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*Trade unions and spatial justice:
Vectors of geopolitics and the power of indifference
Syndicats et justice spatiale:
Vecteur de géopolitique et pouvoir de l'indifférence*

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New experiments in trade union internationalism offer important insights into the possibilities for spatial justice. Many trade unions are facing the sharp edge of economic globalisation, where the growing power of transnational corporations requires unions to broaden their spatial practices beyond the confines of the workplace and national-state by building new relationships with labour organisations abroad. Growing interest and investment in trade union internationalism has the potential to narrow the disparities between workers internationally and lay the basis for a new international class politics, yet while the strategic rationale for transnational union organising is increasingly apparent, the disposition of the union rank and file to a new international class politics remains ambiguous. It is neither clear whether there is support for transnational organising amongst union members, nor whether such support is necessary in order for such initiatives to be effective.

This paper explores the spatial contours of class solidarity amongst trade union members involved in transnational organising in the trans-Atlantic bus industry. It argues that the conflicting spatial visions of rank and file trade unionists does not constitute a barrier to the transnational flow of solidarity. Engaging with writings on militant particularism, it is argued that locally situated 'imagineers' form the pivots of transnational politics, as these actors are uniquely placed to negotiate and translate between hierarchical institutions and local assemblages of justice premised on particular imaginaries of ethnicity, gender, religion, class and nation. Furthermore, against the grain of urban multi-cultural theory that promotes mandatory encounters, this paper argues that in transnational politics indifference is a productive force, as a loose sense of class interest filters out geopolitical currents that might otherwise undermine the basis for transnational identification.