Forced migration and the city: Irregularity, informality, and the politics of presence

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Abstract
This paper explores the relationship between forced migration and the city. The paper outlines four accounts of the city centred on: displacement and the camp-city, dispersal and refugee resettlement, the 're-scaling' of borders, and the city as a sanctuary. Whilst valuable, these discussions maintain a focus on sovereign authority that tends to prioritize the policing of forced migration over the possibilities for contestation that also emerge through cities. Arguing for a fuller engagement with debates in urban geography, this paper considers how discussions of urban informality and the politics of presence may better unpack the urban character of forced migration.

The national as container of social process and power is cracked, opening up possibilities for a geography of politics that links subnational spaces. Cities are foremost in this new geography. (Sassen, 2006: 314)

Urbanism is characterised by movement, flux, restlessness … the politics of urbanism is a politics of movement. (Magnusson, 2000: 298)

I Introduction

It has become a relatively commonplace assertion to claim that the world is becoming, if not having already become, urban. Cities have come to be seen as key mediators in global politics, the global economy and in the social and cultural tensions of living with diversity (Amin, 2012; Sassen, 2006; Wilson, 2015). However, it is only relatively recently that the urban has been considered as an area of study for social scientists concerned with the politics and geography of asylum seekers and refugees. This paper seeks to explore what is at stake in such work and to open a dialogue between studies of forced migration and work within urban geography that situates the city as an ensemble of authorities, legalizations and claims. It is through being attentive to such connections that we might do some of the work of critically challenging a nation-state-centric account of asylum and refugee geographies.

As Gill (2010: 626) argues, there has always been 'a strong association between the notion of a refugee and the notion of states', such that

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asylum and refugee research has a tendency to reify the nation-state and its consistency, coherence and authority. Within recent work, there has been a move to examine the implications of this 'national order of things' (Malkki, 1995: 496), in producing spaces of abjection, exception and marginality whereby a relation to the borders of the nation-state is lived. Geographers have explored spaces of off-shore migrant processing (Den Heijer, 2012; Hyndman and Mountz, 2008), and extra-territorial detention (Betts, 2004; Mountz, 2011; Mountz et al., 2012), as illustrative of how border practices are increasingly detached from the territorial framing of the nation-state and reterritorialized in exterior spaces (see Collyer and King, 2015). Similarly, asylum and refugee geographies have sought to understand the production and maintenance of refugee camps as technologies of regulatory provision (Agier, 2002; Bulley, 2014), which may support fragile forms of community and political activism (Ramadan, 2013; Rygiel, 2012).

In this paper, I argue that this focus on the nation-state would be usefully supplemented with a more critically reflective engagement with the city as a space of refugee politics. A focus on the city has both a political and an analytic purpose. Politically, it may offer a path to contest the exclusions of the nation-state through presenting the urban as a contested yet fertile ground for sequences of critique. Analytically, it offers insight into the dynamics of refugee experiences without automatic recourse to increasingly fragmented forms of sovereign authority or exceptional spaces of border control. This is not to suggest that work on the spatialities of sovereign authority has not advanced our understanding of how the nation-state is sustained through material and affective means (see Darling, 2014a; Mountz, 2010). Rather, it is to highlight the need to explore in similar detail, and with similar critical nuance, the urban negotiations through which many forced migrants experience borders.

Focusing upon the question of 'forced migration' is not without its closures. Partly, because any discussion of forced migration as a coherent field conceals an array of varying statuses. As Hyndman and Giles (2011) find, the distinctions produced between groups of forced migrants are greatly significant in shaping perceptions of social worth and notions of threat. Furthermore, a focus on 'forced migration' presents the danger of uncritically reinscribing the 'administrative categories through which mobility is regulated' (McNevin, 2013: 185). The status-driven subjectivities of forced migration – the asylum seeker and the refugee – name, in part, administrative constructs that act as regulatory responses to mobility (Papadopoulos et al., 2008). However, whilst a focus on 'forced migration' may conceal the complexity of status, it is nevertheless useful because, as Philo (2014: 754) reminds us, the nation-state has 'yet to be deconstructed out of existence'. Thus whilst in this paper I argue for alternative perspectives when examining the relation between forced migration and the city, this is not to say that we can ignore the categories and closures of the nation-state in doing so. A concern with 'forced migration' also matters because this is a language that still dictates much policy and academic discussion. As Bakewell (2008) argues, there is a need to balance the closures of such policy categories with the demand to speak in a language that is of relevance to a diversity of audiences. This does not mean uncritically reproducing problematic categories, rather it reflects the careful work required to illustrate how categories of status are often transitory (Nyers, 2011), and to employ such categories as means of strategic contestation (Moulin and Nyers, 2007).

The paper proceeds as follows. I begin by sketching four accounts of the city within recent asylum and refugee geographies to illustrate some of the dominant trends in this field. These four areas comprise Sections II–V of the paper, focusing sequentially on work on urban

refugees in the context of the Global South, work on the regulation of asylum seekers in the Global North, a broader body of work concerned with the 're-scaling' of border control, and finally a concern with the city as a space of sanctuary. I argue that each of these areas of work has made important contributions to understanding how governmental impulses condition contemporary forced migration in and through cities. However, by remaining largely wedded to an account of sovereign authority, these current discussions tend to prioritize the policing of forced migration over the possibilities for contestation that may also emerge through cities. In making this case in Section VI of the paper, I argue for a fuller engagement with debates in urban geography as a way to advance and politically reorientate work on forced migration. The following two Sections, VII and VIII, propose two potential areas of convergence between urban geography and discussions on forced migration: firstly, discussions of urban informality that destabilize sovereign authority and, secondly, work on presence as a political tool that disrupts normative accounts of forced migration. In reflecting on the relationship between forced migration and the city, I argue for the need to better unpack the urban character of asylum.

II Urban refugees and the shadow of the camp

I begin by focusing on four areas of literature that illustrate relations between forced migration and the city, and that have been significant in shaping understandings of forced migration within geography. The first of these comes from research on urban refugees in the Global South. Much of this work is focused upon exploring lived experiences amidst a wider recognition that urban growth has been achieved in part through significant influxes of refugee populations (UNHCR, 2012). For example, Crisp et al. (2012) suggest that Kabul, Abidjan, Bogota,

Johannesburg, Karachi and Nairobi have all seen significant growth due to forced migration over the last two decades. Despite this legacy of forced migration, Marfleet (2006: 225) notes that a concern with urban refugees has only been a recent consideration for UNHCR, initially being acknowledged in a 1995 report that implied that 'flows of refugees to cities were undesirable', reflecting a 'priority of placing refugees in camps' (UNHCR, 2012: 22). This logic continued with the 1997 *Urban Refugee Policy* from UNHCR, which stated that 'no assistance should be provided ... in urban areas ... where a UNHCR assistance programme exists in a rural camp' (UNHCR, 1997: 2). Indeed, it was not until 2009 that UNHCR adopted a broader and more inclusive *Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas* to reflect the increasingly urban reality of protracted refugee situations.

One of the reasons for this relative neglect of urban refugees is the persistence of a series of normative assumptions over refugee policy. Thus, as Kibreab (2007) argues, in many countries the refugee camp is constructed as the 'proper' space for refugee populations, acting as a technology of spatial segregation that enables the containment of those displaced. Moves to spatially segregate refugees reflect attempts to 'actively prevent refugee integration into receiving societies' (Fabos and Kibreab, 2007: 5), and as such:

> Spatial segregation of refugees is seen as an important instrument of preventing refugees' integration into host societies by prolonging their refugee status. This strategy is defeated if refugees are settled in urban areas, and helps explain why host countries in the South regulate the presence of refugees in urban areas. (2007: 3)

In this context, the refugee camp is often seen as the best way to effect this separation, reflecting a perception of refugees as 'temporary guests' that legitimates the 'placement of refugees in spatially segregated rural sites' (Kibreab,

2007: 31). The significance of this policy for discussions of urban refugees is that, by contrast to the 'official' refugee of the camp, urban refugees are viewed as 'spontaneous' groups who lack the legitimacy of those encamped, as 'the presence in cities of mobile, self-directed refugees ... violate[s] the idea that displaced people must be helpless and dependent' (Marfleet, 2007: 42). As Hoffstaedter (2015) and Parker (2002) point out, the divisive assumptions that restrict support for urban refugees in relation to those accommodated in refugee camps have historically been held not just by 'host' states but also by UNHCR and other NGOs, who have been reluctant to respond to the complexities of refugee provision in urban environments.

One effect of a policy of containment has therefore been to question the rights of refugees in urban environments, whilst a second effect has been to focus academic and humanitarian attention on refugee camps to the detriment of urban forced migrants (Goodall, 2011). Recent work on camp spaces has noted the quasi-urban nature of these environments (see Bulley, 2014; Sanyal, 2012) and has sought to situate camp spaces on an urban continuum, recognizing that many camps either become part of cities or are located on the margins of the urban (Agier, 2002; Ramadan, 2013). However, despite the complexities of these relations, the idealized vision of the refugee camp as a temporary 'solution' to displacement continues to position the camp as a focus of policy, legitimation and humanitarianism, and in doing so helps to explain the production of urban refugees as 'problematic' by comparison. In this way, the refugee camp sets the terms of categorization that shape the subjectivities of differently positioned forced migrants; it serves to insert forced migration 'into the productive logics of society by making out of irregular mobility either controllable populations or illegalised people' (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2013: 180).

Whilst urban refugees have been positioned as the 'problematic' counterpart of a less mobile camp population (Hyndman and Giles, 2011), the current context is one in which increasing critical attention is being placed upon the question of urban displacement. UNHCR may have been slow to reflect the urban reality of many refugees, but since this recognition an increasing focus has been placed on the needs of urban refugees. Such a focus might be seen to have two drivers. Firstly, in the political claims made by those present in urban centres of authority. Here, for example, Lindley (2011: 38) notes that whilst Somali refugees in Nairobi are often harassed by the police, there have been 'signs of growing tacit acceptance by the authorities of the inevitability of the refugee presence in urban areas'. And secondly, in the fact that despite attempts at separation, the continuing attraction of cities for many refugees is clear, as 'the city can represent a site of independence and safety not necessarily found in camps' (Crisp et al., 2012: S24). Studies have thus explored the livelihood opportunities of refugees in Nairobi, highlighting both the integration of individuals into an informal economy of casual labour and the continued vulnerability of such individuals to abuse, arrest and harassment (Campbell, 2006; Jaji, 2009; Pavanello et al., 2010). This tension between the prospects of temporary safety and opportunity and the risks of exploitation and marginalization is an often repeated one in explorations of urban refugee experiences, evident in work from Kampala (Bernstein and Okello, 2007; Dryden-Peterson, 2006), Cairo (Grabska, 2006), Dar es-Salaam (Sommers, 2001), Bossaso (Decorte and Tempra, 2010), Johannesburg (Belvedere, 2007; Landau, 2006), and Pretoria (Rugunanan and Smit, 2011).

The lack of formal recognition of refugee status or citizenship afforded to urban refugees has therefore been argued to exacerbate their vulnerability and has ensured that forced migrants merge into a larger pool of both undocumented migrants and citizens seeking to make a living in informal economies (Crisp et al.,

2012; Lindley, 2011). At the same time, a focus on camp spaces as the 'appropriate' space for forced migration has contributed to the exclusion of urban refugees by attracting resources and attention away from the challenges they face (Kibreab, 2007). Thus, whilst Agier (2002: 337) claims that the 'city is in the camp but always only in the form of sketches that are perpetually aborted', I would argue that we might invert this phrase to see that in many discussions on urban refugees it is the camp that haunts the city. The idealized image of the camp, as a distant and legitimate 'other' of the city, shapes both how the city is positioned and described and how the experiences of urban refugees are understood and interpreted. From the reluctance of UNHCR to acknowledge the challenges faced by urban refugees to policies of spatial segregation, within both academic and practitioner debate a framework of distinction has often been established between the space of the refugee camp and that of the city which serves to maintain normative visions of both. In this context, as Hyndman and Giles (2011) show, it is only when refugee mobility is ordered through practices of managed resettlement that a shift from camp to city is framed as a 'solution' rather than an unwelcome intrusion. It is to this question of regulated displacement that I turn next.

III Dispersal and managed marginality

The second body of work that illustrates relations between forced migration and the city in geography is that which focuses on the containment of asylum seekers and refugees within cities in the Global North. Geographers have here examined the nature of historic and contemporary processes of refugee resettlement and asylum seeker dispersal (Hyndman and McLean, 2006; Phillips, 2006; Van Liempt, 2011; Zetter and Pearl, 2000). Urban dispersal programmes are in place in Denmark, Germany, the

Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK, and are argued to represent attempts to 'spread the burden' of asylum seeker accommodation (see Arnoldus et al., 2003; Hammar, 1993; Robinson, 2003; Wren, 2003). Beyond this economic argument, discussions of dispersal policies have highlighted the political motivations behind dispersal, viewing the policy as a tool for the control and deterrence of asylum seekers (Boswell, 2001). For example, Schuster (2005) argues that dispersal needs to be viewed as part of a larger governmental formation that produces the marginality of asylum seekers through interconnected mechanisms of dispersal, detention and deportation. Frequently, dispersal is positioned as a 'no choice' option, meaning that those accommodated have no opportunity to influence their location and can often be accommodated in areas of existing social deprivation. In this context, Hynes's (2009) study of the experiences of dispersed asylum seekers in the UK suggests that the compulsory mobility of dispersal creates a 'policy-imposed liminality', as individuals struggle to establish social networks within alien, and at times hostile, new surroundings (Hynes, 2009: 115; Netto, 2011).

Dispersal may not always be an urban policy. Indeed, at various points different European countries have experimented with rural accommodation centres, often located in former military or institutional facilities (see Hubbard, 2005; Vitus, 2011). However, the connections made in urban processes of dispersal between the spatial containment of a 'problematic' population within areas of existing social deprivation (Phillips, 2006) and the forms of territorial stigma attached to such marginal environments as 'dumping grounds' are significant for understanding how dispersal presents a marginalization of mobile forced migrants (Cheshire and Zappia, 2015).

Discussions of dispersal are also significant for thinking about forced migration and the city for two further reasons. Firstly, it is notable that these are not widespread areas of attention

either within political geographies of forced migration or within urban studies on diversity and difference. This has meant that whilst some work has sought to critically challenge the exclusions of dispersal (Griffiths et al., 2006; Squire, 2009), and some has highlighted its potential to present opportunities for otherwise disadvantaged cities (Phillimore and Goodson, 2006; Zetter et al., 2005), the complexities of dispersal as an experience as much as a governmental process have been left largely unexplored. The outcome of this is that assumptions of dispersal as a 'sensible' response to asylum accommodation have often remained unchallenged (Hynes, 2009).

Secondly, dispersal policies present a particular vision of the city and of its relation to asylum seekers and refugees. This is highlighted if we consider Robinson's (2003: 147) study of the early years of the UK's dispersal programme, in which he warned that '[d]ispersal zones should not simply be areas where housing is cheaply and readily available and within which asylum seekers can be "held" for six months. Rather, they ought to be locations suited to the long-term generation of visible and integrated "refugee" communities'. Dispersal should thus not be seen only as a response to the question of 'where to accommodate asylum seekers while they await the outcome of their asylum claims', but should include considerable information sharing, community preparation work and pathways to longer-term settlement (Robinson, 1998). It is clear from subsequent studies that this link between dispersal and refugee integration is fragile at best. Dispersal is argued to represent a desire to 'accommodate', rather than a starting point for integration (Darling, 2011a). The role of the city in this process becomes that of a container for individuals whose lives are placed on hold by the classification processes of sovereign attempts to 'manage migration'. Importantly, this means that the particular characteristics of the city as a social, spatial and political formation are either

assumed or overlooked. The city becomes a backdrop to political actions, decisions and exclusions practised elsewhere and imposed upon an urban context. As a result, cities and their inhabitants are denied the agency to shape the dispersal process, and asylum seekers are denied the agency to shape the city.

IV The border 'within'

In Sections II and III, I have examined literature that considers the often exclusionary nature of urban experiences for refugees in the Global South and North. In this section, I consider an area of literature that broadens this exclusionary account still further, considering the city as a site of bordering. Whilst not focused solely on forced migration, such literature provides an essential context within which any understanding of forced migration and the city must be placed. In recent years, a range of work has explored how cities practise modes of 'local border control' (Lebuhn, 2013: 38), which translate policies and enforcement measures from the nation-state to specific urban contexts. In short, this highlights how cities have been central to the diversification of borders into everyday life (see Graham, 2010; Gilbert, 2009; Varsanyi, 2008a). In these discussions, the city is situated as a strategic location for the enforcement of border control 'within' the nation-state, thereby feeding into wider discussions of the shift from territorially fixed border 'lines' to territorially diffuse border 'functions'.

Cities have been argued to play a key role in this complex re-scaling of border control, most notably in North America (Ellis, 2006; Varsanyi, 2011). This 're-scaling' process has two dimensions: a 'top-down' devolution of authority to municipal levels and a 'bottom-up' assertion of authority by municipalities in the form of local ordinances on migration. In the first of these trends, geographers have focused on the enrolment of an expanded array of authorities, services and professionals into the practice of

immigration control, serving to extend responsibility for border policing into new domains of everyday life (Coleman and Kocher, 2011). Urban services, civic and public spaces, and workplaces thus become precarious sites which may display the punitive reach of border enforcement at any time, often at the discretion of those enrolled as 'responsible' citizens (Inda, 2005; Walsh, 2014). As authority for immigration control is devolved to an urban level, it is argued that cities have 'become a kind of factory for the production of illegality' (Ridgley, 2008: 56).

In the second aspect of 're-scaling', geographers have noted the adoption of urban policies on immigration enforcement that go beyond the perceived limits of national legislation. For example, Walker and Leitner (2011) highlight how cities across the USA have instituted ordinances focused on restricting and removing non-citizens. Similarly, Varsanyi (2008b: 892) notes a trend of immigration policing 'through the back door' in the shape of 'land use and public nuisance ordinances that constrain behaviors and living conditions of undocumented migrants'. For example, in July 2006 the city of Hazelton, Pennsylvania, passed a municipal *Illegal Immigration Relief Act*, which imposed fines for landlords who rent to those in the country without authorization and created municipal powers to remove licences from businesses that hire undocumented workers (Steil and Ridgley, 2012).

Whilst the categorical construction of the 'illegal' migrant is not a necessarily urban one (De Genova, 2002), this range of work makes clear that practices of categorization increasingly find their expression through cities where negotiations of status, services and enforcement come to the fore (see Bousetta, 2008; Garni and Miller, 2008; Hiemstra, 2010). Indeed, as Young (2011: 542) notes, the state 'literally takes place in the everyday spaces of the city, which means its exclusions are also worked out there'. What emerges from such work is not an image of the city as a straightforward repository for the policies of the state, but rather a sense of municipalities interpreting, reshaping and creating modes of enforcement in response to framings of irregular migration in statist discourses and legislation (Coleman, 2012; Walker, 2014). Thus whilst focused on the politics of irregular migration, this literature offers insight into the negotiations at work in 'localizing' border controls, responsibilities and narratives.

V The city as sanctuary

Before moving to consider the limits of current discussion of forced migration and cities in Sections VI–VIII of this paper, I want to turn to a potentially more progressive relation between cities and forced migrants than those noted so far. For whilst discussions around the re-scaling of border practices have tended to focus on the exclusionary nature of local immigration controls, this process has not been without resistance. Varsanyi (2008b), for example, notes how a range of cities across the USA have rejected local immigration enforcement and focused instead on shielding their residents from deportation (see Walker and Leitner, 2011). An emergent body of work has thus begun to consider the potential of the city as a sanctuary for irregular and forced migrants.

A central orientation point for such discussions has been the work of sanctuary movements. This image of the city can be seen, to varying degrees, in the work of the New Sanctuary Movement in the USA and Canada, the Cities of Refuge initiative across Europe and the UK's City of Sanctuary movement. In the UK, the City of Sanctuary movement seeks to promote a culture of welcome towards asylum seekers and refugees, based around ideals of responsibility and hospitality (Darling, 2010; Squire, 2011b). Similarly, the Cities of Refuge initiative enrols urban authorities to offer sanctuary to artists and writers fleeing persecution (Derrida, 2001). Often emerging from

charitable and religious organizations, this predominantly European strand of sanctuary tends to emphasize the role of asylum seekers and refugees as contributing to the social and cultural life of their 'host' communities (Goodall, 2010). By contrast, in the North American context the emergence of a range of Sanctuary Cities, most famously San Francisco, has seen attempts to legislate for access to municipal services regardless of status and to protect residents through non-cooperation with immigration authorities. This form of 'urban citizenship' does not necessarily inscribe new rights for irregular migrants (Basok, 2009; Varsanyi, 2006). Rather, these ordinances can be seen as means to maintain informality, to ensure that the piecemeal opportunities irregular migrants may experience are sustained as part of the continued functioning of the city.

Within these discussions of sanctuary, there has been an emphasis on examining the prosaic spaces through which ideals of humanitarianism are practised. For example, Ehrkamp and Nagel (2012) suggest that in the midst of increasingly anti-immigrant legislation in the US South, places of worship have become important sites of welcome. Similarly, work on spaces of charitable provision has highlighted how momentary relations of welcome may emerge in specific, and often highly conditional, urban spaces (Darling, 2011b; Wren, 2007). These discussions are clear on the limits of community provision, raising questions of the longer term effectiveness of efforts to 'welcome' forced migrants. For example, Ehrkamp and Nagel (2014) find that whilst gestures of hospitality may be offered through faith-based communities, these are often 'under the radar' gestures which fail to challenge the status quo of exclusionary and pervasive immigration enforcement. These gestures may 'on the one hand, shield[s] immigrants from aggressive law enforcement activities but, on the other hand, do[es] very little to change the fundamental precariousness of their situation' (2014: 321; Bagelman, 2013).

Sanctuary and its various manifestations has also been argued to represent a means of governing through the assertion of humanitarian intentions (Darling, 2013). In legislative terms, Chavin and Garcés-Mascareñas (2012: 244) argue that 'local incorporation practices' reflect 'regulatory imperatives and worries over public safety'. Through enabling undocumented migrants to access services and support, cities can be seen to 'manage' an undocumented population for the wider 'good' of the city, thereby allaying concerns over public health and public order, as Mancina (2012) argues in the case of San Francisco. Seen through this critical lens, the language of the sanctuary city becomes less one of rights to urban citizenship and more an additional means to govern the presence of irregular and forced migrants. As a result, the question of who 'deserves' the support of the sanctuary city comes to the fore in debating the limits to urban hospitality (Chavin and Garcés-Mascareñas, 2012; Marrow, 2012; Wilson, 2014; Yukich, 2013).

Discussions of the city as a potential sanctuary are helpful in highlighting practices of welcome that assuage the effects of repressive immigration controls. Yet they also point to the limits of such movements, most notably in risking the reiteration of categorical assumptions over who is 'deserving' of welcome. Distinctions such as these are central to the categorizing processes that shape ideals of hospitality (Derrida, 2001), and illustrate how progressive imaginaries of the city may be enfolded into state-centric logics of citizenship. It is to the implications of this confluence that I now want to turn.

VI Policing, politicization and sovereign 'scripts'

So far in this paper, I have highlighted four bodies of literature in which discussions of forced migration have engaged with cities as locations of and for forced migration. In the

remainder of the paper I want to argue that these discussions, whilst valuable in illustrating the resonance of regimes of citizenship and sovereignty within urban life, could be advanced through a fuller engagement with the political character of cities. To do so I argue, in the next three sections, for the need to both foreground the political nature of urban life, and to examine possible convergences between studies of forced migration and work within urban geography that draws on urban informality (Section VII), and the potential value of presence as a political claim (Section VIII).

The political tension between the 'policing' role of cities and their potential for 'politicization' is one that Uitermark and Nicholls (2014) argue is constitutive of the urban. Cities for them are incubators for both dissent and mechanisms of social, political and economic regulation which seek to 'neutralize and pre-empt challenges to the legal and social order' (Uitermark and Nicholls, 2014: 975). 'Policing', in this context, denotes those governmental technologies 'designed to align subjects with the state' (2014: 975), either directly through imposed legal frameworks, or indirectly through rationalities of civic responsibility (Osborne and Rose, 1999). Whilst methods of policing seek to assign positions within hierarchies that are both social and spatial (see Rancière, 1999), politicization names processes of contestation that exceed such distributions. A similar distinction is notable in Isin's (2012) articulation of two modes of citizenship – 'active' and 'activist'. For Isin (2012: 148):

> Producing scripts for active citizenship is among the most prominent businesses of government ... Active citizens are those political subjects that become activated through scripts, which aim to cultivate conducts that are conducive to strategies articulated by governing authorities ... Activist citizens relentlessly pursue possibilities for writing new scripts.

Whilst these tensions between the 'scripted' 'policing' of urban space and a more insurgent 'politicization' of the city have exercised debate within urban geography (see MacLeod and McFarlane, 2014; Rodgers et al., 2014), their impact has been limited when considering forced migration. Notably, the four areas of work discussed so far have all focused on the city as a regulatory space that seeks to 'align subjects with the state' (Uitermark and Nicholls, 2014: 975). In each case, the result is that the politicization of urban space is often secondary to a reading of urban space as a means to monitor and contain forced migrants.

The importance of a concern with the regulatory role of the city is that it shapes and maintains particular perceptual frameworks of expectation around asylum, borders and politics (see Darling, 2014b). In this sense, 'policing' refers not simply to the maintenance of social order, but also to how specific spaces, policies and debates are framed as legitimate. Dikeç's (2007: 20) work on urban policy as a 'practice of articulation' is instructive here for it highlights how policies act to 'define legitimate interlocutors, make sensible certain issues while making others imperceptible, distinguish voices from noises'. For example, in their account of the debates that surrounded the implementation of restrictive immigration ordinances in Hazelton, Steil and Ridgley (2012) argue that particular histories and voices were erased from discussion so as to sustain a narrative of a city 'under threat'. In this case, the framing of immigration enforcement as a 'solution' served to shape what emerged as an acceptable political statement.

A focus on policing alone may therefore restrict the terms of debate on which the urban is encountered. The spatial 'problems' policed in the city are often those of a nation-state-centric concern with citizenship as a national project – a regime of exclusive belonging to be closely guarded through classificatory mechanisms of filtering and selection. In

response, we see the categorization of urban refugees as illegitimate and troublesome presences who should be placed in the 'official' space of the camp, the managed liminality of dispersed accommodation, the maintenance and enforcement of ubiquitous urban borders and the conditional welcoming of only those seen to be 'worthy' of sanctuary. Each of these discussions poses a response to the 'problem' of the refugee, yet each also employs the city as a space produced through the desire to variously control, contain or expel forced migrants. As a result, the experiences of refugees are framed less in terms of their urban character and more in terms of how they articulate an imposition of state authority. This is not to suggest that such experiences are not 'policed'. It is to argue that by focusing upon the 'scripted' power relations of the city, current discussions risk downplaying both the political potentials of the city and the urban character of much forced migration. This is an urban character expressed not just through location, but through urban attributes and conditions which influence the nature of forced migration.

There is, though, need for caution here, not least in recognizing that the possibilities of urban politicization are highly contingent. Any consideration of forced migration and the city must be wary of romanticizing urban politics for at least two reasons. Firstly, because cities are often themselves encountered as sites of intra-urban displacement, violence, and transit. As Riaño-Alcalá (2008) shows in the case of Medellín, the urbanization of violence warns against reading the city as a necessarily protective or progressive environment. Secondly, because accessing means of urban politicization is itself uneven. For those forced migrants without formal status, the risks of political enactment are far greater than for those with (even conditional) refugee status or documentation. As McNevin (2013: 195) argues, in many cases politicization is 'ambivalent' as it may be 'at once, purposeful, political and born of a certain desperation'. A concern with the political potential of the city must thus recognize the ambivalence of differently positioned forced migrants.

With these caveats in mind, I want to use the remainder of this paper to suggest two avenues that might illustrate how cities may be not simply 'active' agents in the management of forced migration, but also sites of 'activist' potential. The two avenues proposed are not divorced from the critical insights gained through those literatures already discussed in Sections II–V of this paper, exploring urban refugees, urban dispersal processes and the politics of sanctuary cities. Rather, they seek to build upon these discussions of 'policing' through approaching forced migration from a different perspective. The politicization of urban forced migration that orientates the final sections of the paper (VII–VIII) thus takes inspiration from Magnusson's (2011) call to expand political imaginaries through 'seeing like a city' in conjunction with 'seeing like a state'. For Magnusson (2011), 'seeing like a state' marks the imposition of a singular, rational order from above, whilst 'seeing like a city' suggests the incomplete crafting of alternative forms of order in practice. To examine this perspective, Section VII considers the informalities of urban life, and Section VIII turns to the question of presence as a political tool. Through these discussions, I argue that geographers might consider how urban relations may exceed the 'scripts' of forced migration.

VII Urban informality

The first area of potential convergence is centred on the nature of urban informality. A concern with informality is important as it may be seen to run across all four accounts of the city outlined so far. From urban refugee settlement to sanctuary ordinances, forced migrants can be argued to be positioned within continuums of formal and informal status, activity and rights (see Feldman, 2012). This is the case not least

because the categories of status that define forced migration are often fluid. As Zetter (2007) illustrates, the explosion of categorization within asylum reflects a constantly shifting attempt to fix and demarcate positions. The significance of this, as Nyers (2011) argues, is that conditions of status are the result of struggles over formal and informal rights. In this context, the complexities of informality and its definition come to the fore, as informality marks not the evasion of regulation and 'policing' as noted in some sanctuary contexts, but rather the production and negotiation of both 'policing' and 'politicization' in context. As recent explorations of the 'improvisational' character of governance suggest (Jeffrey, 2013), the practice of 'policing' forced migration is just as much an issue of informal practices of discretion, knowhow and interpretation as it is a matter of formal practices of regulation. Thus whilst urban refugees and asylum seekers may occupy 'gray space' between legality and illegality (Yiftachel, 2009), in urban environments they are not alone in this situation as a wide range of urban subjects negotiate formal and informal practices on a daily basis. Looking to the politics of informality might thus enable a reconsideration of how urban forced migration has been imagined.

Cities themselves have been argued to represent constellations of legality, illegality, formality and informality as the distinction between the formal and the informal has served as a 'multifaceted resource for naming, managing, governing, producing, and even critiquing contemporary cities' (McFarlane, 2012: 89). Accounts of urban informality have thus been extended beyond a spatial concern with specific territories, to express forms of urban practice that shape cities across the world (McFarlane, 2012; Fairbanks, 2011). What informal practices highlight is the 'ever-shifting urban relationship between the legal and the illegal, legitimate and illegitimate, authorized and unauthorized' (Roy, 2011: 233). These shifting relationships are not simply a backdrop to the lives of urban refugees and asylum seekers. Rather, given the often uncertain legal status and insecurity of asylum seekers, the shifting relationships of authority, influence and negotiation seen to reflect urban practices, question 'the very basis of state legitimacy' (2011: 233). Informal practices constantly question the definitional limits and conditions of the formal, they undermine the legitimacy of claims to authority and a final or fixed sense of what – and indeed who – is legitimate.

The questioning that a focus on the production and negotiation of informality presents may be of use in two ways when exploring urban forced migration. Firstly, this questioning can be applied to the claims of sovereign authority that often frame forced migration. For Roy (2005: 149), '[s]tate power is reproduced through the capacity to construct and reconstruct categories of legitimacy and illegitimacy', as the designation of the informal settlement, like the designation of the 'genuine' refugee, becomes a site of 'complex political struggle' (2005: 150). This struggle is never simply a task of imposing authority. Rather, informality operates in a context where structural power is understood 'not as a monolithic and singular regime of rule, but rather as a fragmented domain of multiple and competing sovereignties' (AlSayyad and Roy, 2006: 12). Feeding such work back to the urban refugee, we can consider how the varied forms of management, provision and classification that the UNHCR (2012) note in relation to urban refugees – from the nation-state, different urban authorities, different agencies and NGOs and UNHCR itself – produce a context of negotiability, fragmentation and the incompleteness of any form of sovereign authority. In their work on refugee protests in Cairo, for example, Moulin and Nyers (2007) highlight how refugee groups opposed attempts at classification by UNHCR and drew upon a range of other situated sources of legitimacy along with the global

connections of the city to 'reformulate govern-mentalities of care and protection' (2007: 356). A concern with urban informality thus high-lights the necessarily limited nature of sover-eign claims to authority. Rather than a 'script' of policing the city, what emerges is an account of the negotiations that take place in attempting to govern through distinctions of the formal and informal. This more messy reality opens the possibility of pragmatic compromises, incom-plete and imperfect attempts at governance and openings for difference.

The temporary reformulations of authority produced through these refugee protests point to a second connection between studies of urban informality and forced migration. A concern with urban informality enables a valorization of incremental and often highly tactical prac-tices that can constitute 'minor' political acts. The informal practices of asylum seekers in cit-ies, such as building precarious shelters, enga-ging in black markets, identity stripping, voluntary employment and anti-deportation organizing and networking, suggest 'minor' cri-tiques of the categorizations of citizenship that might not otherwise register as political acts. As Chimienti and Solomos (2011) find, the capa-cities of asylum seekers and refugees to engage in social movements and actively seek social change are severely restricted, not least by the policing mechanisms already noted. However, an account of the urban informal suggests that 'minor' critiques may offer points of politiciza-tion which, whilst not immediately 'activist' in Isin's (2012) terms, break with established 'scripts' of the passive and grateful refugee and undermine fixed classifications of citizen and non-citizen. Work on the informal urban high-lights the contingent nature of such positions – of vulnerability, invention, permanence and opportunism all drawn together in the process of what McFarlane (2011) terms 'learning the city'. The importance of a turn to urban inform-ality is thus in allowing piecemeal activities to be seen as both politically significant in

articulating a different relation to citizenship, and as urban activities produced through the negotiations of urban life and its multiple authorities, interests, publics and stages. With this in mind, I turn to the politics of presence as a means to broaden this frame of politicization.

VIII Presence

In referring to the politics of presence, I want to discuss claims made through the interweaving of rights to both mobility and political partici-pation within the city. To start with an example, we might look to Fernandez and Olson's (2011) discussion of the claims made by undocumented migrants in Flagstaff, Arizona. In working with migrant rights' campaigns, Fernandez and Olson argue that many of those without legal status are in fact 'fighting for the right to *come and go* more than they are for the right to *come and stay*' (2011: 415, emphasis in original). Focusing on how migrants organized to push the city council to file an injunction against the anti-immigrant Arizona Senate Bill 1070, they highlight the insistence that city officials 'hear their collective voice and represent their inter-ests' (2011: 412). In illustrating the multiple communities and mobile networks that these migrants are engaged in, Fernandez and Olson (2011: 415) argue that the demands they make are to both 'movement and place', as 'they are demanding the freedom to live, raise families and work across borders, and insisting on the right to participate in whatever public they are presently in', thereby asserting that 'the right to belong and participate in a public realm, should be less a matter of where you *were* (born) than where you *are*' (2011: 417, emphasis in origi-nal). The politics of presence is therefore an articulation of an openness to mobility, along-side the 'ability to participate in local affairs' (2011: 418), that has often framed concerns with the right to the city (Harvey, 2008; Purcell, 2003). As such, it reflects a demand for *both*

participation and mobility that may be enhanced *through* the negotiations of urban life.

Drawing from this example, we might note two orientation points for this politics. The first of these is in returning to those sanctuary ordinances that seek to protect undocumented migrants and refugees. Whilst such ordinances may have a regulatory function, they have nevertheless been argued to present openings for forms of 'local citizenship' that draw on the 'right to the city' (Varsanyi, 2008a; Lefebvre, 1996). Reading sanctuary ordinances through the right to the city suggests that the legal and social protection of sanctuary may offer a framework on which claims to rights for services, protection and political participation are made. However, the right to the city is often tied to the notion of inhabitance (Purcell, 2003), such that those able to exercise such rights are residents. By contrast, the value of presence may be in critiquing this requirement of residency. Presence is about the temporary fixing of mobilities rather than their capture within a given spatial form. Thus whilst many urban sanctuary movements advocate rights based on 'the need to prove one's residency' (Nyers, 2010: 137), a number seek to 'articulate ideas of membership based on physical presence'. It is here that a politics of presence draws on a second orientation point.

The 'autonomy of migration' approach views migration as a constituent force in social life (Mezzadra, 2011). In doing so, it seeks to reframe migration as having 'the capacity to develop its own logics, its own motivation, its own trajectories that control comes later to respond to, not the other way round' (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2013: 184). In this sense, the 'autonomy' of migration reflects a challenge to the perceptual 'policing' of migration as a 'problem' to be managed in particular ways. In focusing on 'autonomy', Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2013: 188) argue for a concern with the social transformations 'sustained and nurtured silently through the everyday and seemingly non-political experiences and actions of people'. Beyond the right to the city, the politics of presence therefore reflects a concern with a mobile politics of everyday critique. Presence in this context becomes 'a matter of social fact rather than legal status' (Nyers, 2010: 137), and opens for challenge the categorizations of membership associated with citizenship, residency and formal rights to services and belonging. Asking on what basis rights and services are denied to those present in the city, as in the demands made by undocumented migrants in Flagstaff, the politics of presence names alternative 'ideas of political membership' at the urban level as a way to influence 'ideas of security and citizenship' at the level of the nation-state (Ridgley, 2008: 65).

Presence as an orientation point for political claims is not necessarily or inherently urban. However, it has been argued that in the urban we see the political possibilities of presence most readily. For Sassen (2010: 9), this value emerges from the fact that in cities 'the localization of the global creates a set of objective conditions of engagement' through which presence may be politicized by irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. This 'engagement' is twofold, reflecting both a presence to power, and a presence 'vis-à-vis each other' (Sassen, 2006: 317). Presence, in its urban manifestation, might thus denote a point of political potential that can be mobilized by different causes and concerns in drawing on an engagement with authority localized in the city.

For urban refugees and asylum seekers the question becomes one of how presence may be situated as a claim to rightfulness (Squire and Darling, 2013). Whilst the city provides the context in which claims are made possible, work on urban refugees might explore those claims that are centred on a framing of justice rather than one of hospitality within the city. Presence takes on a dual role within these discussions. Firstly, it articulates the value of the city as a space through which forced migrants may become

present to one another and to urban authorities. The city in this context provides both the battleground for forming political subjectivities as Isin (2002) sees it, and the localization and concentration of globalized assemblages of authority as Sassen (2006) argues. Secondly, claiming presence has the capacity to articulate a 'political subjectivity and its expression to rights' (Isin, 2012: 109) that is delinked from assumptions of citizenship, and that is 'transversal' in assuming rights not through the fixity of residence, but through presence as both a statement of social fact and a transversal connection. Presence in the city is always the culmination of multiple flows and linkages, and as such it poses questions over the frames of justice and injustice that have led individuals to the city (Squire and Darling, 2013).

This approach is, of course, not without failings. Most notably, there is a need to be wary of positioning presence as a straightforward claim to visibility. In some cases, as May (2010) argues, visibility may offer a valuable means of demonstrating the political identification of a group positioned outside the remit of citizenship rights. Yet, there is a danger in visibility. As noted in discussions of the ubiquity of urban borders, being visibly present can invite the increased 'policing' of forced and irregular migrants. Similarly, there is also a significant distinction to be made here between the forms of group visibility and collective identification that May (2010) valorizes, and the risks of visibility for the individual. The politics of presence in this sense is not equally distributed or in any sense universal. Rather, it may reflect a potential resource to be tactically and carefully employed in the practice of negotiating claims to rightfulness. In this context, a claim to political presence centred on the city demands a more nuanced engagement with the informalities and insecurities of non-citizen subjectivity, and demands attentiveness to the strategic use of presence as a political tool in given urban contexts, some of which may produce the visible articulation of a collective identity, some of which may seek to avert, resist or avoid such visibility.

Linked to such concerns, there is the question of how practical a focus on presence may be. The value of presence may be in offering a different starting point for discussion – one emergent from the relations of urban life rather than the imposition of sovereign authority. Thinking through the value of presence as a social fact, and of the frames of justice and injustice to which it may be connected, means viewing presence as an orientation point in exploring 'new scripts' on forced migration (Isin, 2012: 148). A politics of urban presence might be seen as an unlikely political shift in many contexts, yet its exploration may have the potential to shape solidarities centred on the city as a stage of political and social connection, rather than as a site for the 'policing' of forced migration.

Viewing rights within the city as tied only to presence may thus disrupt governmental assumptions that rights have to be tied to citizenship and the state. Crucially, a focus on presence foregrounds the possibility of political solidarities centred on common experiences of the urban across otherwise distanciated constituencies. For example, in the Latin American context the Cities of Solidarity initiative has focused on building urban solidarity through positioning refugee resettlement as an opportunity to improve urban services for all (Varoli, 2010). Similarly, Phillimore and Goodson (2006) argue that urban refugee resettlement can be a means of regeneration when detached from the exclusionary binaries of rights that distinguish 'host' from 'guest' communities. To focus on presence is therefore to examine 'the hard work of ... repositioning the immigrant and the citizen as urban subjects, rather than essentially different subjects' (Sassen, 2013: 69). Urban presence may unite individuals across status and reimagine the city as not a bounded object to be welcomed to or

excluded from, but rather as a relational and collaborative production of those present at any given point.

This is not to suggest that a focus on presence may overtake a concern with citizenship status and rights bestowed by the nation-state. It is to argue that we may see a range of alternatives if we move away from a frame of reference that is concerned only with the hospitable accommodation of difference. Just as 'the deployment of exclusionary city ordinances are not only about shaping an *urban* public, but about shaping a *national* public as well' (Varsanyi, 2008a: 47, emphasis in original), so too might we think of the kinds of rights claims enacted through cities as not simply affecting urban imaginaries but also affecting transnational publics too. It is this framing of alternatives that is most readily elided through a concern with the city only as a space of governmental policing. In challenging these elisions, I have sought in this paper to explore how considering the city may politicize studies of forced migration in new ways, promoting critical questions of urban citizenship, denizenship, and the politics of presence itself.

IX Conclusion

In this paper I have considered how geographers and others have imagined the relation between the city and forced migration. Urban political theory has a great deal to say about the nature of urban democracy and social justice (Purcell, 2008; Soja, 2010), but such insights need to be thought alongside the work of those exploring forced migration. There are, of course, a range of approaches that might be of value here. For example, one might think of discussions over the relational and topological nature of cities as sites of 'intensive' relations of power which enfold state authority and challenge topographical distinctions between 'inside' and 'outside' (Allen, 2010). In this paper, I have outlined only two possible connections. In doing so, I have

highlighted the ways in which taking cities and urban theory seriously means viewing cities as constitutive of both the policing *and* the politicization of forced migration.

In seeking to consider how a framing of the city might contest the dominance of statist thinking on forced migration, it is essential to explore how cities may do something different. This is not, as Young (2011: 545) suggests, to 're-imagine the city as a refuge beyond the nation-state', for there is no 'beyond' the nation-state in this sense. Rather, the nation-state is entwined with the city, relationally constituted through the city, but not necessarily above or before it. Instead, examinations of the urban nature of forced migration point to the potential of the city to work within the interstices of the state – the fractures and inconsistencies that are inherently produced in claims to authority and sovereignty (Critchley, 2012). In this way, debates within urban geography may contribute to the destabilization of an image of the nation-state as a homogenous, all powerful and consistent entity (Gill, 2010; Painter, 2006). Exploring the politics of urban forced migration offers one reflection on the 'insecure' nature of the nation-state as a political formation striving for security (Philo, 2014). As a focus on informality and urban presence has suggested, the city may become a space for a politics of critique relative to the state, a politics that refuses specific forms of governmentality – most notably the abjection of those displaced. The task that emerges from discussions of urban forced migration is to examine the city as a situated and contested interlocutor for state discourses and practices. It is only through opening work on forced migration to a fuller engagement with the politicization of the city, through the opportunities it offers as much as the closures it performs, that geographies of forced migration may harness the 'strategic importance of the city for shaping new orders that can contest the power of . . . new transversal borderings' (Sassen, 2013: 70).

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