

Transcript of Comments on *From Sovereignty to Solidarity: Rethinking Human Migration* by Dr. Harald Bauder

Comments by Dr. Radhika Mongia (Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, York University):

First and foremost, it is a pleasure to be here to celebrate Harald's new book and I am very honoured to have the opportunity to make a few comments on it. For me, it is also weird to be here, as it is my first face-to-face event in more than two years so I am still trying to get my bearings. So, if I seem a bit out of it, that's the reason. Harald's book, as you know, is called *From Sovereignty to Solidarity: Rethinking Human Migration* and it actually gives us what the title promises – an analysis of the conventional thinking on migration that is structured around sovereignty and an argument for apprehending or rethinking migration in terms of solidarity, and you've heard that from both him and Sharyne. Three terms are central to the book – sovereignty, solidarity, and the city or the urban. And each of the three parts of the book is configured around one of the terms, but also the relationships between them. Since you likely have not had a chance to read the book I was going to provide a sketch of some of its main arguments. And while you have already heard some of those, from Sharyne and Harald, I'm going to proceed as if you haven't. I'm going to outline some of the main arguments, sketch some of the themes and approaches that I have found the most illuminating, and then pose a few questions for Harald. Though, Harald, you shouldn't feel under any compulsion to respond to the questions at the end.

In his discussion of the relationship between sovereignty and migration, Harald takes a historical approach, focused largely on Europe, he shows how human mobility has always been subject to control. But whereas early modern and feudal states and other entities sought to control exit, preventing people from leaving, the territorialized Westphalian liberal state allows its citizens to leave but controls the entry of non-citizens into its territory. This is an important shift in migration regulation, from restrictions on exit to restrictions on entry. Even those states that continue to monitor and restrict exit simultaneously also monitor and control entry. Indeed, with respect to migration, as Harald argues, sovereignty works as both cause and effect. It serves as the justification for authorizing control over movement, even as exercising control over movement serves to demonstrate the sovereignty of the state. The modes of exercising and consolidating Westphalian sovereignty are now numerous and the border is not only policed at the literal physical border of nation-states but there's also a lot of migration policy that, on the one hand, has been externalized – or you have migration control by remote control. The most obvious example of this kind of externalization and remote control, a modality of controlling migration, is a visa regime. Even before people get to your borders, you are already screening them somewhere else, through your consulate. Simultaneously, on the other hand, as scholars of bordering have shown, the border and the practices of bordering have proliferated within a state's territory via, for instance, the monitoring of workplaces, schools, policing, and surveillance; so again, the border is not just the literal border but the border is everywhere. In other words, restrictions on entry and on stay, seem to intensify daily, congealing the distinctions between citizens and non-citizens

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and, most importantly, making the lives of non-citizens – particularly those who are illegalized – precarious and often unlivable. The questions for Harald thus are: How can we counter this state of affairs? How might we rethink migration, in terms that do not reproduce such immiseration and perpetual fear? Are there practices in the world that offer ways of thinking about migration, migrants, and refugees that depart from the grids and logic of Westphalian sovereignty? For Harald, as the title of the book makes clear, we need to move away from thinking about migration in terms of sovereignty to thinking about it in terms of solidarity. The rethinking he proposes, however, is not one that relies on an abstract theoretical concept; rather he finds forms of solidarity that challenge Westphalian sovereignty in the practices of people on the ground in various urban sites in different places around the world. As Harald shows, there are numerous forms these practices can take and equally numerous ways that they can be described. For instance, they can be described as sanctuary cities, solidarity cities, or cities of refuge, or in fact not use any of these terms and use something else entirely. In some sites, local municipal bodies are in a position to give partial legal heft to solidarity practices and can, for instance, enable access to city services or curb the powers of local police. We have some of this in Toronto in the don't ask-don't tell policies, and other measures. In other contexts, municipal bodies do not have such powers but civil society and religious groups might provide forms of support for sanctuary. In yet another contexts, the practices of solidarity largely take the form of intervening in and reshaping the discourse surrounding migrants and refugees. Thus, Harald gives us a synoptic view of several such practices in various parts of the globe, ranging from Canada and the US to Latin America, Africa, and Europe. In one way, Harald is very optimistic about what these practices signify and, in fact, sees the rescaling of migration from the national to the urban or local scale as encapsulating a meaningful challenge to practices of national sovereignty. However – though this thematic is a bit buried in the analysis – Harald is aware that practices of solidarity at the urban scale face near-insurmountable challenges as they confront the juggernaut of national sovereignty. And this brings me to the major strength of the book, one that one might say embraces a Gramscian position of the pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will. So, even as Harald is aware of the severe constraints that structure urban solidarity with regard to migrants and refugees, he retrieves from these practices' shards of the promise of hope and alternative imaginations. Thus, he sees them as place-based politics that (and I quote him here) “may challenge and possibly transform the Westphalian global system that currently governs human mobility”. Another strength that informs the book is that it addresses and integrates into the analysis the specificities of migration to settler-colonial contexts such as Canada, the US, Australia, and New Zealand. Thus, Harald juxtaposes Westphalian notions of sovereignty with Indigenous notions of sovereignty, even as he details through the elaboration of numerous examples how practices of Indigenous solidarity and migrant solidarity can and have fruitfully worked together. Yet another lesson I learned from the book is how it successfully manages to address multiple audiences, whether it is the seasoned scholar of migration studies or someone just entering the field, there is much to be learned from reading the book. I am especially grateful to have a text that so elegantly and unpretentiously surveys important facets of

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migration scholarship and I look forward to using it in my classes. One is always on the lookout for texts that are elegant and clear but don't simplify the issues and this is one such text. So, thank you very much.

I wanted, by way of a conclusion, to pose a few questions for Harald. The first one is your argument regarding the potential of urban solidarity to counter the frame of national sovereignty. You write: "urban solidarity initiatives can be interpreted as the attempt to rescale migration and refugee policies from the national to the urban scale". While this might be true, I'm wondering if you are attributing certain a priori qualities to the urban scale. I'd been interested in hearing how you think of the urban scale or indeed of scale in general. I ask because to my mind – and I'm following Lefebvre here, who you also reference in your book, – scales are not given but are socially produced and are the effects of an array of institutions, practices, and ideologies. Each scale, moreover, is imbricated in other social scales and gains its identity through such imbrications. Scales, in addition, do not have any normative content so we don't know if the city is kind of a better place than the nation or the globe. You know these are all abstractions, we don't know if they are going to be good or bad, so they don't have any inherent normative content. My question for you is if it is wise to ascribe a more progressive normative content to the local or urban scale, as you tend to do? (Though I know you are aware, for instance in your discussion of Johannesburg, that things can go "bad" even in a city.) My next two questions are about certain current events and I'm wondering if you might want to reflect on how the issues you address in the book can help us make sense of them. First, is the matter that is currently on everyone's mind, the refugee crisis provoked by the war in Ukraine. The largely open borders for Ukrainian refugees in various European countries can be understood as expressive forms of solidarity, at both the level of the state and at the level of communities, urban or rural. But these forms of solidarity might also be very close to what you call "solidarity as loyalty," premised on a notion of group membership, here racial membership, and configured around inclusion and exclusion and you want to maintain a healthy distance from this form of solidarity. I'd be interested to know how you're thinking about these current events and how your book informs your thinking. And the second current issue is the recent decision – I believe that was just a week ago – of Boris Johnson's government in the UK that essentially outsources asylum seekers who arrive in the UK. The plan is to send them to Rwanda, they just signed this deal literally last Thursday. In many ways, this policy is derivative of Australia's earlier failed policy along the same lines and also an extension of the externalization of migration control. At the same time, it seems to me it also messes with our conventional understandings of the relationship between sovereignty and human mobility. I'm wondering if thinking about the issue from the Rwandan perspective might also ask for a rethinking of solidarity.

So, these are just some provocations you can take or leave, Harald. Thank you again for a fabulous book that, as I'm sure folks can see, can help us make sense of several current migration and refugee regimes. I highly recommend the book to all of you. Thank you again for inviting me to be a part of this.

Comments by Dr. Sedef Arat-Koç (Associate Professor, Department of Politics and Public Administration, Toronto Metropolitan University):

It is a pleasure and an honour to be here on such a great occasion. Outside teaching, this is the first event I'm attending at the university since December of 2019. Because I was actually on sabbatical at the time the pandemic started, and I wasn't attending the university anymore. The launch of this book is really a worthwhile and important occasion to be back at the university for. And I would like to thank Harald for having me as one of the discussants of the book. I find Harald's new book to be an important as well as a very timely and exciting contribution to rethinking migration. The book is rich in discussions of the concept and history of sovereignty, as well as in providing empirical details about various practices of solidarity. The significance of the book goes beyond the quality of its analysis and academic weight. The book also reads like a manifesto for the establishment of local and transnational solidarities in challenging nation-state borders. It is rather rare in academic circles these days to find a scholarly book that can provide solid scholarly analysis and be an inspiring manifesto, a call to action, at the same time. In discussions of sovereignty, Harald provides a historical context for the changing meanings and practices associated with the notion of sovereignty. In the Canadian context, I specifically appreciate the discussion he provides of Indigenous conceptualizations of the term and how they differ from some of the hegemonic state-centered meanings.

As a geographer, I think that Harald has been very well positioned to reflect on the scale at which migrant solidarities are likely to be established. Discussing the city as a potential and actual place of solidarity, Harald is not only realistic about the forms of solidarity possible under the otherwise hostile, anti migrant, and anti-refugee politics that we find in many northern nation-states at the present moment. He's also reflective of the kind of place cities are and the unique kinds of meeting spaces they can provide to people with diverse identities and positions.

I would like to offer a few points of caution and reflection that can move the discussion forwards from the book. As I make these points, I just want to clarify that the points I will make will not point at gaps or problems in the book itself, but rather they have to do with the kind of questions that I personally have been struggling with over the years and not necessarily have found answers to. These points are informed by the topics I teach, research and write on over the years, the fact that in addition to migration, I have been interested in international politics, Western foreign policy in the Middle East, colonialism, imperialism, and the relevance and significance of anti-racist perspectives in different contexts. The first question I would like to raise is a question about sovereignty. While acknowledging that there are different notions of solidarity that exist, the book is clear that it's focusing on certain, very specific notions of sovereignty and that it is a notion of territorial nation-state sovereignty that it is critical of. My first point of caution is to underline that some of the challenges to sovereignty in recent decades – especially in the post-cold war period – have come not just from critical circles, circles that contribute to liberatory projects, but rather from some positions of power. One of the ways in which sovereignty of nation-states, in general, has been attacked in recent decades has been in the form of a general assault by certain undemocratic,

Comments by Dr. Sedef Arat-Koç (continued):

unaccountable international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization which attack popular and democratic sovereignty in countries, regions, places, and so on. Specifically, they attack the sovereignty of people in making and having a say over economic and social policies and decisions. A second way in which questions of sovereignty have typically been taken up in the mainstream political and geopolitical discussions in recent decades has been in the form of selectively attacking nation-state sovereignty in Third World contexts. Defining some states as “failed” or “rogue” and targeting their peoples as needy of so-called “humanitarian interventions” has in recent decades been a typical pattern in imperial projects. While these discourses on sovereignty are very different from the way sovereignty has been approached in the book, they nevertheless need to be taken seriously and addressed as they have been so dominant in recent international political economy and geopolitics.

A second question or point of caution I would like to raise has to do with the fact that as much as we would like to celebrate solidarity activism in various places and in various contexts, as the book itself also hints at, there are certain Eurocentric tendencies in some notions and practices of solidarity activism. There is some recent research such as Fiorenza Picozza’s book on the coloniality of asylum, that show the ways in which solidarity activism may reproduce whiteness and colonial relations of power. Such research and analysis suggest that the politics of solidarity may need to be approached cautiously, critically, and from a decolonizing lens.

The third and final point I would like to raise is on the general question of mobility. While the ideals of mobility and the right to escape need to be considered as very important parts of liberatory projects, we may also need to consider whether they need to be complimented, at least in some contexts, by other liberatory projects. I want to propose that in some contexts, for example in relation to Indigenous peoples and the experiences of Palestinians, rather than an emphasis on a right to move and right to escape, it is important to emphasize a right to stay put. Especially if we are interested in informing and enriching our notions and practices of solidarity by Indigenous perspectives, it is very important to remember how staying put is also something that people are fighting about and for. The question then is a question of how we integrate that right with the right to mobility. Thank you very much.

Response by Dr. Harald Bauder (Cross-appointed Professor, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies and Immigration and Settlement Studies, Toronto Metropolitan University; Senior Fellow, Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies, Germany):

Thank you very much for the commentaries. I’m flattered. I expected to be ripped apart but that didn’t happen. You offered good comments and good criticism, and are asking some really interesting questions. I appreciate that you liked the book and *what* you liked about the book. I wrote *From Sovereignty to Solidarity* having in mind the audience. I wanted it to be reader-friendly and accessible and still have something substantive to

Response by Dr. Harald Bauder (continued):

say. I am glad that I apparently succeeded and also that you intend to use it for teaching. It is an important goal for anyone who writes an academic book that their work is actually useful, especially in teaching.

Let me respond to the questions because they raise important issues. The first question Sedef raised was a question about sovereignty and how sovereignty – both Indigenous and Westphalian sovereignty – is attacked by international organizations. My book doesn't address this question directly, but we can see that these institutions are also attacking solidarity, *especially* solidarity. In addition, I'm not sure whether the whole concept and idea of state sovereignty is worth defending; it is a strange concept, I think. Westphalian sovereignty suggests that there's a political entity in the form of the nation-state that can act completely independently from any other agent and we all know that that doesn't exist. We are all connected with each other, there are relationships with people, with groups, communities, between entities. So, it's a strange concept, it's a political concept. The whole idea of sovereignty is a tool to maintain and exercise power. When I first dove into the literature on sovereignty and looked at what the whole debate about Indigenous sovereignty is – being able to make their own decisions in a settler-colonial context – I was puzzled by even the term “sovereignty” being used. Why would we not use a different term? A term like solidarity because solidarity is a very different concept from sovereignty. Sovereignty is suggesting that there's a political entity out there that can act independently as if there was nothing else, no other political agents; solidarity does the exact opposite, it acknowledges these relationships with political entities, between communities, between groups and I think it's much more productive to use these kinds of terms. I'm not really sure whether we actually need the idea of sovereignty and whether we would be better off with just ditching it. Nevertheless, I understand in public and political discourse we are talking about Indigenous sovereignties; it appears to be almost fashionable, there's also food sovereignty and other kinds of sovereignties. Still, there is an uncomfortable connection – to me at least – to Westphalian sovereignty, which still seems to dominate the political discourse; that's problematic from my viewpoint and also why I prefer to focus on solidarity and hence the title of the book *From Sovereignty to Solidarity*.

The second issue that Sedef raised in terms of solidarity activism is that there are Eurocentric tendencies. I completely agree with that and I can't escape my own positionality in this respect. I grew up in Germany, I'm here in Canada, my whole academic training reflects a Eurocentric perspective that would be really hard for me to escape. At the same time, I absolutely recognize that there's a need to reverse the direction of theory building and theorizing, especially in respect to ideas like sovereignty and solidarity. I admit my book is probably not doing a good job on that. Nevertheless, there is a need for doing that and we've actually started a [new project](#) with partners in the global south, in Africa and Latin America, where we want to pay very close attention to whether we can open that avenue of reversing at least to a degree the direction of theory building.

And to Sedef's final point, yes absolutely the right to move goes along with the right to stay, especially when we talk about colonial and imperial displacements that is in many

Response by Dr. Harald Bauder (continued):

ways the root problem and cause of population movements and people being on the move. I think we cannot separate those, even though in the book I'm clearly focusing on migrants and refugees. But when we go to the bottom of it, colonial displacement is an underlying force triggering these movements.

To Radhika's comment about how we counter the state and solidarity, but my idea of solidarity is that it is already practiced. The idea comes from research by Bridget Anderson, Nandita Sharma, and Cynthia Wright on an article on no border that I'm always assigning to my students who are reading it. And the final argument in that article is that yes, we can think in terms of no borders, these are very radical ideas, but if we look closely these no border practices already exist and they are already present in the way that migrant and refugee communities interact with each other, and interact with non-migrant people and communities. So, it's not entirely my idea. And then there's the territorial nation-state trying to regulate human mobility, and I'm juxtaposing these different kinds of state practices and state policies, and the on the ground activist practices. There's also literature on autonomous migration, for example, that's heading in the same direction. Autonomous migration refers to the idea that there might be the state trying to enforce and regulate the way that people move but then migrants and refugees are responding to these circumstances in ways that the state might not expect and then the state is being forced to respond to that again. In a way, it focuses on the agency of migrants and refugees themselves. And then, also very important in the context of this book, is place-based politics. That comes from an article that you Sedef wrote a little while ago that challenged me to think about these place-based politics.

And that brings me to the first question of scale and scaling: yes the urban scale is, in the words of Alison Mountz, an epistemological assertion. Scale does materially exist but it's also a way that we make sense of the world, organizing the world into geographical scales. But that doesn't mean necessarily that we have to hold on to the kind of container thinking that there's a particular container like the urban administrative unit or a local unit; we can also think in terms of scales and urban places or place-based politics – not necessarily focus on one particular place but also thinking about how places in different circumstances are connected. For example, earlier today we had discussions about an initiative in Europe called Seabridge where there are municipalities, mostly in Germany, that have expressed an interest in working with local places, localities and municipalities in other parts of Europe to accept refugees and migrants directly rather than going through the nation-state. So, there's a connection, a network between cities and localities. It's not necessarily a closed-off container in the way that I'm thinking of these urban scales but a place-based politics that connects places like Toronto to places that migrants and refugees came from or travelled through. It's really a more complex politics of place, not necessarily focused on one locality.

The second question was about the Ukrainian refugee crisis and solidarity based on a type of loyalty. In the book, I talk about different underlying ideas of solidarity, and one of them was solidarity as loyalty in the sense that members of the nation-state feel loyal

Response by Dr. Harald Bauder (continued):

to the state and therefore express their solidarity to all the other members of the same nation-state. To me, this is a misguided nationalistic type of solidarity. I see that actually being the case in the Ukrainian refugee crisis as well. Why are the Ukrainian refugees welcome and the Syrian refugees are not as welcome as much? I think that's exactly expressed in the idea of solidarity as loyalty: "oh, they're just like us because we're all Europeans and therefore we have to express a degree of solidarity towards these people from Ukraine that are arriving here." But at the same time, if there is a Nigerian international student that also lived in Ukraine and wanted to cross the same border, it was much more difficult, if not impossible, for that student. In this case, I think it comes out very clearly, this idea of solidarity as loyalty. That doesn't mean, however, it is the only type of solidarity that exists in the context of this crisis and the refugee movement.

And the final question about the Boris Johnson outsourcing policies, I have to admit that I was on vacation last week in Jamaica and didn't follow world politics for a week, so I claim that I don't really know too much about this particular issue to make an intelligent comment about it here.

Thank you very much for your comments. I'm glad that you like the book. I hope it is useful to your teaching and I'm glad that you enjoyed reading it. Thank you.