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Faith, Freedom, and Humanitarian Governance: The Spatial Politics of Church Asylum in Europe

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Introduction

Thus each individual is solicited as a potential ally of economic success. Personal employment and macro-economic health is to be ensured by encouraging individuals to 'capitalize' themselves, to invest in the management, presentation, promotion and enhancement of their own economic capital as a capacity of their selves and as a lifelong project.

-Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, p. 162

I don't have to win. I've won already.

-Pauliina Parhiala, Director Chief Operating Officer, ACT-Alliance

The publication and translation of Foucault's last lectures from the Collège de France generated a profusion of original work on neoliberalism and governmentality. Much of this work is concerned with the nature of *homo economicus*, and how individuals and populations are governed through the rationalities of freedom in advanced liberalism (Burchell, Gordon & Miller, 1991; Foucault, 2010; Lemke, 2001; Ong, 2006; Read, 2009; Rose, 1999, 2007). These theories advanced ideas of the rational, choice-making actor, who acts under competitive conditions to develop his or her own human capital. In these conceptualizations, liberal governance consists primarily of providing the incentives and expert knowledge so that this individual can, and indeed must, utilize his or her freedom to make appropriate cost-benefit calculations and life choices.

Critiques of the governmentality literature point to the abstracted, generally top-down, overly coherent and frequently univocal view that are among its most problematic characteristics (Brady, 2014; Cadman, 2010; O'Malley, Weir & Shearing 1997). There is often more of an intellectual focus on the programs, technologies and rationalities of governance rather than the ways in which they might (or might not) be actually implemented and experienced. Lippert and Brady (2016), among others, stress the importance of employing ethnographic methods to see just how these governing apparatuses might connect or fail, and in what ways people act in response to them (see also Brady, 2016; Mitchell and Lizotte, 2016; Shields, 2016). In order to understand, not just the liberal programs and technologies of governance but also their execution and reception, they contend that it is necessary to wade into the shambolic world of people's lives and observe and talk with them about their values, motivations, and everyday practices.

In addition to the critiques of theory operating at a distance, there have also been arguments against an overweening focus on neoliberalism and its subjectifying dominance (Gibson-Graham, 1996; Larner, 2003). These critiques are based on the importance of widening our theoretical purview so that we can recognize alternative, non-liberal and/or non-capitalist forms of economic and social governance (Gibson-Graham, 2005; Larner and Le Heron, 2002; Larner and Craig, 2005; Ley and Tse, 2013). Without a broader and more inclusive vision of the multiple determinants of power, it is argued, academics run the risk of both missing what's going on at the margins, and reifying the central object of study.

The publication of Foucault's later work helped support this analytical framing, as it indicated, more clearly than in his earlier volumes, his interest in theorizing multiple forms of power operating simultaneously (Collier, 2009; Elden, 2016). Rather than previous, more rigidly epistemic interpretations of a move from sovereignty to discipline to governmentality (biopower), for example, scholars such as Collier (2009) argue for thinking in terms of constellations of power or 'topologies.' In his view, there is no clear linear path to increasingly advanced liberal modes of thought and technologies of governance (e.g., through concepts of freedom), but rather a constellation of emerging liberal and non-liberal rationalities that must be investigated in context.

In this paper, I expand on these ideas through a grounded analysis of the complex topologies of power operating in contemporary humanitarianism, specifically actions taken on behalf of forced migrants.¹ I'm interested in the rationalities and practices of faith-based actors, their assumptions and beliefs that are different from (and often juxtaposed with) liberal norms, and the productive intertwining of these webs of belief with those of secular governments and liberal organizations (cf. Ager, 2011; Barnett and Stein, 2012; Ley and Tse, 2013; Miller, 2015; Moyn, 2014, 2015).² In particular, I look at this constellation of power through an investigation of church actors and their work in support of migrants through the provision of church asylum, also known as sanctuary (cf. Cunningham, 1995; Lippert, 2005; Lippert and Rehaag, 2013; Marfleet, 2011; Neufert, 2014; Rabben, 2016; Snyder, 2012). In Europe, church asylum is the process of providing church protection for those migrants at risk of deportation—a process involving the person's removal either to the EU country of first arrival,³ or back to the original home

state. In most contemporary European sanctuary practices churches provide accommodation and basic support for this group so that they can avoid or delay deportation long enough to receive another asylum hearing.⁴

I argue that there are multiple understandings of space, time, and freedom that diverge from liberal norms, and which motivate and sustain many faith-based actors to work on behalf of forced migrants. These ‘alternative’ webs of belief are often juxtaposed with more normative liberal understandings of human rights and/or the rule of law. In actions in support of migrants sometimes these diverse rationalities are complementary, and at other times they conflict, but in both cases new political formations and alliances are produced. Studying these processes is important because it can help us to identify transformations in the nature of humanitarian governance that are having, and will continue to have, ramifications for migration policy and related practices.

I also contend that it is through grounded, ethnographic methods such as observation, participation, and interviews that one can best capture the co-constitution of these topologies and emerging forms of political governance. The data here was collected in Europe over a period of four months in autumn, 2016. In addition to gathering archival and online materials, I spoke with and interviewed over 50 pastors, priests, church administrators, leaders and members of activist church networks, politicians, EU bureaucrats, IGO administrators, aid workers, and migrants in the following cities: Geneva, Vienna, Berlin, Brussels, Athens, and Mytilene. I also attended a number of faith-based conferences, including a Eurodiaconia conference in Vienna and a German Ecumenical Committee on Church Asylum (GECCA) conference in Berlin.

In the following section of the paper I briefly chart the growing importance of faith-based organizations (FBOs) in migration over the past decade. Following this I draw on the work of Nikolas Rose to elucidate some contemporary theories of space and freedom in advanced liberalism. I then provide a number of examples of faith-based conceptualizations and practices in the sanctuary movement. In the conclusion I address why I believe these alternative webs of beliefs matter in migration relief work and humanitarian governance more generally.

Faith based actors and migrant-related humanitarian aid in Europe

FBOs have always been central to the delivery of social services and humanitarian aid worldwide (Ager, 2011; Barnett and Stein, 2012; Clarke and Jennings, 2008). In migration aid, in particular, faith-based actors have played a prominent role, especially with respect to the sustained provision of support over time, e.g., after a ‘crisis’ is reportedly over yet assistance is still desperately needed (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2011; Miller, 2015). Directives to help in an ‘emergency’ may derive from nation-states and large intergovernmental organizations such as the UNHCR, but the services and goods provided to migrants are often carried out via the grass-roots practices of local churches, mosques, synagogues, and other faith actors who have been active on the ground for a long time (author’s interview with Ralston Deffenbaugh, Assistant General Secretary for International Affairs and Human Rights, Lutheran World Federation, October 13, 2016;

author's interview with José Riera, UNHCR, October 20, 2016; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2011; Miller, 2015).

Over the last few years this role has become even greater, while simultaneously becoming more public and more legitimate in the eyes of many of the larger secular humanitarian organizations and actors.⁵ José Riera, the former Special Adviser to the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection at the UNHCR, marked out 2012 as a key year in which these partnerships became particularly prominent in migration relief work. He noted that at this time there was an overall greater focus on United Nations inter-governmental cooperation with faith leaders around the globe (author's interview, October 20, 2016). In 2012, for example, the fifth High Commissioner's *Dialogue on Protection Challenges* focused on the topic of 'Faith and Protection,' highlighting the 'important role that faith-based organizations and local religious communities play in protecting asylum-seekers, refugees, the internally displaced and stateless people.'⁶

According to Riera, the *Dialogue*, organizing for the event and the meeting itself were catalysts for creating stronger cooperation and alliances between the UNHCR and faith-based actors. Another tangible outcome of the event was the creation of a document entitled, 'Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders,' written in early 2013 by UNHCR actors, religious experts, academics, and FBOs (author's interview, October 20, 2016; Riera and Poirier, 2014).⁷ The 'Welcoming' text functions as a Code of Conduct for religious groups to stand together against fear and xenophobia, and as a practical tool to develop support for refugees in diverse faith communities. Its message has circulated widely since its publication, and its goal of interfaith understanding has

been revisited over the past few years in a number of venues and events. In 2014, for example, the Lutheran World Federation signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Islamic Relief Worldwide that involved developing a major interfaith humanitarian collaboration. One year later, in 2015, the *Dialogue* event and the ‘Welcoming’ document were both invoked in a major interfaith humanitarian coalition entitled, ‘The Role of Faith in Refugee Protection.’⁸

These alliances between faith communities, and between FBOs and secular actors in humanitarian efforts, have been increasing in other areas as well. The International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) has become a major player in sustainable development and humanitarianism since its 2016 initiation at the Berlin conference, ‘Partners for change—religions and the 2030 agenda.’ PaRD, which ‘aspires to act as a facilitator between secular actors and religious communities,’ is composed of both bilateral agencies such as USAID and BMZ, and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the UN family.⁹ It promotes and encourages religious organizations to join it as partners alongside foundations, networks and other actors in civil society.

The turn to greater and more public FBO assistance in migration relief and advocacy over the past several years is most likely the result of a number of different but interrelated factors. These include neoliberal reforms and a corresponding casualization of labor and movement between sectors in the humanitarian relief industry; a paucity of funds available from secular channels of aid; and possibly a concern about non-transparent funding from Islamic relief organizations in the wake of terrorist attacks in Europe.¹⁰ Additionally, the sheer volume and quality of migration assistance from faith

communities demanded some form of recognition. As a result of these processes, in the current era there are now more prominent international church networks and other types of faith-based partnerships operating with and alongside the EU, national actors, IGOs, NGOs, and secular philanthropists in migration relief. This constellation of groups and alliances manifests a new structure of humanitarian governance, one that I argue is distinctive in its operations from primarily secular, advanced liberal partnerships, and thus important to probe further (see also Ager, 2011; Ley and Tse, 2013; Moyn, 2015).

Governing through freedom

As the twenty-first century begins, the ethics of freedom have come to underpin our conceptions of how we should be ruled, how our practices of everyday life should be organized, how we should understand ourselves and our predicament (Rose, 1999: 62).

In *Powers of Freedom*, Rose asks if freedom is the ultimate achievement of 21st century Western government—advancing the notion that we are now governed, not through opposition to government, as is suggested in the political doctrine of 18th and 19th century forms of liberalism, but rather through freedom itself. Through conducting a Foucauldian style genealogy of the history of freedom he aims to show how this has indeed happened—how ‘we’ have become the subjects of freedom. This has not happened naturally or randomly, he argues, but through historical design—through multiple techniques and strategies of power.

In this conceptualization, the way in which an individual acts has to do with the techniques and programs of governance operative at different historical moments.

Calculative entrepreneurial subjects are specific to the contemporary era of late 20th and

early 21st century free market capitalism and advanced or ‘neo’ forms of liberalism. They are subjects that are both constituted and targeted through choice—through being “active in their own government.” He writes (1999:142): ‘The notion of enterprise thus entails a distinct conception of the human actor – no longer the nineteenth-century economic subject of interests but an entrepreneur of his or her self.’

Rose advances his argument through an analysis of social government, which he contends is restructured in advanced liberalism in a manner that foregrounds an economic logic and corresponding set of programs. These place the enterprise form and economic competition at the center of life, such that all aspects of social behaviour are now reconceptualized along economic lines—as calculative actions undertaken through the universal human faculty of choice (Rose 1999: 142). Choice is the key word here, as it highlights both the freedom of the individual to make calculations and choose how to develop his or her own human capital, while at the same time indicating the narrow parameters of this choice: i.e. both the ‘necessity’ to choose, and the economic framing in which these choices are made.

Rose points to social undertakings in a variety of areas, including education, health, insurance, and welfare, which individuals can, and indeed must, manipulate and use to their advantage—that is, in ways that contribute to their own effective constitution as economic beings (*homo economicus*). Through instrumental decisions and calculative actions in every area of social life, individuals render their choices through a series of cost-benefit assessments. As effective entrepreneurs of themselves, they make these

assessments in ways that aid in their self-actualization and the development of their highest capacities.

Important corollaries to these powers of freedom are those of competition and accountability. In order to maximize their own life chances, rational subjects of advanced liberalism must compete for the best situations and positions. They have to win against others. These competitions, moreover, must take place on a level playing field, one where all are accountable to the rules of the game, and where these rules are codified and an individual or institution's actions and successes are measurable in universal, transparent ways. Good governance consists in establishing the conditions in which these competitions can take place in fair, rational, and accountable forms, and in sharing these regulatory 'best practices' between actors and across sectors (cf. Brady and Lippert, 2016; Corbridge, Williams, Srivastava and Véron, 2005; Dean, 1999; Morison, 2000; Swyngedouw, 2005).

Additionally, for this form of governance to operate as a freedom, these conditions of constant competition and assessment must be perceived as rational and sensible—as the only possible permutations of good governance. They must comprise the moral order of the day, such that individuals understand their own competition and entrepreneurialism as appropriate—as a form of civility. And as self-perceived moral agents, individuals not only must participate in their own self-actualization through these civil practices of economic competition, but also help to establish the regulatory conditions through which they and others can continue to practice this form of freedom. Rose (1999:72) writes:

These practices governed through freedom, to the extent that they sought to invent the conditions in which subjects themselves would enact the responsibilities that composed their liberties. Individuals would have to be equipped with a moral agency that would shape their conduct within a space of action that was necessarily indeterminate.

The moral subject of advanced liberalism thus makes choices according to a common sense understanding of freedom. Moreover, the individual's understanding is shaped by—and shapes—the temporal and spatial context in which the 'space of action' occurs. In the next section I look at the ways in which these abstract ideas are grounded through Rose's identification of some specific spatial techniques and programs shaping understanding and conduct in advanced liberalism. These brief examples are offered as a counterpoint to the 'sacred' spaces of sanctuary and sense of expanded time or 'God's time' that I will present in the ensuing section.

Liberal freedom's governance through space

Rose (1999: 72) writes of the calculated spatial projects of advanced liberalism: 'The government of freedom can first be analysed in terms of the invention of technologies of spaces and gazes, the birth of calculated projects to use space to govern the conduct of individuals at liberty.' One example of these types of spatial projects is town planning. Healthy cities, Rose contends, are created through urban design and architectural forms that create open spaces and hence nurture civility. Potentially dangerous aggregations of people are avoided since that might lead to chaos or

undesirable alliances. These open, neutral, and transparent spaces aid in the constitution of free and willing subjects, who understand themselves to be acting civilly through their own free will rather than because they are policed or otherwise regulated.

Rose argues that it is through these ‘technologies of spaces and gazes’ that individuals are encouraged to feel and behave in civil ways to each other, despite their inherent autonomy and mutual competition. They are shamed into moral behavior owing to the transparency of spaces—an openness that allows them to be observed and judged by others. Their civil behavior towards others, and public order itself, is regulated through a disciplined approach to normative social codes and a fear of shame resulting from deviation from those codes.

It is thus both the actual physical spaces in which individuals operate as well as the normative assumptions about appropriate behavior in those spaces that shapes how and why people act in the manner they do. Calculated spaces and technologies of care—for our bodies, for our loved ones, for each other—are normalized and rendered as common sense. Moreover, they are made both rational and moral through the introduction of techniques of expertise: those ideas and practices of care understood to be best left to the experts, such as, in this case, spatial planners (Rose, 1999: 75).

Rose’s argument advances our understanding of the ways in which subjects are constituted and governed through the spatial programs of advanced liberalism. His studies, and those of numerous others (see, e.g., Clark and Jones, 2008; Elden, 2007; Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Hannah, 2000; Larner and Walters, 2004; Legg, 2007;

Mitchell, 2002; Moisió and Luukkonen, 2015; Sparke, 2006) have been invaluable in elucidating some of the multiple techniques and practices of governing under liberal regimes, including through socially constructed and spatially underpinned assumptions of freedom. However, recent critiques have also been apt in pointing to the limits of both abstracted, ‘helicopter’ views of governance lacking actors and specific contexts, as well as empirical studies that restrict the investigation to examples of successful liberal governance programs in operation. Both of these critiques highlight the dangers of missing disconnections and failures, as well as alternative rationalities through which subjects may be (co)-constituted. It is this latter critique that I take up in the next two sections, with a study of non-liberal webs of belief and associated practices concerning the concept of freedom and its associated spatial and temporal underpinnings.

Grace, time, and freedom

I don't need to win anything. It has been won for me already... We are given another dimension of tools. There is the tool of prayer, the tool of love, and the tool of hope. This relates to advocacy and refugee work especially well. We need to listen and build a plan together. We need to come together and hope. Not just today but also on the long horizon (author's interview with Parhiala, November 9, 2016).

This quote is from an administrative leader of an activist church-based network working on behalf of European migrants. Her statement was made in response to a question about liberal versus pastoral motivations for her work. In a separate interview with a Quaker activist a month later, the same words were used but in the plural form: ‘We don't need to win.’ Both of these informants strongly rejected competition-based

forms of entrepreneurialism as a motivating force for either themselves or their organizations. The ACT-Alliance administrator, moreover, raised the importance of collaborative planning over a long time span, moving from 'I' to 'We' in invoking hope over the 'long horizon.' She said:

There is a sense of urgency (in humanitarian work); of needing to do things today. Of helping that one individual person. A whole universe is in one person. But then there is also God's time. There is an aphorism (in the Lutheran tradition): 'If I knew the world would end tomorrow I would plant an apple tree today.' There is part of time that God is keeping and maintaining. So I have both urgency and calm. Also, I know that I can be blessed. I am supported by God's time.

This sense of time manifests both Parhiala's actions in the world—her understanding of 'urgent' humanitarian situations and the need to act rationally and quickly to provide help—but also her assumptions about a larger and less knowable time horizon: what she terms 'God's time.' Her faith-based beliefs do not supplant liberal rationalities of governance but operate in a constellation of power. Time is short, rationally delineated, knowable, and actionable in effective or non-effective ways; it is also none of these things.

This complicated intersection of beliefs was evident in many of my informants' understandings of freedom as well. Pastor Wolf-Dieter Just, an important actor in the German sanctuary movement for over thirty years, moved firmly and smoothly between a

strong affirmation of normative liberal assumptions about freedom as a set of individual human rights, and an equally passionate faith-based understanding of freedom as grace.

K: What does freedom mean to you?

WDJ: Human rights—individuals' rights to associate, to speak freely...

K: Does it also have a more personal meaning?

WDJ: Oh yes. I live by the grace of God. By his grace I can do what I think is right. I do not have to earn grace. In that respect... Luther got through—he experienced this as a freedom. He experienced this as a salvation... Both these forms of freedom are important to me (author's interview with Just, November 6, 2016).

The belief in freedom as a form of grace or salvation—one that enables and encourages acting on behalf of others—was stated in a similar fashion in 'The Church in the Public Space,' a statement by the Lutheran World Federation at its meeting in Wittenberg, Germany, in June, 2016. The text was explicitly concerned with the role of the church in multiple forms of public engagement, but especially vis-à-vis care for the neighbor.

On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation the Lutheran communion seeks to claim the church's public engagement as a vital element of what it means to be Lutheran. Public engagement is the church's ongoing response to the freedom that is ours in Christ to love and serve the neighbor. The Reformation clearly expressed that this freedom emerges from the salvation by grace through faith.¹¹

From these quotes and passages it is evident that ‘freedom’ is conceptualized as emerging from faith as a gift (from God) rather than solely as a right or entitlement, or in terms of the opportunities for human capital development. It is also understood as enabling the space and time of action on behalf of others—i.e. forms of ‘public engagement’—rather than acting on oneself. Even more important perhaps, this sense of freedom engages a timespan that is not just in the present, or in emergency responses to a ‘temporary’ crisis, but rather is something that is supported over an indefinite time, the ‘long horizon.’ Brigit Neufert, an administrator active in GECCA put it this way in an interview:

There is definitely a difference between faith-based and other practices. Not necessarily the practice itself that’s different, but still... maybe it’s out of freedom that there’s something more that people do. I feel that ‘*Halt*’ and ‘*Haltung*’ are important here. (She looks up translation). *Halt* is (translated as) a crutch or support—that helps you do what you do, helps you not to break down... *Halt*—this is really a central difference between faith-based practices and others. In the context of migration and migration laws people feel so powerless. But you can breathe and take it. Keep up the hope. In these powerless situations it’s important to know where you have this inner support... and that you won’t break down and are not freefalling somehow (author’s interview with Neufert, November 14, 2016).

In order to see how these faith-based understandings of freedom, time, and public engagement are underpinned spatially I turn now to the practices of church asylum. The ‘sacred’ religious understandings and cultural traditions of sanctuary are quite different

from the types of spaces enumerated by Rose as underpinning liberal rationalities and practices. These differences, moreover, are deliberately utilized to enact spaces of safety for migrants at risk of deportation.

Church sanctuary and the spatial practices of pastoral protection

Contemporary European notions of sanctuary draw on older assumptions about sacred space. Churches were built on places considered holy, and for many Christians the area around the altar is considered to be an especially sacred space. The deep-rooted European tradition that those accused of crimes could be offered protection from sovereign forms of power through church asylum began around 600 AD and was recognized in English law for over a thousand years (Shoemaker, 2011).

Sanctuary practices were abolished in most European countries in the 17th century with the growth of liberalism and the belief that this type of action was an archaic and unenlightened holdover to medieval times and an obstacle to rational order and good governance. Ending the practice of sanctuary was generally hailed as a form of progress and justice, especially by reformers backing the rule of law. But many also held onto the practices of sanctuary as an *alternative* form of justice, arguing that innocent people were frequently caught up in blood feuds and/or falsely accused and condemned, and sanctuary was necessary as a critical last defense (Shoemaker, 2011).

Church sanctuary is not legal in any state in Europe but the cultural and religious sense of church space as sacred, and the collective memory of this practice as an alternative form of justice, still has a powerful legacy (Just, 2013; Marfleet, 2011;

Neufert, 2014; Rabben, 2016; Snyder, 2012). In most European countries these memories and traditions remain strong enough that governments try to avoid physically removing someone who has sought sanctuary in a church. In the cases of forced removal by the police, church networks such as GECCA try to insure that the media coverage and negative publicity for state actors is extensive. Neufert, who works for GECCA, writes of these cases (2014, 36):

Although there is no official right to church asylum, the state most often respects sanctuary. But there are exceptions and police might, after all, enter and clear a church. However, this never happens without public attention—without press releases and negotiations between church and state officials.

There are now active sanctuary movements in several countries in Europe and important church networks behind the practice.¹² Church sanctuary practices range from hospitality, advocacy and material assistance for migrants to the actual provision of physical refuge for those at risk of detention or deportation (see the essays in Lippert and Rehaag, 2013; Rabben, 2016; Snyder, 2012). GECCA is the major church network involved in contemporary sanctuary practices in Europe. It has held several conferences on the practice, including in Berlin in 2010 and 2016. Actors involved in the earlier meeting published a manifesto entitled: *The Charta of the New Sanctuary Movement in Europe*. It begins, “Because we want to welcome strangers we have agreed this Charta of the New Sanctuary Movement in Europe.” It then describes the unacceptable fortification and militarization of Europe’s borders, the deplorable living conditions for immigrants, and the objectionable practices relating to refugees and asylum claimants. In this context

of inhumane practices of reception and care the provision of sanctuary is represented as a necessary act in the name of Christianity, human dignity, and in the belief that all are made in God's image:

As Christians, we are unwilling to put up with this way of dealing with people in need. We stand together with them. They are made in God's image, as we are... Therefore we pledge: to use every opportunity to help refugees in need; where deportation looms and human dignity and lives are threatened, to grant refugees sanctuary in our churches until an acceptable solution is found for them...¹³ All of Europe must become a safe haven, a "sanctuary" for migrant men and women. To this we commit ourselves – in the conviction that God loves the strangers and that in them we encounter God herself/himself (Matt. 25, 31ff.).¹⁴

This same sentiment was expressed in numerous interviews I held with pastors, ministers, and church administrators in fall, 2016: that if an 'acceptable solution' to the refugee crisis was not found in EU policy and law then it was the responsibility of Christians and the churches to intervene through the provision of church asylum. Moreover, the intervention would be made regardless of its legal status (i.e., there was an expressed willingness to act against the law), if ministers, administrators, and parishioners felt that it was their moral duty to do so. Sanctuary, in this case, was seen as a practice necessitated by faith and underpinned by the cultural traditions of church space as sacred—as something untouchable by the unjust (and 'profane') instruments of the state. This was made clear to me in one example of failed sanctuary in Iceland. In this

case, the pastor told me that the actions of the police in removing two asylum claimants from the church were deeply shocking to her. She said in an interview:

We formed a circle around the altar. The police came and took the men. The police were in plain clothes and in police gear. They had the gear to use force. We told them: ‘We are here, this is a peaceful demonstration.’ But they were dragged out of the church. People involved were deeply affected... ‘What’s the meaning of a holy place?’ These types of questions were raised. Strong feelings were raised about the spaces of the church (Author’s interview with K, Geneva, October 20, 2016).¹⁵

The same sense of consternation about the transgression of church space was expressed by the Bishop of Münster, when a man facing deportation was forcibly removed from the church there. He said in an interview with the press, ‘It shocks and concerns me that during an ongoing (church asylum) process the man was taken by police without any notice.’¹⁶ Dietlind Jochims, the Chairperson of the Ecumenical BAG Asylum in the Church (GECCA) condemned this same removal in strong terms as well, and the network put out a press bulletin for church members to inform them about it. ‘The Ecumenical Federation of Labor (BAG) Asylum in the Church reacts with consternation to the violent evacuation of a church asylum in Münster on Tuesday, 23 August 2016. One of them had been picked up in the morning by the use of force from the rooms of a Capuchin monastery... This is not acceptable as an official act, especially when it comes to the protection of people from the neglect of their human rights.’¹⁷ Because of the strong belief in the sanctity of the church and its associated cultural traditions in Germany, most state representatives also expressed reticence about the

forcible removal of asylum claimants. Stephan Frey, a spokesman for the Bavarian Interior Ministry said, for example, ‘Every institution must respect German law. But we also respect the special place of the Church in the case of religious asylum.’¹⁸

Recent data collected by GECCA show 323 ongoing cases of church asylum for 547 persons in January, 2017 (of which 145 are children).¹⁹ In her address to the Berlin conference in November, Dietlind Jochims noted that the current number of church asylum requests is ten times higher than it was in 2014. Because of a special relationship between churches in Germany and BAMF (the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees), church asylum is generally sanctioned as long as the two units collaborate on who may be offered sanctuary in the church.²⁰ According to Jochims, this collaboration worked relatively well up until mid 2016, with over 75% of sanctuary cases ending up with positive outcomes. However, since the summer of 2016 this synergistic relationship was fraying. During the Berlin conference in November, many conference attendees questioned the church-state relationship and whether or not it was time to become more aggressive advocates and protectors, especially because of strong disagreement with recent EU designations of countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq as ‘safe spaces’ to which migrants could be ‘safely’ returned. In the Question and Answer period following Jochims’s address, one parishioner asked about the network’s position on ‘squatted’ churches, where migrants claimed sanctuary in the church themselves—regardless of the agreement of the priest or minister.

The comments and discussion in the conference about church-state interactions, ‘safe space’, and squatted churches, and statements by pastors such as K, indicate that

faith actors are acutely attuned to the spatial politics of church asylum. For K, the actual process of providing sanctuary and its repercussions (vis-à-vis the forced removal of the two young men) changed her political position. She was ‘radicalized’ by the event in the sense of beginning to more sharply question the close relationship between the Lutheran Church in Iceland and the state. She said:

The relationship between politics and religion is very close in Iceland. The Lutheran Church is the major church for everyone, and is in bed with the state. They get their salaries through the state... Who are we serving? Are we supposed to enforce and not question? Or are we the voice that criticizes?

After I asked if she would have provided sanctuary (against the law) in her church if the police had not come and removed the men she paused and then said: ‘I think so! Absolutely!’

In the cases enumerated above it is possible to see how beliefs and traditions of sacred space vis-à-vis the church and altar influences how people use them and feel about them. Politically active church leaders and parishioners are willing to utilize these spatial traditions and feelings to uphold their freedom to act on the basis of their faith, even if these acts are against the law. In most cases, because of the perceived sanctity of church space and tradition, state actors are forced to compromise and work with the church on asylum cases. While the overall number of these cases is relatively small in relation to the overall numbers of forced migrants in Europe, they have an important symbolic effect as they are often highly publicized in the media.

Church actors use the tradition of sanctuary's sacred spaces and associated politics of alternative justice to make a political point and to radicalize others—and themselves in some cases—to resist the deportation of migrants by the state. Faith actors also invoke scales of legitimacy other than the nation-state. They point both to international law and to a 'higher' law: a scale of morality they associate with Christianity and having the freedom to act on behalf of others (Just, 2013; Marfleet, 2011; Raiser, 2010). Their moral behavior and civil acts on behalf of others are not underpinned by the transparency of space and the 'shame' of normative differences; they are moral acts made through a sense of a freedom given through salvation, one that church space both accentuates and makes achievable.

In the practice of sanctuary it is thus possible to see the spatial politics of the sacred as something quite different from the spaces of liberalism as outlined by Rose. This is where the ideology and legitimacy of the nation-state, vis-à-vis its control of territorial borders and laws, is confronted with church actors who believe in a borderless faith, where assumptions about serving the neighbor and welcoming the stranger is a fundamental part of that belief system (Lippert, 2005; Snyder, 2012; Rabben, 2016). When the church's sacred space is broached through the violent removal of asylum seekers, in many cases there is both a radicalization of actors and a growing resistance to the normative justifications of the nation-state with respect to the rule of law.

Conclusion

In this paper I looked at the techniques and programs of freedom as enumerated by Nikolas Rose, and juxtaposed them with faith-based assumptions about what makes a person free to act in moral ways. I also investigated some of the spatial underpinnings and related tactics of both these rationalities. It is important to restate that faith-based beliefs don't *supplant* liberal rationalities; rather they are part of a more complicated and heterogeneous configuration of power than is usually associated with liberal humanitarian forms of governance. In what follows I point briefly to why I think these complex topologies are important to analyze further.

First, the willingness to contest normative laws by using spatial practices of the sacred produces a number of political openings for further action. These include actions by migrants themselves, who avoid the passivity associated with receiving aid or refuge by actively squatting churches (Ataç, 2016; Houston, 2017; more generally see Leitner and Strunk, 2014; Nyers and Rygiel, 2015; Mudu and Chattopadhyay, 2017). These types of radical actions have provoked further (often heated) discussions within church communities, itself an important testament to democratic deliberation as well as increased publicity and attention.

Second, the belief in 'God's time' that many faith actors discussed in interviews gives them the ability to continue with a sense of calm alongside that of urgency. Different ideas of time are important to probe because faith-based humanitarian actors in the migration field rarely respond to 'emergencies' or 'crises' and then depart the scene, as is more common among secular agencies. The type of work they do is often geared towards ongoing problems and the continuing integration of migrants and their physical

and spiritual wellbeing over the long-term, forms of care that secular organizations such as UNHCR do not have the capacity to provide.

Finally, as with all organizations working in migration, FBOs are constrained by funding allocations and by documenting their work and providing various accountability measures to donors. But in comparison with contemporary humanitarian programs operating on the basis of more neoliberal rationales, such as social impact bonds and other philanthropic models requiring some form of ‘return on investment’ (cf. Mitchell and Sparke, 2016), FBOs are more free to provide aid and care as they see fit. Financial accountability is still important, but for faith actors there is also a belief that accountability is *also* to a higher order, one that includes an accountability to self, faith and God.

My point is not that there is a clear separation of domains, or that any one is morally superior to another. Rather, I seek to demonstrate how these domains are interconnected and the edges between them are often blurry. Governmentality studies from above cannot capture the nuances of actors’ motivations, nor the ways in which their practices are supported by complex webs of belief. Assumptions about the transparency of space or the rational nature of time miss the ways in which both space and time are produced through human action, and these actions are motivated by contingent and intersecting rationalities. Ethnographic and other grounded methods can help us to see the complex topologies of power operative in any human behavior, and to analyze more fully and concretely both the technologies of governance and their uneven reception.

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¹ In order to avoid reifying the problematic distinctions between so-called voluntary migrants and political refugees, in this paper I refer to people who are moving internationally under stressful conditions with the term forced migrant.

² There are also a number of important special issues that have addressed faith and humanitarianism in the context of forced migration. See the Special Issue of the *Forced Migration Review* 48, November, 2014; and the *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, 3, 2011, with a helpful introduction by Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2011); see also an earlier issue of the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2002, with an introduction by Goździak and Shandy (2002).

³ EU rules under the so-called Dublin regulations stipulate that asylum seekers must register for asylum in the first member state where they arrive, and that member state is responsible for processing the claimant's application. This was initially decreed as an effort to prevent "asylum-shopping," but in practice it has led to an inequitable distribution of asylum claimants in southern EU member states such as Greece, Hungary, and Italy, huge backloads in asylum processing in those countries, and human rights concerns when forced migrants who have made it to northern member states are deported back to countries such as Hungary, where they are not wanted and the reception is bad and conditions often inhumane. Many of those taken into church protection are fleeing from deportation back to these EU member states or to countries now deemed by the EU to be "safe spaces," such as Afghanistan or Iraq, where church members disagree with this geopolitical designation.

⁴ The specific practices of church asylum vary in different European countries. Most of the examples in this paper are drawn from Germany. For more information about sanctuary practices see the up-to-date website of the German Ecumenical Committee on Church Asylum (GECCA), also known as (BAG) Asyl in der Kirche: <http://www.kirchenasyl.de/herzlich-willkommen/welcome/>.

⁵ Note, for example, the high profile meeting of UN leaders, FBOs and religious leaders following the major United Nations Summit on Refugees and Migrants and the Leaders' Summit on Refugees in New York on September 23, 2016. An article about this meeting, entitled "Faith-based organizations can help solve problems of forced migration, say experts at UN," was published on the World Council of Churches website on October 6, 2016. It can be found at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/faith-based-organizations-can-help-solve-problems-of-forced-migration-say-experts-at-un>. See also, documents prepared by UNHCR (2013, 2014); and the International Organization for Migration, IOM (2006).

⁶ See, The High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges 2012, December 12-13, 2012. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/high-commissioners-dialogue-on-protection-challenges-2012.html>.

⁷ See, UNHCR, "Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders." Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/hcdialogue%2051b6de419/welcoming-stranger-affirmations-faith-leaders.html>

⁸ See, Islamic Relief Worldwide, "Role of Faith in Refugee Protection," November 11, 2015. Available at: <http://www.islamic-relief.org/role-of-faith-in-refugee-protection/>

⁹ See, PaRD: International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, "Religious Engagement in Humanitarian Crises," German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Bonn, August, 2016. Available at: <http://www.partner-religion-development.org/>.

¹⁰ One informant at UNHCR believed that the demand for more transparent links was the result of growing Islamophobia in Europe following the bombings in Madrid and London.

¹¹ See, The Lutheran World Federation, "The Church in the Public Space." Available at: https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/council_2016_-_public_statement_church_in_public_space.pdf

¹² Cases of church asylum or sanctuary in Europe have been publicly noted in Germany, Norway, Finland, Iceland, France, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, and the UK (see Lippert and Rehaag, 2013). In addition to GECCA, the other key faith-based network involved in sanctuary practices is the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). Smaller networks include Katholische Arbeitsgemeinschaft Migration (KAM), Evangelische Kirche, and Heilig Kreuz-Passion, among others.

¹³ For an historical examination of the Christian roots of the concept of human dignity, see Moyn (2015).

¹⁴ The Charta is a Resolution of the Annual Meeting of the German Ecumenical Committee on Church Asylum, Berlin, 10th October, 2010. *New Sanctuary Movement in Europe: Healing and Sanctifying Movement in the Churches*, edited by GECCA, Berlin, February 2011, p. 54. It is adapted from the Charta of Groningen, which was issued from a 1987 conference held in Groningen, Netherlands. It is available at: <http://www.kirchenasyl.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Charta-english1.pdf>

¹⁵ Name withheld to grant anonymity. In a related incident in Queensland, Australia around the same time, the Anglican Dean, Peter Catt, declared his cathedral a sanctuary. He said in opposition to a High Court ruling backing up the legality of offshore processing, "This fundamentally goes against our faith, so our church community is compelled to act, despite the possibility of individual penalty against us." If the police sought to forcibly remove the refugees: "I would certainly ask them to leave their weapons outside as a mark of respect ... but it would require someone to create a bit of a scene in a sacred space." Quoted in Jared Owens and Mark Schliebs, "Anglican Church's asylum 'sanctuary' bid," *The Australian*, February 4, 2016. Available at:

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/immigration/anglican-churchs-asylum-sanctuary-bid/news-story/8cbe51438f07a079c7660d1b732f3e31>.

¹⁶ Quoted in "Police force migrant out of German church," August 24, 2016. Available at: <http://www.dw.com/en/police-force-migrant-out-of-german-church/a-19496599>.

¹⁷ Asyl in der Kirche, "Ecumenical Confederation of Labor Denounces Church Asylum in Münster," August 26, 2016. Available at: <http://www.kirchenasyl.de/portfolio/oekumenische-bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft-verurteilt-kirchenasylraeumung-in-muenster/>. Notably, the forced migrant was to be deported to Hungary under the Dublin regulations. Despite the removal of the man from the church, however, the administrative court of Münster stopped the planned deportation owing to the inhumane conditions for asylum claimants in Hungary.

¹⁸ Quoted in "Christian shelter: Refugees of all faiths get sanctuary in German church," May 26, 2016. Available at: <https://www.rt.com/news/344471-germany-refugees-shelter-church/>

¹⁹ See, "Welcome! Current church asylum nationwide." Available at: <http://www.kirchenasyl.de/>.

²⁰ The churches give sanctuary for up to six months, after which the migrant is allowed to stay in Germany for his or her asylum procedure, or to have previous decisions re-examined. (In Dublin cases, if the migrant is apprehended prior to six months residence in Germany (s)he can be immediately deported to the member state of first entry.)