

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

From Community Cohesion to Mobile Solidarities: The *City of Sanctuary* Network and the *Strangers into Citizens* Campaign

Journal Item

How to cite:

Squire, Vicki (2011). From Community Cohesion to Mobile Solidarities: The City of Sanctuary Network and the Strangers into Citizens Campaign. *Political Studies*, 59(2) pp. 290–307.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2010 The Author. *Political Studies*; 2010 Political Studies Association



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/>

Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.2010.00865.x>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's [data policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

From community cohesion to mobile solidarities: The City of Sanctuary network and the Strangers into Citizens campaign

Vicki Squire

This article draws attention to the limitations of the UK's integration and cohesion agenda and introduces an alternative analytical approach that focuses on solidarity, mobility and citizenship over cohesion, integration and community. Developing such an approach through analysing the City of Sanctuary network and the Strangers into Citizens campaign, the article has two interrelated objectives. First, it aims to shed critical light on the assumptions regarding community that inform the UK's integration and cohesion agenda, which involves a series of contradictions that exclude asylum seekers and irregular migrants as subjects of integration and cohesion. Second, it aims to offer some reflections on how these assumptions are challenged by the City of Sanctuary network and the Strangers into Citizens campaign, based on the activation of mobile solidarities that cut across established social hierarchies. In so doing, the article suggests that the UK's approach to integration and cohesion is flawed because it overlooks engagements and solidarities in which cultural categories and legal distinctions are extraneous, while at the same time as which it privileges the collective engagements of established residents over those whose presence may be more fleeting or less definite. In order to demonstrate the inadequacies of such an approach, the article shows how minor acts of citizenship that are mobilised by City of Sanctuary and Strangers into Citizens enact a mobile form of solidarity based on participation through presence. This, the article argues, potentially serves as the grounds for a critical alternative to an approach which assumes that intensified movements and diversities induce hostility.

Deep contradictions are evident in the UK government's recent policies on immigration and asylum. On the one hand there has been a strong push to open up migratory routes for those migrants whose skills are in demand, while on the other hand many migrants whose skills are in demand are denied the right to work after entering the UK (Harris, 2002). On the one hand there has been a re-affirmation of the UK's commitment to providing a safe haven to those seeking refuge from persecution, while on the other hand those seeking refuge have increasingly been intercepted before reaching states such as the UK (Gibney, 2004, Sales, 2005). On the one hand there has been an attempt to draw clear lines between those seeking refuge and those seeking work, while on the other hand there has been a reactionary conflation of the two (Lewis and Neal, 2005). These contradictions result in exclusions in the UK's integration and cohesion policies. Thus, on the one hand there is evidence of a commitment to integrating new arrivals within cohesive communities, while on the other hand there is evidence of the exclusion of asylum seekers and irregular migrants from the remit of integration and cohesion (Squire, 2005).

It is not the intention of this article to examine the consequences of such contradictions and exclusions, which have already been well documented by analysts of asylum and migration (e.g. Morris, 2002; Sales, 2002, 2007; Squire, 2009a). Rather, the article has two interrelated aims. First, it aims to shed critical light on some of the assumptions about community that inform the UK's integration and cohesion agenda, which are constitutive of the contradictions and exclusions outlined above. Second, it aims to offer some reflections on how these assumptions are challenged by movements that mobilise around issues of refugee and migrant justice: the *City of Sanctuary* network and the *Strangers into Citizens* campaign respectively. The article undertakes this dual task by exploring the conception of community that informs the current integration and cohesion agenda, and by drawing attention to alternative renderings of collective engagement that are evident in *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens*. The analysis draws on a series of in-depth qualitative interviews with a total of 12 organisers and participants from Sheffield *City of Sanctuary* and *London Citizens*, which were carried out in the Spring/Summer of 2009. It also draws upon a documentary analysis of material written by organisers, as well as upon observations of meetings with participants from each of the mobilisations in question.¹

Two key assumptions about community are reflected in the contradictions and exclusions of the UK's integration and cohesion agenda. First, community is understood politically in terms of legal membership. In relation to integration and cohesion, this notion of political community is linked to the assumption that those whose status is temporary, ambiguous or undecided do not count as subjects of integration or cohesion. Such a conception is evident, for example, in the fact that integration policy is officially orientated toward refugees and immigrants rather than toward migrants or asylum seekers (see National Strategy for Refugee Integration, 2004). Second, community is understood culturally in terms of ethnic, religious or alternative forms of collective identification. In relation to integration and cohesion, this notion of the cultural community is reflected in the assumption that there exist different groups, which can be integrated within a cohesive yet differentiated whole.

¹ Thanks are extended to Louise Richards, whose support with carrying out these interviews has been invaluable. Full details of these interviews are provided at the end of this article.

This is evident, for example, in the definition of cohesion as a process that is designed ‘to ensure that different groups get on well’ (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007:9). Cohesion is conceived here as complementary to integration, which is defined as a process ‘that ensures new residents and existing residents get on together’ (Ibid.).

Indeed, these two notions of community are evident if we consider how asylum seekers are disqualified, yet also partially included, as subjects of integration or cohesion. While those with refugee status have been the main subjects of integration policies over recent years, asylum seekers have not been explicitly addressed as such. Reflecting the assumption that integration and cohesion only applies to subjects who are legal members of the political community, asylum seekers’ undecided or ambivalent status would seem to disqualify them from integration or cohesion. Nevertheless, asylum seekers have not been completely excluded, but rather have been indirectly addressed at the local level in terms of their affiliation with specific refugee community organisations (see Zetter et al, 2000). Cultural as well as legal understandings of community and membership thus remain important to the contemporary integration and cohesion agenda, with asylum seekers formally disqualified from, yet informally included within, such an approach.

While there remains work to be done in exploring the complexities of and tensions between these different notions of community as they are played out in the UK’s integration and cohesion agenda, this article offers a different focus in showing how the emphasis on community in its legal or cultural form invokes a problematic conception of integration or cohesion. Specifically, the article suggests that the UK’s approach to integration and cohesion is flawed because it overlooks enactments of solidarity in which cultural categories and legal distinctions disappear or are relatively unimportant. This is problematic, because it leads to a privileging of the collective engagements of citizens or established residents over those whose presence may be more fleeting or less definite. Demonstrating the inadequacies of such an approach with reference to the *City of Sanctuary* network and the *Strangers into Citizens* campaign, the article argues that the mobilisations in question activate a dynamic or mobile form of solidarity through which cultural affiliation and legal status is rendered insignificant. In order to develop this argument the article introduces the concept of ‘mobile solidarities’, which refers to the creation of collective political subjects through mobilisations that promote the physical movements of people as well as the multiple diversities that such movements bring about (social and economic as well as cultural and legal). The article suggests that *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* need to be considered in light of collective engagements that emerge in the context of intensified movements and diversities, and that this requires a shift of focus away from cohesion, integration and community and toward solidarity, mobility and citizenship. Specifically, it suggests that the importance of *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* lies in their ability to mobilise dynamic collective engagements through which established social hierarchies are disrupted or overturned. Such engagements might be conceptualised as a series of everyday minor-acts which fit neither a naturalistic legal frame of political community (see Rigo, forthcoming) nor an essentialistic identitarian frame (see Aradau, Huysmans and Squire, forthcoming). Rather, the minor-acts that are mobilised by *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* expose the limits of each of these conceptualisations of

community, thus challenging the assumptions and transgressing the limits of the UK integration and cohesion agenda.

Legalistic and culturalist accounts of political community

One of the main limitations of the UK's integration and cohesion agenda results from its resting on the assumption that political community is primarily legally defined. Defining political community in terms of legal status brings to bear a territorial conception of citizenship that has its roots in a tradition of natural law (Bartelson, 1995) and that invokes a conception of sovereignty based on a strong distinction between 'inside' and 'outside' (Walker, 1993). From this perspective community is largely limited to a sedentary form of membership, while political agency is primarily exercised in territorial terms by those whose legal status is beyond dispute. However, a growing body of work has challenged this notion of community over recent years (see Balibar, 2002). In particular, there is a growing body of work focusing on 'acts of citizenship' that disrupt institutionalised legalistic and culturalist conceptions of political community (see Isin, 2008, 2009). Such works open to question the centrality of sedentary membership and a territorial politics confined to those with legal status. They thus introduces alternative possibilities for understanding collective engagement and political subjectivity (see Aradau, Huysmans and Squire, 2010; McNevin, 2006; Nyers, 2003, 2006 2008; Squire, 2009a).

Despite such interventions opening up new ways for understanding collective engagements and political subjectivity, an account that is aligned with an emphasis on sedentary membership and territorial legal status would seem to prevail in debates around integration and cohesion. This reflects the supplementary role that the notion of cultural community plays in debates around integration and cohesion. A cultural conception of community is supplementary to the legalistic conception set out above but does not displace the territorial, sedentary and status-orientated account of politics outlined above. In this regard, the dynamics of movement and diversity tend to be erased from a culturalist rendering of community and cohesion. For example, while the report of the *Commission on Integration and Cohesion* quoted above has a strong emphasis on cohesion and integration as a dynamic process of interaction, the simultaneous emphasis on differentiated groups brings us back into the essentialising identitarian realm of cultural categorisation. Indeed, a similar move would seem to occur within the field of academic studies. Although there has been a shift toward the development of a more relational account of cohesion over recent years, conceptual analyses often re-affirm assumptions of ethnic and cultural difference while shifting the 'burden' of integration onto new arrivals (e.g. Ager and Strang, 2008). Contemporary debates around integration and cohesion in this regard would seem to overlook some of the important insights that have emerged in the literature on migration and belonging over recent years, specifically those approaches that bring focus attention on the multiple, intersecting and dynamic processes of identification (e.g. Erel, 2009).

An engagement with critical accounts of migration and belonging remains important in addressing the limitations of the integration and cohesion agenda, because such approaches challenge assumptions regarding the 'natural' or 'organic' division of communities by showing how cultural and ethnic categories are produced through

racialised and gendered processes of differentiation (Yuval-Davis, 1997). What is important about this critical literature for our purposes is that it highlights the dynamic and relational character of collective engagements, while at the same time challenging a culturalist account of community membership. Despite the important insights of such scholarship, however, the implications of such conceptualisations do not seem to have been fully digested in debates around integration and cohesion. This would seem in part to reflect the shortcomings of much scholarship that broadly fits within the anti-essentialist frame of reference. Analyses that focus on the fluidity of identity formation have become increasingly widespread within the field of migration studies (see Nassari, 2009). However, the tendency of many studies to focus on fluid processes of identity formation effectively limits their ability to challenge a culturalist conception of community on which contemporary debates around integration and cohesion rest. Indeed, such approaches adopt a distinctly culturalist account of community where they focus attention on the shifting identifications of members within pre-defined national or ethnic groups (e.g. Phillips and Rotter, 2009). The dynamism of such analyses is thus questionable, while their reduction of diversity to cultural 'difference' lends itself to oversight of the complex relations that multiple movements produce. Rather than addressing the tensions and complexities that are opened up by the multiplication of social, economic, cultural and legal diversities, such analyses lend themselves to an integration and cohesion agenda that is limited in scope.

That the integration and cohesion agenda remains wedded to such culturalist conceptions arguably reflects the strong influence of a social capital approach in analysing issues related to social cohesion, coupled with the scarcity of scholarship that adopts a more critical perspective toward this literature (see Coole, 2009). Robert Putnam's (2000, 2007) theory of social capital has become highly influential in relation to debates surrounding integration and cohesion over recent years, evident in the growing body of work addressing the theory that ethnic diversity reduces levels of social trust (e.g. Alesina and La Ferrara, 2002). This has been developed explicitly by analysts such as Herreros and Criado (2009), for example, who suggest that the integration of immigrants is more effective where aggregate levels of social trust are high. What is problematic about such accounts from the perspective developed in this article is that the analysis of integration or cohesion seems to assume a conception of communities as 'naturally' divided along cultural and/or ethnic lines, while immigrants are disadvantaged because they are assumed to be culturally 'different'. Regardless of the fact that some social capital analyses have challenged the theory that cultural diversity has a negative causal impact on trust, diversity on this account is problematically conceived of in terms of cultural or ethnic difference while immigration is implicitly posed as a potential threat to social trust. Such an approach is problematic on two counts. First, it is empirically limited because it does not adequately account for the significance of emerging movements such as those associated with *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens*, which are characterised by the formation of dynamic relations of solidarity in which cultural distinctions as well as legal status is extraneous. Second, such an approach is politically problematic because it potentially privileges some residents over others – namely those with legal status and/or those who assimilate within the unified communal 'whole' over those without legal status and/or who represent 'difference' that might disrupt the unified communal 'whole'.

In summary, it would seem that current analyses of cultural difference and social capital are problematic because they fail to challenge legalistic and culturalist assumptions on which the integration and cohesion agenda rests. Such an approach limits our understanding of collective engagement and constitutes established residents as the privileged subjects of integration and cohesion over those whose presence is more fleeting or less certain. As a rejoinder to this, it might be argued that the limitations of such an account of political community based on membership are acknowledged in the official focus on integration and cohesion as a dynamic process.² However, what the analysis here suggests is that a focus on presence and participation is not enough if the movements and diversities around which collective engagements occur are examined through the lens of cultural difference. Such a focus would seem to foreclose a fuller appreciation of the dynamism of contemporary solidarities while at the same time implicitly re-affirming the importance of cultural membership and legal status. This means that mobile solidarities such as those evident in *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* fall outside of debates around integration and cohesion despite their importance in understanding collective engagements and political subjectivities in a context of intensified movements and diversities. What this also means is that the movements and diversities through which *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* are constituted are often assumed to undermine the social trust that is required for community cohesion. It is in this regard that a consideration of the *City of Sanctuary* network and the *Strangers into Citizens* campaign is important in critically addressing the limitations of the UK's integration and cohesion agenda. Such mobilisations are interesting for our purposes, because they enact solidarities in a dynamic form while simultaneously challenging the privileging of established residents over those whose presence is more fleeting or less definite.

Introducing *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens*

The *City of Sanctuary* network and *Strangers into Citizens* campaign are important for debates around integration and cohesion because they allow us to see how collective engagements are dynamically constituted through a multiplicity of movements and diversities. Both *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* were launched in the mid-2000s, a period characterised by the intensification of movements and diversities. Notably, the mid-2000s were marked by high levels of migration to and from the UK (ONS, 2005). This is indicative both of the intensification of human movements as well as of the intensification of various diversities, as cities and regions undergo change through multiple migrations. In terms of immigration, the mid-2000s were noted for an increase in migration from Eastern Europe (particularly from accession states of the EU), as well as from a perceived yet unmeasured increase in unauthorised migration from outside the EU. From a UK perspective, London is the main city affected by these migrations, although increasingly the movements and diversities associated with them have a wider effect across the UK. In terms of asylum, applications significantly rose through the 1990s and early-2000s before dropping in 2003 to a similar level as was evident in the early- to mid-1990s (ICAR, 2009). The UK policy of dispersing asylum seekers from London and the South East was introduced in the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, further contributing to the

² A dynamic conception is evident in the *Commission on Integration and Cohesion*'s definition of integration and cohesion set out in the first part of this essay, for example.

intensification of movements and diversities across UK cities and regions (Boswell, 2001; Savage, 2005). The latter is particularly important in understanding the emergence of the *City of Sanctuary* network which originated in Sheffield in 2005, with this being a key city to which asylum seekers have been dispersed.

The *City of Sanctuary* network was set up with the aim of extending a positive vision of sanctuary through promoting relationships between local people and people seeking sanctuary (see Darling, 2010). While it originated in Sheffield, the movement quickly developed as a wider national network. At the time of writing a national network of local groups in 16 towns and cities throughout the UK formed part of *City of Sanctuary*, and local authorities had endorsed the initiative in Sheffield, Bradford, Oxford and Swansea.³ In 2007 Sheffield became the first UK *City of Sanctuary* with the support of Sheffield City Council and over 70 organisations. It has since been joined by Swansea as an official City of Sanctuary to date, although cities such as Bradford and Coventry were close to qualification at the time of writing (autumn 2010). The formation of a city or town as a *City of Sanctuary* is based on the commitment of member organisations and groups, as well as on support from local politicians and the active participation of refugees and refugee groups.⁴ The overarching aims and objectives of *City of Sanctuary* are ‘to build a culture of hospitality for people seeking sanctuary in the UK’ and to ‘influence policy-makers and public attitudes throughout the country’.⁵ While the network does disseminate information about campaigns that support its overarching aims and objectives, *City of Sanctuary* explicitly avoids political lobbying or campaigning in favour of a more subtle process of transforming culture. This effectively consists of a dispersed, ‘bottom-up’ approach to political change, which is based on fostering a culture of hospitality and sanctuary at a local level through coalition building and through the creation of opportunities for building personal relationships between local people and those seeking sanctuary (Barnett and Bhogal, 2009: 83).

As a national campaign calling for the one-off regularisation of irregular migrants, *Strangers into Citizens* undertakes more traditional lobbying activities such as petitioning and demonstrating than *City of Sanctuary*. Launched in the autumn of 2006 by the *London Citizens* branch of the national *Citizens Organising Foundation*, the campaign has been endorsed by the Liberal Democrat Party as well as by the London Mayor, Boris Johnson. The main aim of the campaign is to create a ‘pathway to citizenship’ for irregular migrants who have resided in the UK for 4 years or more. It calls for such individuals to be granted 2 years ‘leave to remain’, during which time they are able to work legally and ‘demonstrate their contribution to UK economy and society’. The campaign advocates that such individuals should be considered for permanent leave to remain at the end of this period, subject to their ‘knowledge of

³ The number of cities and towns with City of Sanctuary groups has grown very quickly since 2007, and it is likely that this figure is out of date at the time of printing. For further information, please see www.cityofsanctuary.org.

⁴ In order to qualify ‘officially’ as a *City of Sanctuary*, a city or town has to achieve the four following goals: (1) ‘Resolutions of support from a significant and representative proportion of local groups and organisations’; (2) ‘The support and involvement of local refugee communities, and refugee representation on the local City of Sanctuary working group’; (3) ‘A resolution of support from the City Council (or other Local Authority)’; (4) ‘A strategy, agreed by the main supporting organisations, for how the city is to continue working towards greater inclusion of refugees and people seeking sanctuary’ (Barnett and Bhogal, 2009: 79).

⁵ Information accessed at www.cityofsanctuary.org on 1 August 2009.

English and employer and community references'.⁶ *Strangers into Citizens* clearly differs from *City of Sanctuary* because it is a campaign rather than a network or movement. Nevertheless, it is organised by the *London Citizens* branch of the *Citizens Organising Foundation*, which is a broader coalition based on an alliance of civic organisations that aims to 'create a network of competent, informed and organised citizens who act responsibly in the public life of their communities and are able to influence, for the common good, decisions that impact on their communities'.⁷ *Strangers into Citizens* is thus a campaign that emerges out of broad-based movement which brings together various local 'civil society' organisations such as religious congregations, union branches, schools, and local associations.

What is interesting about *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* from the perspective developed in this article is that each emerges out of dynamic engagements between newly arriving migrants or refugees and more established residents, while also contributing toward the formation of solidarities that cut across such distinctions. For example, the *Strangers into Citizens* campaign arises out of 2001 *London Living Wage* campaign (also organised by *London Citizens*), which brings together migrants and non-migrants of various backgrounds and positions to challenge the low wages of local workers. In this regard, the *Strangers into Citizens* campaign mobilises dynamic collective engagements through which groups and individuals of various cultural backgrounds and social, economic or legal positions come together to challenge the denial of rights to migrants without legal status (see Squire, 2009b). Nevertheless, how effectively *Strangers into Citizens* mobilises such dynamic engagements can be questioned. As a campaign run by *London Citizens*, *Strangers into Citizens* would at times seem to function more as a centrally-organised struggle to generate mobile solidarities than it does effectively mobilise already-existing collective engagements of a dynamic form. This is evident, for example, in the acknowledgement that some constituents of *London Citizens* required persuading that the campaign was worth signing up to (Interview with AI and LZP, Interview with JC). In this regard, *City of Sanctuary* is perhaps more pertinent to an analysis of the constitution of mobile solidarities than *Strangers into Citizens*.⁸

Constituting mobile solidarities

The activities around which the *City of Sanctuary* network is organised are crucial in terms of our focus on mobile solidarities, because they allow us to see how the network emerges out of (as well as contributing toward the formation of) dynamic collective engagements in which established distinctions between new arrivals and established residents become irrelevant. An example in this regard is the Terminus Initiative, which forms a key activity in the Sheffield movement and which was initiated by several Sheffield churches that support the *City of Sanctuary* network (Interview with JA and A; Barnett and Bhogal, 2009).⁹ One of the Terminus Initiative

⁶ Information accessed from www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk/the-campaign on 15 August 2009.

⁷ Information accessed from www.cof.org.uk on 15 August 2009.

⁸ Thanks are extended to Tom Viita here, whose insightful comments have added much to my understanding of the differences between the two cases under investigation.

⁹ It is important to note that the Terminus Initiative was not strictly speaking organised by *City of Sanctuary*, but rather it forms one initiative around which *City of Sanctuary* organises its mobilisation locally.

activities is a café in the Low Edges region of the city, which was set up in part a response to the conditions of asylum seekers within the area and which has run alongside a women's conversation club and a voucher exchange drop-in. There are two ways in which this café is described by interviewees. On the one hand, it is described as emerging out of, and further advancing, engagements and solidarities between established residents and new arrivals with the aim of supporting asylum seekers and refugees. As a church minister involved with Terminus says: 'we [church members] were doing a lot of things with people in the community. Issues arose out of trying to meet people's needs and support them. And we'd become very, very much – we'd become more aware of asylum seekers and refugees in particular' (Interview with JA and A). On the other hand, the café is described as providing an opportunity for asylum seekers to carry out voluntary work in a context whereby they are denied the right to work during the processing of their claim. As one of the founders of the *City of Sanctuary* network suggests: 'the idea we have here is of a café – a sanctuary café, because a lot of those people who are still awaiting status or have been refused it, you know, they can't actually work, [but] they can do some voluntary activities, gain some voluntary activity' (Interview with IB). The Terminus café in this regard can be seen as an activity that emerges out of dynamic collective engagements. Critically, the café also functions as a site for everyday minor-acts that challenge institutionalised hierarchies of inclusion/exclusion, specifically those that are manifest in policies that deny asylum seekers the right to work.

What is perhaps most striking about the Terminus café is that the collective engagements that the initiative fosters would seem to blur the boundaries between 'guest' and 'host' (or 'supporter' and 'recipient'); boundaries which are strongly associated with a territorial conception of citizenship and political community. It is important to bear in mind here the quote from the church minister interviewed above, which would seem in part to paint a picture of established community members supporting new arrivals. Nevertheless, while there clearly are some important differences in the personal and social circumstances of many asylum seekers and refugees that condition their specific support needs, an analysis of the Terminus café suggests that the mobile solidarities that the initiative invokes effectively invert the relation between guest and host, albeit momentarily or in a partial sense. For example, one asylum seeker who has been involved with the initiative describes her experience of the Terminus café as follows: "we [volunteers] are cooking a load of food from other countries together, and then one day they invited immigration and the police to interview. And me, I talk, they eat also my food, [my] cooking - they enjoy[ed it]" (Interview with A). In this example asylum seekers and refugees not only 'host' relatively 'established' residents and workers as their 'guests', but so also do they momentarily or partially disrupt established social hierarchies through their 'hosting' of police and local immigration officers. While there are clearly limitations both in terms of the wider effects and potential endurance of such disruptive minor-acts, we can nevertheless see here that distinctions between established residents or community members and those with a fleeting or uncertain presence become blurred through such engagements.

Indeed, it would seem that many of the everyday activities around which the *City of Sanctuary* network is organised do much more than simply promote a culture of hospitality. In effect, they trouble assumptions about who does and who does not have the right to be present in the city, and in so doing undermine the territorial hierarchies

of inclusion/exclusion on which a frame of hospitality rests.¹⁰ The conversation clubs that are organised across Sheffield are a good case in point here. Conversations clubs were originally set up to provide opportunities for new arrivals to practice their English, yet are simultaneously constituted as spaces of collective engagement in which people of various cultural or ethnic backgrounds, of various legal statuses, and of various social and economic positions have the opportunity to engage with one another (Interview with JA and A; Interview with RS). As one asylum seeker describes, people at the conversation clubs come from various backgrounds: ‘from Iraq, Somalia, Ethiopia, the Ivory Coast – we are all mixed’ (Interview with OW). In this context, who counts as a ‘local’ is by no means clear-cut, as is evident in the following statement made by one of the founders of *City of Sanctuary*: ‘conversation clubs are a kind of drop-in centre idea, basically, where local people practise their English. There’s several of those all around the city. There’s women only ones, there’s mixed ones – so because of the conversation classes there’s quite a big network of local people who form relationships with asylum seekers’ (Interview with CB). Note that local people are described here both as practising their English and as forming relationships with asylum seekers, indicative of the blurring of distinctions between established/fleeting residents. Conversation clubs in this regard can be seen as highly dynamic social spaces through which the intensified movements and diversities that cut across the city are condensed. Legal status, cultural background, and social/economic position do not serve as a limit to involvement in such clubs, and in this regard participation through presence rather than through status or membership becomes increasingly important.

Participation through presence remains important in an informal sense when it comes to engaging as part of *City of Sanctuary* or *Strangers into Citizens*, but is not the only form of participation evident in each of the mobilisations. Formal mechanisms of participation can be enacted within *City of Sanctuary* in one of two ways. First, participation can be enacted through affiliation with or membership of an organisation that has publicly expressed support for the movement. Participation in this sense primarily occurs through organisational activities (e.g. befriending and advocacy work, inviting asylum-seekers to hold positions of responsibility, creating volunteering placements, providing emergency accommodation).¹¹ *London Citizens* also supports participation through organisational membership, although in the latter case participation includes activities such as voting collectively on campaign resolutions, signing petitions or attending rallies and demonstrations. Alongside this, both *City of Sanctuary* and *London Citizens* provide opportunities for individuals to play a more active role in shaping the mobilisation itself. The differences between each mobilisation are more visible when we look at this second set of formal participation mechanisms, however, with *City of Sanctuary* showing evidence of a much more networked-form of organisation than that associated with *Strangers into Citizens*. *London Citizens* has a highly centralised approach that is based on a system of ‘community leaders’, and at times would seem to risk working from the top-down as much as from the centre-out. Thus, community leaders are identified by local organisers in order to ‘feed-up’ ideas for campaigns as they relate to the needs of community members and in order to ‘feed-down’ ideas about the importance of

¹⁰ While there have been a series of more critical Derridean-inspired accounts of hospitality that strive to challenge territorial hierarchies (e.g. Doty, 2006), the focus on ‘guest’ and ‘host’ relations within such an approach is one that remains problematic from the perspective developed in this article.

¹¹ Information accessed at www.cityofsanctuary.org on 12 January 2010.

supporting any given campaign (Interview with AI and LZF, Interview with JP). In contrast, *City of Sanctuary* works with a more traditional organisational structure based on a management committee and open membership, although this varies according to the specific city in question.¹²

It is important to note that organisational-based and mobilisation-orientated activities are often not limited to members alone, and that there are also a series of less formal avenues for participation through activities which are open to all. For this reason, it is important to take the informal dimensions of participation seriously. An important success for *Strangers into Citizens*, for example, is its ability to mobilise a wide range of groups and individuals around the issue of regularisation through large-scale demonstrations (Interview with AI and LZF). Similarly, *City of Sanctuary* includes a broad spectrum of cultural or social activities that are open to anybody who is able and willing to participate at a given time. Examples in this regard include organising/attending a cultural event, facilitating/participating in language exchanges, organising/attending countryside walks.¹³ Indeed, the very success of many of the more formal organisational activities listed above effectively entails the involvement of those who are not formal members of *City of Sanctuary*. After all, activities such as befriending and volunteering are by definition social activities that involve those not directly affiliated with *City of Sanctuary* itself. Despite participation being formally organised around membership in each of the mobilisations in question, it is thus important that we take seriously the broader and more informal forms of participation that are central to the activities around which *City of Sanctuary* and *London Citizens* are organised (see Squire, 2009b).

Informal forms of participation are particularly important to bear in mind given the additional pressures that leave some unable or unwilling to participate in the mobilisations in a more formal sense. For example, asylum seekers, refugees and irregular migrants are often keen to avoid activities that may draw attention to their whereabouts, status and/or activities. In particular, migrants who have experienced political oppression or violence often have compelling reasons that condition their desire to avoid explicitly political activities. Moreover, asylum seekers, refugees and irregular migrants face significant challenges in terms of their everyday survival, which limits or conditions their ability to participate in mobilisations such as *City of Sanctuary* or *London Citizens*. As one of the founders of *City of Sanctuary* suggests: ‘They don’t have that luxury, their priorities [are to] actually save themselves, [they are] doing all they can, and they’re all embroiled in complicated processes which take a lot of their time and energy and effort’ (Interview with IB). In addition, length of residency and depth or breadth of connections with people locally has an impact on an individual’s ability to participate in the activities around which *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* are organised. The deportation or dispersal of migrants and asylum seekers is a particular limitation that neither *City of Sanctuary* nor *Strangers into Citizens* effectively address in order to facilitate the on-going participation of those no longer located within the area. Presence in this regard is central to formal and informal participation in such mobilisations, while informal participation is critical to the involvement of those whose presence in the city is more fleeting or less certain.

¹² Information accessed at www.cityofsanctuary.org on 12 January 2010.

¹³ Information accessed at www.cityofsanctuary.org on 12 January 2010.

Despite the limitations of mobilisations that are constituted through an informal form of participation through presence, the activities around which *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* are organised effectively trouble conceptions of community that are based on membership or status because they facilitate the enactment of solidarities that cut across such distinctions. As we have seen, activities based on participation through presence often render legal status and cultural background insignificant while providing opportunities for minor-acts that disrupted established hierarchies. This is clearly not to say that legalistic or cultural conceptions of community are finally transcended by *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens*, nor is it to say that social hierarchies are overturned once and for all. Rather, it is to say that such mobilisations entail a form of participation through presence which facilitate the formation of dynamic or mobile solidarities and which thus trouble the legalistic and culturalist distinctions that inform the UK integration and cohesion agenda. As such, these mobilisations demand an alternative analytical framework than one which is orientated toward the categories of cohesion, integration and community. Indeed, an approach centred on cohesion, integration and community tends toward a focus on legal status and cultural affiliation, and in this respect overlooks the dynamics of collective engagement that are central to an understanding of *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* as mobilisations through which mobile solidarities are constituted. In this regard an alternative analytical framework is required to address the importance of such mobilisations to questions of collective engagement in a context of intensified movements and diversities. It is here that the article turns to the categories of solidarity, mobility and citizenship.

Analysing mobile solidarities

The formation of mobile solidarities that cut across legal and cultural categorisations would seem to be mirrored in the current multiplication of legal and cultural categorisations, both of which can be interpreted as emerging in a context marked by the intensification of movements and diversities. For example, the proliferation of more ambiguous legal statuses such as dual national or person with temporary leave to remain can in part be understood as emerging where increasing movements of people render clear-cut legal categories difficult to maintain.¹⁴ The intensification of human movements in this regard is inseparable from the multiplication of legal and cultural diversities. Yet the analysis in this paper suggests that diversities cannot be reduced to cultural difference or divergent legal status, but need to be approached more broadly in terms of a variety of diversities – social and economic, as well as legal and cultural. These distinctive forms of diversity would seem to be multiplied in complex ways where the movements of people are intensified, as we will see below. What an analysis of mobile solidarities brings to the table in this context is an appreciation of the different possibilities that are opened up by the multiplication of movements and diversities. As well as opening up possibilities for mistrust and hostility, such movements and diversities also open up possibilities for the dynamic formation of mobile solidarities that cut across institutionalised hierarchies of inclusion/exclusion.

¹⁴ This is not to overlook the relevance of political factors in conditioning such shifts, as the work of Roger Zetter (2007) on the multiplication of protection statuses importantly points out.

A focus on solidarity rather than on cohesion or integration is critical in developing an understanding of how mobilisations such as *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* mobilise the dynamism of human movements and diversities. Solidarity is important for several reasons. First, as a socio-political concept, an emphasis on solidarity allows for an exploration of the ways in which social relations are constituted politically through processes of mobilisation or collective action. This is evident in Pierre Rosanvallon's (2000) conceptualisation of solidarity in terms of a 'community of sentiment' that is based on involvement. Such a focus differs in important ways from the focus on trust in the social capital literature, with the latter developing a psycho-social account of individualised or collective reactions to social change rather than examining how changing social conditions are politically navigated. Second, as a relational concept that by definition focuses attention on struggles of a collective and political form, an analytics of solidarity demands that we are sensitive to the tensions that are constitutive of any social formation. Such an approach does not deny the tensions that are central to any collective endeavour or social formation, nor does it entail a drive toward the elimination or assimilation of such tensions. In contrast, an analytical framework which takes cohesion or integration as its starting point would seem to either overlook such tensions in favour of the preservation of cultural 'difference', or struggle to do away with such tensions based on the assumption that they will inevitably turn to hostility (see Squire, 2005).

To focus attention on *mobile* solidarities is to be aware of the potentiality for hostilities without assuming hostility as a starting point. It is also to shift attention away from an ideal of unification toward the dynamics of disagreement and negotiation, while maintaining sensitivity to disjuncture (see Rancière, 1999). In contrast to Rosanvallon's definition of solidarity as forming a 'community of sentiment', an analysis of mobile solidarities thus focuses attention on those dynamics that condition the inevitable failure of any social formation to become a community *qua* communion (see Nancy, 1991). While movements of people and diversities of various kinds certainly seem to be intensified at the current juncture, an analytics that takes mobility seriously works from the assumption that collective engagement by definition entails movements and diversities as well as solidarities and/or hostilities. Indeed, these moments of dynamism and fixity remain in a relation of continuous tension from the perspective developed here (see also Aradau, Huysmans and Squire, forthcoming). In other words, mobility understood in terms of multiple movements and diversities is neither conceived of in a purely historical sense as an emergent condition nor in a purely theoretical sense as antithetical to fixity, but rather is examined as a constitutive dimension of social and political life. Mobility may be a category of particular significance at the current juncture where the dynamics of movements and diversities are intensified, but this is not to say that it has ever been a category of insignificance.

Mobility serves as a limit concept to community where the latter is conceived of as a unified whole. If we take seriously the analysis of *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* that has been developed here, then it would seem that we need to shift attention away from the relatively static category of community toward the more dynamic category of citizenship. This shift of focus should neither be interpreted as an attempt to transcend or evade the drive toward a cohesive social formation nor as a move denying the importance of trust or the potential for hostility in collective engagements. Rather, the move toward an analytics of citizenship might be

interpreted a shift that aims to bring to the fore those collective engagements that stand in tension with the drive toward a unified community and that challenge the established hierarchies of inclusion/exclusion through which the struggle to maintain a utopia of the unified whole ensues. An analysis that takes citizenship rather than community as a starting point is critical in this regard, because it allows us to shift away from an approach that examines changes to an already-established communal formation toward an approach that examines acts through which citizenship is created 'anew' (see Isin, 2008, 2009).

Rather than taking the stability of a communal whole as a starting point and analysing intensified movements and diversities as disruptive of this, an analysis of acts of citizenship reminds us that such disruptions are a necessary feature of any social formation. An emphasis on acts of citizenship also shifts from the social to the political level without introducing a divide between the two, allowing us to follow the move from a social analysis of collective engagements to a political analysis of collective mobilisations. Specifically, a focus on the way in which social activities around which *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* are organised create sites for minor-acts in which asylum seekers and irregular migrants claim a rightful presence within the city is important, because it opens up the scope for a political analysis that challenges processes of exclusion or marginalisation (see Lefebvre, 1996).¹⁵ Rather than simply analysing asylum seekers and irregular migrants as subjects who are excluded from the remit of integration and cohesion policies, such an approach allows us to examine the way in which they act as political agents who have a social presence. Citizenship in this regard is not approached in terms of communal rights and obligations that arise from a social contract between members of a given community, but rather it is approached in relation to the on-going formation of political subjects and social formations (see Isin, 2008, 2009).

The critical importance of an analytics of solidarity, mobility and citizenship is evident if we consider the case of an asylum seeker who was interviewed as a participant of *City of Sanctuary*. What is striking about this particular example is that the asylum seeker in question works as a radio broadcaster in Sheffield and in this capacity described a situation in which he interviewed the local Mayor on the issue of asylum on a local radio show (Interview with OW). Already, we can see how the movement of this individual into the city invokes a more complex set of diversities than a reductive account of cultural difference would suggest. Various diversities become important here, with the individual in question simultaneously occupying both a position of legal, social and economic marginalisation (as asylum seeker) as well as a position of social status (as broadcaster). As analysts have frequently pointed out, many asylum seekers and refugees within the UK are highly educated and come from a position of social status and often economic prosperity. In this regard, even a single individual can embody a series of diversities that run in tension with one another. What an analysis of citizenship acts, mobility and solidarity brings to the fore here is the way in which the very act of interviewing the mayor by this individual entails a challenge to social hierarchies and relations of authority. The individual in question can be seen as challenging the assumption that his status as asylum seeker relegates him to a position of one who is denied the right to work and political voice,

¹⁵ The importance of 'rightful presence' comes out of my discussions with Jonathan Darling, who bought my attention to this term.

and thus as mobilising his social presence in terms that allow him to implicitly claim rightful presence within the city. Perhaps most fascinating here is the way in which the interviewee describes his individual case as opening up the potential for solidarity as well as hostility. Thus, he describes: ‘one of my friends, who was working here voluntarily [at the Radio Station] ...he never knew I was an asylum seeker and he was always against them. But the day I tell him about ourselves, he was in tears’ (Interview with Broadcaster from *City of Sanctuary*: 15). The story that this interviewee tells us is one that points not only to the potential for hostilities in a context of intensified movements and diversities. So also does it point to the potential for the formation of solidarities in a context where intensified movements and diversities are multiplied in ways that are complex and often unexpected.

From community cohesion to mobile solidarities

This article has developed an analysis of *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* based on the categories of solidarity, mobility and citizenship. Such an analysis is critical, it has been argued, if the importance of the mobilisations in relation to debates around integration and cohesion are to be adequately understood. The UK integration and cohesion agenda remains caught within a frame of cohesion, integration and community. As such, it works on the assumption of ‘natural’ distinctions, which are associated with legalistic and culturalist conceptions of community and which invoke sedentary and territorial notions of membership and status. Such a frame is unable to address *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens*, which defy the very distinctions on which such an approach is based. Indeed, *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* do not only provide a challenge to legal distinctions between citizens and non-citizens and to cultural distinctions between different ‘community groups’, but so also do they provide a clear challenge to simplistic accounts of cultural diversity as having a negative impact on social trust. The very emergence of these mobilisations questions the simplistic assumption that hostility towards ‘different’ people is an inevitable outcome of intensified movements and diversities, because each is founded to a greater or lesser extent on collective engagements that promote such movements and diversities. Moreover, distinctions between established residents and new arrivals are blurred through the activities around which these mobilisations are organised, while distinctions of legal and cultural forms become extraneous to their activities. In this regard the assumption of hostility is challenged on various levels. What is most striking about *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* from the perspective developed here, however, is that the activities around which the mobilisations are organised create sites for what we have called minor-acts of citizenship, through which established social hierarchies are momentarily or partially disrupted and/or overturned. While the intensification of movements and diversities serves as an important condition under which these minor-acts of citizenship emerge, it is in the mobilisation of dynamic collective engagements that minor-acts of citizenship are constituted as mobile acts of solidarity. A form of participation through presence is critical to the development of these minor-acts and mobile solidarities. Whether or not *City of Sanctuary* and *Strangers into Citizens* can extend beyond the limitations of physical or social presence, however, remains to be seen.

Bibliography

- Ager, A. and Strang, A. (2008) 'Understanding integration: A conceptual framework', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21 (2): 166-191.
- Alesina, A. and La Ferrara, E. (2002) 'Who trust others?' *Journal of Public Economics*, 85 (2), 207-34.
- Aradau, C., Huysmans, H. and Squire, V. (forthcoming) 'Acts of European Citizenship: A Political Sociology of Mobility', *Journal of Common Market Studies* (accepted for publication).
- Balibar, E. (2002) *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Barnett, C. and Bhogal, I. (2009) *Becoming a City of Sanctuary: A Practical Handbook with Inspiring Examples*. Ripon: Plug and Tap.
- Bartelson, J. (1995) *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Boswell, C. (2001) *Spreading the Costs of Asylum Seekers: A critical assessment of dispersal policies in Germany and the UK* (London: Anglo-German Foundation).
- Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) *Shared Futures*. Wetherby: Crown Copyright.
- Coole, D. (2009) 'Repairing civil society and experimenting with power: A genealogy of social capital', *Political Studies*, 57 (2): 374-396.
- Darling, J. (2010) 'A City of Sanctuary: Re-imagining urban responsibilities', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (forthcoming).
- Doty, R. L. (2006) 'Fronteras compasivas and the ethics of unconditional responsibility' *Millennium*, 35: 53-74.
- Erel, U. (2009) *Migrant Women Transforming Citizenship*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Gibney, M. (2004) *The Ethics and Politics of Asylum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harris, N. (2002) *Thinking the Unthinkable*. London: IB Taurus.
- Herreros, F. and Criado, H. (2009) 'Social trust, social capital and Perceptions of immigration' *Political Studies*, 57 (2): 337-355.
- ICAR (2009) *ICAR statistics paper 1: Key statistics about asylum seeker applications in the UK (February 2009 update)* <http://www.icar.org.uk/download.php?id=515> accessed on 8.1.10.
- Isin, E. (2008) 'Theorising acts of citizenship' in E. Isin and G. Nielsen *Acts of Citizenship*. London: Zed Books, pp. 15-43.

- Isin, E. (2009) 'Citizenship in flux: The figure of the activist citizen', *Subjectivity* 29, 367-388.
- Isin, E. and Nielsen, G. (2008) *Acts of Citizenship*. London: Zed Books.
- Lefebvre, H. (1996) *Writings on cities* (trans. and ed. E. Kofman and E. Lebas). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lewis, G. and Neal, S. (2005) 'Contemporary political contexts, changing terrains and revisited discourses' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28 (3), 423-444.
- McNevin, A. (2006) 'Political belonging in a neo-liberal era: The struggle of the *sans papiers*' *Citizenship Studies* 10(2), 135-151.
- Morris, L. (2002) *Managing migration: Civic stratification and migrants rights*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Nancy, J.L. (1991) *The inoperative community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Nassari, J. (2009) 'Refugees and forced migrants at a crossroads: Forced migration in a changing road', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 22 (1): 1-10.
- Nyers, P. (2003) 'Abject cosmopolitanism: The politics of protection in the anti-deportation movement' *Third World Quarterly* 24(6), 1069-1093.
- Nyers, P. (2006) 'Taking rights, mediating wrongs: Disagreements over the political agency of non-status refugees', in: J. Huysmans, A. Dobson and R. Prokhovnik, (eds.) *The politics of Protection: Sites of Insecurity and Political Agency*. London: Routledge, pp. 48-67.
- Nyers, P. (2008) 'No one is illegal between city and nation' in E. Isin and G. Nielsen *Acts of Citizenship*. London: Zed Books, pp. 160-181.
- ONS (Office for National Statistics), 2005
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1311> accessed on 8.1.10.
- Phillips, J. and R. Potter (2009) 'Questions of Friendship and Degrees of Transnationality among Second-Generation Return Migrants to Barbados.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35(4): 669-688.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000) *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Touchstone.
- Putnam, R. D. (2007) 'E Pluribus Unam: Diversity and Community in the Twenty First Century: The 2006 John Skytte Prize', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30 (2): 137-74.
- Rancière, J. (1999) *Dis-agreement*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Rosanvallon, P. (2000) *The New Social Question: Rethinking the Welfare State* (trans. Barbara Harshav), Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rigo, E. (forthcoming) 'Citizens despite borders' in V. Squire (ed.) *Borderzones of Mobility, Security and Citizenship: Contesting the irregularisation of migration*. London: Routledge.

Sales, R. (2002) 'The deserving and the undeserving: Refugees, asylum seekers and welfare in Britain' *Critical Social Policy* 22(1), 456-478.

Sales, R. (2005) 'Secure borders, safe haven: A contradiction in terms?' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28 (3), 445-462.

Sales, R. (2007) *Understanding Immigration and Refugee Policy: Contradictions and Continuities*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Savage, S. J. (2005) 'The Efficacy and Justifiability of Policies to Disperse Asylum Seekers: A Case Study of Dispersal under the UK's Immigration and Asylum Act of 1999', in A. Bolesta (Ed.) *Refugee Crises and International Responses: Towards Permanent Solutions?* Warsaw: Leon Kozminski Academy of Entrepreneurship and Management, pp. 217-246

Squire, V. (2005) "'Integration with diversity in modern Britain": New Labour on nationality, immigration and asylum' *Journal of Political Ideologies* 10(1), 51-74.

Squire, V. (2009a) *The Exclusionary Politics of Asylum*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Squire, V. (2009b) *Mobile Solidarities: The City of Sanctuary movement and the Strangers into Citizens campaign*, report accessible at <http://www.open.ac.uk/ccig/news/mobile-solidarities-the-city-of-sanctuary-movement-and-the-strangers-into-citizens-campaign>

Walker, R. (1993) *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yuval-Davis, N. (1997) *Gender and Nation*. London: Sage.

Zetter, R. and Pearl, R. (2000) 'The minority within the minority: Refugee community-based organizations in the UK and the impact of restrictionism on asylum seekers', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26 (4), 675-697.

Zetter, R. (2007) 'More labels, fewer refugees: Remaking the refugee label in an era of globalisation' *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20(2), 172-192.

Interview data

Interview with CB: National Co-ordinator of *City of Sanctuary*.

Interview with IB: Co-founder of *City of Sanctuary*.

Interview with RS: Chair of Assist and participant of *City of Sanctuary*.

Interview with OW: Broadcaster, asylum seeker and participant of *City of Sanctuary*.

Interview with JA and A: Local minister, co-organiser of the Terminus Initiative, and participant of *City of Sanctuary* and with A, an asylum seeker who is a participant of the Terminus Initiative café.

Interview with AI and LZP: Policy and press director & policy and communications director of *Strangers into Citizens*.

Interview with JP: Local organiser with *Strangers into Citizens* (South London Citizens).

Interview with JC: Local organiser with *Strangers into Citizens* (West London Citizens).

Interview with CF: Local community leader with *Strangers into Citizens*, school chaplain.

Interview with NN: Local community leader with *Strangers into Citizens*, vicar and asylum seeker.