Negotiating Borders through a Politics of Scale: Municipalities and Urban Civil Society Initiatives in the Contested Field of Migration

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

In contrast to the increasingly repressive migration policies at national and supranational scales, new pro-migrant policies, networks, and practices of support have been initiated at the local scale. In numerous European municipalities, political visions and concrete experiences of inclusive approaches in the field of migration have emerged in recent years that combine questions of the right to global freedom of movement and social rights. While numerous studies have examined these "politics of scale" and scale-making at the local level in different places, this forum aims to further these debates by reflecting the entanglement of social movements and civil society organisations with the local municipalities across Europe and by bringing the analyses and experiences of diverse initiatives into discussion. We therefore examine practices, relations and institutions of local migration politics that re-negotiate and bypass national and supranational borders at local scales, but also create new borders and boundaries in these processes. With this multidisciplinary forum, we aim at advancing empirical analysis as well as theoretical debates in the wider field of migration and geopolitics. Each contribution deals with a concrete empirical case of local politics and the challenges that emerge in these contexts – focusing on European "host societies" in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, and Germany – as well as with analytical concepts that are key to understanding these cases and to linking them to broader societal structures and dynamics.

Introduction to the Geopolitical Forum

Ilker Ataç and Helge Schwiertz

The past few years have been marked by increased social conflicts on migration-related issues. As a reaction to the so-called "refugee crisis" in 2015/16,

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many European states have continuously tightened migration and border policies and fundamental rights have been restricted – reactions to migration movements which demonstrated that it was rather a crisis of Schengen and European refugee politics (De Genova, Garelli, and Tazzioli 2018). At the local scale, on the other hand, contours of a development are emerging that runs contrary to this. In contrast to the increasingly repressive migration policies at the European and national levels, new pro-migrant policies, networks and practices of support have been initiated at the local level (Agustín and Jørgensen 2019; Ambrosini and Boccagni 2015; Ataç, Schütze, and Reitter 2020; Bauder and Darling 2019; Kreichauf and Mayer 2021; Mayer 2017; Oomen et al. 2021; Schwiertz and Schwenken 2020; Vandevoordt and Verschraegen 2019). In numerous European municipalities, political visions and concrete experiences of inclusive approaches in the field of migration have emerged in recent years that combine questions of the right to global freedom of movement and social rights, de facto making the case for more open borders (Jones 2019). Debates about the "local turn" of migration and border regime analysis (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018; Hinger, Pott, and Schäfer 2016) – resembling a broader "urban geopolitical turn" (Rokem et al. 2017) –, urban citizenship and sanctuary cities (Darling and Bauder 2019) as well as the nascent movement of "New Municipalism" (Thompson 2020) signal a shift to local politics in the field of migration in Europe in the last decade. Increasingly, civil society but also municipal initiatives emerge at the local scale that address the local scale to make and frame their claims and to implement their goals.

In this forum, we therefore seek to discuss practices, relations and institutions of local migration politics that re-negotiate and bypass national and supranational borders at local scales, but also create new borders and boundaries in these processes. While numerous studies have examined the "politics of scale" and scale-making in this geopolitical field (Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008; Nicholls and Uitermark 2017; Darling and Bauder 2019), this forum aims to further these debates in two ways: first, by reflecting the entanglement of social movements and civil society organisations with local municipalities and, second, by bringing the analyses and experiences of diverse initiatives across Europe into discussion. Reflecting the potentials and pitfalls of local migration politics with a focus on non-governmental/governmental relations across localities also opens up perspectives on the complexities and ambivalences of local initiatives, which cannot be dichotomously categorised as either political solidarity or presumably unpolitical humanitarianism (Schwiertz and Schwenken 2020). With this multidisciplinary forum, we therefore aim at advancing empirical analysis as well as theoretical debates in the wider field of migration and geopolitics (see also Pascucci and Ramadan in Allen et al. 2018; Rokem et al. 2017): each contribution deals with a concrete empirical case of local politics as well as the challenges that emerge in these

contexts – focussing on European "host societies" in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, and Germany – and develops analytical concepts that are key to understanding these cases and to link them to broader societal structures and dynamics, e.g. the increasing impact of nationalism and restrictive border policies (Kasparek et al. 2017) but also processes of transnationalization and Europeanisation 'from below' (Delanty and Rumford 2005).

By refraining from seemingly definite categories and going beyond the focus on national societies and migration policies, this forum opens up an analytical perspective that helps to reflect newly emerging spatialities, multiple scales, and ambivalent relations in the field of migration. The contributions thereby deal with the following questions:

- How do urban civil society and municipal initiatives shape, negotiate, undermine or challenge migration politics and the borders of citizenship at local scales?
- To what extent can cities be the setting for a political transformation: is it possible to counter the general tendency towards restrictive policies and anti-migrant stances with a more open, city-based approach to migration and what are the limits of such an approach?
- What is the relationship between (pro-)migrant social movements, civil society organisations and administrative and policy actors in the field of migration at local scales?
- In which ways do initiatives in the field of migration develop multiscalar strategies and create translocal and transnational relations?

All contributions show how different actors use local settings for organising solidarity work, but also to politicise diverse migration relevant issues: they create support structures for newcomers, organise welfare services to undocumented migrants, or build networks to support people crossing the Mediterranean. Linked to the broader geopolitical perspective on urban conflicts and transformations, we perceive how these initiatives intervene in, shape and co-produce "urban environments" which comprises the built infrastructure, the social fabric, and political processes of the city (Pruijt 2007, 5115; Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2012). In this sense, the city is not only an important site for the struggles for social justice and rights in the form of "urban citizenship" (Darling and Bauder 2019; Schilliger 2018) and the "right to the city" (Lefebvre 2009; Harvey 2012) but also for humanitarian and "community infrastructures" (Pascucci 2017), which could also be seen as part of local border regimes. To understand these complexities and dynamics of urban migration politics, we need to take the multiplicity of actors into account, including local governments, NGOs and welfare associations, social movements and activists, churches, volunteers and migrants themselves (Kreichauf and Mayer 2021). In the forum contributions, this differentiation

helps us to understand diverse forms of action at the city level: creating a solidarity-based infrastructure of dissent aiming at social and political transformation (Jørgensen), organising local civil disobedience to resist against hostile national policies (Vandevoordt), making contributions to local welfare arrangements in terms of urban citizenship (Ataç), governing local regimes of refugee reception (Hinger, Spindler), or declaring one's own city a "safe harbour" to mobilise for refugee reception at the municipal level (Schwiertz).

The contributions analyse how cities are creating the environment for a political transformation in the context of repressive national and supranational policies and polarised societies. The cases from different European countries examine how social movements and civil society organisations challenge these policies and anti-migrant stances and produce spaces for inclusive and progressive practices at the local scale (Kreichauf and Mayer 2021). The city becomes a location for building transversal solidarity struggles by migrants and citizens to counter the EUropean border regime (Ataç, Rygiel, and Stierl 2021). These cases show also heterogeneous – sometimes complementary, sometimes conflicting – positions and strategies of civil society initiatives in their relations to local governmental institutions. Thereby, it is crucial to reflect the ambivalent relations of conflict and cooperation with municipal actors: On the one hand, new forms of alliances between urban civil society initiatives and administrative and policy actors emerge to counter the tendency towards restrictive policies at upper scales. Municipalities and civil society actors profit from local networks and collaborations and act in a dynamic setting (Swerts and Nicholls 2020). Civil society organisations may operate as intermediaries between (irregular) migrants and state actors to link them with social and political resources (Ruszczyk 2019). On the other hand, there are clearly limits to these collaborations since some of the social movements have more radical, transformative visions than the municipalities want to afford and municipal policies themselves vary between symbolic declaration and concrete implementation (Lambert and Swerts 2019). Local governments are selective in their relations with NGOs and prioritise those that serve as an extension of the local government rather than getting uncontrollable and resisting local policies (Nicholls and Uitermark 2016: 32).

These complex relations can be aptly analysed with the typology of Agustín and Jørgensen (2019), which is taken up in various forum contributions. They differentiate "autonomous", "civic", and "institutional" variants of solidarity: "autonomous solidarity" depicts relational practices produced in self-organised spaces with an explicit antagonistic position towards the state; "civic solidarity" is used to denote a wide range of hybrid practices by non-state actors with varying degrees of both conflict and consensus vis-à-vis the state; 'institutional solidarity' refers to transformative practices, in which public sector officials are actively involved. The contributions refer to this

typology to analyse different civil society organisations and social movements. Vandevoordt explains how organisations change their strategies and actions, moving back-and-forth from autonomous to civic forms of solidarity, depending on changing circumstances, migration policies, but also as a result of cooperation with local and municipal actors. Ataç shows how different solidarity organisations exist in an urban setting; they all constitute part of the urban support infrastructure for undocumented migrants. He shows that their activities are shaped by interaction and cooperation with local authorities. In a similar way, Hinger discusses an example of institutional solidarity and shows how accommodation is carried out by local authorities in cooperation with NGOs and welfare organisations based on humanitarian principles. Hinger also shows how locally negotiated civic and institutional forms of solidarity go beyond the local and gain leverage through their translocal networking. While the material impact of institutional solidarities often remains vague, Spindler discusses the recent changes during the pandemic and reveals how symbolic politics of refugee reception contradicts the concrete political measures.

Beyond these political relations at the urban scale, the contributions highlight the multiscalar, spatial entanglements of local initiatives (Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008; Darling and Bauder 2019). Jørgensen shows how the solidarity work of the Danish refugees welcome movement combines its actions on the local scale with addressing the European scale (scaling-up) and alliance-making with city networks (scaling-out). Discussing the oscillation between different forms of solidarity, Jørgensen points out how these are linked to, often simultaneous, processes of scaling up and down as well. In a similar vein, Hinger analyses different local regimes of refugee reception in the light of the interconnections between different scales and localities. Beyond the interplay of governmental levels, Schwiertz examines how movements for the safe passage of refugees emerge through a transnational space of contention that they simultaneously co-produce through relating the Mediterranean to central Europe. At the same time, some municipalities use this spatial dimension to declare their solidarity with refugees in the Mediterranean, while neglecting the rights of refugees who are already present in the city, as Schwiertz points out.

While stressing its importance, the contributions also reflect on the limits of local action. We thereby draw on approaches, which remain rather cautious regarding the progressive potentials of urban migration politics as well as the analytical focus on local scales, pointing to the risk of an isolating localism and speaking of a "local trap" (Purcell 2006). Furthermore, the studies show the remaining dependence of municipalities on state and federal authorities and how the competences of the local level are determined through vertical power relations in the context of multi-level governance (Ataç 2019). To study the relative autonomy of the municipal level, we discuss how the discretionary

powers and scope for action, opened up by cooperation with local and transnational initiatives, reveal the possibilities and limits of local action in the context of the federal and regional setting. To understand the unequal power position of actors, all contributions therefore suggest analysing processes of negotiation involving diverse actors, strategies, discourses, and policies at different scales. With this forum, we thereby seek to avoid the pitfalls of "particular localism", treating localisation as an end in itself and assuming the local scale "to be inherently more democratic than other scales" (Purcell 2006, 1921), by discussing multiscalar entanglements in each case as well as potential translocal relations, which we render more visible with the synopsis of the contributions situated in diverse localities. The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly aggravated the precarious situation of migrants, amplified some of these bordering processes and brought new challenges, which some of the individual contributions also address.

Based on the perspective of seeing the city as a site for struggles for social justice, we take the multiplicity of actors into account with a focus on the entanglement of social movements and civil society organisations with local municipalities. Through this, we open up perspectives on the complexities and dynamics of emerging local practices in different European cities. Future research could expand the debate of this forum by focusing on the following points that we have started to address or that we have been touched on only in passing. First, it would be fruitful to systematically analyse and discuss the complex relations between non-governmental and governmental actors across localities to understand the emergence of different local border regimes. Second, studies on local political initiatives continue to expand the focus of this debate by linking the issues and strategies in the field of migration to other social relations and fields like gender, labour, or housing. Third, it would be important to discuss further the emergence as well as the possibilities and obstacles of translocal and transnational networks that go beyond specific cities and that show ways of how to transcend the risk of localism. Finally, it is crucial in this view to expand the debate beyond the geographical scope of the forum contributions and to link it with debates in the global south to broaden the horizon of knowledge and go beyond a solely European perspective.

Building an Infrastructure of Dissent – Civic Solidarity as a Transformative Practice

Martin Bak Jørgensen

In this intervention, I will use the concepts of civic solidarity and infrastructure of dissent to discuss the Danish case. Both these concepts seek to capture how actors within civil society engage in a politics of solidarity and both

notions connect to the concept of scales. I use these notions to discuss the actions and strategies of the Danish refugees welcome movement *Venligboerne*.

Solidarity in my understanding is a relational practice. It is contentious; emerges strongly in moments of disruption or conjunctures; is generative of political subjectivities and collective identities; entails alliance-building among diverse actors; is inventive of new imaginaries; is situated in space and time and organised in multi-scalar relations; and is linked in different ways to institutions (Agustín and Jørgensen 2019; Fischer and Jørgensen 2020). Solidarity practices connect different geographies and enable relations that transcend national borders. Here, the urban scale has been especially important when analysing how solidarity can become institutionalised and lead to alternative infrastructures of inclusion. Cities can serve as both empirical sites for understanding practices of solidarity as well as providing an analytical lens (Darling 2019). In previous work, we offered a spatial and relational understanding of solidarity distinguishing between autonomous, civic, and institutional forms of solidarity (Agustín and Jørgensen 2019). The concept of civil solidarity has a rich literature and can, as Harald Bauder and Lorelle Juffs claim, be characterised as "complex, multi-dimensional, and normative" (2020, 46). Civic solidarity, in the context of this intervention, underpins ways of organising within civil society initiatives to include refugees. It involves a vast number of manifestations and actors, such as NGOs, local communities and individuals. It is practiced by civil society that is not part of the state, but the degree of contention varies depending on the claims and strategies of each organisation.

Focusing on civic solidarity entails focusing on the dynamics of action and contestation. Solidarity *is* a practice of contestation and can be linked to the notion of dissent. Dissent is the "social and political questioning (not just mere critique or a need for palliative reforms), undoing consensus and rendering excluded actors and struggles visible" (Jørgensen and Agustín 2015, 14). From this view, dissent assumes relevance as experiences opposed to a dominant order to render new actors, struggles and ways of organising visible. In his book *The Next New Left*, Sears (2014) coins the notion "infra-structures of dissent". Such infrastructures, according to Sears, provide social movements with four essential capacities: collective memory; collective dreams; collective learning; and capacity for solidarity. Hence, when analysing a movement like *Venligboerne*, it helps identifying how the organisation provides the organisational infrastructure needed to support various forms of dissent (Jørgensen and Olsen 2020). In Sears' framework, the infrastructure of dissent entails the capacity for solidarity as an integral component. He does not regard solidarity as an automatic reaction to injustice but rather something that must be cultivated (Sears 2014, 21). In other words, while individuals may sympathise intuitively with refugees, organisational infrastructures are required to enable

solidarity as effective praxis. Hence, sympathy will not be useful – as in transformative - if it is not translated into practical action through movements or organisations.

Solidarity with refugees transcending ethnic and/or religious exclusivity is firmly situated within the internationalist tradition, which in turn responds to multifaceted geographies of resistance. Scaling theory has been a central focus within urban studies (Bauder 2016; Schwiertz, this Forum). Movements can shift scales upwards on the international level when national opportunity structures appear closed, whereas international mobilisation can in turn pro- voke action that opens up national or local opportunity structures (Antentas 2015, 1115; also Fischer and Jørgensen 2021). The capacity to shift scales, however, also depends on subjective factors, such as the degree of social anchoring in civil society, movements enjoy on the local scale.

In Denmark, the solidarity movement developed rapidly over the 'long summer of migration' in 2015 by rearticulating and reactivating the existing infrastructure while at the same time expanding it. The refugees welcome movement *Venligboerne* that grew out of this development is the strongest example of civic solidarity in a Danish context and likewise shows how an infrastructure of dissent emerges and develops into a permanent organisation (Agustín and Jørgensen 2019; Jørgensen and Olsen 2020). In Denmark, the border closure between Denmark and Germany (from January 2016) and deterrence policies more broadly have had a radicalising effect on *Venligboerne*. *Venligboerne* started out as a welcoming movement identifying itself as 'outside politics'. It presents a good illustration of what collective memory, collective dreams collective learning, and capacity for solidarity looks like in practice. The movement has spread to most municipalities where the different member groups are connected in a horizontalist structure but most often function as autonomous units, as there is no central organising commit- tee beyond a set of shared principles. *Venligboerne* has several shared aims, such as providing legal aid, practical help, medical support, language training, job-seeking assistance, and everyday donations; creating broad alliances including both experienced activists and people new to solidarity work; mak- ing the problems of the asylum process and integration into Danish society visible; and articulating the commonalities between people, refugees, and Danes alike.

The closure of the political opportunity structures on the national scale has led to a scale-switching of solidarity work. The conditions in Greek hotspots, such as the now burned down Moria camp on Lesbos, has long been a focus for the Danish solidarity movement, including the overt political part of the *Venligboerne* movement. The lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the conditions for trapped refugees even more. The situation caused individual *Venligboerne* members to initiate various initiatives in the Danish context, such as raising money for necessities, but also long-term

projects like establishing school and cultural structures for migrants in Greece. Spurred by initiatives in other European cities that jointly offered to give unaccompanied minors from the camps asylum – and thus circumventing the Dublin regulations – the *Venligboerne* members started forging alliances with local city council members and put pressure on those to get them to put the proposal of accommodating refugees from Greek camps on the agenda of the local city council meetings. This kind of politicisation signals a shift in the relation with municipalities as many *Venligboerne* groups previously had been collaborating with the municipalities as service providers from a humanitarian perspective. The Danish government has repeatedly stated its opposition to receiving refugees from these camps. However, because of ongoing solidarity work by *Venligboerne* on the local urban scale, the city council of Helsingør was the first to join the cities of Amersfoort, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Ghent, Groningen, Leipzig, Nuremberg, Tilburg and Utrecht, by offering to take in more than 20 children (also Vandevoordt, this Forum) and later other municipalities have followed this request. Although this might be wishful thinking – as they will require the formal approval of the Minister of Immigration and Integration to actually receive refugees – their hope is that bringing the issue to the European scale will apply pressure on the national scale thus enabling practical solidarity on the local scale (Fischer and Jørgensen 2021). It is an illustration of how the infrastructures of dissent and capacity for solidarity can be up-scaled. Local *Venligboerne* groups not only support these proposals but also actively refer them to the agenda of city council meetings. This kind of solidarity work illustrates both an upscaling towards the European scale and alliance-making with city networks, as well as to actions on the local scale. *Venligboerne*, in this sense provides an illustrative example on a solidarity-based infrastructure of dissent aiming at social and political transformation.

Prefiguring Policies of Solidarity: The Case of BxlRefugees – Citizen Platform for the Support of Refugees

Robin Vandevoordt

This contribution starts from the simple idea that grassroots groups shift scale depending on the opportunities they find to change policies – scaling up, down or both at the same time. Drawing on the case of the Brussels-based *BxlRefugees – Citizen Platform for the Support of Refugees*, I show how grassroots groups move between autonomous, civic and institutional forms of solidarity (Agustín & Jørgensen 2019; Jørgensen, this forum), and how these movements are produced by a complex set of relations with state actors on different policy scales (cf. Ataç, this forum; and Schwiertz, this forum).

The *Citizen Platform* was created in 2015 to coordinate the volunteers who wanted to support newly arrived asylum seekers. In many ways, the

Maximilian Park occupies a central place within this "urban arrival infrastructure" (Saltiel 2020; Meeus et al). Located in front of the Brussels-North train station, the park is surrounded by towering office-buildings that welcome hundreds of thousands of commuters on one side, and social housing blocks on the other. While the Maximilian Park is usually little more than a nondescript space between social words, it now became home to Belgium's largest makeshift refugee camp. Due to its accessible location and the nearby presence of numerous civil society associations, this non-place transformed, almost overnight, into a contentious site of care, solidarity and border management (Depraetere and Oosterlynck 2017; Vandevoordt 2019b).

In the Summer of 2017, the Maximilian Park once again set the scene for a dramatic "geopolitics of refuge" (Rokem et al. 2017). After the demolition of the Calais 'Jungle' and make-shift settlements in places like Paris, a changing group of 600 to 1000 migrants got 'stranded' in Brussels. While their migration statuses and trajectories varied, this group could not or did not want to apply for asylum in Belgium, and instead, tried to reach the U.K. Belgium's Federal government responded with repression, in ways similar to the 'politics of exhaustion' put in place by the French and U.K. state in the Calais region (Welander 2020): police forces regularly destroy make-shift settlements, confiscate tents, clothes, and smartphones, and organise raids to arrest, detain and ultimately release migrants back on the streets again (Vandevoordt 2020b; Vandevoordt and Fleischmann 2020). This turned Brussels-North into a distinctively urban "transit zone" (Ansems De Vries and Guild 2019).

In that period, 10 to 12 people, most of whom had been long-term volunteers in the Citizen Platform, noticed the presence of minors, women and men with health problems in the area around the Maximilian Park. As in 2015, they searched for places in existing shelters, yet this time to no avail. As all doors closed, they saw no other option but to host the most vulnerable migrants into their own homes, and launch an appeal for other volunteers to do the same. At the same time, the federal government intensified its repressive approach, and spread a discourse criminalising migrants "in transit". This sparked a series of controversies that led more and more people to contact the Citizen Platform and host migrants into their own homes (Vandevoordt 2020b). In this sense, their mobilisation resembles Agustín and Jørgensen's (2019) notion of 'autonomous' solidarity': citizens organise support to migrants, partly as an act of civil disobedience or even resistance against hostile state policies.

To the Citizen Platform's coordinators, however, hosting at home was never a desirable response to the situation. From the beginning, they advocated with the federal, regional and local governments to establish collective shelters, where migrants would be provided with food, medical care and legal information. While this obviously fell on barren ground with federal policy-makers, the regional governments of Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia claimed they did not have the formal competence to establish such a centre, as asylum and

migration are Federal competences. Instead, the Citizen Platform obtained enough material support from the Region of Brussels, some of Brussels' municipalities and NGOs such as Médecins Sans Frontières, to open a collective shelter in an unused office building on the outskirts of Brussels (Vandevoordt 2019a, 2019b). Initially, this collective shelter, dubbed Porte d'Ulysse, displayed clear characteristics of autonomous solidarity: like many Anarchist-inspired squats, it was loosely organised and thrived on an antagonistic relation with the federal government. 'Here we don't talk about solidarity, we act in solidarity', was one of the often repeated phrases my respondents shared with me in this early period (Vandevoordt 2020a).

Between August 2017 and January 2019, however, two paradoxical developments took place. On the one hand, the Citizen Platform's relation with the Federal government grew increasingly hostile, resulting in mutual accusations of creating a borderland in Brussels. Police raids were countered by citizen marauds to prevent arrests, and Federal attempts to criminalise the practice of hosting illegalised migrants were met with letter-writing actions to local mayors to oppose any laws facilitating such criminalisation. Yet on the other hand, the Citizen Platform gradually received more financial support from the Region of Brussels, enabling it to employ staff members and professionalise some of its services. To signify these changes, the Citizen Platform for the Support of Refugees, changed its name to 'BxlRefugees – Citizen Platform'. While parts of the Platform are still organized in more autonomous, horizontal ways that are driven by volunteers (e.g. the Sisters House providing a safe space to women), especially the Porte d'Ulysse has come to embody the Citizen Platform's shift from a politicised, autonomous form of solidarity, towards a more civic, depoliticised variant that hinges on a close collaboration with local state actors (Ballet 2021).

Lastly, the rise and development of the Citizen Platform cannot be understood without taking the peculiar context of Brussels into account. The institutional complexity Europe's capital created both policy gaps (with Brussels' state actors lacking the formal competence to address migration), and a wide range of opportunities to obtain institutional support (in line with Brussels' tradition of supporting civil society organisations to provide services instead). Moreover, as one of the world's most diverse cities, Brussels has provided the Platform with a steady stream of new volunteers sympathetic to migrants' cause. Many of my interlocutors strongly identified with Brussels' reputation of being a progressive, chaotic haven to Belgium's repressive federal policies (Vandevoordt 2019b; Vandevoordt and Fleischmann 2020).

Summing up, *BxlRefugees – Citizen Platform* has shifted back-and-forth between autonomous and civic forms of solidarity, depending on its changing relations with state actors on different policy levels. In doing so, the Citizen Platform has developed an increasingly adversarial stance towards the federal government, and simultaneously engaged in pragmatic cooperation with local

state actors. These paradoxical relations with state actors have resulted in different outcomes and dilemmas for each of the sites in which the Citizen Platform is active (Ballet 2021). The key thread connecting its actions across time and space, is that it has consistently tried to put in place the policies it urged its governments to adopt: to organise adequate material, social and legal support to migrants 'in transit'. This has enabled the Platform to turn some of their solidarity practices into a political ambivalent "community infrastructure" (Pascucci 2017) that is endorsed by local policy-makers and vehemently opposed by their Federal counterparts.

Negotiating Alternatives to the Camp Approach in German Cities: A Migration Regime Perspective

Sophie Hinger

According to the German Asylum Act, asylum applicants "should, as a rule" be accommodated in centralised facilities. This principle was introduced together with other restrictions in the early 1980s with the explicit aim to deter unwanted immigrants from coming to or staying in the country (Wendel 2014). The ending of the obligatory stay in 'camps' has ever since been one of the key demands of refugee rights advocates. Also some local authorities have noted the socially detrimental effects of the camp approach to asylum migration and sought for alternatives. The municipalities have rather little say in the making of asylum policies. However, they implement and interpret them, and in some areas, including asylum accommodation, they have some leeway in decision-making. In the following, I will take refugee accommodation in Germany as a case to discuss the possibility to change restrictive asylum policies 'from below'. I will, first, present examples of German city municipalities which have rejected the 'camp approach' and instead developed concepts for decentralised accommodation, i.e. accommodation in private flats. Second, I will argue that a (local) migration regime perspective is suitable to explain, why in some cases restrictive migration policies are undermined by municipalities, concluding, third, with the limits and potentials of such alternatives.

I will focus especially on the "Leverkusen model", which stipulates the accommodation of refugees in private flats instead of centralised facilities. Leverkusen was not the first municipality that developed an alternative to the camp approach. For example, Munich had developed an alternative approach to camp accommodation already at the end of the 1980s (Crage 2009). Yet, the Leverkusen model and its implementation since the early 2000s has become a major reference for the decentralisation of refugee accommodation in Germany and has served as a role model to several other municipalities. At the time, the local administration of Leverkusen was facing a problem: the

city's existing asylum accommodation facilities were run-down, and the planned opening of a new facility was met with protest from local residents and NGOs which had long criticised the conditions in the centralised facilities. Following the example of the nearby city of Oberhausen, the local adminis-tration then decided to decentralise part of the refugee accommodation. Like in Oberhausen, they first allowed families to look for a private flat. In a second step, one especially degraded accommodation centre was closed and the 80 inhabitants supported in finding a flat. While the local administration was hesitant about allowing all asylum seekers to move into a private flat, this eventually became possible through a model developed in cooperation with the Catholic charity organisation Caritas and the local Refugee Council. From 2003 onwards, all asylum seekers wishing to move into a private flat were allowed to - if the rent was deemed acceptable and the individuals certified with "housing readiness" by the Caritas. The Leverkusen model subsequently served as an inspiration to several other municipalities, including Cologne, Leipzig, and Osnabrück.

Some scholars have explained such local opposition to restrictive national migration policies with the fact that municipalities pursue different interests than national governments. Bommes (2008) argues that municipalities gen-erally seek to include newcomers, disregarding their legal status, while at the same time trying to limit further immigration, given that their primary task is to make available the necessary infrastructure and services to their inhabitants. Along similar lines, Aumüller (2009) states that municipalities are above-all pursuing a pragmatic approach focusing on solving concrete problems. Indeed, the fact that the accommodation in private flats proved cheaper than in centralised facilities was one of the reasons why Leverkusen and other cities adopted such models. Yet, explanations solely focusing on local policies and state-actors, assuming that these necessarily seek to include all residents, seem not sufficient to explain why some municipalities seek to develop alternatives to restrictive migration policies.

A local migration regime perspective goes beyond such a narrow analytical focus, taking into account multiple factors and actors and the negotiation processes between them (Hinger, Pott, and Schäfer 2016). From such a perspective, it is not assumed that the local level or local authorities are necessarily more inclusive than their national counterparts. Against such a "local trap" (Purcell 2006) assumption, the regime approach highlights the dynamic nature of local socio-political orders and the possible variations, but also interconnections between different scales and localities. And it seeks to bridge the gap between solely actor-focused approaches, and mostly structure-oriented approaches, in that it draws attention to "local zones of negotiation" (Hinger, Pott, and Schäfer 2016; Pott and Tsianos 2014), in which various differently positioned actors struggle over migration. Outcome of these strug-gles are specific local(ised) problem definitions as well as responses to

migration. Such a perspective relates to but also differs from other relational perspectives on social movements, CSOs and municipalities. The decentralisation of asylum accommodation in German cities can also be considered as "institutional solidarity" (Agustín and Jørgensen 2019). It is mainly carried out by local authorities in cooperation with NGOs and welfare organisations on the basis of humanitarian principles and/or the idea of all residents belonging to the city. Yet, the regime perspective is perhaps better suitable to grasp the unequal power position of and processes of negotiation between the actors involved.

From a regime perspective, the development of decentralised asylum accommodation in German cities is fruit of the everyday struggles in which various actors, policies, and discourses from different scales take part. First of all, the development of the Leverkusen model (and others) depended on national and state regulations which allowed the municipal authorities some leeway in handling refugee accommodation differently. Furthermore, civil society organisations, like the Caritas and the Refugee Council, pushed for a decentralisation model and are implicated in its implementation. These civil society organisations function as service providers, refugee rights advocates and gatekeepers at the same time (cf. Ataç, this forum). In local zones of negotiation also everyday encounters and local 'events' play a role: For example, it was the appointment of a new Commissioner of Social Affairs in Leverkusen that made a cooperation with Caritas and the Refugee Council possible, as the latter had been in conflict with the previous head of administration. Moreover, the decentralisation of asylum accommodation became thinkable because of the local resistance against the planned opening of a new centre and thanks to an event in the city, at which a representative of the city of Oberhausen presented their practice of letting asylum-seeking families move into private flats.

To conclude, I will briefly discuss the possibilities and limits of local alternatives to the camp approach to migration. One obvious limit is the subordination and dependence of the municipal scale to both state and federal authorities. Changes in state or national policy, can effectively dismantle local counter-models. Also tight local housing markets and increased arrivals like in 2015 and 2016 can challenge decentralisation plans. A third limitation is that the decentralisation models often (re-)produce categorisations of deserving vs. undeserving refugees, by making the moving into private flats conditional upon criteria, like "housing readiness". Nonetheless, decentralised housing models present an opening towards more egalitarian ways of living together in cities. As shortly indicated, these may spread from one locality to another. And most importantly, they may make a real difference in the lives of the people most affected by restrictive policies. An evaluation with refugees in Leverkusen who had moved into private flats indicate that for many individuals having a place of their own allowed them

to rest and lead more self-determined lives. Such measures seem highly significant for the mental and physical well-being of asylum-seeking newcomers.

The Gap between City Image and Treatment of Refugees in the Context of the Pandemic

Susanne Spindler

People in Cologne, from local politicians to ordinary citizens, proudly describe their city as build by a long history of migration, as "tolerant", "open minded" and "multicultural". This is part of the city image that is conjured up again and again, be it in songs or in job offers. In the field of contemporary migration policies, municipality and civil society organisations cooperate in many fields. One example for the cooperation on the local level is the "right to stay" campaign in Cologne, initiated by NGOs and migrant's self-organisations with the aim to improve and accelerate regularisation of persons with long-term exceptional leave. The campaign convinced the town council: together with the immigrant authority the initiative developed an inclusive and systematic identification process for regularisation. For this purpose, a team was established within the immigration authority, to find and address the ones that could get part of the programme and bring them into contact with the specialised counselling structure of the NGOs. It is an example for a successful advocacy project initiated by the local initiatives moving local authorities to improve basic rights. The project was also so successful because it translated the city's self-image as an open and inclusive city into a policy measure.

At the same time, better conditions for refugees are hardly achieved when it comes to highly scarce resources such as housing. Good conditions on housing like decentralisation of dwelling are recognised as a necessity (see Hinger, this Forum). The authorities installed a management which is run by two charity organisations and the Refugee's Council to support refugees moving out of the camps. Nevertheless, it is rarely possible to find housing for refugees in Cologne. Municipality's explanation is that there are few building plots and no free apartments in town. Hence, many refugees living in Cologne are still suffering from precarious conditions, especially those in camps.

Although the municipality presents itself as supportive for refugees, especially within the Corona crisis we can observe a growing gap in town politics between declared solidarity and the treatment of refugees living in town. Deterioration for refugees within Corona-crisis are obvious from European to national to local level. Migrant's and refugee's (human) rights get more violated than before. In the camps of Greece and Bosnia, the Mediterranean, along the European and the externalised borders,

camps became even broader spaces of vulnerability and limitations (Saifee, Franco-Paredes, and Lowenstein 2021, Volkin 2020). Also, in Germany the situation in camps got worse. While authorities urge the population to keep distance and to follow hygienic rules, refugees in camps live in tightest spaces with shared sanitary and food. The hygienic situation in the camps is bad; many people have to share few toilets, washing rooms and kitchen (Burschel 2020). Refugees depending on their residence status have limited access to public health, which in times of pandemic is even worse. Refugee's rights like personal rights, rights to protection of health, to education, to information were cut, as well the right to family life because family reunion was stopped. This was a nationwide phenomenon. Although the state might restrict basic rights to prevent a pandemic, the question of whether the measure is proportionate to its interference with human rights should limit the restriction of fundamental rights (Muy 2020). In Cologne, like in other cities, civil organisation or volunteers could not enter the camps and authorities were not reachable for refugees (Riße 2021). The lack of information about the situation in the camps had the effect of less public knowledge and less public control of what authorities are doing. Very few social workers were in the camps, and they partly stated misuse of their work in the pandemic, e.g. they had to buy food for the inhabitants instead of counselling.

While it is adopted as a measure of public health effectively, what quarantine meant in a space like a camp is a carceral reality of locking in hundreds of people at one place. In Cologne, with one or few corona-positive tested refugees, all camp-inhabitants were detained by quarantine. Hundreds of people could not leave the camp; for weeks and months children were not allowed to go to school. In times of digital home schooling, children in camps live in very bad conditions, with a lack of computers and of internet connection. Civil organizations demand facilities for home schooling and integration courses, but in many cases, there is still no stable connection. Many municipal dwellings still do not have any connection and municipality does not allow private connections. In the face of the Pandemic, movements and organisations strongly demanded the immediate closing of the camps for a better protection and better life for the 1235 refugees still living in camps. In February 2021 municipality decided to close the camps – not immediately, but within the next four years.

At the local level, developments of reduction of refugee`s rights or of the broadening gap in the treatment of refugees and other citizens undermine not only the city's self-image but also the cooperation with civil society in concrete refugee politics. The municipality did not support those who were already there as it could be expected. In other fields, it was easier for the municipality to maintain the self-image: symbolic politics of receptiveness for refugees like

the "safe harbour"[1] were still declared within the pandemic but without the need to show real consequences.

Before the pandemic we could observe that NGOs and local social movements had an impact on municipal politics and on activities of local immigration and dwelling authorities. There was a lively communication to enhance the situation of refugees. In the context of the pandemic, the influence of the civil society has been reduced for several reasons: Refugee's rights and issues remain low on the municipality's priority list of crisis management. The problem of internet connection shows that even affordable and simple measures to improve the situation have not been taken. There was and still is a lack of social care in the form of social work and volunteers, and without physical contact with refugees and authorities, the possibilities for action by movements and supporters become increasingly limited. Still the City presents itself as open and supportive for refugees and there are declarations of solidarity with refugees, but we can observe a gap in municipal politics between the solidarity declared with those refugees who are not yet here (and who might never come) and the treatment of refugees already living in town. This declaration feeds the image but needs no action. Pressure of movements and NGOs is needed to turn the welcoming ductus into real policies and to make citizens (Isin 2009, 383) out of all those who are already living in town.

Negotiating inclusive city: How different types of civil society organizations improve welfare services for undocumented migrants in Vienna

Ilker Ataç

The debate on urban citizenship and sanctuary cities highlighted how the rights and access to social and welfare services for undocumented migrants are secured through local policies, especially in the context of restrictive national policies (Ataç, Schütze, and Reitter 2020; Bauder 2021). However, the role and contribution of civil society organisations (CSOs) are understudied. Only in a few cases, undocumented migrants gain access to welfare services through the incorporation into regular systems as citizenship rights. In most cases, access to welfare services happens through parallel non-state structures via CSOs when they act as part of a wider infrastructure of the city and contribute to local welfare arrangements (Ambrosini and Boccagni 2015; Mayer 2017). By considering the diversity of CSOs in terms of their organisational structures, aims and relations with the city government I argue that different organisational cultures, goals and motivations prevalent in these organisations need to be taken into account (Mayer 2017). In the following, I present three types of CSOs, each with different relationships to the municipality, through the examples of three organisations in Vienna. I aim to shed light on how the

contribution of CSOs creates an inclusive city and discuss the importance of their relations with the municipality and the conflicts emerging within these relations.

CSOs provide services such as legal counselling, health care, accommodation, and language courses to undocumented migrants as well as advocacy to improve their social and political rights in the public and political arenas (Ambrosini 2013). The broad category of CSOs includes welfare associations, churches, NGOs, human rights organisations as well as social movements. For analysing the contribution of CSOs in Vienna, I will use the typology provided by Agustín and Jørgensen (2019: 15, 40-41). They outline three types of solidarity: autonomous, civic, and institutional. Two dimensions of the relationship of CSOs with municipalities have been discussed in the literature so far. First, municipal governments challenge restrictive national policies by cooperating with CSOs to carry out the delivery of welfare services. As CSOs act as intermediaries between local authorities and migrants, collaboration of this kind allows municipalities to act beyond their formal role and expand their outreach and impact (Delvino and Spencer 2019). Second, through their collaboration with municipalities, local civil society actors play an important role in pushing for negotiating and implementing inclusive cities (Kreichauf and Mayer 2021). With this article, I contribute to this debate and discuss further dimensions of this relationship. Three organisations involved in the provision of welfare services for undocumented migrants in Vienna serve as case studies.

The first organisation is Caritas which I classify as an example of institutional solidarity. Caritas is a crucial and powerful welfare organisation which works as operative partner in providing services for asylum seekers and refugees on behalf of the welfare department of the municipality of Vienna. In this function, the counsellors in Caritas encounter their clients, including undocumented persons, in the central advising point. Although Caritas is not commissioned by the municipality to provide services to undocumented migrants, they opened a second service point for this group of people, who are not eligible for social benefits. Through this service point, the organisation uses their knowledge and networks to offer services to persons who would otherwise fall through the net. For those cases, they use their limited budget originating from donations and their close relationship to the catholic church to offer services. In other cases, the counsellors function as gatekeepers when they push cases of hardship to influence administrative decisions. I classify Caritas as an example of institutional solidarity, since they use the infrastructure acquired by giving services on behalf of the municipality to expand the services for undocumented migrants.

The second organisation is Amber-Med; they offer health services for persons without health insurance, including undocumented migrants. As an example of the civic solidarity model (Agustín and Jørgensen 2019: 41),

Amber-Med is a charitable initiative seeking to include migrants by mobilising financial and non-financial resources to offer health services for undocumented migrants. AmberMed is staffed by volunteer doctors and their costs are covered mainly by the donations of institutional and private actors. Although they receive a limited amount of funding by the municipality, their relation to the city is ambiguous. The organisation argues that, by providing 8.279 treatments for 3.312 people without health insurance in 2019, they made an enormous contribution to the well-being of the city. Since they deliver services to people who live in Vienna, they ask the municipality to cover their full budget. They launched a public campaign to enter into negotiations with the municipality. However, the municipality did not respond to their inquiries, which led to tensions between the organisation and the municipality.

The third organisation is the "Deserteurs- und Flüchtlingsberatung" (The Deserters' and Refugees' Counselling Centre) which is an example of autonomous solidarity. They offer free and independent legal counselling, especially for undocumented migrants who are otherwise not entitled to counselling. The counselling hours are open to everyone independent of financial means without prior registration or other conditions (Dessi n.d.). Establishing trust with clients and treating each case confidentially is regarded as very important. They offer counselling for persons "who are sent away by other organisations", "who are labelled as illegal", asylum seekers with a negative decision, people in detention pending deportation, as well as people in "hopeless procedures" (Dessi n.d.). Their work is made possible through volunteers and donations. The organisation consists of a young team of mostly students or graduates of law, social work, and social sciences, as well as recognised refugees. They engage in creating "infrastructures of dissent" (Jørgensen, this Forum), aiming to work against exclusion and injustice. The Deserteurs- und Flüchtlingsberatung is self-organized and does not receive municipal support. Neither the organisation nor the municipality has the will to enter into a cooperation. As an example of autonomous solidarity, Deserteurs- und Flüchtlingsberatung constitutes part of the city's support infrastructure for undocumented migrants outside of the governance mechanisms of municipal policy.

The engagement of the CSOs build the foundation for diverse services offered to undocumented migrants in Vienna. They are central actors that engage in offering welfare services and push for more inclusive policies for undocumented migrants (Ataç and Schilliger 2022). Only in few cases, undocumented migrants gain access to welfare services through the incorporation into regular systems and citizenship rights. The municipality of Vienna does not claim to have a public policy towards undocumented migrants. Rather, the city maintains different relationships with the individual CSOs that are active in the field and provide services to undocumented migrants. Local governments are selective in their relations with CSOs and prioritise the ones with

whom they want to build reliable relations (Nicholls and Uitermark 2016). From the perspective of the city, close collaborations as well as loose connections enable the city administration to fall back on an existing support infrastructure in different ways. In this way, some CSOs become more central and others more marginalised in the web of governance. CSOs, however, are not passive subjects: Through their work, they make the city dependent on them, even if they do not always get the material and immaterial recognition for their achievements.

The three different types of CSOs described in this article shape local responses to undocumented migrants through their activities but also in interaction with local authorities. Caritas, as an example of an institutional service provider working on behalf of the municipality, can actively transgress their position as a provider for municipal services and fill service gaps. However, there is a risk that support can only be offered individually, due to budgetary limitations and based on discretion. As the example of Amber-Med shows, the relationship between municipalities and CSOs is shaped by an asymmetrical power relations, within which local CSOs find ways to fulfil their aims and broaden their impact. They make use of their networks to broaden their services and politicise the issue to get legitimacy and more resources from the city. Autonomous CSOs and initiatives such as the Deserteurs- und Flüchtlingsberatung compensate for the city's complete lack of (even indirect) action and support towards certain groups. The importance of their work lies outside of an established governance setting.

Translocal Networks and Transnational Spaces of Contention Against the Criminalisation of Migration and Sea Rescue in the Mediterranean

Helge Schwiertz

In the summer of 2018, conflicts about refugee reception and sea rescue escalated to an unexpected degree in the EU, when Italy and Malta impeded governmental and non-governmental rescue ships like the Aquarius and Lifeline, refusing to allow migrants to disembark. Criminalising sea rescue missions politicised what was previously mostly regarded as a humanitarian act, which, in turn, has mobilised protest in many European cities. From Naples, Palermo, and Barcelona, to places far away from the Mediterranean, urban movements as well as municipalities opposed this new level of repression, declaring themselves as a 'safe harbour' for migrants and a 'city of refuge'. In the following, I argue that in this context a *transnational space of contention* was co-produced together with a *translocal network* of cities and local initiatives acting in solidarity with migrants affected by this situation. Focusing on the case of the Seebrücke-movement that emerged in German cities but grew across national borders, I want to contribute to debates about the ways in

which political organising can relate to and at the same time reach beyond the local scale by creating political spaces and linking places.

In Germany, reports and pictures circulated by crew members of rescue ships in the Mediterranean, and the outrage over the events that happened thousands of miles away, had a particular mobilising effect. The protest movement Seebrücke (German for 'pier', literally 'sea-bridge') emerged as a result of this new chapter of European anti-migrant politics, when activists met in Berlin to reflect on how to respond, all sharing the view that they could not continue to stand by and that otherwise they would become "complicit themselves" in the fact that "people were drowning".[2] As many shared this outrage, Seebrücke groups throughout Germany managed to mobilise more than 150,000 people for protest events in the first few months, creating a decentralised movement. This is also reflected in the fact that many local groups were founded independently of each other – e.g. in response to public presentations by rescue ship crews –, not knowing the Seebrücke movement and only joining it afterwards.

This multi-local mobilisation of Seebrücke relates to a transnational as well as to a translocal approach. First, Seebrücke co-produced a *transnational space of political contestation* from the Mediterranean to German and other European cities in response to the increasing criminalisation of non-governmental sea rescue. This transnational reference is reflected in the demands of the movement: On the one hand, it calls for the resumption of sea rescue in the Mediterranean, which is symbolised by wearing orange clothes and life jackets at protests. On the other hand, Seebrücke demands access to refugee protection in Germany and emphasises the transnational responsibility of the German state beyond its territory for people at the EU external border. Taken together, these points highlight that mobilisations do not refer only to local or national scales, but that they relate to a transnational space, produced by Seebrücke as well as numerous similar pro-migrant mobilisations across Europe. This cross-border approach is also reflected in the name of an initiative co-founded by Seebrücke two years after its inception, in June 2020, which advocates for a European migration policy from below and calls itself *From the Sea to the City*.

Second, to make a difference in this transnational space, Seebrücke developed a political strategy rooted at the local scale, but without reducing itself to localism, creating *translocal networks*. Engaging in a "politics of scale" (Leitner et al. 2002), their aim was to circumvent anti-migrant politics at the (supra-) national level and counter it with progressive politics at the city level (see Jørgensen and Vandevoordt, both this forum). Inspired by debates around 'Solidary Cities' and 'Urban Citizenship' (Bauder and Darling 2019), Seebrücke organisers established broad, city-based alliances through close cooperation between citizens and municipalities. Based on the slogan "Make your city a safe harbor!", the aim was to achieve municipal declarations of

intent to accept refugees rescued in distress at sea. This multi-local lobbying campaign has succeeded in getting over 200 cities and towns in Germany to declare themselves 'safe harbors', with some cities also taking the initiative themselves by forming the "Cities of Safe Harbors Alliance" one year after the inception of Seebrücke. Although these declarations of municipalities remained largely symbolic – which is why some criticise them for merely serving the city image without implementing concrete measures or even having the competence to do so, since immigration issues are primarily regulated at the federal level – they nevertheless expressed growing support not only in civil society but also in government institutions, translating civic solidarity into institutional solidarity in the field of refugee reception (cf. Agustín and Jørgensen 2019; see also Vandevoordt for a similar and Ataç for a diverging case, both this forum); thereby they provided a leverage point for further reaching political initiatives.

However, the impact of Seebrücke cannot be understood by limiting it to the local. Rather, it results from a combination of local, city-based approaches in a translocal movement that articulates a politics of proximity with a politics of cross-border relations. It can therefore be seen as an approach to circumvent the shortcomings of "particular localism" that treats localisation as an end itself and what Mark Purcell calls the "local trap, in which the local scale is assumed to be inherently more democratic than other scales" (2005: 1921). Closely related to solidarity city networks, Seebrücke creates urban solidarities that at the same time avoid the local trap by being "strategically local *and* transnational in scope" (Bauder 2021: 13). Moreover, the approach of Seebrücke also resonates with broader debates about "new municipalism" (Russell 2019; Thompson 2020), which highlight strategies that take the local as an entry point but going beyond the local scale in "a politics *of* place *beyond* place'" (Massey 2007: 15). Besides this translocal aspect, the literature on new municipalisms furthermore elaborates the point that these are rooted in social movements, but aim at reclaiming a decisive role in municipalities in order to re-politicize and transform governmental structures to "build alternative urban institutions" where people are rooted much closer in space (Thompson 2020: 9; Russell 2019: 1004), e.g. in form of Public-Common partnerships. Thus, while Seebrücke resembles new municipalisms in its approach to go beyond the local level and form translocal networks in relation to a transnational political space, it is still open to debate to what extent a structural change in politics and governance forms can be triggered from these campaigns for making one's own city a 'safe harbor'. If these campaigns would, like new municipalisms, aim at democratic self-government and "bringing people closer to decisions that affect them" (Russell 2019: 1002), it would be necessary to elaborate how this can be achieved in the field of migration, especially in this case, when the people in question, migrants on

escape routes, are not yet present on site and are referred to predominantly as subjects in need of protection, especially in their role as victims of shipwrecks.

In the case of Seebrücke, however, the effectiveness of the movement can be explained precisely by its "strategic humanitarianism" (Schwiertz and Steinhilper 2021). This deliberate reproduction of humanitarian discourses through the minimal consensus on rescue from life-threatening situations constitutes the success of the broad mobilisation, including people that were not involved in political protest before. Nevertheless, it could at the same time also block the way for a profound, inclusive transformation of political structures. However, prime examples of the new municipalism, like Barcelona, are also struggling to enact the principles of close participation of all persons concerned when it comes to the rights of migrants and refugees; e.g. city government's repression of migrant street vendors (Delclós 2017; for the case of Cologne see Spindler, this forum). Here, it is worth discussing how municipalist approaches – which articulate a promising political imaginary beyond national and neoliberal orders – can be advanced also in the field of migration. Here, I would argue, practices of radical democracy are crucial, in the sense that ever new groups make claims about their equality and re-negotiate the borders of political communities (Schwiertz 2022). On the one hand, this needs to be approached from the perspective of those who migrate and their positions, which are not given centre stage in the case of Seebrücke. On the other, such an attempt to democratise democracy at municipal scales would include approaches to further reflect and develop urban politics in the context of transnational spaces and translocal networks such as those I have outlined with regard to Seebrücke.

Notes

1. "Safe harbour" means a self-obligation to decriminalize Search and Rescue Action (SAR), to welcome refugees and to receive more refugees than the City could be obliged to.
2. Parts of this contribution are based on research published in Schwiertz and Steinhilper (2021) with interviews conducted by Elias Steinhilper and me.

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