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Sanctuary and solidarity: urban community responses to refugees and asylum seekers on three continents

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Introduction

“The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying ‘this is mine’ and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes, might not anyone have saved mankind by pulling up the stakes or filling in the ditch and crying to his fellows ‘beware of listening to this impostor, you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all and the earth itself to nobody”

(Rousseau, 1754, Second Part)

Consideration of the quotation above, and comparison with international current affairs in 2011, might lead many to conclude that we have not progressed a great deal in the more than 250 years since Rousseau produced his discourse. Conflicts in Egypt, Libya, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Ivory Coast and Tunisia, record breaking drought and famine in the Horn of Africa, continuing strife in the middle and far east and south America, and poverty, hunger and inequality in many parts of the world, mean that vulnerable, desperate and persecuted people continue to seek sanctuary in another country, and continue to face barriers, hostility, and often rejection.

There are many examples to illustrate how nation states and their communities react with hostility towards those whom they see as a threat to be repelled. One recent illustration is that of the plight of refugees from Libya and Tunisia seeking to find safety in Europe, many arriving on the Italian island of Lampedusa. Some refugees have drowned when boats capsized in the Mediterranean, and when refugees attempted to travel into France by train from Italy the French government stopped such trains from entering, and the British press expressed fears that such refugees would reach the UK (Peter Allen, Daily Mail, 27April 2011).

The example above is given to remind us that the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees is still frequently seen as a threat by the states where such people attempt to seek sanctuary. In Europe a myth that there is an asylum ‘flood’ still persists despite the fact that developing countries host 80% of the world’s refugees (Chetail and Bauloz, 2011). Terrorism, security, Islam, economic migration, forced migration and undocumented status are still commonly conflated, often by politicians wishing to frame a particular discourse or further their own agenda (Ruedin and D’Amato, 2011; Hopkins, 2011a; Squire, 2009; Huysmans and Squire, 2009).

In Britain, immigration is still a dominant political issue, and the media can be very influential in framing these negative discourses (Squire, 2009). A narrative of ‘us’ and ‘them’ is encouraged that reinforces negative attitudes of host communities. Immigrants, whatever their reason for arriving in a country, are often seen as potential terrorists, and are expected to prove their innocence (Ruedin and D’Amato, 2011, D2; Chetail and Bauloz, 2011).

Alternatively, asylum seekers and refugees are framed as ‘bogus’, bent on ‘scrounging’, and to be viewed as scapegoats for a variety of social and economic ills

(Squire, 2009; Harvey, 2009; Halfani and Toner, 2008). Those that are seen as 'desirable' have their movement around the world welcomed and labelled as 'mobility', whereas the poor and vulnerable are framed as 'dangerous' and to be stopped (Castles, 2008). Such stereotyping serves to strengthen existing prejudices (Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Citrin et al, 1997).

In Britain, asylum seekers waiting for their claims to be determined have been dispersed to a number of cities and towns since 1999, after complaints from local authorities in places where asylum seekers first arrived in the country that they were taking a disproportionate share of responsibility and cost. Asylum seekers have had no choice as to the location of their dispersal, and dispersal destinations have often been chosen for reasons other than being the most appropriate communities to host new arrivals, for example because of the availability of very low cost housing, often in very poor condition (see for example Burnett, 2011): "Those seeking safety in the UK face being dispersed into areas which are potentially both increasingly hostile and under-equipped to provide for their needs"

Published government policy documents and research reports on refugee integration focus heavily on such issues as work, housing and language skills (see for example Cebulla et al, 2010), and although these are undoubtedly important, work to break down attitudinal barriers in communities is also of great importance. Bringing new arrivals into sometimes ill-prepared host communities over many years has only heightened the need for projects that seek to combat hostility and support the newcomers in their new situation.

In the United States the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001 have also served to increase fear and suspicion of perceived outsiders, particularly Muslims, and increased the likely hostility of communities towards immigrants, including refugees and other vulnerable migrants (Rosenblum, 2011; Eby et al, 2010; 2011; Seghetti et al, 2009).

Although factors shaping immigration policies in different countries are varied (Ruedin and D'Amato, 2011), and can include the political environment, civil society, the judicial system, economic situation, media and historical factors, the negative and increasingly hostile discourses, and the challenges faced by communities, are common to much of Europe and America in the early 21st century. There is a common theme of attempting to contain refugees and asylum seekers in the global south, and of avoiding responsibility if at all possible (Chetail and Bauloz, 2011).

A variety of mechanisms are employed to evade such responsibility, including constructing pre-entry requirements such as visas, from which asylum seekers are not exempt, removing people to a supposed 'safe third country' without establishing that the receiving country is in fact 'safe', externalising processing of claims to outside states, accelerating the way claims are dealt with so that evidence is overlooked and interviews either not conducted or poorly conducted, over use of detention, and excessive force used in removals (Chetail and Bauloz, 2011).

In this environment there is a growing concern about relationships between host communities and newcomers (Bilodeau and Fadol, 2011). As van Liempt (2011) points out in a study of Somali refugees experiences in Holland and Britain, even when relations between host communities and new arrivals are good on the surface,

this can often mask a very normative relationship where the power balance is completely skewed towards the hosts, and where all the adjustments are required of the new arrival, who can be a victim of extreme stereotyping.

As Dancygier (2011) points out, conflict is often exacerbated by either real or perceived competition for resources between host communities and new arrivals. Poor economic circumstances such as exist currently only serve to heighten the likelihood of such conflict. Rates of change in communities can also be extremely unsettling, and adjusting to the sudden increase in the population of those that are perceived as 'other' can also give rise to conflict (conversation with Kevin O'Neil, Princeton University, July 22nd 2011).

So it is important to consider how communities can be brought together, how refugees and asylum seekers can experience genuine sanctuary and welcome, what are the drivers for positive community responses, the role of organised civil society and individuals, and what role leaders can play in this process. Diverse, welcoming communities can only be achieved through the active involvement of the host community (Clark, 2008 p103). This includes community in its widest sense, with a role for business, the media and higher tiers of government (Clark, 2009; 2010).

This paper seeks to examine the role of communities in offering sanctuary and welcome by comparing responses across three continents: Europe (specifically Great Britain), North America (including the United States and Canada) and South America. It will specifically discuss the role of communities in cities and large towns, and will demonstrate why this focus is important. It will look at motivations and drivers for positive responses to refugees and asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants, the types of supportive activity that communities engage in, the important role of faith communities, and the role of local leadership, in an attempt to understand what conditions are important for such positive responses of welcome to take place in cities. The paper will use the themes of sanctuary and solidarity as a basis for these explorations.

The paper will not attempt to evaluate the success of such responses as many of the initiatives discussed are very new and such work can take a long time to bear fruit. Rather it takes the view that cities and towns where such responses are present are more likely than those where no such initiatives exist to be or become places of sanctuary and welcome, and therefore it is important to understand their antecedents and conditions for either survival or failure.

Neither will the paper consider in detail legislative regimes of immigration and asylum in each country under discussion, as such regimes are extremely complex and require much more space than is available here to be examined in detail. However they will be touched upon in places where appropriate and relevant.

The paper will also draw attention to a common thread of conflict that can be identified in places where such community responses take place. It will show that such conflicts arise between different layers of government, between secular laws and moral and religious codes, between nuanced facets of political expediency, and between the competing needs of different groups. This conflictual character marks out many of the responses identified, and suggests that this is a sphere towards which

further attention should be directed in the future if their role is to be more completely understood.

The paper takes a comparative approach, examining responses to vulnerable migrants across a very wide geographical area. As Dancygier (2010) points out, there is a lack of comparative work on host community and new arrival relations and conflicts. She points out that most work is constructed in the form of quite detailed case studies. Whilst these are indeed valuable, it is also important to investigate linkages between sometimes outwardly disparate situations, which may have more in common from which we can learn than might at first be obvious.

Following on from this, the paper will also take a broad view of the categories of persons to whom communities respond either with support or negativity, adopting the term 'vulnerable migrants'; this category includes refugees and asylum seekers, but also undocumented migrants at risk of deportation or other punitive responses. It is intended to signify those presenting themselves in another country as being in dire circumstances and in need of refuge, that need arising from a broad range of reasons.

As Nadeau (2007) and increasingly many others, point out, such categories as 'economic migrant' and seeker of political asylum' are 'collapsing' in the face of increasing global poverty, conflict and displacement. The often quoted statement in this regard is that "they are here because we are there" (Sivanandan, 2008). Webber (2011) argues that dividing up people fleeing their countries into narrow categories is no longer tenable: "one way or another most of those who come to these shores without official permission are refugees from globalisation, from a poor world shaped to serve the interests, appetites and whims of the rich world" (Webber, 2011).

Although of course technical legalistic definitions of immigration status are extremely important, and their conflation often criticised by academics and others as a source of stereotyping and prejudice, 'vulnerable migrant' is a more helpful categorisation in the context of this paper.

Castles (2008) has voiced the opinion that too often academic work on migration is too narrowly focused, looking at one sphere only such as forced migration, economic migration and labour mobility, looking at either the North or South, or a particular country or region, or a particular legal issue. This paper seeks to span those boundaries by employing both a wide and comparative geographical focus and a broad categorisation of persons seeking refuge. It will in this way demonstrate links between many different spheres, which may hitherto have gone undetected.

Why are cities important?

There has been an increasing interest and focus on the importance of the world's cities in a wide range of social, economic and other policy arenas (Prakash and Cruse, 2008; Amin and Graham, 1997). This has resulted in a number of inter-governmental initiatives of cooperation between cities on a continental and world wide basis to learn from each other and develop common solutions to problems, particularly around diversity and openness.

Eurocities is such a partnership in Europe, with a membership of 140 cities in 30 European countries. The group was founded in 1986 by the mayors of Barcelona, Birmingham, Lyons, Frankfurt, Milan and Rotterdam. Member cities tend to have an international and diverse population dimension and have populations in excess of 250,000. The group has a particular programme and series of conferences on the theme of immigrant integration, jointly facilitated by the European Commission. Another related project is DIVE (Diversity and equality in European cities), which seeks to benchmark diversity and equality policies in cities and provide a framework for peer review by other cities (www.eurocities.eu).

But why are cities so important in this context? It is estimated that approximately 3.3 billion people live in cities, and an estimated 5 million of these will be refugees (UNHCR, 2009b). Approximately 70% of the persons of concern to UNHCR in Latin America live in urban areas (UNHCR, 2010a). With frequently such terrible conditions existing in large refugee camps, and the extreme hardship and conflict associated with these, the experience of refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants living in cities is sometimes given less attention and research focus (United Nations, 2007).

Greg Clark (2008 p14) tells us that, in our globalised world, cities have become “the junction boxes for international interactions at the local level”. Cities are “the territorial and experiential texture for half the global population” (Halfani and Toner, 2008 p1). They are a place where ‘strangers’ have always come together, amid “continuous contestations of who belongs and to whom the city belongs”. Prakash and Cruse (2008) tell us that “cities are the principle landscapes of modernity” (introduction), and as such all the tensions between diverse groups with sometimes conflicting needs and priorities are concentrated in urban spaces. Cities and their governments have a prime responsibility in effective responses to immigrants and their relationship with local communities (Ray, 2003; Sandercock, 2000).

This paper will therefore focus on community responses to vulnerable migrants in these important urban environments, and primarily on the type of response that encompasses a whole geographical community, rather than individual groups or organisations within the town or city.

Why are communities important?

Just as this paper focuses on support for vulnerable migrants in urban settings and responses made on a particular geographical basis such as town, city or state, so it also highlights the importance of responses that come from communities, or attempt to enlist support from whole communities, as opposed to the work of individual organisations.

The way that communities react to fill perceived vacuums left by failure of public policy, or more actively respond to perceived injustice in policy and legislation related to migration is highlighted by a number of authors in the Australian context, where for some years the arrival of asylum seekers from Far East countries, often risking everything to reach Australian shores, has been a very contentious issue (see for example Melucci, 1996; Gosden, 2005, 2010; Tazreiter, 2010). As Gosden (2005, 2010; Tazreiter, 2010) point out, collective action is important both for its practical

effects and the benefits it brings to those whom it seeks to support, but also because it sends a message to the wider population as to what many members of the community consider acceptable, and a message that government policies can be challenged when deemed to be unjust.

The same marriage of practical action and influencing unjust policies and working for change is pointed to by Nadeau (2007) in relation to Canada.

She points out that a handful of Canadian church communities can exert a powerful influence on the government by their public defiance of the immigration system, and so give them leverage to challenge the flaws and injustices that exist.

Just as civil society can exert influence on governments in relation to particular policies, both by their actions and by influencing wider public opinion, so there can also be advantages to governments from engaging with civil society, in that they can potentially gain a great deal of grass roots information which they might otherwise find difficulty in obtaining. It can be a difficult balance for community groups between capitalising on this position of influence and being viewed as colluding with the very government they are attempting to challenge (Banulescu-Bogden, 2011).

Methodology

The research for this paper has been underpinned by significant desk based research and literature reviews across a number of themes, including sanctuary movements and their historical background, the significance of faith and faith communities, the role of local and national leadership and the role of community based support for refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants. This encompassed material from the UK, the US, Canada and Latin America, as well as more general work covering these themes.

The research also included interviews and discussions, both in person and by telephone, and the collection of material and evidence by email correspondence and by following up suggestions from respondents for further sources of information. The research included a short visit to the United States in July 2011, and attendance at a number of relevant conferences, public talks and book launch presentations.

Participants included those working as both paid staff or volunteers for a number of City of Sanctuary groups in Britain; a local councillor in a City of Sanctuary location in England; some of those involved in instigating or inspiring community responses; academics and researchers who have worked on similar or related themes and have detailed insights into a particular aspect; someone who was personally involved in the original sanctuary movement in the US in the 1980s; current participants in the New Sanctuary movement in the US; and UNHCR staff working on the ground in a relevant area.

The collection of evidence was not without difficulties in some cases. There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly it was apparent that some participants in support activities for refugees and asylum seekers took the view that they would prefer the active involvement of others working 'on the ground' to enquiries from academics and researchers, a view which is to be recognised as completely valid. Many

organisations and community groups are extremely hard pressed and do not have time or resources other than to engage in their front line and campaigning work.

Secondly some people and groups in the US are involved in activities that are either illegal or on the margins of legality, and are therefore naturally suspicious of enquiries from researchers. This current research is not unique in encountering these difficulties (conversation with Linda Rabben, 19th June 2011). Approaches through other trusted contacts do not always change this situation. Similarly, some participants work, whilst not illegal, puts them in conflict with various levels of government, whether it be a local authority in England or the state or federal authorities in the US. This group can also be reluctant to take part or wish to do so in a very general way which cannot be identified. Government sources can also be very sensitive to how their views on these topics are portrayed.

Additionally the geographical scope of the paper is very wide, and the amount of information available on different locations is varied. The amount and accessibility of data for the section on Cities of Solidarity in Latin America was difficult to obtain as little work on collecting information has been carried out to date in any systematic way. However, given that, it is hoped that this research contributes in a small way to collecting some of this data and linking it to other activity elsewhere.

Sanctuary and solidarity

Sanctuary and solidarity are two important themes running through this paper, and through narratives of responses to vulnerable migrants both now and through history. Particular aspects of these themes will be discussed below in the sections on the various geographical locations, but before proceeding to that more detailed discussion, we will look at the concepts more broadly in order to understand their significance in this context.

Sanctuary in History

The idea of sanctuary has a long history, and has been a subject of interest for many historians, sociologists and others in recent times, particularly those interested in its role in the protection of vulnerable migrants.

There was a Hebrew tradition and practice of sanctuary in biblical times, where protection was given to fugitives to prevent them from being attacked by relatives of their victims before they could be formally brought to justice. In England right of sanctuary was granted to those in fear of their life from the 1st century. From Norman times church sanctuary was available to both debtors and thieves; the general right of sanctuary in was attached to any church or chapel, but only for capital offences where a person fled to save their life. In such circumstances they could, within a certain period of seeking sanctuary, present themselves before the coroner's court under common law, confess and agree to leave the country within a fixed period of time. If they then did not leave through a designated port of exit, or returned to the country, they would be liable to be hanged.

Certain churches were also designated by the Crown as special sanctuaries where those accused of treason could take refuge for an indefinite period, although still with the option to confess and leave the country (Thornbury, 1878). It must be remembered in this context that in the England of the Middle Ages many innocent people were accused of treason for political expediency or ambition, so it was not just a privilege taken advantage of by criminals or otherwise guilty persons. In many cases it was not merely the main church building itself that was designated as a sanctuary, but possibly other outer buildings, or the churchyard or other grounds around the church itself.

Upon the Reformation of the church in England begun by King Henry VIII right of sanctuary based upon houses of religion was severely curtailed, although certain non-religious locations were designated as refuges where sanctuary could be claimed. Henry VIII identified a number of cities throughout England as places of sanctuary (Rabben, 2011), but this proved very unpopular with many city residents as it was perceived that the community was being expected to give protection to those who were little more than criminals; we can see here a clear link to attitudes towards immigrants today!. In 1623 the right of sanctuary was largely abolished in England, although it still persisted in a few places, to be abolished entirely by two Acts of Parliament in 1693 and 1723.

Following this period of religious based asylum we can see beginning the origins of the modern asylum and refugee system, where nation states as opposed to houses of religion or certain towns and cities, acted as places of refuge for those fleeing persecution (Rabben, 2011). For example in the late 17th and early 18th centuries thousands of Huguenots fled from persecution to Protestant countries in Europe, (Stevens, 2004; Price, J. Centre for Research on London; Marfleet, 2011b).

In the 20th and 21st centuries faith has again become an important factor in the support of those fleeing persecution (Rowlands, 2011). In the Second World War, the French village of Le Chambon sur Lignon, led and inspired by its Protestant pastor, gave refuge to some 5000 Jews fleeing the Nazis, arranging escape for many of them to other safer countries. They defied the police and Vichy authorities, and the pastor was arrested although subsequently released (Rabben, 2011). In the sections below, this paper will show how the centuries old tradition of sanctuary, and its 1940s appearance in Vichy France, can be seen anew in more recent developments in both Britain and America.

Solidarity

As we will see below, ‘solidarity’ is the term used in many instances in Latin America where local communities are responding with support for vulnerable migrants. The Collins Dictionary of Sociology defines ‘solidarity’ as integration between people and their neighbours, and as being about social ties. A more vivid and perhaps more helpful definition can be found in Ahmed (2004, p.189):

“Solidarity does not assume that our struggles are the same struggles, or that our pain is the same pain, or that our hope is for the same future. Solidarity involves commitment and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground”

Solidarity in the context of this paper implies striving for an equal relationship between those offering support and those receiving it; a recognition of possible power differences and a striving to refrain from framing those in receipt of support as helpless victims who should be grateful (see for example Darling, 2011). It implies standing alongside rather than a paternalistic approach, or as Dalton (2008) puts it “being present with the stranger”. How this is played out in practice will be discussed further below.

Sanctuary and solidarity in Britain

In Britain there has remained in recent years a high level of hostility towards immigrants in general, and asylum seekers in particular. Asylum seekers are often viewed with suspicion, as being out to get something for nothing. A public survey in 2008 found that ‘asylum’ was associated with mental illness, disorder, terrorism, criminality and benefit fraud (Cox, 2008). Asylum seekers were rumoured to be provided with all kinds of items such as fully taxed and insured cars and mobile phones loaded with credit, and suspected of ‘taking jobs’ even though under British law they are not allowed to work (Independent Asylum Commission, 2008).

The survey found that the public generally supported the protection of persecuted people seeking a place of safety, but did not associate ‘asylum seekers’ with this category of person, a situation which the report suggests is strongly influenced by media portrayals of asylum. The report suggests that the use of ‘sanctuary’ as an alternative term would assist the public to view those seeking support more sympathetically, and in fact many organisations and agencies in Britain have now adopted the term ‘people seeking sanctuary’ in preference to ‘asylum seekers’.

But what is the modern history of sanctuary in Britain in the context of support for vulnerable migrants? In the 1980s some churches in England provided sanctuary to those in fear of deportation. In 1986 Viraj Mendis, a Sri Lankan Tamil under threat of deportation from the UK and who feared for his life if returned to Sri Lanka, claimed sanctuary in the Church of the Ascension in Hulme, Manchester, where he was protected by the priest and a group of supporters, remaining there in the church for two years and only leaving when the church was stormed by the police and immigration officers. He was returned to Sri Lanka but claimed that the fact that his case had achieved such a high profile meant that no-one would dare to harm him.

The case achieved a great deal of attention and some outrage due to the violence of the raid, being the first known violent breaching of a church by force in Britain in modern times (United Church of Canada, 2004). In a response the British Council of Churches formed a Sanctuary Working Group to provide guidance to churches considering offering sanctuary, and a number of guidance packs and guides were published (see for example Weller, 1989; and see Weller, 1993). A statement on sanctuary by the British Council of Churches in 1988 advised churches that they might consider offering sanctuary if there was a well-founded fear of persecution, or a serious threat to family life or a gross injustice was likely to take place.

The guidance reminded churches that sanctuary giving always carried some risk of prosecution. It counselled that when considering such action the church should remember that sanctuary should only be a last resort, that the local congregation of the

church should be in support of the action and that there should be broad support from the wider community outside the church congregation (United Church of Canada, 2004).

But what about sanctuary outside this literal church based context of physical refuge? The City of Sanctuary movement in Britain was started by Inderjit Bhogal, Methodist minister and former President of the British Methodist Conference, in which capacity he visited a number of immigration centres and was very alarmed at the conditions and injustices he found there (Bhogal, 2010; 2001). Having been involved in the church based sanctuary work discussed above in the 1980s, he formed the idea of working towards his home city of Sheffield, South Yorkshire, becoming recognised as a City of Sanctuary, where asylum seekers and refugees would receive an active welcome supported by a broad range of groups and organisations within the local community.

He worked with Craig Barnett from the Quakers (who later became the City of Sanctuary movement's first national coordinator) to take the idea forward, and in October 2005, following a public meeting to discuss the idea, this resolution was adopted:

“Our organisation recognises the contribution of asylum seekers and refugees to the City of Sheffield, and is committed to offering hospitality to people who come here in need of safety from persecution. We support the goal of Sheffield becoming a recognised City of Sanctuary for asylum seekers and refugees”

(Bhogal, 2010)

The working group set out to enlist the support of a wide range of local groups and organisations, including faith groups of different denominations, schools and colleges, student unions at the city's universities, voluntary organisations, businesses and crucially the local authority. In June 2007 it was declared that Sheffield was officially a City of Sanctuary.

In 2009 an official manifesto produced in conjunction with Sheffield City Council was produced, setting out key areas for concern and action. The City of Sanctuary model set out to emphasise both the contribution that new arrivals could make to their host city, and the important role of the host, and taking pride in offering welcome and hospitality (Darling, 2010).

The City of Sanctuary movement was from its inception a truly 'grass roots' movement in that it was initiated by individual people with a religious background and grew out of earlier instances of churches providing physical sanctuary to those under threat of deportation, and was not instigated by government policy initiatives or programmes of large third sector organisations. As such it defined its own criteria for designation as a City of Sanctuary, which was outside formal rules or official processes.

The important factors were the achievement of active support from a very broad range of groups and individuals in the local community and active support from local government (Bhogal, 2010). The movement started in Sheffield has grown and spread across Britain, and as of 2011 there are City of Sanctuary movements in 18 cities and

towns, with 5 of those (Sheffield, Coventry, Swansea, Bradford and Bristol) having achieved national recognition with City of Sanctuary status (www.cityofsanctuary.org).

National meetings of the movement are now held each year and there is a national coordinator based in Leeds and a website for movements to share news and provide information to the wider community on their activities and progress. Local movements vary in their origins, but most have a strong component of churches and other faith based organisations within their founding group. Some groups have found it relatively easy to engage support from their local communities and local government, whilst for others it has proved difficult or even extremely contentious. Below are some illustrations of work going on in some of the City of Sanctuary locations, and some of the challenges they face.

Hull

The movement in Hull arose from a concern about health and social care provision for asylum seekers and refugees in the city, resulting in the commissioning of a major piece of research led by a leading Hull academic, Professor Peter Campion, and the publication of a research report in early 2009 (Campion, 2009). The report was commissioned by Chris Long, Chief Executive of NHS Hull:

“I commissioned this report because I had very strong concerns about how Hull was responding to significant changes to its population caused by a recent relatively large inflow of refugees and asylum seekers. Hull had always been a city with a homogeneous population. That only really started to change in the early 2000s “

(email conversation with Mr Chris Long, 25 May 2011)

Mr Long’s concerns were that there was little knowledge of the actual make up of this new population and its needs, that the new population was prey to exploitation, that the voluntary sector was bearing a disproportionate burden of caring for the new population and a perceived unpreparedness of the statutory sector to play its part in supporting the new arrivals, and a concern about rising xenophobia in the city, although as Mr Long put it, this was tempered by some notable instances of hospitality and generosity.

Mr Long also expressed the belief, that we will find echoed many times throughout this paper, that “that we test the overall value and effectiveness of our services by how we respond to the most disadvantaged in our community. If we get things right for refugees and asylum seekers we are getting things right for most of the rest of the population”.

The report highlighted the fact that there were significant numbers of destitute asylum seekers in Hull, that there was a lot of very sub-standard housing in the city, that public attitudes were largely hostile to refugees and asylum seekers, that health services, particularly mental health services were poor and difficult to access, and that access to English language classes was also difficult (Hull City of Sanctuary website).

After the publication of the report (Campion, 2009) in early 2009, later that year an open meeting was held at a Methodist church in the city to which Craig Barnett, the then national coordinator of City of Sanctuary, was invited to speak about the movement. Subsequently a steering group chaired by Peter Campion was formed to carry forward the work in Hull. The aim was to work to change hostile public attitudes, promote change and access to services across all sectors, and to strengthen the work through contact with other City of Sanctuary movements around Britain. The steering group now counts two refugees amongst its members, something that the original group saw as vital.

Hull City of Sanctuary was officially launched at a celebratory event in June 2010, attended by a broad range of organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers, and with added support from one of the city's local MPs. The movement has achieved good informal support from a wide range of statutory organisations, and will be seeking formal expressions of support in the near future. However they report that, despite the pivotal role and strong support of the NHS and Primary Care Trust, individual general practitioners have been reluctant to be involved, despite approaches.

There has also been a marked lack of interest from local businesses. However the Lord Mayor of Hull has assisted by writing personally to many local businesses encouraging them to support the movement, so it is hoped that this will achieve some results. There is a programme of talks at local schools to raise awareness of asylum and refugee issues amongst schoolchildren. One significant activity of the group has been the setting up of a Sanctuary House to house destitute asylum seekers. The house was donated by a local Roman Catholic church and has housed a number of people to date, some of whom have been able to leave following successful determination of their claims (Minutes of Steering Group meeting 12th April 2011 and Annual Report to the Annual General Meeting of Hull City of Sanctuary, 26th May 2011, as supplied by the Chair).

The group consider that they have achieved a lot in a short time, but have much more to do and in some respects have not moved as far forward as they would have hoped at the outset. (email conversation with Peter Campion, 22 May 2011)

Bradford

Bradford has a long history of immigration and a large existing ethnic minority community, and this is the background context to the City of Sanctuary movement in the city (Reid, 2011). In common with many of the other local movements, City of Sanctuary Bradford was started when a small group of local people who had heard about the movement attended a national meeting and came back determined to start up such a movement in their own city.

These initial members were all volunteers with existing organisations working to support refugees and asylum seekers in Bradford. Again in common with other areas, one of these groups was a faith based ecumenical asylum support organisation. The first meeting took place in June 2008 and after gathering support from other refugee and asylum seeker support groups a launch event was held in October 2008, attended by over 100 people and opened by the Lord Mayor of Bradford, lending official

support at an early stage (email conversation with coordinator of Bradford City of Sanctuary, 24th May 2011).

This active support from the City Council continued, and in March 2009 the council signed an official Memorandum of Support in March 2009. Bradford was declared a City of Sanctuary in November 2010. As of March 2011 the movement in Bradford had 132 committed supporters, including a wide range of faith groups including Christian, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim and organisations including Amnesty International, the Red Cross, a food bank, arts and women's groups, night shelters and rape crisis centres, housing associations and residents groups. There is also commitment from a number of schools and colleges and the student union at Bradford University, and a local Asian radio station. There is also strong support from the statutory sector, including a wide range of health services, and from political parties.

Activities, delivered through member groups, include providing housing for homeless asylum seekers, raising funds for local refugee organisations, supporting refugee groups to find meeting and worship spaces, facilitating English classes, giving talks in schools to raise awareness, running befriending projects, encouraging refugees to speak about their experiences at community events, promoting the sighting of signs of welcome for refugees in local businesses and services, helping with legal advice and appeals, promoting awareness amongst religious communities, providing drop in centres, hot food and clothes, providing interpreters, running women's groups, children's play facilities, providing support with access to health services and educational opportunities, providing day trips and organising a hosting project where local people act as hosts and have people with nowhere to go staying in their homes (Bradford City of Sanctuary).

The above extensive list of activities, which is not untypical of a successful City of Sanctuary local movement, shows how practical action to improve the material circumstances of asylum seekers and refugees is combined with support to assert rights through legal advice and advocacy, and awareness raising amongst the local community and beyond. It includes not only immediate support with food, shelter and so on, but support with longer term and empowering results, such as access to language classes, education, and opportunities to become meaningfully involved rather than being passive recipients of charity. This is a theme that is echoed in many such projects across all geographical locations, and will be returned to later.

Huddersfield

Not all sites of the Sanctuary movement are in cities; some larger towns and even a London borough (Hackney) have Sanctuary movements. Due to the initial movement starting in Sheffield, many groups have sprung up in Yorkshire, including in the town of Huddersfield. In Huddersfield the Quaker community had learned about City of Sanctuary via their links with Quakers in Sheffield, where the national coordinator Craig Barnett was a Quaker.

The Quaker Meeting in Huddersfield supported the idea of starting a Sanctuary group, and the Huddersfield Interfaith Council was also approached for support. A public meeting was arranged in September 2009, which was attended by approximately 70 people. It was clear from the meeting that there was enough support for starting a

local Sanctuary group, and a steering group was formed. The group was formally launched in June 2010.

The Mayor of Kirklees, the administrative district where Huddersfield is situated, has given a lot of informal support and attended events. However the group intend to wait a little longer before seeking official council endorsement, wishing to ensure that before they do so they have a very broad and significant base of local support. There are at present 65 committed supporting groups, including a school, local business, a sports club, a mother and toddler group and the Women's Institute.

Activities so far have included the forming of a group within the Quakers that organises a monthly Sanctuary Supper that brings together refugees and the local community for food and to meet each other, and a similar event organised by the Methodist Mission. One local organisation is offering mentoring and training for refugees and asylum seekers that want to work in creative industries. There has been a lot of positive support from the local press, which is vital for building wider community support, and the steering group has worked to include refugees amongst its members.

“I think that if you are seeking sanctuary in Huddersfield you may know that there are people who are pleased to welcome you and to try and support you”

(email conversation with coordinator of Huddersfield Town of Sanctuary, 4th June 2011)

Nottingham

Nottingham has not yet been officially declared a City of Sanctuary but has strong support from the City Council and is working towards being officially recognised by March 2012. There are about 50 committed supporting groups in the city, including a number of faith groups, community centres, women's groups, ethnic minority community organisations, the Red Cross, Oxfam, the local Unison trade union branch, local police and probation service, sections of Nottingham Trent University, colleges and the Forestry Commission.

Another member group is Citizens for Sanctuary, which although similar in name should not be confused with the City of Sanctuary movement, although the two often work closely together. Citizens for Sanctuary is a nation wide movement that works to change and challenge unfair immigration procedures. In Nottingham they work with the City of Sanctuary group by helping to transport asylum claimants to their reporting location, which is for many not in the city, therefore creating great difficulty getting to another town with few resources, and trying to weed out fraudulent and incompetent immigration advisers who seek to take advantage of vulnerable people (City of Sanctuary Nottingham newsletter, February 2011).

Other projects associated with Nottingham City of Sanctuary respond with a host of practical assistance and support that includes providing food and clothing, helping to fill in forms, finding solicitors, visiting those in detention centres, and buying credit for mobile phones. Another recently started project works to support people who have recently been granted legal status; these people can often be in dire circumstances

because as soon as they receive status they are no longer entitled to the housing and other support they received when awaiting settlement of their asylum claim, and can often be given only days to leave their accommodation, often with no money or other means of support. The project, run almost entirely by volunteers, helps by assisting with official forms, finding housing and doctors, applying for welfare benefits, looking for work, providing access to computers and English classes.

Although faith was not the starting point for the movement in Nottingham, it is an important component. Much of the practical work is based within church communities, and this is backed up by a programme of supporting prayer, including special prayer vigils when difficult or dangerous situations are faced by those whom they support. Congregations also support the work through their financial contributions from collections.

Faith is also important for another reason. Asylum seekers often arrive with nothing, bereft of everything they once owned. Many have a faith, and can see this as all they have left. Therefore finding support within a welcoming faith community can be very important to them (interview with Chair of City of Sanctuary Nottingham, 5 August 2011; and see Snyder, 2011).

The Probation Service in Nottingham has formally signed up to support City of Sanctuary. Their viewpoint is that helping to support 'emerging community' offenders contributes to community safety by helping prevent re-offending (City of Sanctuary Nottingham newsletter, June 2011). This theme of support for refugees and asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants as a tool for promoting community safety will reoccur later in this paper, in the context of the United States, where it is a prominent theme.

Swansea

Like many of the other participating cities, the movement in Swansea came out of a visit by people already involved in working with refugees in Swansea to a national City of Sanctuary conference. After the visit in 2008 a workshop on the subject during Refugee Week led to the formation of a steering group. Again faith also played a part as the original founders were also involved with the Quakers and so had heard in that way about the City of Sanctuary movement in Sheffield. After two years of work and a launch event during Refugee Week 2009, Swansea was formally recognised as a City of Sanctuary in April 2010. Importantly for this, the City Council formally passed a resolution of support in December 2009.

Swansea City of Sanctuary members are of the opinion that they have only been able to achieve such success with their work because Swansea had already such a strong tradition of welcoming and supporting refugees. Swansea was designated as an asylum seeker dispersal area, and unlike some similar areas there was a strong voluntary effort in Swansea to work with and support the new arrivals sent to the city. An important part of this work was around 'story telling'; allowing the voices of refugees and asylum seekers to be heard by encouraging them to tell their stories and experiences, including through writing and poetry. Several volumes of such stories were published (see www.hafen.org). (email discussions with members of Swansea

City of Sanctuary, 6th and 17th June 2011). We will see the use of story telling as a tool for refugee empowerment used elsewhere later in this paper.

The movement in Swansea has more than 100 organisations formally signed up as supporters; a very broad range of groups including faith organisations, refugee groups, trade unions, arts groups, environmental groups, women's organisations, the YMCA, the Citizen's Advice Bureau, mental health and drug organisations, youth groups, local businesses, the Metropolitan University and sections of the University of Wales, police, schools and the local evening newspaper.

The group has a hosting project where temporary homes are provided for people with nowhere else to go and in need of support, and in addition other support is provided such as inviting people for meals, paying for credit for mobile phones and bus passes, providing trauma counselling, computer access, legal advice, parenting classes, a swimming group, first aid training, and a scheme where refugees can help repair old bicycles and then keep them for their own transport.

There are also a lot of activities that bring refugees and asylum seekers together with the host community, organising a number of social and cultural events, and arranging for refugees to speak to local organisations about their experiences. More than 70% of supporting organisations are engaged in some form of practical work to support refugees and asylum seekers (City of Sanctuary Swansea newsletter, June 2011).

Again we can see that there is an important mix of practical support, access to legal rights, and work to combat discrimination and intolerance and bring communities together.

Coventry

Coventry, another one of the areas of Britain designated as a dispersal area for asylum seekers, became officially recognised as a City of Sanctuary in March 2011, the project having been launched in September 2008. The movement in Coventry had many facets of its birth in common with those in other cities. The drivers and key actors came from faith based groups, there was positive contact with the national movement, a visit to a national conference, and a return train journey during which agreement was reached to take the project forward.

In the case of Coventry, the instigation came from Churches Together with Refugees in Coventry (CTRIC) and Coventry Peace House. The Peace House is a mutual cooperative housing project dating from the 1990s and having its origins in a peaceful protest camp outside a tank factory in Coventry. Members of the Peace House were central to the instigation of the City of Sanctuary movement in Coventry, and the Peace House is an important partner in the movement, working in a number of ways to support refugees in Coventry.

CTRIC, another important partner, is a charity aiming at "encouraging churches to be more welcoming to refugees who come here.....churches here tend to reflect the same range of attitudes as the rest of the population towards those seeking sanctuary" (email conversation with Secretary of Coventry City of Sanctuary, 30th May 2011).

Three members of CTRIC, a member of the Peace House and the Anglican Diocesan Director of Social Responsibility made up the party that travelled to the National Conference of City of Sanctuary in June 2008, and on the train journey back to Coventry the movement was born. It currently has more than 70 supporting organisations in the community, including faith groups, schools and voluntary organisations. Again, a main focus of their work is changing attitudes and encouraging hospitality and welcome, combined with practical action such as providing a night shelter for destitute asylum seekers.

The movement in Coventry has good support from the City Council and Lord Mayor, although the Cabinet of the City Council has not officially endorsed City of Sanctuary. City of Sanctuary members consider that, although they are very pleased to have national recognition, there is still much to do in the city; many organisations providing support to vulnerable migrants are closing because of lack of funds in the present difficult economic and political climate, and rising poverty and marginalisation can make it more likely that host communities will express hostility towards new arrivals.

Ipswich

Like Huddersfield, Ipswich is a town rather than a city. Its journey towards becoming a Town of Sanctuary had an unusual beginning, starting in Yarlswood detention centre and arriving via the Young Vic theatre in London. Like Inderjit Bhogal's visits to detention centres in the 1980s, visits which inspired the whole City of Sanctuary movement, It began with a visit to the detention centre by actress Juliette Stevenson, who was so affected by the stories of women and children detained there that she instigated a dramatic performance of their stories, 'Motherland', in which she and her daughter narrated verbatim the detainees experiences. It was performed at the Young Vic theatre in 2008, and later performed in the House of Commons and in Bedford, near to Yarlswood detention centre. The performances included public discussion and were attended by some of the women from the detention centre themselves. The performances were covered in the national press and raised the issue of the detention of child asylum seekers (Women for Refugees).

Motherland inspired a charity evening at St John's United Reform Church in Ipswich, aimed at raising awareness about asylum seeking in Britain. Due to its show business connections and inspiration the evening was able to draw upon a number of well known entertainers, and also included a number of refugees talking about their experiences. The evening had a great deal of impact on all who attended. The publicity for the event came to the notice of the national City of Sanctuary movement, who contacted the organisers in Ipswich about becoming involved in the movement. There followed the setting up of a working group to take forward Ipswich Town of Sanctuary (Ipswich City of Sanctuary website).

The committee in Ipswich consists of only two people, the church's Minister and the City of Sanctuary coordinator. They have to date enlisted the support of 20 local groups and organisations, and working with them provide real support for vulnerable migrants in the town.

A consultation of all supporters produced a set of recommendations to the borough and city councils which included a suggested review of policies related to unaccompanied asylum seeker children; that the councils should actively challenge misinformation related to people seeking sanctuary; that the councils should promote the teaching of the history and basis of sanctuary in the UK in schools; to improve the housing arrangements for asylum seekers with disabilities; to provide training for council employees in matters related to sanctuary; that the councils should provide volunteering opportunities for asylum seekers; and that the councils should publicly promote the idea of Ipswich as a Town of Sanctuary.

The group runs a hosting project to provide accommodation, and several asylum seekers have been supported in this way. As in Nottingham, there is often need to help those who have received positive results to their asylum claims, as they may have to leave their accommodation with little notice. The group in Ipswich helped one such young woman in this position who was left unable to get support from any public agencies because it took weeks for her to be issued with a national insurance number. There is also help with speaking English and a project to raise awareness in local schools. However, although the practical work in Ipswich is very tangible, gaining support from the local council and wider community has proved very difficult.

“There are many faith groups that have not been interested in the movement itself, and many groups/organisations that you would expect to support the idea of caring for strangers and of seeing the world as one...the development of support has become rather stagnant”

The coordinator has a number of views as to why this might be. Firstly, as there is no support currently from the local authority, the community and local organisations may see the movement as lacking legitimacy. An allied reason may be that people are suspicious of a group that is not formally constituted, is not registered as a charity. People are used to dealing with more formal groups with attendant perceived professionalism.

Although the group are hopeful of gaining some support from the local authority in the future, at present this is not the case. There would seem to be a negative cycle where the council are reluctant to give support because they perceive that it would not be popular to be seen by the local community to be openly supporting asylum seekers, and then the community are wary of giving support due to lack of legitimacy that council endorsement would give. One Muslim community member told the coordinator recently that the council would not want to give their support as they would “not want to be seen to open the floodgates”. A council member also said that they preferred not to raise the issue of asylum with the general public, many did not realise that Ipswich was a dispersal area for asylum seekers and that it was “better to keep it that way”

Ipswich is a town within a mainly rural agricultural area, where many people do not travel much outside the immediate area and where communities tend to be quite parochial and insular. This does not assist in building a culture of welcome as people are fearful of the unknown and believe myths about asylum seekers found in the media and encouraged by extreme right wing politicians. The local media is generally hostile and although may carry reports on City of Sanctuary work does so in a negative light (reference to newspaper article)

The extreme hostility displayed by some sections of the local community can be illustrated by the fact that the coordinator reports that she received death threats after an article about City of Sanctuary appeared in a local newspaper, and an old church building that was earmarked for use by a local Muslim group was burned down.

The coordinator reports that the work of the movement in Ipswich has been described as 'ghostly', because although very concrete work is being done there is little or no recognition or formal acknowledgement. Against this background the two existing committee members continue to work for more support, and are planning a re-launch event in late November 2011, which is hoped will provide the opportunity to provide more information to possible supporters within the community and answer questions.

(Interview with coordinator of Ipswich Town of Sanctuary, 6 August 2011)

There is also active City of Sanctuary work going on in other locations, including Leeds, Bristol, Oxford and Leicester, about which there is no space to give details in this paper. As acknowledged by Darling et al (2010) the movement, although making some very concrete advances in raising the profile of the issue of asylum and migration, and combating hostile attitudes, is in many ways a somewhat intangible concept. However it can be seen from the above discussion that there is a will to provide a broad range of practical support, complemented by support to access legal rights, and combined with awareness raising and campaigning to change both public attitudes and wider public and government policies. There was generally a strong theme of empowerment of asylum seekers and refugees and a rejection of charity models and a perception that improving conditions for all disadvantaged members of the community was the best way forward (both these points were made by a local councillor interviewed in one of the City of Sanctuary locations). It can also be seen that faith played an important part in many of the groups, and that being part of a national network, however loosely constituted, was important.

Sanctuary and solidarity in Canada

Before going on to discuss sanctuary and solidarity in the United States, we will briefly examine the case of Canada. There has been a movement amongst churches in Canada to give physical sanctuary to asylum seekers in danger of deportation since 1983 (Lippert, 2005). Initially church congregations, alarmed by what they perceived as the injustice of deporting people back to unsafe countries of origin, campaigned against such deportation without resorting to actual physical sanctuary provision.

In one instance in Montreal, a group of 17 churches supported the campaign of a group of Guatemalan refugees who had their asylum claims refused and were threatened with return to Guatemala. Arrangements were made to provide one member of the group with physical sanctuary in a church if the campaign's demands were not met. This threat was made very publicly, including for example a press conference. The campaign was successful as a result of groundswell of public opinion, with the government agreeing to add Guatemala to the list of 'unsafe countries' to which people could not be deported (United Church of Canada, 2004).

Between 1983 and 2007 there have been approximately 40 situations of such sanctuary in Canada, involving people seeking refuge from countries including

Algeria, Bangladesh, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Iran, Israel, Ivory Coast, Kosovo, Lebanon, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan,, Russia, Syria and Zimbabwe (No-One is Illegal Vancouver). As with Britain, guides have been produced to assist church congregations in Canada to make decisions as to whether to offer sanctuary and to whom and in what circumstances (United Church of Canada, 2004).

In addition to the provision of physical sanctuary in churches there exists in Canada a strong movement for migrant rights and justice, based in a number of Canadian cities and working on an inclusive city wide basis, with the focus on improving things for all marginalized groups in the community. The No-One is Illegal movement exists in Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver. The movement is characterised by a strong involvement by the migrant communities themselves, and by others fighting for rights, for example women, gay and disabled people. (Note that this movement in Canada should not be confused with the No-One is Illegal movement in Britain which campaigns for the complete removal of all immigration restrictions).

In Toronto the movement sets out to challenge the notion that respect, social justice and basic services should only be the preserve of those with full citizenship (Nail, 2010).

The movement in Toronto started when the founders were working providing art therapy in an immigration detention centre and realised that most of the people were there because they were undocumented and had been ‘shopped’ by members of the community, rather than being detained by immigration officers (Nail, 2010). Some people had been informed on by employers, others by service providers or even partners, and they reported that they lived in fear of having to seek emergency health care or access some other vital service. People were unable to attend their English language classes for fear of arrest and detention.

This led to an ‘Access Without Fear’ campaign, which was strengthened by campaigns around ‘Education not Deportation’, ‘Food for All’, ‘Health for All’ and a campaign against violence towards women (many vulnerable migrant women were taken advantage of by abusive partners who used the women’s lack of legal citizenship status to exert undue influence over them).

An anti-deportation march in 2006 was followed by the creation of a City of Sanctuary campaign. The focus of the campaign is to gain access to vital services for all citizens irrespective of their immigration status, and for people to be able to live their daily lives without fear of detention and deportation (No-One is Illegal Toronto).

Sanctuary and solidarity in the United States

Faith communities in the United States have a long history of support for refugees and other vulnerable migrants. For example, through the Church World Service, a partnership of 30 Protestant churches, pooled resources in the aftermath of the Second World War to coordinate and facilitate resettlement of refugees from Europe. This network provided both material assistance such as food and transport, and sponsorship within communities for newly arrived refugees.

More than 50,000 European refugees were resettled in this way by the early 1950s (Eby et al (2010; 2011)).

Church congregations bore the entire cost of this programme and therefore there was no issue of refugees being perceived as a 'drain' on public funds. In the Cold War period that followed, large numbers of refugees were welcomed in circumstances where they were fleeing Communism, as this was perceived by the US as a legitimate threat. For example, between the late 1950s and early 1970s many thousands of Cubans were admitted as refugees (Bon Tempo, 2008).

In 2010 73,293 refugees were admitted to the United States, the majority of them coming from Iraq, Burma and Bhutan (Martin, 2011a). Currently the model for refugee resettlement in the US still retains a strong input from community groups, prominently faith based organisations, although there is also federal government financing.

Community groups provide a wide range of support for resettled refugees, including help with bureaucratic processes and form filling, getting used to transport and other services within the community, financial help such as buying furniture, finding employment and education, accessing health and other services. The prominence of formal faith based involvement in this work reflects a general high level of involvement of faith organisations in the delivery of welfare services in the US (Wuthnow, 2004).

However the refugees discussed above come, and have come, into the United States by formal established routes from locations from where the US government wishes to accept refugees. In the 1980s large numbers of refugees from Central America began to try to flee into the United States due to the increasing conflict in that region, a conflict in which the US government was heavily involved in its drive to combat Communism. These refugees, although desperate, were neither legal nor welcomed. Their situation sparked the origins of the 'sanctuary movement' in the US which saw churches becoming physical sanctuaries for those fleeing the Central American conflict (see Gzesh, 2006).

In 1980 a group of Salvadorans were abandoned in the desert of Arizona by people smugglers, and two church communities in Tucson responded by offering the 13 survivors sanctuary (Gibson, 1990).

Other churches in San Francisco and Washington also publicly declared themselves as sanctuaries for Central American refugees in 1982. At the time of writing her paper in 1990, Martha Gibson reported that the movement had grown to include over 400 churches offering sanctuary and about 2000 other congregations supporting the work, including by transporting refugees around the country (for contemporary histories of this period see Davidson, 1988; Crittenden, 1988; Golden and McConnell, 1986).

In New Mexico in 1986 the Governor declared the whole state a sanctuary for those fleeing from the south (Garza, 2011), although this was later reversed and public opinion was generally against such a stance. Lutheran minister Glen Thammert

And several others became involved in trying to help those fleeing from Central America. They were arrested and there was a very high profile trial in 1988.

Thammert was eventually acquitted, in part due to a very active defence campaign which worked on public opinion and the media. This and other similar cases of the period are a clear indication that real risks were taken by people of faith (interview with Glen Thammert, August 2011).

The concept of modern day sanctuary had been evoked two decades earlier in a completely different context by the Reverend William Coffin, chaplain of Yale University, and an ardent anti-war campaigner. He supported those young people who were evading the draft into the armed forces to fight in Vietnam, and in 1967 offered the chapel at Yale as a sanctuary for draft evaders. However the university authorities banned such use of the chapel, and instead he held a church service elsewhere where he accepted draft cards handed in to him and returned them to the authorities. In January 1968 he, together with a number of prominent peace campaigners, was charged with conspiracy to aid and abet draft resistance. He was convicted in June 1968, although this was overturned on appeal in 1970 (The Times, 14 April 2006; Marfleet, 2011a).

In the present day there are still many vulnerable migrants in need of support and assistance in the United States. It is not possible in the space of this paper to enter into a detailed discussion of the complexities of the US immigration system, or the highly contentious nature of the present climate on this issue. However, it is the case that currently there are very large numbers of undocumented migrants, largely originating from Mexico and other Latin American countries. For example, in California around 10% of the workforce are undocumented. Around 70% of undocumented migrants are employed and many have children born in the US (Jiminez, 2011; Passel and Kohn, 2009).

In addition, since the terrorist attacks of 2001, it has been considerably more difficult to claim or be granted asylum in the United States (Kerwin, 2011). It is harder to gain access to the country in the first place in order to make a claim, and eligibility criteria have been considerably tightened, with a heightened burden of proof. Legal representation is difficult to obtain and without it there is a strong likelihood of failure.

Also the system has significant and concerning inconsistencies. A study between 2004 and 2007 showed that in one town rates of positive determination of asylum claims varied between 2% and 70% depending on which judge presided at hearings (Kerwin, 2011).

As a locally based community response to those vulnerable migrants needing support, a New Sanctuary Movement, finding its roots in the original Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s, has developed in a number of US cities. Like the Cities of Sanctuary movement in Britain it is a social movement rather than a formal organisation. The movement began in 2007 and public declarations of intent were held in a number of cities right across the US. It was seen as a response to the rising anti-immigrant feeling and increasingly punitive immigration policies, and particularly instances, of which there were many, where families have been broken up through deportation (Washing (Seattle) NSM, May 2011).

Like the Sanctuary movement in Britain the disparate local coalitions keep in touch through a loose network and meet once a year for mutual reinforcement and to

campaign together in a show of strength. The extent of activities varies greatly between different locations. In some places congregations are keen to be involved but may lack support from the wider community or other congregations, or simply lack the resources or facilities to engage in practical action, as was reported to be the case in Austin, Texas (email discussion with church member, Austin, Texas, 16 May 2011).

In Chicago the New Sanctuary Coalition is extensive and active. The opening paragraph of its brochure states that:

“The Chicago New Sanctuary Coalition is an inter faith coalition of religious leaders, congregations and communities, called by our faith to respond actively and publicly to the suffering of our immigrant sisters and brothers. Through prayer, reflection, education, relationship building and action we will welcome immigrants and collectively work to bring that welcoming spirit to the whole community”

(CNSC brochure supplied by member for this research)

The movement in Chicago participates in the Inter Faith Committee for Detained Immigrants. Activities of this committee include a regular prayer vigil at an immigration detention centre, to “support those who are in immigration detention, the families of those in detention, and to be a public witness to the injustices of our immigration system”. Clergy and members of congregations also accompany those being deported on buses on the way to the airport, offering them support and prayer. Members also visit inside detention centres and prisons and act as ‘witnesses of proceedings in the immigration court (CNSC brochure, 2011).

The movement in Washington State carries out many similar activities, and has held public demonstrations at which members have been arrested, and occupied an immigration court building. Their work is particularly focused on preventing the splitting up of families, and the deportation of parents with children who are US citizens or were taken to the country as young children. Here is an extract from a letter sent to the immigration court by a ten year old boy whose mother was under threat of deportation:

“why do you do this huh? Well we’re all the same to God. What makes us different? Tell me one reason why we should go. We grow crops for you, clean for you...do you like to get dirty?...please let us stay here, we respect you but you don’t respect us”

(letter dated July 7, 2010, supplied by member of Washington State New Sanctuary Coalition)

As well as this type of activity, the modern movement has also been offering physical sanctuary to some people in immediate danger of deportation (see for example Bazaar, 2007). In 2008 it was reported that more than a dozen people were at that time living in church sanctuary in various states (Tareen, 2008). Other faith communities have considered but decided against taking the step of offering physical sanctuary. In Arizona “the atmosphere has been so toxic that we made an on the ground determination that it would not be ethical to put desperate people into such a perilous situation” (email conversation, Phoenix Arizona, 12 May 2011)

The effectiveness of the New Sanctuary Movement has been mixed in differing locations. In some cities and congregations whilst ministers and pastors have been enthusiastic about becoming involved, their congregations have been less committed, and therefore practical action has not resulted, or has taken place in a very limited way (conversation with Grace Yukich, Princeton, 22nd July 2011).

In parallel to the New Sanctuary movement another locally based response to supporting vulnerable migrants is taking place in the United States. This movement is focused on a conflict between federal immigration laws and their implementation on a local level. Previously immigration law has been largely a federal preserve, but recently the issue has polarised communities and local authorities and police forces into anti and pro immigrant 'camps'.

However, as O'Neil (2010) points out, local or state level desire to control immigration policies is not entirely new. The city of New York had powers in the mid 19th century to regulate immigrants in a distinct way at variance to federal arrangements, giving rise even then to Supreme Court challenges on the matter. During the First World War some localities formally declared English as the first language as a response to anti-German sentiments, and in the 1980s some similar declarations were made, in some cases declaring English as the sole permitted language (O'Neil, 2010).

O'Neil traces the origins of the new move towards local immigration declarations to 2006, at which time there was a conflictual public debate on immigration issues, with opinions sharply polarised. In July of 2006 the Town Council of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, passed an Illegal Immigration Relief Act. The Act would have not only been restrictive towards those without status, but imposed a raft of regulation on all citizens. For example anyone renting accommodation would have been required to obtain a license confirming their immigration status.

The Act would have also, amongst other things, required employers to submit employees' information for verification against immigration records, and would have allowed legal employees to sue employers if they took on anyone without status. Alarming, any citizen would have been able to request investigation of the immigration status of anyone else.

This was never implemented due to legal challenges by the civil rights movement, but it brought the issues to national prominence. However, one can tell the strength of the determination of the city of Hazleton to take control of this issue by the fact that city authorities are said to have spent \$5million on legal costs and are still pursuing the matter to the Supreme Court, with their insurers mounting their own legal action to have themselves absolved of responsibility for the mounting costs (O'Neil, 2010; Hoy, 2009).

Controversially, the growing number of companies operating private prisons in the US have been accused of campaigning for and supporting harsh immigration ordinances because they are paid by the prisoner, and increasingly immigration detainees are locked up in private prisons (Wood, 2011).

Nowhere has the issue of local restrictive ordinances been more contentious and bitter than in Arizona. The Arizona ordinance has been described as one of the most

stringent and punitive in the country, and has given rise to huge opposition from a wide cross section of the community. Farmers have been alarmed at the prospect of losing much of their labour force to detention and deportation. A number of individuals and groups have filed legal challenges and even many of the local law enforcement officers who would have to enforce the law have publicly denounced it (Robertson, 2011). The church has been at the forefront of opposition, with four bishops filing legal challenges to the new law in early August 2011, stating that it was infringing their freedom to practice their religion.

In contrast to this negative and restrictive response by some communities, others have reacted in an opposite manner and become known as 'Sanctuary Cities', where local law enforcement officers do not cooperate with federal immigration authorities, and operate a very 'light touch' in respect of immigration status. San Francisco was one of the earliest cities in the US to formally declare its intention not to cooperate with the federal immigration authorities (Martin (2010)). Since 1989 the city's administrative code prohibits local law enforcement officers from cooperating with the federal immigration authorities or enforcing federal immigration law, and the code explicitly designates San Francisco as a 'City of Refuge'. From 2009 the city has also issued a local residents' identity card, one of the first cities to do so. This card is available to anyone able to prove that they live in San Francisco, and acts as a passport to vital public services, irrespective of immigration status. A similar scheme is successfully operating in Princeton, New Jersey.

The city authorities believe that immigrants, even if undocumented, bring many economic and social benefits to the community, and that cooperation with stringent federal policies breaks down trust and threatens community safety. However in recent times this stance has been threatened by San Francisco being compelled to take part in the federal 'Secure Communities' programme. This programme is operated by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and entails matching the fingerprints of anyone arrested (even for very minor infringements) with a federal database to check immigration status.

If found not to have legal immigration status the person is liable for deportation, even if the offence is extremely minor (Martin, 2010). The programme has faced fierce opposition in many cities where it has been implemented, and given rise to much strident debate and controversy. Local administrations consider that enforcing 'Secure Communities' risks breaking down any trust built up in the community and makes people fearful of reporting crime or cooperating with the authorities. In Phoenix Arizona, the Secure Communities programme has been said to "be the source of a lot of suffering and injustice" (email discussion with member of Arizona Interfaith Alliance for Worker Justice, 12th May 2011).

The reasons for some communities rejecting strict immigration ordinances are not simplistic; such attitudes are not always born out of a desire to be humanitarian and welcoming to immigrants, rather sometimes hard economic factors come into play (Hoy, 2009). In many cases the labour of undocumented migrants is vital to the local economy, and local authorities have no wish to pay out vast sums on possible law suits if local ordinances are challenged.

Hoy (2009) provides some examples, for instance the town of Farmers Branch, Texas, a suburb of Dallas, spent \$3 million in legal fees in the three years between 2006 and

2009 due to challenges to restrictionist policies. In Tomball, Texas, a suburb of Houston, motives for rejection of harsh policies were both economic and humanitarian, and included sensitivity to the town's public image. There was no will to reduce the pool of local labour and the market for rented housing, neither was there a desire to have the town "on the national map of racism and hatred"; in fact even the local councillor who originally proposed the anti-immigration ordinance in Tomball voted against it when all the arguments against had been aired, and the proposal was unanimously rejected (Hoy, 2009).

Another frequently cited reason for a 'light touch' approach to immigration enforcement, and a lack of cooperation with federal authorities, is that harsh regimes involving constant checks of resident's immigration status destroys trust of local communities in the police and thus is detrimental to community safety (Chishti et al, 2003; Tramonte, 2011).

Whilst these cities and towns mark themselves out as Sanctuary Cities, other places across the US have responded in the opposite manner by implementing, or seeking to implement, anti-immigration ordinances in a similar vein to that proposed for Hazleton Pennsylvania (above), seeking to strengthen local ability to respond negatively towards undocumented migrants (O'Neil, 2010; Ramakrishnan and Wong, 2007). Such ordinances seek to restrict the possibility of employment for such migrants by controlling 'day labour' hiring, requiring stringent checks by landlords and employers regarding immigration status, and having closer communications between local authorities and federal immigration authorities.

In the year 2006-7 O'Neil (2010) calculates that 118 localities sought to bring in such ordinances, many closely modelled on the Hazleton proposal.

There is currently no reliable data on how many of these were passed, but it is known that 11 passed policies that brought local police forces into the realm of immigration law enforcement. More than 30 localities passed regulations enforcing in some way English as the local official language, governing how services were delivered. 17 localities passed restrictions to access to housing.

Ramakrishnan and Wong (2007) found that political factors were a strong predictor of whether or not an area was likely to propose and implement such anti-immigrant ordinances, rather than economic factors causing conflict over resource allocation. Republican voting areas were found to be twice as likely as strongly Democrat voting areas to propose such ordinances.

O'Neil (2010) concludes that a major factor in how likely local towns and cities are to seek to pass such restrictive ordinances is the rate of change in the community, i.e. the rate of growth in the immigrant population. The actual size of immigrant and ethnic minority communities within an area is not found to be relevant in this regard; rather it is adjusting to the rate of change that is important (and see Hopkins, 2011b). However O'Neil also supports the view of Ramakrishnan and Wong (2007) that Republican voting is an indicator of support for restrictive action against immigrants. There are other anecdotal factors reported, such as the occurrence of a high profile crime, car accident or similar incident involving an unauthorised immigrant (and see for example MacDonald, 2010). However the general rate of crime in an area does not appear to influence negative attitudes (Hopkins, 2010).

We can see from all the above that there is a wide range of community based activity to support vulnerable immigrants taking place across the United States, including practical support, prayer and witness, and campaigns for a more just immigration system. There are also serious challenges and bitter and contentious battles taking place in many locations, often involving conflict between different layers of law and public administration. As this research is completed, there has been one significant victory for those seeking to improve what they see as a flawed immigration regime.

This centres around the fact that many of those threatened with deportation have been young people taken into the United States as young children by their parents. They find themselves with no legal status but having known no other real home and wishing to remain and contribute to society. The deportation of such young people has been the grounds for the strongest of the objections to immigration processes. On 18th August 2011 it was announced that such deportations would be suspended (Pear, 2011), a significant victory for those working for immigrant rights in the US.

Sanctuary and solidarity in Latin America

It is estimated that in 2011 Latin American countries currently host more than 400,000 refugees, asylum seekers and others in need of international protection (UNHCR, 2011b). There are activities aimed at supporting vulnerable migrants in many Latin American countries that are in several aspects similar to those taking place in Britain, Canada and the United States. However the framework in Latin America is somewhat different to the other contexts discussed above. To understand the antecedents it is appropriate to refer to the Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action to Strengthen the Protection of Refugees in Latin America (2004).

This agreement was made in November 2004 by the governments of 20 Latin American countries, with input from other experts including UNHCR and other international NGOs and other third sector organisations. It is intended to form a framework for improved protection of displaced people in Latin America. The agreement was made at a meeting of the participating governments in Mexico City, timed to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (1984).

The Plan seeks to identify long lasting solutions to improving the protection of displaced people in Latin America, and is constructed around three ‘pillars’, all grounded in the concept of solidarity. Solidarity is the theme because as with other approaches discussed above, the aim is to help and improve the living circumstances and opportunities of everyone living in the particular location, both displaced people and host communities.

Solidarity is also relevant because in Latin America, unlike many other regions receiving vulnerable migrants, most of those seeking protection come from other countries in the region, perhaps only from just across the border in the neighbouring country. For example Ecuador and Costa Rica, Panama and Venezuela receive a great many refugees from Columbia (UNHCR Briefing on Mexico Plan of Action; UNHCR, 2009c; Aguilar, 2011). Therefore ‘solidarity’ emphasises sharing of responsibility and a ‘south to south’ approach, countries of the global south cooperating to protect vulnerable and displaced citizens (Aguilar, 2011).

A third reason why solidarity is relevant in this context is that many of the politicians and local officials and others working in positions of responsibility were once themselves refugees. In Chile, the President themselves had once experienced torture and exile under the regime of Pinochet. In addition, many of the ordinary population have experienced conflict and displacement, and may have even returned to their country after a period of exile as a refugee somewhere else. Therefore there is both an official and personal aspect to solidarity with others seeking refuge (UNHCR, 2009a; Varoli, 2010; Smith, 2010).

Two of these pillars of solidarity are related to refugee protection in border regions and resettlement programmes aimed at sharing responsibility for displaced people more fairly amongst different countries in the region. The third pillar is the one most of interest in the context of this paper, the pillar related to Cities of Solidarity. As stated above there are a large number of refugees living in Latin American cities. This applies to both people fleeing their country and internally displaced people, who often end up in large cities seeking support, sometimes having to move around frequently to escape further violence or persecution, and often living in dangerous surroundings such as places prone to mudslides or flooding. They may also be people used to a farming or other rural way of life and find adjusting to survival in a large city very difficult (UNHCR Briefing on Mexico Plan; UNHCR, 2009c).

In common with communities elsewhere that we have discussed earlier in this paper, host communities in these cities can find it difficult to adjust to the arrival of a large number of new arrivals, creating hostility and also in a practical sense putting additional strain on resources. This is particularly relevant in the Latin American context as so many in the host community themselves live in extreme poverty (UNHCR, 2009c). Therefore an approach which seeks to improve situations for the whole community irrespective of immigration status is very important.

In 2004 the idea of Cities of Solidarity was really only an aspirational concept, and to date is not fully developed as a cohesive programme, but is an important framework for work to improve support for displaced people in urban settings. As of January 2011 there were 16 formally declared Cities of Solidarity in 7 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Uruguay and Venezuela.

UNHCR reaches cooperation agreements with the municipal authorities in participating cities. Importantly it is usual for these agreements to be formally ratified in a manner that means that they remain in place as policies even if local administrations change over time (Varoli, 2010). In all cases the commitment of local government officials and municipal authorities is central to the delivery and success of City of Solidarity programmes.

Their role is to assess the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, and establishing action plans to address these needs. Such plans may include programmes for housing, education, employment and training, health and welfare services, help to start businesses, or credit unions, amongst other things (Varoli, 2010). Below is an overview of some of the activities taking place, demonstrating the range of support provided.

Montevideo in Uruguay has included the University in its City of Solidarity programme, where the University shows commitment to the integration and welcome

of refugees by promoting access to higher education and encouraging and facilitating access to the professions for refugees. Lago Agrio in northern Ecuador is another formally declared City of Solidarity. Sucumbios, the region where Lago Agrio is located, is home to many thousands of refugees from Columbia. In the real spirit of solidarity, Brazil is supporting the work in Ecuador supporting and integrating refugees in Sucumbio. The Brazilian government is supporting a number of projects in education, water and sanitation provision and initiatives to combat gender based violence (Aguilar, 2011), with organisational and administrative support from UNHCR.

Again the key is to benefit everyone in the community. Examples include additional primary school classrooms, new public lavatories and a new children's playground, and support for a centre for women victims of domestic violence. In an interview at the Open Cities conference in Quito, Ecuador in October 2010 the Mayor of Lago Agrio, Marco Antonio Enriquez Maldonado stated that it was important to ensure refugee programmes improved life for all citizens, as this was the way to combat hostility and build community cohesion (Durango and Aguilar, 2010).

This theme was echoed by the Mayor of another of the Cities of Solidarity (Durango and Aguilar, 2010) at the same conference, stating that it was extremely important to change attitudes in the host community; this should not be done in a proscriptive way but by demonstrating that:

“...we are all human beings, all live on one planet, all have the freedom to decide where to live and to learn from our differences, to learn the most positive and create a better society worldwide. That's one of our greatest responsibilities and requires leadership..”.

Norman Ray, Chair of the Bureau of Human Mobility in Quito, Ecuador, another Solidarity City, reinforced this point, stating that it was not enough to seek to foster tolerance, but rather what was required was respect between communities (Durango and Aguilar, 2010).

Not all refugees in the region originate from other Latin American countries. The city of La Calera in Chile is also a Solidarity City, and in 2008 welcomed a group of Palestinian refugees from a camp on the Syria/Iraq border (Varoli, 2010; UNHCR, 2011a). Although headed by local government initiative, the hosting of the Palestinian refugees won strong support from all types of community groups and individual volunteers. All the refugee children were sponsored by local Chilean families and local companies made offers of employment to the adults. Although subsistence payments were made, it was an important part of the integration programme to encourage self-sufficiency in the long term (UNHCR, 2011a).

One important aspect of Cities of Solidarity is to promote the visibility of refugees and asylum seekers, often involving the media to promote a positive message to the wider community. This not only helps dispel myths and combat host community hostility, but also increases the social capital and social networks available to refugees (Varoli, 2010).

The role of the media in delivering positive messages about refugees was well recognised in the case of the resettlement of the Palestinian refugees in Chile. It was

realised that immigration and asylum was not an issue about which the Chilean public knew a great deal, and that migration was often viewed in terms of economic migrants who were seen as competition for scarce resources and ‘undeserving’. Therefore a robust publicity campaign including information press conferences was undertaken prior to the arrival of the refugees (UNHCR, 2011a).

One very good illustration of how programmes in a Solidarity City can work is the case of Desamparados in Costa Rica, a part of the larger city of San Jose but a large urban conurbation in its own right. It is the third largest city in Costa Rica, and one of the most impoverished and densely populated. The estimated population is around 250,000 and it is also estimated that as many as 20% of the population are migrants and refugees (UNHCR, 2010b).

Some districts may have as many as 50% of their population as migrants from Nicaragua.

A central focus for work with refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants in Desamparados is the House of Rights. This project resulted from an agreement in 2007 between the municipal authorities in the city and UNHCR, with other partners including the University of Costa Rica. The aim is to provide vulnerable migrants and disadvantaged members of the local community with access to legal rights and advocacy, and to various forms of social support, including health services, employment and education.

The project also includes access to counselling services, particularly related to sexual and gender based violence. A service for labour market rights, a micro finance project and a youth project were included from 2010. the House of Rights seeks to empower its users and also provide an integrated service linked to other public services in the city. Public legal education is important, ensuring that users are informed about their rights and how to assert them.

Another important aspect of the project is the use of its premises for other community activities. This provides a space for community activities that are open to all, organised with a strong emphasis on equalities and inclusiveness. The House brings the community together and seeks again to improve the situation of the whole community (UNHCR, 2010a; UNHCR, 2010b; UNHCR, 2008; Podesta, 2008).

The role of faith

As we have seen from the above discussions, faith communities and people of faith play an important part in supportive responses towards refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants, although Snyder (2011) points out that migration studies rarely includes religion in its analysis. As Inderjit Bhogal (2009) points out, only once in the Bible is the command ‘love thy neighbour’ to be found, although it is so often quoted; however the command to ‘love the stranger’ is to be found repeated 37 times.

The reasons for the important role of faith are many and varied, and not as simplistic as might first appear. Many debates have been had as to the extent that biblical scripture for example justifies or commands Christians to offer sanctuary and reach out to the stranger (see for example Biema, 2007). Grace Yukich has conducted

research on such work in the United States, and explored the nature of motivations of people of faith when engaging in this type of work.

In her view, not only are people of faith motivated by their religious belief that they are called to help others, particularly the vulnerable and persecuted, but they are also influenced by a wish to change public perceptions of organised religion. In recent times in the United States there has been a tendency for organised Christian religion to be framed as associated with the right wing of politics, conservatism and Republicanism, and Ms Yukich considers that such work can be viewed by participant congregations and individual people of faith as a means of countering this perception and presenting what they feel is a more liberal and acceptable public face to their religion (conversation with Grace Yukich, Princeton, 22nd July 2011)(see also Wuthnow, 2004; Dionne, 2008).

However Ms Yukich also points out elsewhere (Yukich, 2010) that, when asked about their motivations for engaging in such work and the role of their religious faith in these motivations, people can change the way they portray the significance of their faith depending on the context and situation. For example, when discussing their activism with others in their faith community they may stress the strong religious foundations of their motivation, whilst with friends outside this community they may indicate other aspects such as a broad moral basis for their actions, or if advocating for their cause with outside bodies they may stress more technical or legal aspects. Clearly the aim is to further the main cause by framing it in a way that they feel that the audience will be most responsive. Therefore discussions of motivations must be viewed in this light.

Gibson (1990) looked at the motivations of those engaged in the original sanctuary movement in the United States in the 1980s. That research found that participants perceived that the state was itself breaking the law through its actions, and in addition behaving immorally, and therefore there was a dual reason for becoming involved. Gibson found that not only was the religious faith of participants important in motivating them to help others in extreme circumstances important, but also some participants valued the risk and danger that they put themselves through by their involvement.

The risk and danger was a demonstration of their faith to others and made them feel ‘good about themselves’, as if they were really sacrificing something in order to help others, not doing something with little actual cost. Gibson also echoes Yukich (above) in suggesting that motivations can include changing public perceptions of the church, quoting one research respondent as saying “...only two things get more valuable when stepped on-Persian rugs and the church”.

In addition to the motivations that faith communities may bring to this type of activity, many authors have drawn attention to other facets of this sector which can be seen as strengths. In the United States context Eby et al (2010; 2011) point to the fact that faith based groups are firmly rooted on a permanent basis in communities and a linkage to a broader geographical network of other congregations and contacts which can be utilised to provide resources or mobilise activism.

These aims are echoed in Cairns et al (2007) research on the role of churches in delivering social support in local communities. Although this research is not in the

context of support for vulnerable migrants, but rather work with the community more widely, it identifies factors that make some congregations ideally suited to this type of work. Cairns et al show that congregations are well placed to understand local needs, often have within their number skills in leadership and organising, are likely to have buildings which can be utilised for community purposes, and often are able to call upon willing volunteers (see Snyder, 2011).

However the research points out that these things cannot be taken for granted and sometimes congregations will lack the capacity to take on work with the wider community, perhaps through lack of skills, time, confidence or having enough support from the whole congregation. Faith communities have strengths in crossing many societal boundaries and in having links to a wider geographic network (Snyder, 2011)

Snyder (2011) sees a twofold role for faith communities in the support of vulnerable migrants, which she characterises as ‘settling’ and ‘unsettling’. The settling comes from the practical work with asylum seekers and refugees, and the unsettling aspect is about challenging stereotypes and working to eliminate hostility and intolerance within the wider community. Again we see the theme of combining practical action with working for attitudinal and systemic change.

Rowlands (2011) has a different perspective on what faith communities can bring to the support of vulnerable migrants. Rowlands highlights three forms of justice which are said to be fundamental to those of religious faith. Firstly distributive justice speaks to meeting basic needs for protection, and fair access to legal advice, legal aid and freedom from destitution. It also looks to fair distribution of the world’s resources, in an attempt to alleviate some of the causes of migration, not only focusing on food and water, but more widely on the effects of poverty, conflict and genocide.

Secondly contributive justice stresses participation, ensuring that those affected by laws and rules have the ability to shape them, the ability to choose where to live and work (all denied to asylum seekers). Thirdly commutative justice is about relationships and how we are treated by others, in this context by immigration officers and others in positions of power in the immigration system. Rowlands argues that the sensitivity to these forms of justice in people of faith makes them well suited to work for rights of vulnerable migrants. However it could be debated how much these are preserves of faith or simply of humanity.

Working as equals

Before drawing our conclusions on all the discussions above, it is worth pointing out that many people, both researchers and practitioners, point out that there are inherent dangers in working with people seeking sanctuary, in that is sometimes a temptation to treat them as vulnerable and helpless victims. Nail (2010) discusses this in the context of Canada, describing a move away from charity and benevolence to responsibility. Again in the Canadian context, Nadeau (2007) writes that:

“we do not see the asylum seeker or refugee as tragic victim whom we are saving by our good works. Rather it means that we acknowledge that we are in a relationship, one that is shaped by a country and a religion with more than 500 years of colonial past”

Varoli (2010) sees this sense of responsibility and lack of paternalism as a strength of the Cities of Solidarity programme in Latin America, and Darling (2011) highlights the issue on a micro scale in his very vivid description of a drop in centre for asylum seekers. He points out the dynamics of being host and guest, and the importance of reciprocity. An example he describes is where the volunteers in the drop in centre are reluctant to let asylum seekers make the tea and put out the biscuits, a role which they see as their own preserve.

This may seem a trivial issue, but Darling uses it to illustrate how well meaning motives can sometimes translate in a subtle way into exertion of power, and disempowerment of those whom we seek to benefit. He points out that even in the giving of care there is an inherent power imbalance because “compassion can be withdrawn on a whim, there is no penalty for not caring” (p.9). Squire (2011) reinforces this point in her relation of a situation where asylum seekers cooked and served food for police and immigration officials, “momentarily or partially disrupting established social hierarchies through their hosting”. As Snyder (2011) says, it is important to ‘struggle with’ rather than ‘struggle for’, and this might be taken as a true meaning of solidarity.

Conclusion: sanctuary, solidarity and conflict

This paper has identified a number of commonalities in the responses to vulnerable migrants that it has discussed, more than might have been expected in such disparate settings. We have seen that local leadership is important, that approaches that serve the whole community are more likely to succeed, that faith plays an important part in many initiatives and that solidarity and sanctuary have resonances both across time and geographic spaces. However if we were to identify one single theme for this paper, it would be that of conflict. Most of the situations described here are characterised by conflict of one kind or another.

Firstly, the context for any work of this kind is the competing need of host communities and new arrivals. Halfani and Toner (2008) state that it is “a challenge to deal with a fear of difference and the other, and competition for resources...these exert a profound influence over the fabric of social relations” (p6). However it is important not to stifle debate, conflict must be played out or it will be more destructive. Competition for resources whether real or perceived can be particularly relevant in the Latin American context, where both new arrivals and hosts may be experiencing extreme poverty and disadvantage.

Another clearly identifiable sphere of conflict is that between law and morality, or law and faith. We have seen many instances where people have defied the law to do what they believed to be right. Gibson (1990) states that those involved in the original sanctuary movement in the US considered that they were both upholding the law and traditional American values, that what the state was doing was so aberrant that it was itself breaking the law. Dalton (2008) sees it as the church standing outside the realm of the state, transcending national boundaries: “The church occupies a moral, conceptual and existential space, separate and apart from the nation state” As Nadeau () points out, the Roman Catholic catechism explicitly states that “the citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order”; but how do we in practice decide where

will place ourselves in the intersection of law and morality if placed in such a situation?

And these are not the only spheres of conflict, for we can see in the story of the New Sanctuary movement the conflict between two aspects of migrant rights, as portrayed in the interview from Phoenix, Arizona above. Providing sanctuary can make a powerful point in the campaign for a fairer immigration system, raising the public profile and renewing the debate, but might it put the individual who is in sanctuary at great risk?

Perhaps the most complex of the conflicts relevant here is that between local and federal law in the US in relation to Sanctuary Cities and anti-immigration ordinances, for here we cannot say that the law of the land is pitted against a moral code or religious conviction, although they may play some part. In this situation it is a battle between two sets of law at different levels in the same country. Hence this conflict has been viewed as threatening the very fabric of the American republic itself (see for example Walsh, 2005).

We can conclude that sanctuary, with all its connotations of a safe haven, protection and welcome, and solidarity, implying something solid and reliable, in a sense immovable, are only achieved at some cost, often considerable. This cost may be for individuals or whole communities. In seeking to provide hospitality, support and refuge for vulnerable migrants it appears that there will always be difficult conflicts to resolve.

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