: Fostering cultural pluralism through citizenship politics” (Kim Rygiel and Feyzi Baban).

⁴ Interviews referred to in this section were conducted by Ilker Ataç and Sara de Jong as part of a collaborative project on the refugee organisations in Vienna from 2015 until 2018. Interviews in 2020 were conducted by Ilker Ataç.

⁵ Maurice Stierl is a participant in the *Palermo Charter Process* and has been involved in drafting some of its statements referred to in this section.

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