Political Theory and Migration

Concepts of non-sovereignty and solidarity

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Abstract This paper seeks to make a moral argument for citizens' need to create networks of solidarity with non-citizens. Instead of concentrating on the political mobilization of migrants themselves, it thus highlights the theoretical grounds on which notions of responsibility and solidarity can be extended to 'non-members' within established political communities. This goes against prevalent modes of argumentation in modern political thought, where solidarity and responsibility are mostly defined in terms of shared social or political identities. To establish this alternative line of argumentation, the paper draws on the works of Emmanuel Levinas, Judith Butler and Jacques Derrida.

This contribution seeks to engage on a normative level with political networks of solidarity between non-migrants and migrants with insecure residency status. While most Western political thought considers responsibility in relation to relatively stable categories of community (i.e. as one's responsibilities for fellow members of a family, clan or nation), I propose a notion of responsibility for 'others' – for non-members – as incentive to create more open forms of political and social association. This challenges the notion of sovereignty, central to early modern thought about the individual and the state, and highlights the importance of non-sovereignty as both a factual reality and a normative concept.

The first part of this essay outlines the concept of the non-sovereign self and shows how it may relate to an infinite responsibility for others. I will briefly discuss Emmanuel Levinas's notion of otherness as constitutive of the subject, before turning to Judith Butler's psychoanalytic interpretation of the Levinasian idea. Finally, I discuss how Jacques Derrida's reading opens up the possibility to think about the relationship between self and other in terms that are transferable to issues of migration. Derrida introduces the idea of

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unconditional hospitality, a concept that calls the possibility of just, sovereign nation-states into question. Relating the notion of the non-sovereign self to concepts of non-sovereign forms of political association, the second part of this paper concentrates on the heightened importance of solidarity in societies where precarity and securization are closely interwoven with forms of governing. The paper closes with a short exploration of how notions of responsibility for 'others' and solidarity can be exemplified by a more concrete discussion of political networks that seek to support migrants without secure residency status.

The concept of the non-sovereign self

Recently, non-sovereign concepts of the self have played an increasing role in political thought. In difference to the notion of the sovereign or modern subject, where the individual's abilities to think and act autonomously stand in the foreground, non-sovereignty stresses human relationality. The following short introduction concentrates on interrelated theoretical approaches where the self is understood as non-sovereign because of its constitutive relationship to the other. While Levinas argues that our very understanding of the world is indebted to our relationship to the other, in Butler's engagement with his argument the bodily and psychic dimensions of human existence come to the fore. This enables us to understand the relationship to the other as one that stresses the universally shared conditions of bodily existence without eradicating the separateness or uniqueness of each being. Derrida's formulation of the self's relationship to the other via the spatial terms of welcoming and hospitality shows why concepts of non-sovereign selfhood are specifically fruitful for thinking about the ethics of migration.

The notion of non-sovereignty implies that the subject can only be thought in connection to another subject. On an abstract level, Emmanuel Levinas has proposed such a concept of subjectivity. Making a pre-ontological argument, Levinas aims to establish ethics as the basis that enables our very ability to perceive the external world. He argues that humanity's understanding of its own existence is based on, and limited by, its relation to an outside or other. Importantly, Levinas's concept of 'the other' does not only, or even primarily, signify another person, but a transcendental idea. 'The other' might be interpreted as the ineffability or incomprehensibility of God. 'The other' can also be taken to express the idea that there is always 'something' that escapes language and human comprehension – that the human ability to know the world and express oneself in language is limited. The awareness of this

elusive otherness grounds and enables moral consciousness. The self, as Levinas asserts, "cannot find meaning within its own being-in-the-world" (Levinas 1986: 23). Only by perceiving a transcendental other can human beings grasp their own existence in space and time. Levinas thus understands the subject as established by the address of the other, an address that puts an ethical demand on the subject. That the other is before the subject — not in a spatial or temporal, but a logical sense — makes the demand of the other unavoidable. To put it differently, because the subject only comes into being via the other it has a general debt towards the other. When responsibility is understood as following from a debt that is not caused by any specific or willed activity of the subject, the ethical relationship to the other is no longer of the subject's choosing. In this sense, the address of the other is an imposition upon the subject that denies its freedom, but at the same time establishes the very possibility for moral agency and selfhood.

The moral importance of Levinas' thought might become clearer when we turn to the link Levinas establishes between the transcendental notion of otherness and concrete encounters between human beings. In these encounters a universal, ethical demand is expressed by the face of the other person. Surprisingly, Levinas' concept of the face does not depict the singularity of another person with specific, unique features. Instead, what the face reveals is a universal, infinite alterity. While I might appreciate a casual acquaintance's specific, unique mimicry in a personal encounter, seeing the anonymous face of the other reveals a universal vulnerability. The perception of this vulnerability is accompanied by a moral injunction against killing the other. The transcendental concept of otherness, and the ethical demand that it makes on the self, are thus shown in the fundamental vulnerability all singular faces expose. Any particular other person could reveal to me her universal 'face' that signifies her existential vulnerability. Therefore, one's moral relationship to another person does not depend on any historical precedent. The notion of 'the face' signifies an ethical demand not to kill or let the other die that is independent not only of *who* the specific other person is, but also of who I am and in what relationship we stand to each other.

Judith Butler has taken up the Levinasian notion of the address of the other. She combines it with a more concrete narrative of human dependency and precariousness, by drawing on Laplanchian psychoanalysis (see Butler 2005). Here, non-sovereignty, dependency and responsibility follow from the psychic and bodily dimensions of human existence. As embodied beings, humans are not born as unchanging, sovereign subjects. Instead, they come into the world prematurely, in the sense that they need the care of others for their bodily and

psychic survival. The infant depends on adults, whose actions it neither fully understands nor controls. Helplessness and need force the infant to develop an emotional attachment to its primary caregiver(s). In this sense, there is no choice but to love the (adult) other who, similarly as in Levinas's formulation, is prior to the existence of the self. This insight of the priority of the other is important for Jean Laplanche's project, which seeks to decenter the status of natural drives in psychoanalysis. In difference to Freud, Laplanche claims that inherent drives are not the decisive factor in the development of the infant's relationship to the primary caregiver. Instead, it is the other, in the form of the overbearing and enigmatic adult, who first addresses the infant. The unconscious develops in response to this address, an address the infant cannot avoid, but which it finds inscrutable and overwhelming. As the infant is unable to understand what the other wants it represses these excess demands. This first act of repression, however, is a deed that precedes any doer. The 'I' only emerges because of this primary repression and will thus always retain traces of the enigmatic foreignness the infant encounters in the address of the other. In this formulation, the self's desires are the consequence of the internalisation of the enigmatic desires of others.

Turning to Laplanchian psychoanalysis thus allows Butler to argue that the self comes into being via its unavoidable relationships with others. The relational self remains, even as an adult, at least to an extent unknown to itself, unable to account for its own emergence. It is therefore non-sovereign. In other words, one's becoming a subject, that is, a person who can communicate, is capable of acting in accordance with social rules and is recognized by others as a bearer of rights, depends on one's enigmatic and uncontrollable relationship with concrete other persons. Moreover, throughout their lives human beings remain non-sovereign, not only because their knowledge (and thus control) of themselves and others is limited, but also because they are vulnerable and mortal beings, who depend for their survival on far-reaching and often incomprehensible social, political and economic networks.

As this notion of ongoing dependency on an outside makes clear, Butler understands the self as incorporating otherness at its core. Moreover, she argues that the relationship to the other challenges the external boundaries of the self. Its bodily and psychic needs establish the self as expansive and ecstatic. This notion draws on Butler's reading of the key scene of recognition in Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a narrative of a consciousness that is perpetually outside itself. Because negativity is seen as "essential to self-articulation", the ecstatic subject must "suffer its own loss of identity again and again in order to realize its fullest sense of self" (Butler 1999: 13). For Butler, in the Hegelian scene

of mutual recognition, the subject never returns to itself free of the other from whom it sought recognition. In this sense, relationality, the connection between the self and the other, becomes constitutive of what the self is. Butler thus argues for an ecstatic notion of the self, which from the start emerges as non-self-identical and differentiated, outside of itself. Translating the scene of recognition into our every-day emotional attachments to other people, Butler maintains that it is in moments of love, desire or loss that we overstep our own boundaries and realize that the relationship to another person can unravel our tentative sense of bounded selfhood. It is from this understanding of the constitutive character of the other that Butler develops a notion of our ethical responsibility for the other, similar to Levinas's.

This emphasis on personal relationships and emotions, however, at first sight appears to create a problematic imbalance between one's personal bonds to singular others and a broader understanding of unknown 'others' one would encounter in political interactions. When Butler combines Levinasian, Laplanchian and Hegelian notions of otherness, 'the other' emerges as a concrete other person in the first place: someone the self has an intimate, emotional relationship with – the primary caregiver of the infant and, later in life, close friends, lovers or family members. Those relationships have the power to unravel the self in ecstatic movements of love, desire, anger, grief and mourning in which the self comes to understand itself as overwhelmed and undone by the other. It remains unclear, however, how one gets from these personal relationships to an acknowledgment of responsibility towards others who are foreign to oneself. The question is then how one would explain an assumption of responsibility for those with whom one has no affective relationship. In other words, it remains unclear how to get from the personal to the political realm – from the 'me' and 'you' to the 'third'.

Butler seeks to circumvent this difficulty by turning to the universality of emotional attachments that are revealed most sharply in the experience of loss and mourning. While the experience of being unravelled by grief is unique and personal, it is nevertheless an experience that all people who have lost someone they loved share. Thus, loss and grief are at the same time deeply personal and universal. By assuming that *all* human beings mourn when someone close to them dies or disappears we can relate to the experiences of strangers who have lost their loved ones. In this sense, Butler argues, bonds of solidarity with those affected by the wars waged in 'our' names could be formed. To understand war deaths not as anonymous, but in terms of personal tragedies would make it possible to relate to those affected globally by violent assertions of state-sovereignty. Those faceless others, lost in the wars waged by western

powers in the name of defending sovereignty, might then be understood as lives mourned by their relatives and friends in the same way as citizens of Western states would mourn their loved ones lost to violence. The experience of loss here becomes the possibility to create ties that bridge over regional and cultural distances.

The universality of loss brings the concept of precariousness – as a universal condition – into focus. Butler understands precariousness as a socio-ontological dimension of all embodied beings. Precariousness highlights that, as relational, vulnerable and finite beings (both in the sense that we are mortal and that our knowledge of the world, others and ourselves is necessarily limited) we depend on others in innumerable ways. While we are all precarious beings, however, precariousness does not make everybody equal. While it is a shared condition, the ways in which people are exposed to precariousness differ. As Isabell Lorey explains, precariousness is neither an unchangeable way of being nor an existential sameness, but the multiple insecure constitution of bodies, which are always socially contingent. As shared, that is, at the same time separating and relating, precariousness signifies a "relational difference" (Lorey 2012: 33-4). By turning to precariousness, Butler thus formulates an ethical appeal that seeks to overstep the boundaries of one's community or personal affiliations.

While Butler stresses the importance of personal emotional bonds and the conditions of embodiment, Jacques Derrida's engagement with Levinas tries to mitigate the violence and inequality that seems to be implied in Levinas's concept of otherness (see Derrida 1997). In Levinas's language the other is not only before the self, it also persecutes and accuses the self. Derrida seeks to reinterpret this relationship in terms of 'welcoming'. The scene of address in Levinas is pre-ontological, which means it is set outside of, or prior to, the notion of time and space. This makes it possible to understand address and response as simultaneous – that that is, not in terms of an overbearing, threatening other who is there before the self and thus places the self in a purely reactive position. Moreover, the interweaving of the ontological and the pre-ontological also signifies the moment of address and response as, in a certain sense, ongoing, or an interruption of temporal linearity. The 'I' receives or welcomes the other at the same time as it is addressed by the other – it comes into existence (and remains as 'coming into existence') as an 'I' through this very act of invitation. Address, response and constitution of the subject cannot be thought as temporally distinct, separate phases. To understand 'self' and 'other' as interrelated positions that need each other for their very existence makes the scene of encounter one of reciprocity. In this understanding, the

self comes into being by simultaneously occupying the site of the other and welcoming the other into its space. By mutually overstepping their boundaries, the positions of self and other are established as non-sovereign, as depending on their relationality. One does not start from a pre-given substantial identity that would constitute the basis for a capacity to welcome, but the welcoming of the other, hospitality itself, comes to define and constitute the subject. The subject is this openness to the other.

The spatial connotations the term 'welcoming' implies, however, opens up a question regarding inhabitation and belonging. We might object that the notion of welcoming presupposes a sovereign subject that inhabits a 'place of its own' that belongs to the subject and from which it originates. Only when the subject possesses such a space, could it welcome the other into it (in the sense that I need a home to welcome a stranger as a guest into my house). Indeed, when Derrida discusses this notion of welcoming a guest into one's home he appears to set limits to the idea of unconditional welcoming. Derrida warns against a situation where, when the host relinquishes his or her sense of 'being a master in one's own home' the relationship between host and guest turns hostile. Then "[a]nyone who encroaches on my 'at home', on my ipseity, on my power of hospitality, on my *sovereignty* as host, I start to regard as an undesirable foreigner, and virtually as an enemy." (Derrida / Dufourmantelle 2000: 53–55, my emphasis). Derrida is thus clear in noting that relinquishing one's sense of sovereignty is a difficult feat and linked to the acceptance of heightened vulnerability. To avoid the perceived danger brought by the outsider or other the host needs to establish conditions on, or laws of, hospitality. This introduces a seemingly irresolvable tension between laws that condition hospitality and the unconditional demand for welcoming. Unconditional hospitality appears impossible if it is not bound by formulated laws that limit access to one's 'home' and bind the guest to certain rules he or she has to obey during the stay. However, conditioning that which is supposed to be unconditional threatens to undermine and deprave it. These two schemes, therefore, are simultaneously antinomic and inseparable.

Derrida's discussion of laws of hospitality versus the demand for unconditional hospitality is often referred to in order to highlight the complicated situation of European states which have to fulfill humanitarian obligations towards refugees at the same time as they seek to limit access to their territories (see, for example, Stronks 2012). Such an account, however, encounters several difficulties. First, when Derrida engages with Levinas, he denies the philosophical or ontological basis for sovereignty and belonging, and thus challenges the necessity to limit the capacity for welcoming. Instead, Derrida argues that the space of the

self — one's home -– is only constituted by the act of welcoming and thus through an act of dispossession. The notion of originary dispossession implies that there is no 'home', no space where the self is before the arrival of the other. To establish a self then could be understood as the transformation of an originary dispossession into a possession – one becomes a self by claiming 'one's place in the world'. This claim, paradoxically, relies on the understanding that one shares the world with others. One claims a space as one's own by offering to share it with someone else. This understanding of welcoming as what constitutes the self, calls into dispute that we have a right to own a part of the world – to something that belongs to us more than to any other person. There is no 'home' but only places we pass through. These are places where we welcome the other and through this very act of welcoming make a claim to being there.

Second, establishing an equation between 'home', in terms of something that belongs to someone exclusively, and 'state' is complicated, especially if we take into account the malleability of both the state-boundaries and rules of membership. Given the ontological and historical problems we encounter in discourses of belonging and the often violent ways, in which state-borders are drawn and redrawn, we might be wary of any claims from a particular group or government to have an exclusive right to a territory.

Third, it might be misleading to think about migrants as 'guests' who are in an unequal relationship to a 'host'. It is not only unclear who would play the role of the host, the state and its institutions or the citizens in the communities where migrants live; most migrants are also not guests. A guest, by definition, stays for a relatively short, circumscribed period. The guest is therefore not included into the decision-making processes of the host on how to run her home, because these decisions would not affect the guest in the long run. The guest analogy might thus be more fitting for tourists than for migrants. Many migrants are looking for a new home and make a claim to become members of the 'host' community. The issue is then whether those who make a claim to membership should have a say in how membership is defined. Seeing migrants as potential members, rather than perpetual outsiders, also changes the context of the threat of violence Derrida refers to in terms of the 'guest'. While our engagements with others indeed harbor the danger of violence, this danger cannot simply be put in terms of a communal 'inside' threatened by an 'outside'. As we have seen, the notion that there is a sovereign self, at home, free from the other is illusory and our necessary engagement with other people always reveals our vulnerability. While boundaries between 'self' and 'other', as well as the boundaries of community are indeed in constant need of negotiation,

this negotiation might be more fruitfully thought as a reciprocal conversation between all who are affected, than as limited by laws of conditional hospitality.

As my short discussion of Levinas, Butler and Derrida suggests, an abstract moral argument can be made for why 'we', as citizens of affluent Western countries, should critically interrogate our exclusive right to a given territory. Moreover, understanding the 'other' as constitutive of the self allows us to understand responsibility as independent of our prior knowledge of the other person. What counts is not so much who the other is and in what relationship she or he stands to us, but that the other is vulnerable. If we recognize that the self is permeable and harbors 'otherness' at its core, we might also come to question the philosophical foundations of state-sovereignty. This, in turn, could enable or underwrite a critique of political practices of control designed to defend borders against uncontrolled migration. By understanding that our living conditions are enabled by and entangled with the living conditions of people from politically and economically less stable regions, a valid argument for freedom of movement can be made. As Derrida points out, we have an ethical obligation towards others that goes beyond the boundaries of nation-states and citizenship, but such an ethics of 'infinite hospitality' cannot be thought within the framework of the nation-state (see Derrida 2002: 100). However, a politics that does not refer to unconditional hospitality loses its reference to justice, because it is unable to take the other into account (see Derrida 2005). In the next section, I will explore how these insights can be useful in thinking about the possibility to establish forms of political and social associations which operate beyond or parallel to existing state-institutions. By bringing the notions of non-sovereignty and responsibility to bear on the question of how solidarity with migrants might inspire open forms of political activism, we will elucidate these concepts in a more practical context.

From Precariousness to Precarity and a Politics of Solidarity

An ethics of non-sovereignty demands that citizens of Western countries declare their solidarity with undocumented migrants and refugees. We still have to ask, however, whether a sense of responsibility for others in this rather abstract form is enough to establish political connections between people who do not necessarily share a social identity (such as class, gender or ethnicity). Instead of understanding the lack of a binding social identity as a drawback, however,

we might understand it as the opportunity to establish political connections that do not eradicate difference. In the absence of a shared identity a more open and creative political sphere can be established. If a community is based on shared identity, the definition of identity often predetermines political goals and the forms political actions are supposed to take. If no pre-established formulation of shared identity is available, this might provide the possibility to establish new, creative forms of political engagement, whose final goals are not defined *a priori*. This, however, requires a different understanding of connectivity that highlights the role of solidarity as a political sentiment one establishes towards an 'other'. Such a formulation, stresses the possibility for political association that does not seek to eradicate difference or heterogeneity. One possible route such a reformulation could take is to move from the general concept of precariousness, as a universal ontological condition, to the political concept of precarity. As we have seen, all humans experience precariousness in the sense that they are vulnerable and dependent living beings. Moreover, appreciating the concept of universal precariousness might allow for the insight that we all have experienced mortality as the loss of a loved one. Therefore, even as citizens of relatively secure Western states we might be able to empathize with other human beings who have lost friends or family members through war, extreme poverty, or during flight. While precariousness is universal, risks, however, are not equally distributed. The concept of precarity highlights the ways in which political, social and economic structures organize precariousness. While precariousness is ontologically given, precarity is produced by social structures, where the individual interacts with the state and economic systems, for example via the organization of working conditions. Personal levels of precarity are thus defined by one's access to institutions or social networks that safeguard a person from dangers by providing education, health-care or secure living and working conditions.

As Isabell Lorey argues, the distribution of precarity through economic stratification and political measures is an important hallmark of the modern welfare state. The promise of security entailed in citizenship in a Western welfare state is intrinsically bound to the fear of the dangerous and precarious other. This discourse protrudes a disciplinary power, where citizens seek to avoid becoming 'othered' themselves by fulfilling social expectations. Fear of precarization and the perceived need for protection thus become important aspects of the subjection of citizens, where a bond between the individual, society and the state is established (ibid: 24).

Lorey sees neo-liberalism as an intensification of the governing function of precarity and the accompanying discourse of securitization inherent to the

modern capitalist state. With the 'withering-away' of the welfare function of Western nation-states, precarity has reached the 'core' population. While previously forms of precarious employment or insecure health-care have been restricted largely to the global south or the 'fringes' of Western European societies, today delineation from the precarious other becomes increasingly complicated. In this context, precarization becomes a mechanism of heightened control within the social mainstream. This shows itself for example in the fear of a relatively privileged and well-educated workforce to become redundant – a fear that produces an incentive for increased self-government or self-exploitation. The demands of an insecure and flexible labor-market appear as potential forces of de-politization, where the growing preoccupation with self-marketing and discourses of self-responsibility cover over common political interests of laborers (Lorey 2012: 85). Moreover, the growth of economic precarity also transforms the role of the nation-state. Where the role of the state as provider of welfare and social provisions is minimized, the state redefines itself by concentrating on discourses of security that involve its military and police functions. In this context, disciplinary techniques of control and surveillance increase in importance (ibid: 86). Discourses of 'others' are cultivated, where the other either appears as a potential threat (the criminal, the terrorist) and/or as the one who would unfairly benefit from the state and thus needs to remain excluded from systems of care and protection (the anti-social freeloader, the economic migrant). The interplay between processes of securitization and precarization provides at the same time a justification for the necessary incompleteness of sovereignty and the rationale for the ongoing efforts to establish sovereignty.

While the discourse of precarity stresses how a feeling of insecurity spreads towards the centers of relatively wealthy states, we should, however, not succumb to the temptation of evoking a new time of generalized or equally shared risks. Even though we can in a certain sense speak of a 'democratization' of precarity, those who were previously 'othered' or are now identified as security-threats remain more vulnerable to new processes of precarization, as the situation of undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers demonstrates. The heightened perception of insecurity, both on an economic and geopolitical level, has increased the demand to secure national borders in the name of the securing of the 'native' population. The accompanying criminalization of migrants and ethnically and culturally laden discourses on terrorism further redefine those who appear as visibly 'other' as potential security threats. Even though borders can never be closed completely, new measures of border-control further restrict the autonomy of migration with the effect that the act of migrating for many becomes increasingly perilous and deadly. Moreover, not only are precarious

labor conditions still strong push factors for migration, when migrants reach economically stronger countries they are disproportionally affected by the precarization of labor (ibid: 92). Migrants and refugees not only suffer from often insecure residence permits, their residency status also determines access to labor markets, education and medical care, thus heightening their precarity.

Nevertheless, more widely shared experiences of precarity can function as an incentive to create new forms of political action and establish networks of solidarity. Many perceive the pressure of the neo-liberal work world as isolating, for it leaves no space, energy or time for shared resistance. For some, however, the spread of insecurity in all aspects of life provides an impetus to create new connections that replace lost or weakened societal bonds traditionally provided by social and state institutions. The weakening of the rigidity of former social and work relations can provide an opportunity to challenge inflexible institutional forms of political organization and provide an incentive for social change. The increasing flexibility of social structures can enable unforeseen openings for new social spaces where networks based on an apprehension of shared precariousness and the inadequacy of state institutions are formed. In an emerging 'politics of care' collectives take on some of the previous state-functions. Here, the transgression of spheres (between work, political and private life), fostered by post-fordist working relations can be redefined as chance for flexible forms of political organization to appear. The emphasis on insecurity and securitization as ongoing and accelerating processes requires that political activists to envision less static and durable forms of political associations, and new forms of political activism, which can also be more inclusive. The creation of flexible political networks makes it possible to react to an increasingly fast-paced social world as well as to changing forms of governmental control.

In this context, one could argue that a growing awareness of the more widespread effects of precarity in the 'core population' has helped to shape the forms of organization and action that come to play in social networks of solidarity with migrants. As members of the No Borders network describe it in an online-manifesto, political action becomes reinscribed as the attempt "to create strong networks to support free movement across Europe's borders" by establishing an infrastructure that helps to provide at least a minimum level of security to those who live with precarity, while at the same time recognizing migration as a social force within an increasingly flexible and unpredictable social and political world. Migration highlights the importance of social and personal networks as an answer to precarity and exclusion. While political activists can only play a small part in these processes, they can "play an active role in

bringing such connections together across national and cultural boundaries" (ibid). The political sphere becomes reimagined as "a pool of formal and informal connections, a web of solidarity" where the provision of basic services such as food, housing and basic health-care to those excluded from citizenship rights and state welfare becomes a political act of resistance. Some 'No Borders' activists thus see themselves in the tradition of previous resistance movements, such as the French Resistance during World War II and the 'underground railroads' that helped runaway slaves in the U.S. They argue that, just as the outcomes of these movements were unforeseeable, activists today cannot foresee which processes and developments their activities will set into motion and which future forms of political spheres they might thus help to create. To acknowledge that precarity is politically and socially stratified means to be aware that the intention to create a political space where actors can meet as equals is not enough to make differences 'magically' disappear. The manifesto thus stresses the need for No Borders "to be an open and diverse movement" which has to "tackle the borders within our movement too". They "need to constantly address different forms of privilege, whether based on people's legal status, language, education, gender, race, class, or simply people's other commitments and abilities to face different levels of risk"(ibid). They also emphasize that political action should not be motivated by identity or life-style choices, a danger they see within the European anarchist scene in which they have their roots.

This description of political activism suggests an understanding of solidarity as a political affect that connects people without eradicating difference. Instead of invoking the need for close bonds within a clearly defined and limited group of people, the concept of solidarity stresses the importance of maintaining open political associations.[1] This reaffirms the political significance of concepts of non-sovereignty and otherness. To elucidate the connection between solidarity and otherness, it helps to recall our discussion of the non-sovereign self. As we have seen, the self is not only constituted by the address of the other. It also retains otherness at its core. Moreover, as Butler stresses, the self is ecstatic, constantly overstepping its boundaries towards the outside or other. This ecstatic relationship does not necessarily stop at preconceived community boundaries. We do not only establish relationship with those we perceive as

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[1] This definition of solidarity differs decisively from earlier definitions prevalent in the 19th century where solidarity was understood as creating social cohesion in an increasingly dispersed, but clearly bordered and relatively homogeneous, society. This latter understanding is also present in the Marxian argumentation. While calling for *international* solidarity it understands this solidarity as one that exists between equals, that is, workers who share a common identity and common goals (see Marchart 2010: 357).

similar to us, or to those we think we share certain identity-traits with, in complex societies we are also related, in innumerable ways, to people who appear different and who remain strange or unknown. Thus, we might promote a political stance towards our 'own' community that understands this community as permeable. Just as the self constantly oversteps and redefines its own boundedness in its relationships with other people, a community can establish solidarity with those 'outside' of its (internal and external) borders, with strangers, non-members or non-citizens, and in this process renegotiate its own understanding of identity, boundedness and cohesion. This, in turn, opens up the possibility for the establishment of non-sovereign political assemblages, where the impossibility of self-identity is taken as an asset. Solidarity does neither presuppose that we find things we share with others, nor that these others eventually become members of 'our' political or social group.

Therefore, even though this understanding of solidarity draws to a certain extent on Hegelian notions of recognition, we need to be careful to differentiate between these two concepts. Connecting solidarity to recognition, we could fall into a position which, as for example in Axel Honneth's formulation, defines solidarity as a process based on symmetrical appreciation between relatively autonomous individuals (Marchart 2010: 357). Such a position would be difficult to maintain, if we recall the concrete situation of activists involved in movements of solidarity with undocumented migrants. Here the differences of positions (concerning risk, but also relative political and cultural visibility) between activists who have secure residency and/or citizenship status and those living with the constant threat of removal are obvious. Understanding solidarity in terms of reciprocity would make little sense in such a context. This asymmetry can also be expressed in ethical terms. As the notion of infinite hospitality should make clear, the specificity of the ethical appeal to solidarity with migrants is that we are not dealing with a symmetrical relationship. Migrants' need for protection is asymmetrically weightier than concerns of citizens about the strain an influx of migrants would allegedly put on welfare systems and the cultural homogeneity of receiving communities. Faced with competing demands, these positions should not be regarded as equally valid. Migrants are thus not under the same obligation to recognize the demands of the settled populations of receiving countries to maintain their cultural or social *status quo*, as this population would be under the obligation to recognize migrants' needs for protection and humane living conditions.

The notion of solidarity as closely akin to recognition in the way Honneth formulates it is also unsuitable for a second reason. Honneth's discussion implies that there exists, necessarily, a positive center of particularity we will

have to recognize in the other. The relationship between self and other grounds on the mutual recognition of the positive attributes the other has to offer. It is argued that every other person has something that makes her unique and thus establishes her value. While this might be the case, the idea that we need to recognize another person because she has something positive to offer is not the best way to approach debates about migration. As I have tried to show above, an ethics of hospitality hinges on the insight that who the other is cannot be of importance. Conducting debates about migration in terms of the positive contributions migrants could make to the 'host' society risks derailing the conversation. The question cannot be whether a migrant has something to offer to enrich a receiving country's culture or labor market. Instead, solidarity with migrants is based on migrants' need and/or on the insight that a right to free movement cannot be limited to the citizens of rich Western countries.

Conclusion

This paper sought to establish non-sovereignty as a term that allows to think relationality and difference together. Starting from the notion of the non-sovereign self, I argued that engagement with the other not only establishes the human relationship to its external environment as such, it is also a necessary condition of embodied existence. We do not only need others, however, we can also understand the relationship to others as one of ethical and political obligation. If we believe that no one has more right to 'the enjoyment of the world' than any other person, a normative argument for unconditional welcoming and freedom of migration can be made.

My argument complicates the possibility to draw a comparison between singular existences, the relationship between an 'I' and a 'you' or a 'host' and a 'guest' on the one hand, and broader societal processes on the other hand. While extrapolating from notions of the individual or person to the level of the state or society is a well-worn strategy of argumentation in political theory, it is not unproblematic. One goal of this paper is to reorientate how the relationships between singular human beings and communities are imagined. I argue against an understanding of society as a clearly circumscribed, singular organism or body that mirrors the body of a human being as a singular, clearly bounded entity in space. If we concentrate on the conditions of vulnerability, non-sovereignty and precariousness, which are universally shared but still affect every being in unique ways, the interconnections between bodies and thus between various social, political and economic networks come to the fore.

Establishing a sense of communities as interrelated networks then challenges the notion that any political community could be bound in a similar way as the living bodies of human or non-human animals. States are artificial formations, whose external borders and internal rules are malleable in ways that cannot translate into metaphors of living bodies. If we understand the state as a negotiable entity, however, there is no firm ground on which we could deny entry and membership to some people while granting it to others.

It is from this position that a case for solidarity with migrants is made. Solidarity marks the movement beyond organic concepts of established commonality. To develop solidarity with others we thus have to challenge the boundaries of our communities, and our positions within them. Solidarity implies that we might put the interests of the other, the stranger or non-member, above the (assumed) interests of our own, pre-established, community. The appeal to do so is based on the insight of otherness as constitutive of subjectivity and creates a bond between diverse people. If we accept that we carry otherness within ourselves, that we are not self-identical, we might be in a better position to accept the otherness of another person and refrain from the need to captivate what she is within preconceived ideas of identity based on origin, religion, race or legal status. Such an understanding of solidarity also allows us to rethink political practices. Instead of stressing the need to create a strong and lasting set of common goals, agendas or identity traits, political action in concert can be redefined as needs-based, a notion that allows for the creation of more fluid and flexible forms of political association. These continuing efforts to restructure the public sphere are not unique to movements of solidarity with migrants, but are part of many struggles for emancipatory political change.

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

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