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Humanitarian Capture, Solidarity's Excess: Affect, Experience, and the Mobile Commons in Migrant Solidarity

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Abstract: This article focuses on the relation of affect and the mobile commons by drawing on the case of migrant solidarity in the Spanish state during the so-called "refugee crisis". I begin by portraying the context of emergence of migrant solidarity in Catalonia and its relation to the "humanitarian affective governmentality" (HAG) of both migrants and their supporters—a regime that redirects affects in collective organising to reinforce European borders. Despite these attempts of co-option, however, I argue that migrant solidarity may exceed the capture from HAG. Excess refers, in a first instance, to the role of affects in the social production of experience; and in a second instance, to how collective organising feeds the virtuality that freedom of movement is still possible. I thus argue for the consideration of affects, understood as that emerging in the encounters between bodies, as part of the mobile commons.

Resumen: Este artículo se centra en la relación de los afectos con los *mobile commons* a partir del caso de la solidaridad con las personas migrantes en el Estado español durante la llamada "crisis de los refugiados". En un primer momento, el texto describe los intentos de gobernanza de estos movimientos a partir de la idea de "gubernamentalidad humanitaria de los afectos" (HAG), un régimen de poder que busca redirigir los afectos que están en la base de la socialidad de estos movimientos solidarios para reforzar las fronteras europeas. A pesar de estos intentos de control, sin embargo, en el artículo argumento que los movimientos solidarios son capaces de exceder su captura por parte de la HAG. Desarrollo así la idea de "exceso" en referencia al rol de los afectos en la producción social de la experiencia. A su vez, el "exceso" a la HAG se encuentra también en cómo estas acciones colectivas cultivan la virtualidad de que la libertad de movimiento es aún posible. Por ello, el artículo apuesta por la inclusión de los afectos, entendidos como aquello que emerge en el encuentro entre diferentes cuerpos, como parte de los *mobile commons*.

Keywords: migrant solidarity, affect, experience, refugee crisis, mobile commons

The tragic loss of life in the Mediterranean has shocked all Europeans. Our citizens expect Member States and European institutions to act to prevent this tragedy from continuing unabated … That is why the Commission today proposes an agenda which reflects our common values and *provides an answer to our citizens' worries* about unacceptable human suffering on the one hand and inadequate application of our agreed common asylum rules on the other hand. The measures we propose will help manage

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> migration better and thus *respond to the justified expectations of citizens*. (Vice-President Frans Timmermans, cited in European Commission 2015a, emphasis added)

Introduction

In the context of increasing militarisation and enforcement of the European border regime, struggles for the freedom of movement have proliferated across and along the physical borders of the region (Ataç et al. 2016; Stierl 2019). Literature covering these forms of political struggle has gravitated around two main branches of thought. On the one hand, the *acts of citizenship* perspective (AoC) looks at how migrants enact forms of participation by collectively organising in arrival societies (Isin and Turner 2007). On the other hand, the *autonomy of migration* perspective (AoM) underlines the ways in which migrants drive social change and render borders malleable not by addressing the state; but, rather, by constantly subverting and escaping the control the state enforces over them (Mezzadra 2012; Papadopoulos et al. 2008). AoM foregrounds organisational practices of mobile populations and their supporters that aim at facilitating freedom of movement. Such processes, which facilitate freedom of movement, have been described as the "mobile commons" (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). The mobile commons comprise the material and immaterial resources that are used by migrants to assert their freedom of movement. The term refers to the breadth of knowledge, practices and relations of care amongst people on the move, as well as between them, their environment, and their supporters. Commoning is about the practices of those implicated in actively caring for shared worlds (Papadopoulos 2018); in this sense, the mobile commons exist only as long as they are used by people in movement. As an organisational practice, mobile commons can constitute new ways of relating, delimiting new boundaries that go beyond the regimes of citizenship (Dadusc et al. 2019). Commoning is thus a process which is ineluctably linked to the constitution of specific socialities and ways of relating. And yet, little attention has been paid to the role of affects in the creation, maintenance, and regeneration of mobile commons. This paper explores some examples of these emerging socialities in the context of the solidarity movements in the so-called "refugee crisis". It argues that mobile commons are grounded in the circulation of affect and its role in the construction of collective forms of experience.

In the words that form the epigraph of this paper, Frans Timmermans, Vice-President of the European Commission in 2015, justifies the then newly approved European Agenda on Migration on the urgent concern of citizens towards the situation that was unfolding in the Mediterranean Sea. Beyond the importance of this statement as a rhetorical element, his words point to the imbrication of affects in the governance of both migrants and European citizens in the context of the declaration of a "refugee crisis". How, then, can we conceive the affects that constitute collective organising as feeding the mobile commons when they are co-opted by states and used in containing, controlling and interrupting freedom of movement? I argue they do so in two ways. In a first instance, the diverse

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communities of justice (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013) that emerge in this context are rooted in the sociality of affect and the social production of experience. In a second interrelated instance, the material engagements of these new communities of justice may contribute to nurture the "affective infrastructures" of the mobile commons, where the affective, in this case, refers to the cultivation of a virtuality that states that freedom of movement is still possible.

In order to unpack this mostly theoretical article, I rely on different kinds of empirical data gathered during doctoral research between 2015 and 2017. I convey a series of scenes of migrant solidarity that range from mainstream civil society initiatives to anarchist, noborder organising. On the one hand, I am informed by my engagement as an activist in these different groups in Barcelona and other transnational spaces, such as activist camps or gatherings across Europe. On the other hand, I draw on the compilation of a set of Narrative Productions (NP) produced in collaboration with various groups of activists, which deal with the emergence of various forms of migrant solidarity (for more on the methodology, see Balasch and Montenegro 2003). These were carried out in the context of the mainstream media campaign "Casa Nostra, Casa Vostra" ("Our House, Your House"; CNCV hereafter) in Catalonia during 2016 and 2017. I complement these two sources of empirical data with video transcripts, social media excerpts, and public statements found online.

The article proceeds as follows. In the first section I describe the context in which migrant solidarity becomes articulated in Barcelona and Spain in response to the EU's declaration of a "refugee crisis". In the second section, I conceptualise affects in "migrant solidarity" movements as part of a regime of control and neutralisation of their ability to disrupt European borders. The "humanitarian affective governmentality" of the refugee crisis seeks to channel affects in migrant solidarity to enforce borders. In the third section, I propose that although examples of solidarity movements may be in some instances complicit with border enforcement, they nevertheless contribute to the mobile commons by exceeding the capture of humanitarian governmentality. To do so, I convey the idea of the "excess" in solidarity by describing the role of affects in casting collective experience, thus feeding the mobile commons. In the final section, I relate these material collective engagements that feed the mobile commons to the cultivation of virtualities, to which I refer as the "affective infrastructures" of freedom of movement.

Spaces of Migrant Solidarity

The case of migrant solidarity after 2015 in the Spanish state is particular. Geographically, the Iberian Peninsula remained far from the main migratory routes that were used from 2015 to 2017, with significantly fewer arrivals of people compared to the central and eastern Mediterranean (CEAR 2017). The declared "refugee crisis" was situated physically and symbolically far away from the territory, located in the distant images of arrival to the Greek shores that could be seen on the media. Despite this perceived distance, during that time, public opinion polls pointed that a wide majority of the population remained in favour of "welcoming refugees" (Amnesty International 2016). Several institutional

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declarations were made by city representatives in an attempt to channel public concern and indignation and put pressure on the central Spanish government. Barcelona took the lead and declared the city a "Refuge City", a name that mirrors the statewide network of cities promoted by the town council. The city's mayor, Ada Colau—who carries a strong symbolic and political capital after the "Indignados movement"—had just got into office in May 2015. In the following months, she starred in national headlines with public statements in which she called for "empathy"; she sent a public letter to Mariano Rajoy, the conservative PM of Spain at the time, in which she reclaimed more power to "receive refugees" (ABC 2015a). In response to Colau's letter, Rajoy reasserted the power of the state over asylum. Nevertheless, he expressed his compliance with the "quotas" outlined in the so-called "relocation scheme",[1] affirming the country "would not deny asylum to anyone who is in need" (ABC 2015a). The response of Spain, according to him, should aim at "preventing human losses and *standing in solidarity* with those who flee war and political regimes that do not respect basic human rights" (ABC 2015b, emphasis added). But what does it mean for Rajoy to stand in solidarity? The events that took place during 2015, and which were brought on by the declaration of the "refugee crisis", constituted a new and distinct moment in which the idea of solidarity became ubiquitous. The underfunded and understudied state asylum system started to gain political relevance (Jubany and Rué 2021). In the case of Spain, the claims for "refugee solidarity", and the material involvements that followed, adopted many different faces, tracing a parallel temporal trajectory to such institutional declarations, which ultimately try to respond to them.

The months that followed the publication of Aylan Kurdi's picture, in September 2015, saw a myriad of initiatives of individuals that decided to mobilise in their everyday life to show support. In Barcelona, several assemblies flourished across the city trying to mobilise grassroot resources to figure out what "welcoming refugees" would look like. The Xarxa Educativa en Suport a les Persones Refugiades (Educational Network in Support of Refugees), explains in their NP how in these first months the grassroot movements of the city tried to mobilise the pre-existing grassroot resources in order to raise material help to be sent to Greece, but also creating informal meeting spaces and public talks to discuss the situation. In the case of the Network, they coordinated teachers working in public primary and secondary schools who voluntarily shared educational resources in order to introduce issues of forced migration in their classes (Xarxa Educativa en Suport a les Persones Refugiades 2017). All in all, the mediatisation of a declared "crisis" and the important grassroots mobilisation contributed for the issue to be of key importance for the agenda of local social movements.

During 2015 and 2016, large numbers of people decided to travel to Greece to show support to people on the move. The first chaotic months of 2016 led to the closure of the Greek Northern border with North Macedonia after the signature of the EU-Turkey deal, leaving thousands of people that up to that moment were on the move suddenly stuck. At that time, informal groups of people found themselves supporting these people in makeshift settlements such as the ones in the Greek border town of Eidomeni, or the Piraeus port in Athens. Clara, an activist

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who was part of what later on came to be the project Comunitat Eko, explains in her NP how they first arrived as an affinity group to Eidomeni, and later on, with the support of other volunteers who came from Lesvos, tried to support the self-organisation of an informal settlement 20 km from the border (Comunitat Eko 2017). I was myself one such individual, in this case in the summer of 2016 in the city of Athens. At that moment, a quick search on Facebook groups for organisations working on the ground, or knowing someone who had been there before, was enough to have a rough idea of where to go and what was needed, and decide to go there. Once there, the precarious situation made it easy for travellers to become involved in grassroot infrastructures, such as small non-profit organisations distributing food and clothes, warehouses that gathered international donations, community kitchens, or self-organised squatted housing for migrants such as the City Plaza.

These kinds of involvements were the ground for threading informal trans-local networks of solidarity. Back home in Barcelona, a series of political actions were carried out in support of the struggles of people on the move. The generally young, White middle class activists who had travelled to different places in Greece initiated a series of initiatives to support the ongoing struggles in Greece from home. In May 2016, for example, a group of individuals who had previously met in Eidomeni initiated a "refugee camp" (Acampada Refugiada) in front of the European Commission's headquarters in Barcelona, demanding a solution to a problem they believed "was not humanitarian, but rather of political irresponsibility" (Camps 2016). Around the same time, too, as will be shown below, a group of activists who had been involved in these transnational networks squatted in a building with the idea of creating a shelter for transmigrants, looking too for a symbolic connection with similar actions in Greece and elsewhere in the EU.

Similarly, a group of volunteers who had been participating in support initiatives to the refugee camp of Vassilika, situated on the outskirts of the Northern Greek city of Thessaloniki, decided to initiate the umbrella-like media campaign CNCV. Targeting the state responsibility in "welcoming refugees", this campaign had great success in mobilising a hegemonic movement of solidarity with "refugees" in the whole Catalan territory. It had the support of local and regional authorities and the collaboration of Catalan public TV, which broadcasted a series of short documentaries portraying the standby situation of people living in Vassilika camp after the signature of the EU-Turkey deal. Although the core group organising the campaign had a clear plan to be developed during the months in which it was active, the campaign kept an open working group. This group was composed, at different stages, of organisations such as trade unions, bigger NGOs, and longstanding anti-racist and migrant support groups pertaining to the social movements of the region, thus serving as an articulatory frame in which the very meaning of solidarity with "refugees" was internally contested (Ramírez-March and Montenegro 2021). The campaign was finalised on 17 February 2017 with a big demonstration under the slogan "Volem Acollir" ("We want to welcome"), claimed by the organiser team as "the biggest in Europe in defence of refugees".

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In this article I do not seek to conflate these different examples of collective organising, carried out frequently invoking different identities. In some cases, these actions of migrant support are opposed to each other in terms of political alignment, forms of organising, and degree of complicity with migration control. Trying to grasp this complexity, García-Agustín and Jørgensen (2020) propose a taxonomy of the recent migrant solidarity movements that would divide the above practices into what the authors call *autonomous solidarities*—self-organised and horizontalist practices rejecting collaboration with state humanitarian interventions; *civic solidarities*—wider initiatives that try to emphasise commonalities and build consensus, including also small non-profit organisations; and *institutional solidarities*—a term which points to the ways in which civil society's actions permeate present institutions and are formalised in them to some degree. Della Porta and Steinhilper (2021) draw on this work and propose a similar classification by describing how civic engagement in migrant support practices could be divided along an axis that situates humanitarian interventions on one end and solidarity on the other. This division is proposed if only to argue that the current circumstances have brought a series of dynamics of hybridisation that have "blurred the lines in between contentious and non contentious civil society engagement" (Della Porta and Steinhilper 2021:176), in which the depoliticised framework of NGOs and the politicised one of social movements contaminate each other. Both these approaches agree nevertheless with David Featherstone's (2012:5) take on solidarity, which sees it as a relational practice "formed through political struggle which seeks to challenge forms of oppression". In line with these contributions, here I am interested in both this relational aspect of solidarity and the sometimes ambivalent effects of it. In the rest of the article I will display a series of scenes and narratives that account for different moments in which solidarity practices are spatialised and produced in corporeal interaction with others. The next sections account for the role of affects in such spaces and their possible capture from humanitarian reason, first, by relying on two scenes that depict a hegemonic movement of civic solidarity with "refugees", and second, by relying on a third example that focuses on antagonist, noborder direct action.

The Humanitarian Affective Governmentality of Migrant Solidarity

4 September 2015. A moving speech is given in a municipalist political conference in Barcelona. Three days ago an institutional email had been set up by the town council to channel what was perceived as an overwhelming response of concern from civil society. Two days before, Aylan Kurdi had died on Turkish shores, his photograph becoming infamously identified as one of the most iconic images of the "refugee crisis". Barcelona en Comú's newly appointed Mayor Ada Colau reads some of the letters sent by city residents on the previous days:

> Ana: I've stopped looking at the images on TV. I cover my eyes because it's too much for me. I want to help with the refugees. I can take in one or two people. I will give them food, care, clothes, but above all understanding. I'm 46% disabled. I don't want

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> to deceive you, I've been retired since I was 50, and I am 57 now. But I can help, and I need to help.
>
> If Ana can help, why can't the Spanish government? Shame! (Barcelona en Comú 2015)

The words are interrupted by applause. Attendants get up, some of them close to tears. "Si, se puede!", they chant. It is only three months since Barcelona's "government of change"[2] took office, and the possibility that the city will be "opened to refugees" seems at reach. The room is flooded by an atmosphere of hope, an affect that turns a hostile and sombre political scenario into a now *possible* future of opening the borders to people crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

Affects[3] such as these never emerge in a vacuum, but are always performatively entangled in a context; a history that forecloses the meanings that may be attributed to it (Avramopoulou 2017). The scene above accounts for the atmosphere in the city of Barcelona in late 2015, a moment in which the discursive declaration of the "refugee crisis" crystallised in a hegemonic movement of solidarity "with refugees" that was, as illustrated above, also picked up by institutional actors. In past research (Ramírez-March and Montenegro 2021), my collaborator and I argued that this hegemonic movement was importantly influenced by, even as it contested, the humanitarian governmentality of a declared "crisis". The argument that I present in this section complements our previous analysis by paying attention to how humanitarian governmentality also relies on the production, circulation and modulation of affects in migrant solidarity.

Humanitarianism, broadly defined as "the imperative to assist fellow human beings and to alleviate [their] suffering" (Wilson and Brown 2011), has acquired a central place in the governance of mobile populations in the Mediterranean region. Since the European Agenda on Migration was presented in 2015 in response to an alleged "migration crisis", European borders have been further militarised and rendered inhospitable, configuring a borderscape that conflates securitarian and humanitarian logics (Garelli and Tazzioli 2018). In this context, humanitarian intervention reveals itself as a technology of government that "conducts the conduct" (Foucault 2009) of both migrants and their supporters by narrowing down the conditions of possibility in which they carry out their actions. Rather than protecting the lives of migrants at sea, humanitarianism further exposes migrants to the violence of borders while rendering them governable, containing them in space (Pallister-Wilkins 2020) and regulating the temporalities of their movement (Tazzioli 2018). Similarly, and to the interest of this text, humanitarian governmentality seeks to police the *possible* ethical actions that can be taken to contest border violence (Pallister-Wilkins 2017), neutralising migrant solidarity's disruptive potential by imposing a narrative of political neutrality and fostering the well-known binary of the good (deserving) "refugee" and the bad (undeserving) "migrant" (Dadusc and Mudu 2020). This became apparent during the CNCV campaign: the constant reference to the (distant, heteronormative) image of a Syrian "refugee" family arriving on Greek shores as the desired "target" of these displays of solidarity contrasted with the daily routine of police persecution of Black African street vendors in the commodified public space of

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Barcelona's city centre. Antiracist and noborders migrant support groups confronted this scenario by pointing to the constitution of a new racialised, necropolitical affective economy that classified migrant bodies into those who were considered "worthy" of solidarity, concern, and compassion ("refugees"), as opposed to those who were not ("migrants"). These demands, however, were far from reaching major media attention and political acknowledgement from the campaign organisers and from Catalan political representatives, who widely endorsed the campaign focus on a call for solidarity with "refugees" (not with "migrants").

In their analysis of the German *Willkommenskultur* ("welcome culture"), Larissa Fleischman and Elias Steinhilper (2017) show how wider movements of civil society support to migrants can be read as the emergence of humanitarian "apparatus" (Foucault 1977) through which the state, in a situation of declared "emergency", can "put to work" volunteer labour to compensate for the lacks of the welfare system and thus ensure the survival of the current border regime. Moreover, the recent wave of criminalisation of search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea shows that not only does humanitarian governmentality produce "the good conduct" that citizens adopt to maintain normality, but also the threats to this normality. Deanna Dadusc and Pierpaolo Mudu (2020) argue that what they call "the humanitarian industrial complex" fosters and tolerates humanitarian interventions that are complicit in border enforcement, while criminalising "autonomous solidarities", that is, radical interventions that aim at disrupting the operation of borders and facilitate freedom of movement. The literature reviewed so far pays attention to different attempts to govern both migrants and their supporters through specific rationalities of government that rely on humanitarian values and logics. However, there has been little attention paid to the role of emotions/affects in the constitution of these regimes of government. And yet, as argued by Anne-Marie D'Aoust (2014:270), emotions can be seen as "another instrumental way through which practical rationalities can be enacted". Humanitarianism can thus be seen as a technology of government that contributes to shape our "bordered reality" (Spathoupoulou and Carastathis 2020); it determines what can be felt and what cannot, towards whom it should be felt or it should not.

There is now a considerable amount of literature addressing how affects are a site of governmental intervention. Ben Anderson (2010), for example, analysed this for how governments tried to create an atmosphere of hope in order to boost morale during the First World War; others have focused on how affects such as fear are used to inflict a constant state of threat, only to later on offer a securitarian answer to it (Adey 2014; Joronen and Griffiths 2019; Massumi 2010). Addressing the relation between affects and these modes of power over life, Anderson (2012) argues that affects are both what is targeted by forms of government and the necessary conditions for their emergence. According to him, forms of government "act on an affective-rational subject but also emerge from a specific organisation of affective life" (Anderson 2012:37). This organisation is what he calls an "affective condition", described as "an affective atmosphere that predetermines how something … is habitually encountered, disclosed and can be related to"

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(ibid.). This dual condition of affects described by Anderson, for the case of migrant solidarity in Catalonia, points to how humanitarian governmentality can be seen to modulate and thus instrumentalise the feelings of concern and sympathy that were described in the previous section. This is shown in the epigraph of this article, where "citizens' worries" are claimed by the European Commission to implement processes that further fortify European borders. While the reference to "citizens' worries" is, in this declaration, linked to the presence of "unacceptable human loss", it is however followed by a call for technocratic solutions to dysfunctional "asylum rules". This appeal may be understood in terms of mirroring and amplifying the fears of alterity that in other countries have been crystallised in the racialised figure of the "refugee" (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2018). Nevertheless, I would argue that, in the case of Spain, the reference to "worries" similarly targeted those positive feelings present in spaces of solidarity.

I refer to this mode of government as the "humanitarian affective governmentality" (HAG) of migrant solidarity. HAG is present in the mainstream progressive migrant solidarity movement looking to "welcome refugees", such as the one exemplified by the Catalan case and portrayed by the scene of the municipalist political conference. By adopting the hegemonised frame of intelligibility of the "refugee crisis", supported by institutional declarations and mainstream media portrayals of the situation, this movement participates in redirecting the affects that are present in displays of migrant solidarity towards the humanitarian enforcement of borders. This is a conceptualisation of affective capture from power that supports other scholars who have analysed the ambiguous and conflicting roles present in migrant solidarity mobilisations in Europe, and the sometimes blurry frontier in between compliance with, and disruption of the European border regime (Della Porta and Steinhilper 2021).

Excess and the Commons

Processes of feeling are well documented as a key element to understand the emergence, continuance and possible success of social movements (Jasper 1998, 2018). Similar to the instrumentalisation of affects in HAG, social movements usually draw on the creation of emotional frames as a way to create a "resonance" (Schrock et al. 2004) that attracts participants into a mobilisation. Likewise, emotions play an important role in the inter-subjective dynamics of movements. Jeffrey Juris (2008) describes the ritualistic kind of interaction of mass protests during the anti-corporate globalisation movement as being able to amplify participants' emotions, such as rage or anger, and transform them into "affective solidarity". By this, Juris refers to how emotions potentiate internal cohesion by drawing participants into a joyful, empowering experience that is also personally transformative. Here I am not interested in bringing together the notions of affect and solidarity to explore how these emotions might be a precondition for solidarity to exist—or the possible limitations to such approach, in line with Jodi Dean (1995). Rather, I am concerned with how the affects that are present in solidarity, as spatialised in a diversity of practices, contribute, as in Juris' account, to configure the experience of those who participate in them. This experience, I will argue

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here, is to be regarded always of collective nature, and constitutes the root of what I term *the excess in solidarity:* a way to conceptualise affect's role in the creation of new socialities that feed the mobile commons.

The idea of excess has circulated academic debates on affect early on since its popularisation. It is perhaps most well known in Massumi's (1995) assertion of affect's relative autonomy from the realm of representation and its ability to escape from power. In the work of Antonio Negri (and in his collaborations with Michael Hardt), affect is that incommensurable entity linked to life that is defined by the paradox of being both the raw material from which capital extracts value, and a reservoir of pure creativity that opens up new forms of living that escape power—that is, power as *potentia* (Hardt and Negri 2000, 2009). The account of excess that I present here keeps this sense of in-appropriability present in these contributions to the autonomist tradition, but specifically looks for political potentiality in the role of affects in constituting the experience of those who are involved in spaces of migrant solidarity. The excess in solidarity, I argue, refers to the ways in which affects emerge, as understood in the Spinozist tradition, in the encounters of different bodies (Seyfert 2012) and, in doing so, reorganise experience and participate in the emergence of new socialities. In order to untangle this idea, let's have a look at the case of Patricia, one of the persons who mobilised in solidarity in early 2016 in the city of Barcelona.

Patricia was one among the many people who saw the documentary "To Kyma" (Fontseca and Díez 2016). Broadcast on Catalan public TV, the film portrayed the first steps of what, in September 2015, was a small and recently created lifeguard NGO: Proactiva Open Arms. The film depicted the precarious work this organisation was undertaking amidst scenes of packed boat arrivals to the Greek island of Lesvos. It showed how the job of saving lives was in the hands of an informal organisation that rapidly grew thanks only to the increasing economic support of civil society. "In Lesvos, it is the People who keeps saving the people", concludes the film echoing a common motto in demonstrations, thus pointing to European governments' inaction and complicity in migrants' deaths in the Mediterranean. Shocked by what she had just seen, Patricia decided she needed to do something about it. She then turned on her computer and posted the following text on her Facebook feed:

> I am crying out of helplessness, out of rage, of pain. I feel an accomplice of what we are doing to the refugees! I think I am aware of what's going on, but still doing nothing about it! I don't know anymore where to look at, can't even look at myself in the mirror! People suffering and here I am complaining about the [financial] crisis, the government, this or that pain. And I say to myself "that's enough"! But I can't do it on my own! I need you! They need us! Let's go out to the streets and cry out loud in case someone listens to us. Even if only the suffering ones so they can feel an instant of relief. They might then dream that they are not alone in their awful destiny! I can't stand it anymore but … I can't do it alone. I need you. They desperately need us! Let's redeem history! This is our historical chance to do it! (Martorell 2016)

What happened afterwards is explained by Patricia herself in her NP:

> To my surprise, the text circulated very quickly, and soon 39,000 people had shared and subscribed to it. From this point, I decided to use the post to call for a

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> demonstration for 30 March 2016 in Plaça Catalunya [Barcelona's city centre], under the name "A cry for the refugees" ["Grito por los refugiados"]. 3,000 people ended up attending this demonstration. I had no idea my call would gather that many of them, and this moment resulted into a lot of new connections. Something new started to incubate. (Martorell 2017)

In the case of Patricia, the improvised protest she called for takes place just two weeks after the EU-Turkey deal was signed. Indignation and helplessness for the decisions of governments emerge in this context, shaping the hope that something may be changed if their demands are heard. As argued in the previous section, HAG works by capturing this affective condition into the exceptionalist humanitarian frame of intelligibility of a "refugee crisis", creating a particular affective economy that casts certain bodies as worthy of solidarity, thus excluding others. However, the scene of Patricia shows too that the same affects that are captured by HAG are the root for new bodily encounters that gave way to creative outcomes. In her case, this demonstration led to the creation of a small NGO that provides psychosocial support to asylum seekers and supporters in Greece and Barcelona.

The relation of affect with the social production of experience is Leila Dawney's starting point in "The Interruption" (2013). In this article, she argues that paying attention to the sociality of affect remedies some of the shortcomings of the Foucauldian perspective of subjectivation. Foucault posits that bodies are governed at the level of affect "through the production of specific modes of experience" (Dawney 2013:632). Bodies are the surface of contact of power relations, and are thus not viewed as the origin of new forms of being. The implication of this is that bodies are viewed as docile and malleable, and their ability to experience is somehow left aside in relation to the production of the subject. However, Dawney argues that a Spinozist notion of affect as "the capacity to affect and be affected" complements Foucault's theory of the subject in relation to experience by foregrounding the sociality of affect. The result, she argues, is a "decentred" image of the subject as emerging not only as "a surface effect of affective forces and relations"; but, also, as "an active participant in the production of those forces" (Dawney 2013:631). With this move, Dawney aims at showing how experience is socially produced in the interplay of the registers of the affective and the subjective. Here I share Dawney's interest in the relation of affect and the social production of experience and complement it with scholarship that foregrounds how experience, rather than being an entity that individuals possess, a result of being disciplined or positioned in a discourse, is always the result of emergent, collective production (Stephenson and Papadopoulos 2006). Bodies co-constitute each other and, in so doing, produce new configurations of experience.

This is most exemplified in Alfred North Whitehead's (1933) conceptualisation of the "fundamental structure of experience" (cited in Stenner 2008). For Whitehead, experience is always the result of what he terms the "subject-object" relation. More importantly though, this relation is always mediated by "concern". Concern is what binds subject and object together into an "actual occasion of experience", the most elemental unit of which our experience is composed. An actual occasion is a fusion of subject and object in an event of experience. Our experience of being in the

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world is constantly woven in a continuous flow of such moments. The notion of concern points to a key idea here: namely, that affect, rather than being a mere part of experience, acts as its fundamental constitutive. For Whitehead, actual occasions of experience are made of "prehensions", a term that signifies how the world is grasped and incorporated into an actual occasion experience. In prehending the world, an actual occasion attributes value, emotion, and purpose. This is why, drawing on Whitehead, but also on Susan Langer's philosophy, John Cromby and Martin Willis (2016:485) affirm that "[f]eeling is the primordial texture of being, the continuous and most fundamental stuff of which all experience is woven". It is, then, by paying attention to the capacity of affect to assemble particular configurations of experience that I propose the notion of excess. In this conceptualisation, excess will not be found in a mere celebration of the extra-discursive, incommensurable nature of affect (Massumi 1995), but in a close attention to how affects participate into the arrangement of new forms of experience.

What is then the relation in between this account of excess and the mobile commons? As stated above, I argue that mobile commoning is grounded in the circulation of affect and the construction of collective forms of experience. In contrast to other definitions of the commons that focus on how certain resources are horizontally managed against processes of dispossession and commodification (e.g. De Angelis 2017), I am aligning here with a more general definition. The commons—or rather *commoning*—are a relational process that entangles a given community with their environment in order to sustain life (Papadopoulos 2018). As an inherently relational activity (Harvey 2013; Linebaugh 2008; Stavrides 2016), commoning only exists as far as these relations take place. Commoning is thus grounded in the creation of new configurations of "continuous experience" (Stephenson and Papadopoulos 2006). Above I have conceptualised excess as the ability of affect to cast such particular configurations of experience that feed the contribution of migrant solidarity to the mobile commons. However, this crafting of experience takes place amidst the capture of affect from HAG. This idea, then, requires a second conceptual clarification in relation to the notion of the commons. In his analysis of the community technoscience of the maker culture, Dimitris Papadopoulos (2018) argues for an understanding of the commons as not separated from the spheres of the public or the private. Rather than being separate, he argues, these different realms are folded into each other, or "stacked": some of the social processes that constitute the commons are subject to valuation; similarly, the corporate sphere is more and more frequently grounded in cooperative relations and common pool resources. In a similar way, then, the notion of the excess in solidarity that I developed here points to how mobile commoning takes place *amidst and beyond* the capture of migrant solidarity from HAG.

Virtuality and the Mobile Commons: The Affective Infrastructures of the Freedom of Movement

It is May Day 2016 in Barcelona. An anarchist demonstration marches through the central Gothic Quarter. As the demonstration stops, a group of masked activists lean

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> out the windows of an empty, emblematic 19th century building: a former art school in the heart of the city's Old Town. A manifesto is read; the building is declared "liberated" and turned into a "safe space", a "FreeSpot" able to provide for the needs of those in the move. The squatters unfold a banner that hangs from the main balcony of the building. In direct contestation with the "Refugees Welcome" banner hanging from the City Hall, just a few hundred metres from the scene, another one now reads "Ciutat Refugi, Hipocresia de Merda" ["Refuge City, Fucking Hypocrisy"]. (Fieldnotes, June 2016)

As shown by the banner displayed by the activists, the new inhabitants of the building adopted an antagonist stance towards the mainstream movement of solidarity, represented by Barcelona en Comu's city government endorsement of the Refugees Welcome slogan. In a leaflet that was thrown out of the building's windows, the collective positioned itself against what they considered "institutional violence", characterised by the "inaction" and "hypocrisy" of the institution's endorsement of a humanitarian discourse that "hinders the colonial responsibility in the causes that force people to flee from their countries of origin". So far I have conceptualised excess to HAG in reference to the role of affects in constituting experience in spaces of solidarity, giving way to new socialities that in turn feed the mobile commons. The previous sections illustrated this by drawing on a series of scenes in which the concern, outrage and hope present in mainstream hegemonic solidarity initiatives and redirected towards the humanitarian enforcement of European borders. In the case of the above occupation, it is a negative affect such as anger which drives activists together into the creation of a project that aims at contesting the very meanings of solidarity with people on the move, as well as its capture from humanitarian governmentality. It is not my purpose here, however, to analyse how this resistance to HAG may take place. As I argued in the previous section, the argument that I try to make is that the affects that are present in both kind of examples of migrant solidarity organising are targeted by HAG and, at the same time, exceed it, insofar as they craft socialities that feed the mobile commons. In this subsection, moreover, the case of the occupation will serve to illustrate how this crafting of collective experience in mobile commoning relates to the cultivation of virtualities: what I term here as the *affective infrastructures of freedom of movement*.

The AoM approach foregrounds the concrete empirical practices that evade migration control and facilitate movement, including knowledge sharing and cooperative relations amongst migrants, as well as between migrants and their "supporters". Such processes that sustain freedom of movement constitute the mobile commons (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). In addition to this first concrete, empirical way of understanding AoM, Dimitris Papadopoulos has more recently argued for a second meaning of AoM that points to migration as a "speculative affect". By this he refers to the ways in which migration "nurtures the belief in the possibility to be free to move" and it "embodies a virtuality as secure, free, and warm as it can get in the harsh conditions of sovereign control … [a] potentiality and virtuality that becomes actualised and materialised through the diverse movements of people" (Papadopoulos 2018:60). Papadopoulos refers here to the notion of "virtuality" as it is understood in the philosophy of Gilles

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Deleuze (see Deleuze and Parnet 2007), an aspect that has been developed by affect scholars such as Brian Massumi. Drawing on Deleuze, Massumi (2002) argues that affects open up the actuality of experience to a multiplicity of potentials. Tied to the actuality of certain events, Massumi argues, the virtual is something that is "inseparable from the concrete activity and expressivity of the body". This activity, he goes on to claim, "is as abstract as it is concrete; its activity and expressivity extend, as on their underside, into an incorporeal, yet perfectly real, dimension of pressing potential" (Massumi 2002:31). Coupled to the actuality of experience, this conceptualisation of the virtual refers to what John Cromby (2015:168) summarises as the ability of affects to "make present the influence of an indeterminate future". In the case of the occupation, it points to how the concrete material involvement of these activists instantiates hope in the fact that freedom of movement is still possible.

Let's go back now to the idea of the FreeSpot. This occupation had as a direct inspiration the radical urban politics of squatted housing projects for migrants (see, for example, Karaliotas and Kapsali 2021). In the months prior to the action, some of the members of the squatter collective had visited and supported such projects in Athens and elsewhere in Greece. During the preparation for the action, the notion of the FreeSpot emerged in direct confrontation to the hotspot approach in the management of the "refugee crisis". To the contrary of hotspots, that is, to a carceral system devised to turn the islands in the Mediterranean into inhospitable spaces to migrants and to increase the effectiveness of EU deportation system (Pallister-Wilkins 2020; Spathopoulou and Carastathis 2020), the idea of the FreeSpot projected an imagery of a network of "liberated" spaces aimed at facilitating freedom of movement. This idea is not new; it can be traced to other examples of support networks for people on the move such as the shelters for transmigrants along the US-Mexico border (Candiz and Bélanger 2018), or to the common reference in the noborders movement in Europe to the Underground Railroad in North America (the networks that supported enslaved Black people in their escape from Southern to Northern territories during the 19th century [Stierl 2020]).

The construction of imaginaries such as these connects grassroot communities currently acting transnationally (Routledge et al. 2006). In this case, these connections work moreover to create links between struggles for the freedom of movement across time and space. These imaginaries, as argued by Viviana Asara (2020), are far from being mere "cognitive schemata" guiding social movements, but are to be seen as embodied in their practices, "re-partitioning the 'sensible experience of life', producing different lives" (Asara 2020:5). The case of the FreeSpot occupation thus shows how the excess in solidarity refers to an escape from control that is rooted in experience and is "both speculative and literal" (Papadopoulos et al. 2008:67). That is, the creation of these speculative, virtual figures of freedom of movement is grounded in the actions of migrants and supporters that position the body into new configurations of experience. These interventions contribute to the creation of what I call here the "affective infrastructures" of freedom of movement. The *affective* in the "affective infrastructures" refers to the role of actions such as the occupation of the FreeSpot in generating a virtuality that is

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able to sustain hope in the fact that freedom of movement is still possible. This is a virtuality that is fostered by migrants in their everyday defiance of biopolitical border control. Similarly, it is a virtuality that is cultivated and cared for by migrant solidarity, a work of cultivating hope that is to be regarded as part of mobile commoning.

Conclusion

Citing Peter Linebaugh (2008), Dimitris Papadopoulos and Vassilis Tsianos (2013:179) propose the notion of the mobile commons as a way to "see through the chink in the wall", to cultivate an imaginary of what lies behind the regulatory regime in which borders and citizenship are co-substantial to each other. By pointing to how citizenship is, by design, planned to fail, they propose an alternative lens to look at the politics of transmigrancy. By this, they refer to the ways in which migration—and the diverse allied "communities of justice" in solidarity with it—instantiate justice and political change beyond its inclusion in the polity, by facilitating freedom of movement.

This paper has focused on the relation of affect to the mobile commons by drawing on the case of the migrant solidarity in Catalonia during the so-called "refugee crisis". I began by giving an account of the local context of the case in order to highlight affects as rooted in a performative relation with the social and historical background in which they emerge. This was my starting point to inquire into the paradoxical relation of affects and migrant solidarity in the refugee crisis. On the one hand, I have argued that "humanitarian affective governmentality" modulated and targeted affects, which are present in different examples of collective organising to make them functionable in the current enforcement of the European border regime. On the other hand, I have argued that while affects are both the conditions of emergence of these forms of power and that which is targeted by them (Anderson 2010), the affects in migrant solidarity partially *exceed* the capture of humanitarian governmentality. The excess in solidarity, I argued, points to two interrelated instances in which affects play a role in the collective organising in support of people on the move. In a first sense, "excess" refers to the role of affects in constituting the experience of those who are involved in collective organising. This construction of experience through affect, I argue, is in the root of mobile commoning. In a second sense, excess refers to the relation of these material encounters with the generation of a virtuality of freedom of movement. These virtualities provide the ground for movements to keep on struggling, and it is in this sense that I propose this work of constructing "affective infrastructures" of the freedom of movement—that is, the work of cultivating hope present in migrant solidarity—to be regarded as part of mobile commoning.

The idea of the excess in solidarity complements and diffracts some of the recent work on migrant solidarity after the "long summer of migration". First, it disrupts a clear distinction between practices of migrant solidarity that either become "captured", or remain "autonomous" from humanitarian reason, and looks for ways in which political transformation can be carried out inside this very

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regime (Stierl 2018). While these distinctions certainly appear important to distinguish the actions that become the target of state criminalisation (Dadusc and Mudu 2020), they can obscure the complex psycho-social processes by which humanitarian governmentality may shape the sometimes ambivalent experience and effect of migrant solidarity organising (Della Porta and Steinhilper 2021). While, as covered in this article, humanitarian reason seeks to capture the socialities of migrant solidarity, these socialities have also been seen as the source of politisation (Karaliotas and Kapsali 2021; Sandri 2018). Second, the notion of "excess" points to the fact that mobile commons emerge from *within* the very same humanitarian regime they oppose. As such, there's no clear distinction between these two; rather, they are "stacked" (Papadopoulos 2018) on top of each other. That is, the excess in solidarity emerges from within the affective conditions that feed humanitarian affective governmentality. Although affects of concern, hope, and anger, among others, are both instrumentalised by top-down governmental attempts to govern migration, or reclaimed in a paradoxical relation by "bottom-up" community organising, they feed the mobile commons insofar as they reorganise the experience of those involved in spaces of solidarity.

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Endnotes

[1] After the Lampedusa shipwreck of April 2015, in which at least 700 people lost their lives, the European Commission promoted a series of measures under the "European Agenda on Migration" in order "to prevent human tragedies and to deal with emergencies" (European Commission 2015b). Among them were the so-called "relocation agreements", which outlined a set of "quotas" meant to "distribute" people seeking asylum in first arrival countries, mainly Italy, Greece and Hungary, to other countries in the EU with fewer arrivals.

[2] This is the name that was given to a series of left-wing municipal governments that reached office after the political cycle of the "Indignados movement" in Barcelona, but also in Madrid, Cadiz, and Zaragoza (amongst other cities in Spain).

[3] While the distinction between affect and emotion—together with the ontological nature of affect itself—has been a matter of extensive debate in the last decades, here I will align with Cromby and Willis (2016), who reject such dividing lines between affect and emotion and argue for the indistinguishable use of both notions in favour of a processual look at *feeling*. For the purpose of this article, I will however refer mostly to *affect* as a way to stress the interpersonal, relational sense present in the Spinozist tradition (Seyfert 2012), which is key to the development of my argument.

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