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Migration and Cities

Conceptual and Policy Advances

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Editors

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Chapter 1

Migration and Cities: An Introduction



Anna Triandafyllidou , Amin Moghadam , Melissa Kelly ,
and Zeynep Şahin-Mencütek 

1.1 Introduction

Migration is at the heart of urban growth, both as a lever of development and as a set of challenges for cities. By 2050, two-thirds of the world's population will live in cities (UN, 2018), with migration driving significant demographic, socio-economic, and cultural transformations. Over the decades ahead, we will see large urban centres continue to rise, particularly in Asia and Africa, while some small and mid-sized cities in Europe, North America, and the Asia Pacific may have to battle population decline. Increasingly, cities will welcome migration's contribution to diversity and cultural vibrancy while at the same time struggle to provide services for rising migrant populations or to offer sanctuary for refugees.

Scholarly contributions to the links between migration and the city have often been compartmentalised. Some studies have emphasised the challenges that migration brings to cities (Caponio et al., 2018; Yeh & Chen, 2020); issues of irregular migration and asylum (Spencer & Triandafyllidou, 2020; Darling & Bauder, 2021);

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or, for instance, migrant entrepreneurship in the urban context (Liu, 2021; Rath & Swagerman, 2016; Räuchle & Schmiz, 2019). Others have focused on experiences of young migrants and issues related to the sense of belonging to the city (Fathi & Ní Laoire, 2021; Tzaninis, 2020) as well as migrants' impact on city-making (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018). And yet others have focused on how migration is closely intertwined with urban development ultimately shaping the overall national socio-economic and political context particularly in settler colonial states like Australia (Levin et al., 2018) or Canada (Bonifacio & Drolet, 2017). These approaches have been seen as distinct and separate from work that looked into cultural diversity management and how cities use cultural diversity to brand themselves as attractive destinations for the creative class (Florida, 2002) or simply for international students and aspiring artists (Molho et al., 2020).

This book comes at the heels of an emerging scholarship that focuses on how cities respond to migration by emphasising the concept of conviviality as a strategy for valorising diversity, addressing tensions, and downplaying power imbalances (Berg & Nowicka, 2019). The book is complementary to recent work on how urban governance develops from the ground up, whether reactively or proactively, with a range of new civil society and private sector stakeholders to manage migration and migrant integration (Hillmann & Sammer, 2023). This collection of chapters though is different as it goes beyond the usual case studies of European and North American cities engaging largely with cities in different world regions including the global South.

The book is structured in four parts. The first looks at cities as hubs of cultural creativity, exploring the many dimensions of cultural diversity and identity as they are negotiated in the urban context. The second focuses on what lies outside the large urban centres of today, notably suburbs, while the third part engages with migration and diversity in small and mid-sized cities, many of which have adopted strategies to welcome growing numbers of migrants. Last but not least, the fourth part looks at the challenges and opportunities that asylum-seeking and irregular migration flows bring to cities.

This book reflects on cities as hubs of creativity but also as places of tension where different types of minorities and migrants meet and mingle. We look at top-down urban policies that aim to build on diversity or provide shelter, and to grass-roots mobilisations advocating for solidarity and inclusion; we consider how cities negotiate the different levels of governance (local, national, and transnational) in managing transit migrants or refugee populations; and we examine the role of diasporas in urbanisation. We seek to curate insights from different world regions to better understand the relationship between migration and the city in the twenty-first century.

This book brings together case studies from around the world, including China, the Middle East, Asia Pacific, Africa, North America, and Europe. The methodological approaches adopted in the different chapters are mainly qualitative but the disciplinary perspectives differ, ranging from Urban Studies and Sociology to Social Anthropology, Cultural Studies, and Political Science. In the sections that follow,

we review the related scholarly approaches and discuss how contributions to this volume offer new analytical and empirical insights into the set of research questions addressed in each part of the book.

1.2 Emerging and Established Global Cities: Instrumentalising Post-Migration Diversity

In the world's major metropolises, urban diversity is formed by the interweaving of the history of a particular context and the diverse practices taking place at various geographical levels. This can take form via exchanges at a local scale – for example, in a neighbourhood – among transnational networks of migrants; or it may involve global economic and cultural networks propelled by large multinational companies, state authorities, and globalised elites.

Urban diversity is also often associated with, and even instrumentalised by, urban policies and politics aiming to attract more economic capital and qualified migrants and professionals. The result of this dynamic is materialised at the urban level by the emergence of new local-cosmopolitan realities, of which the 'cultural districts' and processes of gentrification are well-known examples throughout the world.

However, the other side of this globalisation of the 'symbolic economy' of culture at the urban level (Hannerz, 1992; Zukin, 1987) is that of socio-spatial inequalities often to be found in the inner city neighbourhoods adjacent to the cosmopolitan cultural districts. Cultural diversity eventually is closely intertwined with socio-economic inequality (Oosterlynck et al., 2019). The latter raises therefore the issue of access to and the sharing of resources, the affirmation of 'rights to the city', and even the growing phenomena of dispossession of the most vulnerable city-dwellers, migrants and non-migrants included.

This book is also informed by the recent 'southern' turn in Urban Studies or repeated calls for a 'more global urban studies' (Lawhon & Truelove, 2020). There is a growing body of research on Global South cities that explores an array of issues ranging from informality and the impact of rapid demographic change upon the built environment to local policies and campaigns for greater social and economic justice. A number of studies also focus on labour and lifestyle migration or various types of mobilities in the Global South cities that transform through economic development plans and urbanism such as in Seoul, South Korea, or Iskandar, Malaysia (Shin & Kim, 2016; Koh, 2021). While a post-colonial approach would question the use of concepts developed to help explain the urban phenomena of the north (López-Morales, 2015), in the countries of the Global South, we need to consider similarities and differences among cities and the ways in which they manage migration and migration-related diversity. Contributions to this volume seek to highlight how local, regional, national and transnational levels are interconnected and can best be understood as processes of what historian Cyrus Schayegh (2017) defines as 'trans-spatialisation'.

While there have been numerous studies that have investigated the rise of cultural industries, especially in Asian cities, the questions of cultural pluralism and urban cultural policies and politics have tended to receive less sustained attention. Societies in the Americas and Europe are already urbanised by more than 75%, but the great urbanisation challenge is taking place in Africa and Asia, which are expected to go from, respectively, 40% and 48% of urban population to 56% and 64% of urban population (UN, 2014). In this context, cities are faced with the challenges of providing services such as healthcare, housing, education, and culture.

Through empirical studies carried out in cities spanning Asia, Latin America, Africa, Middle East, Asia Pacific, and Europe, contributors to the first part of the volume cast light on the complexity of cultural and ethnic diversity in cities. They highlight how urban life forges constant cultural innovations out of multiple traditions and how it actually can generate contradictory trends. Metropolises with large immigrant populations veer towards a certain homogenisation of the urban space, adopting common models of consumption (including those of consuming the city itself) as well as developing similar types of social and spatial segregation (Hannerz, 1992). Research on cities allows us to adopt finer and smaller geographical scales of analysis, such as a street or even the urban interstices, and provides information on the variety of modes of appropriation by migrant city dwellers, their capacities to build a sense of belonging to the city at a very local scale and sometimes bypassing the national community to which they may not have access (Assaf, 2020).

In an ever-more mobile and interconnected world, all cities are hubs of migration and diversity. They are diverse in their populations but also play a crucial role as points of reference and identity loci in a globally interconnected world. Indeed, migrant and minority integration happens at the local level even if it is regulated at the national level. Cities consequently play an important part in the (re)shaping of national identity and in the negotiation between the local, the everyday, and the transnational (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018). They are often the place where the national is actualised and negotiated.

Migration as a very complex process defines the urban and makes the city in more or less visible ways (Sharma, 2021). In contrast to the common assumption that migrants exist on society's periphery, in some cases they immensely help cities to regain their former standing as migrants contribute social relationships, urban restoration, and economic development (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018). On the other hand, migration-related diversity also creates tensions and conflicts that need to be negotiated among different stakeholders including local government, civil society, private actors and migrants themselves. Indeed, migrants may negotiate these conflicts through contestation, collective mobilisation, or silence (Sharma, 2021).

The chapter by Jeremie Molho on 'Urban Policy Modelling and Diversity Governance in Doha and Singapore' points precisely to these complex dynamics. Molho argues that the transnational circulation of policy ideas has been increasingly advanced as a significant factor in the fabric of local diversity policies. On the one hand, the circulation of managerial concepts such as diversity management has contributed to the rise of neoliberal urban diversity models; on the other, city networks,

international organisations, and transnational civic movements are pushing forward progressive urban diversity agendas. His study points to the role of such processes of policy modelling in shaping urban diversity governance. The study is based on fieldwork conducted in Doha and Singapore since 2018 and on the analysis of these cities' policy documents. It shows how transnationally circulating references and norms contribute to shaping local diversity governance frameworks and how both cities strive to position themselves as diversity governance models. The author argues that their modelling strategies rely on the spatial and organisational compartmentalisation of distinct diversity frames. This allows to minimise policy tensions, alleviate external critiques, and craft local experiments that can be projected as models on the world stage.

Loren Landau's contribution – entitled 'Governing Diversity Beyond City and State: Epistemic and Ethical Challenges of African Urbanisation' – casts further light to these tensions. Levying 'bespoke' data collected in 2020 across three African cities and an existing corpus of work on African mobility and urban governance, the chapter forwards three primary points. First, while recognising the potential importance of state actors in diversity management, it warns us that the normative biases associated with state sovereignty lead to analytically over-privileging the state. Urban spaces often present amalgams of regulatory systems working at different spatial scales and moral registers, argues Landau, and invites us to pay more attention to those. Second, capturing the actors involved in managing mobility and diversity within cities is critical, but cities' socialities are not spatially bound. The diversity of spatial and temporal orientations at work in cities means people are part of moral and material economies that shape their relationship to space, institutions, and each other. With this in mind, the chapter offers a third challenge to the normative presumption of inclusion, highlighting not only its elusiveness but the potential hazards it poses for urban residents' life projects. The author argues for an approach to urban policymaking that conceptualises the urban not as a singular, bounded space, but as a series of constellations and corridors: sites linked to each other within and beyond the city through multiple institutional, economic, and moral economies. Such an approach not only reveals the horizontal intersections of multiple policy spaces, but gives cause to reconsider the almost universal call for localised inclusion, visibility, and representation.

Bringing these insights together Amin Moghadam, in his chapter on 'Urban Diversity and Spatial Justice: A Critical Overview', seeks to demonstrate the complexity of urban diversity as a locus of negotiation and tension between diverse social and political players. In the cities of both the Global South and the Global North, whether under authoritarian regimes or liberal democracies, the undeniable fact of diversity is now an integral feature of political discourse and action, argues Moghadam. However, the political use – instrumentalisation, even – of urban diversity is often selective, partial, and sometimes discriminatory: experiences seen by inhabitants as being cosmopolitan and diverse are not always those recognised and valued by urban governance. The tension between a political vision of diversity and diversity as experienced from below, on a day-to-day basis, can contribute to processes aimed at making certain social groups visible or invisible at the urban level,

i.e., those who deserve to be recognised and represented by the political authorities and those who remain excluded from the political representation of diversity.

1.3 Migration Outside the Urban Core: Small and Mid-Sized Cities

Migration is typically understood as an urban phenomenon affecting larger cities. In countries with highly managed immigration systems, efforts have increasingly been made by different levels of government to encourage migration to smaller centres. Often smaller cities view international migration as one way to grow the local population and economy, and a range of stakeholders – including local organisations, employers, and community members – mobilise to welcome migrants to their communities. Despite this, many smaller cities continue to struggle to provide the services, housing options, and employment opportunities that migrants need. There is clearly a need to better understand the experiences of smaller communities as destinations for migrants building on recent studies on migrant economies developing not only in large urban centres but also in mid-sized cities (Rauchle & Schmiz, 2019; Glick Schiller & Caglar, 2009; Hatziprokopiou et al., 2016).

In this part, the volume brings together studies from Australia, Canada, the United States, and Europe, integrating them into a rich comparative framework. In her chapter ‘Multi-level Migration and Multiculturalism Governance Meets Migrant and Refugee Agency in Regional Australian Towns’, Martina Boese takes stock of the many federal, state, and local policies in Australia that have encouraged migration to, and settlement in, regional towns and cities over the past decades. She also points to the accompanying local multicultural and intercultural policies developed to better accommodate these increasingly diverse populations. And yet, argues Boese, despite several policy programmes and related research, many research and policy questions remain unanswered. Boese is particularly concerned with the increasingly instrumentalised economic narrative supporting such migrations that tends to overlook the migrants’ experiences with settlement in small and mid-sized cities outside the gateway metropolises. She also points to the different experiences of refugees and migrants, and the problems involved in transforming current regional refugee settlement into population policies. Last but not least, taking stock of her own recent research on multi-local settlement, Boese notes that ‘successful settlement’ can involve internal secondary mobility in line with the life course perspective and changing needs of migrants or refugees and their families.

Furthering our insights into the experiences of second-tier cities, Yolande Pottie-Sherman compares the realities of urban Atlantic Canada with cities in the US Rust Belt. In line with Martina Boese’s critical observations, Yolande Pottie-Sherman also notes that there is an increasing interest not only in Australia but also in Canada and the US to use immigration to offset demographic and economic challenges

associated with aging or shrinking populations, slow growth, and economic decline. The cases of Atlantic Canada and the US Rust Belt are compared in this chapter with a view to examining two different approaches to immigration and uneven development. In Canada, notes Pottie-Sherman, place-based immigration programmes explicitly encourage immigration to Atlantic Canada while immigrant integration is supported through ‘top-down’ federally-funded settlement, multiculturalism, and citizenship programmes. Conversely, in the US efforts to use immigration to address spatial inequality are happening outside of formal policy channels from the ‘bottom up’, driven by networks of local business associations and non-profit organisations that increasingly promote immigration as a tool of economic revitalisation in the Rust Belt. Drawing on several years of fieldwork in both regions involving participant observation at immigration summits and conventions, stakeholder interviews, and media and document analysis, this chapter considers the implications of these diverging approaches, noting how realities on the ground are in constant evolution. The chapter points to the need to reconsider immigration as a tool for addressing uneven regional development.

Similarly to Australia, Canada, and the US (as well as other OECD countries), New Zealand has joined the race of attracting immigrants to its small and mid-sized towns in the effort of boosting their demographic and socioeconomic growth. In their chapter ‘New Zealand’s Small-Town Disruptions and the Role of Immigrant Mobilities’, Ashraf Al Alam, Etienne Nel, and Sammy Bergen critically investigate the experiences of the Southland and Otago regions in New Zealand. The authors note that such small towns and their populations perceived their urban environments as stable and largely monocultural. They were thus ill-prepared to accept new cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. While immigrants were seen as desirable in contributing to socioeconomic and demographic growth, realities on the ground were challenging. Drawing on empirical research in New Zealand’s Southland and Otago regions, the chapter discusses immigrant settlement patterns and their local impacts as disruptors to the previous realities and points to the tensions created. The chapter reflects on the notion of resilience for such small and mid-sized cities in considering how they can couple immigration with their socioeconomic and demographic development.

Bringing these insights together, Melissa Kelly reflects on whether second- and third-tier cities in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the US offer a welcoming environment to new immigrants. Kelly also notes the instrumental narrative of immigration as a solution to problems of depopulation and economic decline as well as the manifold efforts to make these, previously homogenous, small and mid-sized cities more welcoming to new arrivals. She notes that such welcoming initiatives should not be understood only as policies as they also encompass narratives and discourses as well as practices on the ground initiated by civil society, local governments, or even employers. Unfortunately, as Kelly points out, such initiatives have often had limited success as migrants initially settled there subsequently moved on to larger urban centres. The author points to the systemic issues and inequalities that hamper such policies and practices, to the often ‘conditional’

character of the welcome narratives, and to the overall challenges that small and mid-sized cities face that are simply reproduced when it comes to immigrants and their families.

1.4 Suburbanisation and Migration

The third part of the volume offers a closer look to the intersection between global migrations and suburban transformation. Suburbanisation as a global phenomenon has presented multifaceted patterns of change in various contexts. Migrant settlements in suburban spaces add more complexities to suburbia by bringing diverse demographics, (inter)cultural practices, new built forms, and new meanings of space and community. These migrant spaces challenge the conventional organisation of 'suburbia'. Governments, practitioners, and academics must often reconcile the competing needs of diversity and urban growth played out in changing land uses and physical forms (e.g. neighbourhood character and heritage preservation), competing claims for space and rights to the city (e.g. who has access to resources), and considerations of equity and social inclusion (e.g. who belongs to and in the community?). In this part of the book we look at the links between everyday suburban life, urban governance, and economic growth.

This section includes a closer look into 'Settlement and Rental Housing Experiences Among Recent Immigrants in the Suburbs of Vancouver: Burnaby, Richmond, and Surrey', authored by Carlos Teixeira and Anabel L. Salinas. The chapter explores the settlement and housing experiences of recent immigrants in three culturally diverse and fast-growing Vancouver suburbs as well as the interactions between suburbanisation processes and migrants' housing strategies. Teixeira and Salinas note that securing good-quality, affordable housing is key to the successful resettlement and integration of immigrants in the suburbs of Vancouver. Drawing on data from questionnaire surveys administered to 137 immigrants renting in the suburbs of Vancouver, the study points to the tensions involved at both the material and social levels. Given the escalating housing costs in the rental and homeownership markets and low vacancy rates, most participants had difficulties finding housing. Participants coped by sharing housing with relatives or friends to save money or by renting a basement. They also reported financial stress, with most living in unaffordable rental housing. The low vacancy rates in Vancouver's suburbs have created a 'landlord's market' and about one-third of participants reported perceived discrimination based on income, large family size, immigrant status, and general mistrust of their cultural, religious, racial, or ethnic backgrounds. The chapter concludes by offering some important policy reflections on the tensions between ambitions of multiculturalism and growth in suburban areas and the difficulties experienced by immigrants in settling in those peripheral areas of large urban centres.

Looking at migrants' experiences in suburban areas, Jie Shen's chapter, 'Stuck in the Suburbs? Socio-spatial Exclusion of Migrants in Shanghai', points to the

importance of migrants' residential location in their social integration process. Shen notes that in China large numbers of migrants join an increasing urban population in the country's major cities in search of better work and living conditions. However they often end up settling in the disadvantaged urban periphery. By examining the place effects of suburban residence on the incorporation of migrants into cities, the study shows how location is intertwined with all aspects of settlement. Drawing on a survey undertaken in Shanghai, the author finds that, after controlling for the effects of individual characteristics, migrants living in the suburbs not only earn less than their counterparts in the central city but are also less likely to construct inter-group and diverse social ties to aid future prospects. To make matters worse, they have little chance of moving to the central locations where there are more resources and instead are likely to be trapped in the suburbs. In both Teixeira and Salinas's and Shen's chapters the evidence shows that suburban settlement can be particularly challenging for new immigrants, leading to their exclusion rather than inclusion in the urban fabric.

Cathy Yang Liu and Rory Renzy examine the interaction between suburbanisation and migrant entrepreneurship in the US. The authors note that the pattern of migrant and minority spreading to previously 'all-White' suburbs has been documented in recent research. Their study focuses specifically on immigrant-owned businesses and their substantial growth over the years that has made them important actors serving unmet markets, hiring workers, and generating local economic development. The chapter uses national business datasets to examine the spatial patterns of migrant entrepreneurship and the performance of employer firms as indicated by the number of firms, employees, sales and receipts, and total annual payrolls for cities and suburbs over time across a broad array of Metropolitan Statistical Areas. Atlanta serves as a case study site for more detailed analysis on the dynamics of suburban ethnic economy. The chapter points to the important dynamism of suburban ethnic businesses and makes suggestions for supporting such businesses as well as preserving ethnic identity in suburban areas of large cities.

Concluding this part, the chapter by Zhixi Zhuang, 'Suburban Migration: Interrogating the Intersections of Global Migration and Suburban Transformation', looks at the importance of suburbanisation as a global phenomenon that emerges in multifaceted patterns of evolution and transformation in the different national and regional contexts. Zhuang argues that migrant settlements in suburban spaces add more complexities to suburbia by bringing diverse demographics, (inter)cultural practices, new built forms, and new meanings of space and community. These migrant spaces challenge conventional suburban socio-spatial organisations of land, infrastructure, and resources as well as suburban governance, planning, and design. The manifestations of migrant suburbs where diversity and urban growth are juxtaposed inevitably present profound implications for governments, practitioners, and academics in a myriad of ways, such as changing land uses and physical forms (e.g. neighbourhood characters, heritage preservation), competing claims for space and rights to the city (e.g. who has the access), and increasing awareness of equity and social inclusion (e.g. who belongs to and in the community). Zhuang points to the importance of considering the production of space as an analytical framework as

well as a policy perspective. She applies the theory of the production of space to cast light upon the narratives of everyday suburban life, diversity management, growth and development, policy and governance, and socio-spatial (in)equity and (in)justice across different suburban contexts in different world regions.

1.5 Bordering Migration in Cities

The final part of this volume builds on the previous chapters, analysing the manifold challenges and opportunities involved in immigration towards urban contexts but shifts the focus on a different population cohort. Instead of focusing on economic migrants who arrive legally and oftentimes in a highly regulated way to small or large urban centres, chapters in this section look at asylum seekers and (irregular) migrants who arrive in large numbers at border cities. Rather than adopting a migration or asylum governance approach, contributions focus on border cities as urban spaces of transit and in transition.

Such cities are usually small or mid-sized urban centres that end up becoming important transit hubs and temporary settlement spaces for refugees, asylum seekers, and ‘irregular’ migrants seeking opportunities to migrate onwards. Due to the protracted nature of migration journeys and associated risks, these transit migrant populations often stay in these cities longer than initially envisioned, making these cities transit-turned-host spaces. As a result, these cities are also confronted with the arrival of a diversity of service providers acting in reception and integration fields ranging from international humanitarian NGO workers, state officers, international organisation employees, journalists, researchers, and smugglers. Short- or long-term stays of these actors lead to physical, economic, and socio-cultural transformations in urban neighbourhoods and border towns. These can make some pivotal fields at the local level – housing/sheltering, employment, or education – contested fields regarding the entanglement of diverse stakeholders involved and dynamics changed over time (Werner et al., 2018). In addition, prevailing restrictive border policies may subject these cities to top-down physical changes such as construction of border walls, accommodation centers, and camps or the deployment of extra security measures, or even the creation of cemeteries for abandoned corpses of migrants. Moreover, the local governance structures are influenced by all these developments. Municipal actors like mayors may need to engage in more interactions with the national scale (e.g. ministries or directories) or transnational scale via city networks or humanitarian actors, leading to institutional changes or empowerment (Betts et al., 2021) and may take advantage of new opportunity structures to develop their leadership (Sabchev, 2021).

This part of the volume draws on studies from the Middle East, Latin America, and Europe. Starting with a study on the city of Glasgow, UK, in his chapter entitled ‘The Urbanisation of Asylum’, Jonathan Darling explores the growing prominence of urban contexts, urban authorities, and urban politics in shaping debates on asylum and refuge that have traditionally been orientated around the nation-state.

Glasgow is at the heart of the UK's response to refugee displacement and thus offers a unique case study – quasi a natural laboratory. Based on long-term qualitative research on Glasgow, this chapter examines three trends in contemporary urban configurations of asylum. First, how asylum seekers and refugees have been positioned within urban economies of value extraction. Second, how cities have been sites of considerable experimentation over the containment of asylum seekers and refugees, with flexible infrastructures of accommodation being one key development. Third, the frictions of government and solidarity that urban asylum foregrounds. These are frictions between local and national governments, on the one hand, and between community initiatives to support refugees as neighbours and the patterns of bordering practiced by state and non-state actors, on the other. Bringing these three findings together, the author highlights the growing importance of cities in shaping how we understand asylum and its political possibilities.

Following on the heels of Darling's chapter, Estella Carpi discusses 'urbanitarian' ecologies in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan after displacement from Syria. During the last decade, argues Carpi, displacement from conflict-ridden Syria has converged with an increasing emphasis on the 'urban-humanitarian' nexus. Humanitarian actors have focused on urban livelihoods as refugees mainly move to cities in search of employment. The formerly predominantly camp-based mode of assistance has by now turned into support for urban refugees, internally displaced people, and local urban dwellers in the region. It is within this framework that the politics of international humanitarianism have emerged, generating urban-humanitarian (notably 'urban-itarian') ecologies in cities and towns in the countries neighbouring Syria.

Drawing on different case-studies since 2016 in six sites in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan – all primary destinations for refugees from Syria – the study shows how 'urbanising' humanitarianism, when insufficiently responsive to local specificities, has resulted in poorly attuned humanitarian programming. The author offers a long set of fieldwork observations in multiple urban sites, highlighting how both refugees and local urban dwellers develop complex livelihood strategies, building their worlds across the urban and the rural. The working concept of 'urban-itarian' does not intend to mark those spaces as exclusively or predominantly urban; but, rather, as an interface where humanitarian and urban actors and negotiations end up marginalising or assimilating the rural and the peri-urban, regardless of environmental complexities.

The next chapter in this section, 'Sheltering Extraction: the Politics of Knowledges Transitions in the Context of Shelter Organisations in Mexico and the Netherlands', focuses on Mexico and the Netherlands. Cesar E. Merlín-Escorza investigates two non-profit, non-governmental shelter organisations (Casa para Todes and Iedereen Welkom) in two border cities in Mexico and the Netherlands. Both organisations are based on volunteering schemes and aim to assist people often addressed through different and interchangeable labels such as 'migrants', 'refugees', and 'asylum seekers'. The chapter situates both shelters as spaces characterised by the transit and transition of people, their knowledges, and experiences. It discusses the implications regarding the naturalisation of the shelter as a space for doing fieldwork and

the processes through which the knowledges and experiences of people being sheltered are differentiated and transformed for academic purposes.

This chapter offers (auto)ethnographic insights originated at both places to reflect on the notion of ‘extraction’ involved in both sheltering and migration research. In so doing, how people’s knowledges and experiences are amplified and channelled through the production of academic knowledge and how volunteering, as an entry point for ethnographic research, serves this purpose are problematised. Reflections point to the imbrication of sheltering practices with the ‘Northern’ migration apparatus of academic knowledge production in which the shelter as a space for doing migration research is given by longstanding colonially-shaped relations. A final suggestion is given to researchers interested in studying sheltering practices to design their research in a way in which social transformation is served by doing research.

The contributions in this part of the volume are brought together by Zeynep Sahin Mencutek in ‘Temporality and Permanency in the Study of Border Cities and Migration’. This chapter synthesises the analytical reflections from the three previous ones and links them with broader scholarly research on forced displacement, asylum, and cities. Sahin Mencutek argues that the intersection of governance approaches with urban and humanitarian studies provides rich insights into, and novel concepts about, displacement and asylum. She argues that the arrival of diverse actors related to asylum leads to physical, economic, and socio-cultural transformations in urban neighbourhoods and border towns, sometimes temporal, other times permanent. The chapter then identifies four main dynamics at play in the urbanisation of asylum: extraction, frictions, temporality, and spatial changes. It concludes with questions to consider in developing a more elaborated research agenda on politics of urban and asylum from a relational perspective.

1.6 Urban Diversity and Complex Migration Patterns: Analytical Reflections

Contributions to this volume and the chapters of Moghadam, Kelly, and Sahin Mencutek point to several new developments with regard to urbanisation processes and the ways in which migration contributes to the development of large and smaller urban centres and shapes their social, economic, cultural and political realities.

The first set of chapters summarised and further elaborated by Amin Moghadam (Chap. 4, in this volume) invite us to reflect on the relationship between urban diversity, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism. We observed two types of relationships between urban governance and the migration/diversity nexus. First of all, diversity has clearly become a matter to be regulated by urban governments rather than an issue that pertains to the national policy realm only. Large cities and particularly cities that aspire to be cultural and economic regional powers develop a range

of policies to regulate as well as promote migration-related diversity. In fact, Moghadam (*ibid.*) speaks of the governmentality of diversity to point to the many ways in which diversity is governed from the top down. Through the work of Molho (Chap. 3, in this volume) we note that cities instrumentalise migration and post-migration diversity in compartmentalised and often antithetic ways. The diversity of highly skilled migrants, artist expats or businesspersons, or international students is supported and promoted. Cities put in place both hard infrastructure (buildings, transport systems, public spaces) and soft infrastructure (cultural programmes, political discourses, and vernacular narratives) to promote diversity. They embrace this type of cultural diversity as a part of the identity of the city as a cosmopolitan capital.

At the same time, diversity arising from lower-skilled migration and labour-intensive sectors of the labour market is highly controlled and regulated through different types of hard and soft infrastructures (Molho, Chap. 3 and Moghadam, Chap. 4, in this volume). Here the buildings are not museums or galleries; they are dormitories for low-skilled workers, kept out of sight, in separate city areas. That diversity is not celebrated or embraced. It is rather highly controlled and suppressed. Related public and policy discourses are silent on this diversity which is pushed to the margins of the urban – both the planning margins, as these neighbourhoods are located at the periphery of the city, and the symbolic margin, as such diversity is seen as foreign and transient, not belonging to the city.

However, contributions to this first part of the volume also point out that there is a bottom-up vernacularisation of diversity within the city that arises through the everyday work and life of migrants as well as through artistic practice that may involve those lesser skilled foreign workers confined in the dormitories. Such urban diversity flourishes at the urban scale, within the city or between cities through city networks that operate independently from the national level and the national policies (see also Landau, Chap. 2, in this volume).

Contributions to this volume suggest that we should not ask whether urban migration-related diversity is transnational or cosmopolitan but rather we should adopt a multiscalar perspective looking at the translocal connections and the transnational cultural capital that migrants generate at multiple levels, whether vernacular or of ‘high culture’ (see also Meinhof & Triandafyllidou, 2006).

The second part of this volume focuses on the challenges and opportunities that migration and related ethnic and cultural diversity bring for small and mid-sized cities. The narrative here is one of a welcome, but it disguises a dominant instrumental concern: welcoming diversity is a necessity because migration is crucial for the demographic, social, and economic survival of many of these small and mid-sized urban centres. The question of infrastructure arises here with more potency as these cities and towns do not have the economic robustness to produce large scale physical infrastructure or the social vitality to produce social networks and cultural spaces of welcome.

Reviewing several welcoming initiatives – notably local policies and practices – Kelly (Chap. 8, in this volume) and several of the contributors (notably Alam et al.,

Chap. 7; Boese, Chap. 5; Pottie-Sherman, Chap. 6, in this volume) point to the importance of recognising the internal diversity of the welcoming community as well as the diversity of the ‘immigrants’ who are welcomed. They also point to the power relations involved in the welcome as any welcoming initiatives are unavoidably structured by economic inequalities and social and cultural barriers often ignored or pushed under the carpet when welcoming initiatives are designed and implemented.

Both large urban centres and small and mid-sized cities are seen to share an instrumental approach to migration and diversity as they need it for different purposes. Among the former, to increase their economic and symbolic power; among the latter, for mere demographic and socio-economic survival. However, in the latter the welcome is less conditional and more long-term as immigrants and their families are invited to stay, while in the large urban centres the instrumental and highly unequal character of the welcome may be more transient, subject to changes in politics and policies.

Contributions in the third part of the book show that suburban areas have not invited migration or sought to welcome it, but rather migration and the resulting cultural and ethnic diversification have just ‘happened’. As migrants sought more affordable housing or new business opportunities, suburban areas around large cities have developed their own diversity landscapes, without, at least initially, any particular urban design or plan. Urban planning and local government have rather emerged reactively, in response to the migrant and minority populations settling in the suburbs. While often these suburbs are seen to lack services and infrastructure (particularly housing) and to provide limited networks for new migrants (see also Shen, Chap. 10; Teixeira & Lopez, Chap. 11, in this volume), in others they become cultural and economic centres in their own right (see Liu & Renzy, Chap. 9, in this volume). Interestingly, migration and diversity here are not instrumentalised – nor hyper-governed, as Moghadam (Chap. 4, in this volume) argues with regard to large urban centres. They are rather emerging autonomously and revendicating their own urban spaces of middling diversity. Such (often secondary) migration and diversity bring a whole set of urban planning challenges for local governments (see also Zhuang, Chap. 12, in this volume) but also signal new forms of urbanisation that challenge our distinctions between urban core and suburban periphery.

Turning to the role of forced migration and asylum-seeking in urbanisation processes, in the last section of the book, we observe that here too, such movements are characterised by the absence of proactive policies – they rather just happen, and then policies and practices emerge to put order into the urban ‘mess’. Related hard infrastructures – entire new neighbourhoods, shelters, or markets – (see Carpi, Chap. 14; Merlin-Escorza, Chap. 15, in this volume) and soft infrastructures such as policies and practices providing first responder support to asylum seekers and displaced persons (Darling, Chap. 13; Carpi, Chap. 14, in this volume) here simply emerge to respond to a ‘crisis’. All four chapters included in this final part of the volume point to tensions in the process as national governments may seek to impose

order while local authorities and non-governmental organisations may prioritise support, seeking to ignore the tensions between national (or also international) policy priorities and local needs and solutions.

While radically different in many ways, suburban cultural diversity emerging out of the suburban sprawl of settled middle class migrants, and the abrupt cultural diversity that emerges from displacement and asylum-seeking, share one point in common: their resilience and significant socio-economic vitality.

This book confirms the close interrelationship between migration and urbanisation processes and the importance of diversity as both an asset and a liability or challenge for cities, large and small. Contributions to this volume demonstrate that we should not see migration as a single phenomenon conducive to the growth of urban centres. We need to understand the different types of migration and the differential impact that they can have, from the ground up or from the top down, to urbanisation. Transience, fragmentation, and contradictions are integral elements of the migration-urbanisation relationship.

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Part I
Emerging and Established Global Cities:
Managing Diversity from Above and from
Below

Chapter 2

Governing Diversity Beyond City and State: Epistemic and Ethical Challenges of African Urbanisation



Loren B. Landau 

2.1 Introduction

Cities are sites of institutional innovation, norm setting, and material production. They are where the majority of the world's population live (United Nations, 2018). Across Sub-Saharan Africa, rapid population growth and geographic expansion only emphasises cities' importance. Countries whose populations were primarily rural a generation ago now see the burgeoning of capital and secondary cities (Lucas, 2021). While cultural heterogeneity has always been a norm in African cities (O'Connor, 1983), the pace and nature of growth has added levels of difference. Language, class, race, and religion are part of this story. So too are people's position in spatio-temporal circuits linking them to families, friends, and at multiple sites and in multiple potential futures. Some remain locally oriented, dedicated to building lives *in situ*; others live on the margins, impoverishing themselves, intentionally disconnected from people and institutions to build a future life elsewhere while remaining deeply connected to multiple sites where they have family, friends, or business interests. Sometimes they imagine lives in futures they cannot yet name but have only ideas of a place where life offers a future less beset by economic and physical precarity (see Franck, 2021), where they can become more than they are.

These diverse orientations and trajectories generate multiple political valences. While some seek political inclusion and recognition, others shy away from it. The diversity this engenders layers multiple, determined, and open-ended geographic and temporal orientations atop class, ethnicity, religion, and language. Differential histories of political mobilisation add further dimensions, with some residents seeking remedies through public institutions and others indifferent to or fearful of them.

The proliferation of mayoral forums to address issues of migration reflect the importance of understanding urban policymaking and the politics associated with

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mobility and diversity (see Lacroix, 2022; Bälz & Aki-Sawyerr, 2021). Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 sets ‘inclusive cities’ as a goal for those seeking to address the socio-political challenges of urban growth in an era of austerity. Underlying the SDG and many other urban level initiatives are ontological, epistemological, and ethical premises warranting scrutiny. These include the very meaning of a city, the desirability of place-based inclusion, and what means and ends might be required to achieve it. Without providing definitive answers to those questions, this chapter provides a framework for how we might more accurately and ethically consider mobility and cities in an era of economic and environmental precarity, ongoing mobility, and institutional frailty and fragmentation.

This chapter outlines these concerns as a way of charting research at the intersection of urbanism, mobility, and the management of diversity. Levying targeted data collected in 2021 across three African cities and an existing corpus of work on African mobility and urban governance, this chapter forwards three primary points. First, while recognising the potential importance of state actors in diversity management, the normative biases associated with state sovereignty lead to analytically overprivileging the state. Urban spaces often present amalgams of regulatory systems working at different spatial scales and moral registers. That should be the analytical starting point. Second, capturing the actors involved in managing mobility and diversity within cities is critical, but the sociality of cities is not spatially bound. The diversity of spatial and temporal orientations at work in cities mean people are part of moral and material economies that shape their relationship to space, institutions, and each other. With this in mind, the chapter offers a third challenge to the normative presumption of inclusion, highlighting not only its elusiveness but the potential hazards it poses for urban residents’ life projects.

I ultimately argue for an approach to urban policymaking that conceptualises the urban not as a singular, bounded space, but as a series of constellations and corridors: sites linked to each other within and beyond the city through multiple institutional, economic, and moral economies. Such an approach not only reveals the horizontal intersections of multiple policy spaces but gives cause to reconsider the almost universal call for localised inclusion, visibility, and representation.

2.2 Data and Approach

This is a largely conceptual and exploratory chapter that draws on almost two decades of research on mobility and urban governance in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere to surface issues and open exploratory space. It begins with work done in collaboration with the South African Local Government Association to understand municipal preparedness to address questions of mobility in the country’s cities. This project brought together a generalised statistical analysis and extensive interviews with municipal authorities and civil society organisations to identify the policy and institutional challenges facing decentralised municipal government (see Landau et al., 2013). It was later extended to include additional municipalities in South

Africa and Botswana (see Mapitsa & Landau, 2019) and then to Kenya and Uganda where we explored municipal and civil society responses to migration and displacement in Nairobi and Kampala (see Kihato & Landau, 2016). The statistical data cited here stems from a survey conducted March–April 2021 in Accra (Ghana), Nairobi (Kenya), and Johannesburg (South Africa). As national and regional nodes for economic and human circulation, they are ideal sites for exploring the governance of urban space in an era of mass mobility. Reflecting patterns seen elsewhere in African cities, each has a relatively young population and receives migrants from across their respective countries, the regions, and further beyond. As indicated in Table 2.1, data were collected from over 1600 people distributed almost evenly across nine specific research sites – three in each city. The sampling took place in some of the most diverse neighbourhoods within each of these cities. In Ghana and South Africa we used census data to identify areas with notably high levels of recent in-migrants. In Nairobi we selected areas based on local expertise. In each site, we included a mix of long-term residents, domestic migrants, and international migrants.

Together these data provide unique, contemporary insights into the nature of urbanisation, institutional engagement, regulation, and translocalism within African cities. Their experiences, alluding to more than what is detailed in this chapter, speak to the normality of multiple diversities associated with urban mobility. They also provide insight into the urban estuaries or gateway zones that characterise some of the most rapidly expanding cities in the world.

The account presented here is by no means definitive, nor is it intended to be. Rather, it is primarily an illustrative, constructive critique of the analytical and normative shortcomings within much urban policy analysis. I present it here not to advocate for African exceptionalism or to argue that cities across the Global South cannot be compared alongside cities in other regions. Quite to the contrary, while each city and country have distinctive histories and characters, African cities amplify and illustrate many of the trends now beginning to appear elsewhere: economic and environmental precarisation, translocality, and the notable absence of public institutions from social, economic, and political life (cf. Bhan, 2019; Comaroff &

Table 2.1 Sample size by city and sex

City	Sex	Respondents	Average age
Accra		575	34.28
	Female	289	34.01
	Male	286	34.56
Johannesburg		529	35.64
	Female	254	36.09
	Male	274	35.19
Nairobi		519	32.22
	Female	258	31.69
	Male	261	32.74
Total		1623	34.06

Comaroff, 2012). This latter point generates forms of ‘do-it-yourself’ urbanisation and urban life. Without muscular state institutions or hegemonic social ones, people are able to trade, house, and engage on terms of their own making (Randolph & Storper, 2023). This level of informality does not mean infinite flexibility or anarchy, but instead points to the importance of unwritten rules that produce conflictive or convivial relations among urban residents.

2.3 Analysing Beyond the Urban Edge

2.3.1 *The State on the Margins of Urban Life*

Urban theory and approaches to policy analysis is often informed by the Euro-American experience, where cities are sites of political and economic incorporation. Urban regimes incorporate markets, state, and civil society actors – although not always easily – to regulate each other and urban populations. For historical and contemporary reasons, African cities primarily reflect urbanism of a different kind. Although the continent has a long history of urbanism associated with trade and pre-colonial political formations, the continent’s primary cities are almost new. Whether designed as sites of colonial extraction (e.g. Johannesburg, Lubumbashi) or trade and transit (e.g. Nairobi, Kinshasa), the continent’s cities were typically planned and constructed for limited, carefully regulated populations (see Freund, 2001; Lamprakos, 1992). Even in the post-colonial period, many countries maintained strong anti-urbanisation agendas designed to maintain Africans as a primarily rural, agricultural people with space in the city allocated to those needed by government or the limited presence there.

Municipal governments were simply not prepared or willing to engage with the rapid urbanisation that has occurred over the past two decades. Some feared doing so would only accelerate urban growth, but whatever their actions, they have done little to slow urbanisation. Across the developing world, the total built-up area of less-developed countries quadrupled between 2000 and 2015 (Pesaresi et al., 2016). Secondary cities in Sub-Saharan Africa doubled their populations in that period and their de facto geographic boundaries grew even more rapidly than their populations. Primary cities, like those discussed here, have also expanded spatially – if less dramatically – as their populations grow from natural increase and in-migration. These rates are akin to industrial European cities 150 years ago and more recent ones in globalising, industrialising Asia. But African cities have only limited industry, trade, and opportunities for secure livelihoods. Some of this is connected to limited states, although greater public intervention has not always generated more equitable or prosperous cities. Regardless, cities continue to offer limited possibilities amidst precarity. Some find fortune there, but most do not (see also Friesen et al., 2019; Lamson-Hall et al., 2018; Kihato & Muyebe, 2015).

Many of Africa's urban spaces are made by people's efforts to do so, often with little direct engagement with municipal authorities. Although some celebrate the evident creativity and self-reliance (cf. Finn, 2014), it generates a level of disconnection, informality, and ongoing mobility (or churn) that has significant implications for people's lives and policy analysis. While urban policy around land-use or trade is, for example, undeniably important (see Kihato & Royston, 2013), many of the neighbourhoods in which people live are 'Brown Areas' (O'Donnell, 2004) or what Scott (2009) might term 'ungoverned spaces.' Yet O'Donnell's and Scott's perspectives – like many policy analyses – are potentially misleading as they create analytical dichotomies between state and non-state forms of governance and policy. While urban regime theory recognises the role of private sector and civil society organisations in determining rules, such approaches often defer to the state as a locus of policymaking. Alternatively, states are seen as 'captured' – the executive committee of big business or others. Yet few speak about urban policy and governance in the presence of frail or intentionally absent state institutions – both traits seen widely across Sub-Saharan cities. Under these conditions, forms of horizontally and socially enacted 'policies' become central in shaping people's lives.

My work in South Africa and Kenya finds that those with the most *de facto* power in regulating urban spaces are often not municipal officials but self- or community-appointed leaders. While their authority may be officially (or unofficially) endorsed by state agents, their actions are often extra-legal (see Misago & Landau, 2022; Misago, 2019). In parts of Cape Town, for example, efforts to prevent anti-immigrant conflict have resulted in a spatial segregation of foreign-owned business and limitations on their numbers. While there is no legal basis for such divides, they have now become normalised, almost congealing to create something Stone (1989, 1993) might recognise as an urban regime or system for governing diversity. Elsewhere, forms of gangsterism and protection rackets have established themselves in ways that produce regimes controlling entrance and residence that rely on relatively stable, if emergent and informal, collaborations and contests among various social, economic, and political actors. Yet, as Davis (2011), Tilly (1985), and Martin Scorsese (*Gangs of New York*, 2002) all note, these often include mafias or mafia-like organisations working at multiple scales (see also Misago, 2019; Ansell & Gash, 2009; also, Alcántara & Nelles, 2014, p. 183). Even when they rely less on violence, the basis of authority and influence is often economic or social, not political (see Landau, 2015).

There is perhaps no better illustration of how millions live beyond the realm of formal law and policy than in considering the protections (or lack thereof) immigrants and refugees achieve in African cities. In research conducted in the mid-2000s in Johannesburg, Maputo, Lubumbashi, and Nairobi, legal status did little for those living in informal settlements, townships, or densely populated inner-city areas (see Landau & Duponchel, 2011). This was in part because almost all services were provided through markets and local level patronage, not states. Moreover, even the police operated on logics only loosely – if at all – structured by law. Instead, it was people's social connections with neighbours, family members, and service providers that most influenced substantive outcomes. As such, when people seek to find

ways in a city, it is not municipal offices or officials that are their most important connections, but the people who live around them or others who might make them visible to hostile actors (see Landau et al., 2016; Vidal, 2010; Hornberger, 2011).

Municipal and national policy texts or implementation remain relevant as they clearly provide a general tableau in which other forms of governance exist. But for significant portions of the urban populations, it is other, often ‘informal’ regulatory regimes that matter most. As discussed, these may take the form of local protection rackets that determine who can build, live, or move through a city. Or it may be private property developers or private security operators who effectively regulate interactions and mobility or provide services including water, education, and housing (see Landau, 2015). These may be embedded in regimes involving state actors and formal policy, but they too may effectively operate beneath or in parallel to such systems. Recognising this asks analysts to reconsider the meaning of regimes and opens the possibility for multiple, potentially highly spatialised regimes that alternatively include and exclude officials as the locus of action and importance.

2.3.2 *Translocality and Scale*

Having discussed the relative (ir)relevance of formal institutions and policy in managing Africa’s urban diversity, I now turn to the spatial basis of urban policy analysis. Underlying such analyses are definitions – sometimes explicit, sometimes not – of ‘city’ or ‘urban’. Shifting to the latter recognises the limitations of solely concentrating on municipal authorities, formal governing processes, or geographically delimited and homogenised spaces. Instead, I seriously engage Boudreau’s (Boudreau, 2016) provocation that ‘the urban’ is not simply a site, but rather a condition shaped by multiple societal issues that intersect in ways that are generative, performative, and potentially transformative. Making sense of urban governance and socio-economic outcomes amidst mobility and informality demands urban policy analysis extend beyond formal urban governments to include policies and practices shaping urban space – whatever their geographic or institutional origins. This is both a liberating and confounding position. At one level, it erodes straightforward comparative frameworks. What is the unit of analysis if cities are not legally defined jurisdictions? And how does one compare?¹ Indeed, such fluid boundaries risk becoming an unwieldy study of everything (see, for example, Brenner & Schmid, 2015). This, in turn, ceases to be fundamentally about what is distinctly ‘urban’ or the city (see Roy, 2016). In some instances – for example in understanding global labour or supply chains – the complete erosion of place-bound analysis enables scholars to see the truly planetary nature of participation processes. What is perhaps more useful for understanding diversity management is a perspective that recognises the cultural and economic specificity of place but demands a more

¹For more on urban comparison, see Robinson, 2016.

permeable and heterogenous epistemology to avoid being blindered from significant forms of regulation and policy processes at work in a given site. As McFarlane (2011, p. 664) notes, ‘a new relational perspective on cities means that it is impossible to understand cities as territories prior to their engagements with other places’.

Such permeability can be accomplished without abandoning a focus on specific geographic sites. This can be done by understanding cities themselves as constellations of interconnected sites embedded in translocal and trans-scalar webs of circulation and regulation. Some speak of this as assemblages or systems of systems, although our focus here is somewhat more concrete. Making sense of urban spaces means tracking connections up, down, and out. The ‘up’ – linking urban policy to ‘higher’ levels of government – is already common in urban policy analysis. This typically takes the form of analytical ‘stacking’, where municipal responses are seen to challenge, follow, transform, or otherwise engage policy frameworks forged at the supra-city level. Such an approach has been productively employed by Ambrosini (2021), Bauder (2017), de Graauw (2021), van Ostaïjen and Scholten (2018), and Martínez-Ariño (2018), among others. Where cities are expressly responsible for realising international or national policy goals, this is clearly an appropriate starting point although these connections are more dialogical than unilinear. It is not simply about implementation or ‘urbanising’ national or international norms and provisions. Instead, policy formation is often mutually constitutive. As cities assert their independence and mayors or other officials mobilise international attention alongside national leaders, formal policy shifts at multiple levels may be driven from ‘below’. Mayoral dialogues and interventions to support cities to address migration issues and help shape immigration and naturalisation policies illustrate this potential.²

Recognising how municipalities are multiply connected to other levels of government is a powerful first step in garnering insight into factors shaping urban space but is not enough alone (cf. O’Toole, 2011). There is need to drill down to the hyper-local: the sub-urban areas that can serve as points in a constellation or archipelago of connected, yet nonetheless distinctive sites within cities or spread across continents. We need not just to take cities seriously (as this volume argues), but to initiate one’s analysis at the level of the neighbourhood, an enclave as small as a street, a street corner, or even a building. This allows Quayson (2014) to offer a vivid account of Oxford Street, Accra’s highly globalised but remarkably local shopping mecca. Or Tayob (2018) to reveal the translocal connections reshaping Minneapolis’s economies and spaces. Looking at Oxford Street in Accra or Johannesburg’s Diepsloot (see Harber, 2014), or any number of other urban estuaries, reveals the range of actors and logics alluded to above (see for example, Zack & Landau, 2021; Hall, 2021). Some are effectively self-regulating islands; others work in ways envisioned by public policy. Many offer hybrid regimes where local actors claiming multiple forms of authorities interact to create vastly different (but potentially connected)

² See, for example, new work by the Cities Alliance (www.citiesalliance.org/how-we-work/global-programmes/global-programme-cities-and-migration/overview)

governing regimes. Diepsloot, for example, is a poor and largely informal area housing close to 140,000 people. It is remarkably violent and only occasionally patrolled by the police. Yet it is effectively conjoined with Dainfern, a wealthy, walled neighbourhood within walking distance that relies on it for labour. There too the police are largely absent, replaced instead by private security under control of the homeowners' association (see Murray, 2020). The two are materially and socially connected, and both governed largely 'outside' the state. The variations in these spaces could not be starker, but neither can be understood alone. Paller's (2019) work on Accra offers less dramatic contrasts, but nonetheless illustrates how the gradual incorporation of different peoples and authority systems generates significantly divergent if geographically proximate policy environments in ways that are both distinct and connected within and beyond urban space (see also Bhan, 2019; Roy, 2016).

Material circulations, evidently and importantly, imbricate multiple geographic spaces (see Buechler, 2008). But as our world is not materialistically determined, there is value in 'socialising' these material circuits. The 2021 survey, for example, found that close to two-thirds of migrants (domestic and international) across the sample reported having household members living in another city, town, or village. In Johannesburg, more than half (56%) of people who were born in the city still had family living elsewhere. In many instances, households are effectively translocal: most urbanites with family outside the city regularly send money to them and many receive information, food, or other forms of support. While these connections appear to have weakened somewhat during the Covid-19 health emergency, they remain remarkably strong across all three sites. Moreover, more than half of domestic migrants (53%) in Accra indicated that if they have surplus, they invest outside the city. The percentage was lower in Nairobi and Johannesburg, where there are clearly significant numbers of people extracting urban resources (or attempting to) to build lives elsewhere. When asked where people would like to buy land or a home, only about half of those surveyed indicated they would like to buy where they are. When asked where they hoped to retire, the majority of respondents across the survey imagined a life elsewhere – typically in their communities of origin. While such return may ultimately prove untenable, they remain oriented in mobile temporalities, never fully invested in the urban. While the usufruct nature of migrant lives may be relatively universal, their concentration in cities changes the very character of those sites. In neighbourhoods where few people are from, who is it that is then investing in the place where they live?

Social and material connections mean that the regulation of urban space – what people do, where they spend, how they interact – is conditioned by possibilities and policies elsewhere. These may include tax codes or rural land use and zoning laws. It may also relate to the informal forms of social regulation that pressure people to provide resources, return 'home', or seek status in spaces other than where they reside (see Kankonde, 2010). This is particularly acute in migrant-rich neighbourhoods or gateway zones where the majority or large plurality are recent arrivals who are effectively on their way elsewhere (see Saunders, 2012). In such sites, multiple forms of pressures and policies may rub uncomfortably against each other, with

some shaped by local concerns while others seek to build lives elsewhere (cf. Thomaz, 2021).

While the literature on transnationalism does well at capturing the multiple social worlds that people occupy, what is emerging across much of Africa are urban spaces (or sites within them) that are effectively translocal or multiply local. This is no longer about city and home: it is migrants working in spaces they know and those they can only imagine. For some it is about building a future in one place while preparing for a life in multiple, possible, others. Potts (2011) argues that this reflects a form of partial urbanisation, where urban life becomes inseparable from lives elsewhere in ways that demand a simultaneous, multi-sited analysis (see Turner, 2015; Mbembe & Nuttall, 2004). I suggest there is value in going beyond the kind of dyadic approach outlined by Potts (2011) and other transnational scholars. Rather, people in a given site – a gateway zone within a municipality, for example – are constantly negotiating formal and social regulation at multiple scales and from multiple sites within and beyond the city: where they live, where they work, where they intend to go, and where they come from (see Dzingirai et al., 2014; Potts, 2011). Even in the most economically marginal neighbourhoods, residents are part of continental and global constellations, interconnected through material exchange, social recognition, moral disciplines, and future imaginations (cf. Soja, 1996). These more archipelagic forms of membership create constellations of economies and institutions both fragile and fragmented and connections more dispersed that demand new forms of multi-sited urban policy analysis.

2.3.3 *Inclusion as Metric*

My final challenge is to how scholars epistemically and ethically mobilise ideas of inclusion and participation. At a normative level, scholars often align with the eleventh Sustainable Development Goal's call to build 'inclusive cities' or older refrains to ensure all residents have a 'right to the city'. Even when not explicitly stated, norms of representation, visibility, and local investment often serve as means of evaluating the effectiveness, structure, and morality of urban diversity management. For some this is largely about economics: access to work, basic services, and possibilities for upward mobility. For others, it is about political inclusion: consultation and the ability of all urban residents to shape the municipal policies affecting them. The understanding of inclusion informing most policy approaches – from Urban Vision plans to the Sustainable Development Goals – draw inspiration from industrial cities in North America and, to some extent, Latin America. Henry Lefebvre's famous demand that workers have rights to the city is premised on their contributions to building its infrastructure and wealth (see Purcell, 2016). Moreover, it presumes an ideal of urban ownership, if not of land, then of the city's future. For him, for the drafters of the SDGs, or the forces behind Habitat III's demand for urban inclusion are ideals of localised belonging; of representation and visibility; of recognition and status where you are. They work from an ethics of inclusion that

presumes people wish to remain. Yet models of place bound by incorporation, assimilation, or integration are no longer adequate as either an empirical or ethical guide (see Bakewell & Landau, 2018). As people build translocal lives – often governed by processes beyond formal institutions – local, state, or social recognition and ownership may cease to be the goal. For some, it may be something they actively avoid.

The translocalism and informality described above give cause to question the desirability of inclusion that is so often a metric for ‘urban success’. Indeed, one must not presume the desirability for urban solidarity and place-bound membership for those living in estuaries or translocal constellations, or for those who see the state as either inherently oppressive or irrelevant. Instead, political participation and inclusion – like the economic and social lives described above – becomes something that is often temporally and spatially dispersed: nodes and networks spanning space and time (see Vivet et al., 2013, p. 78). People shun local engagement while supporting political parties and processes elsewhere. They attend churches, go to community meetings, or help repatriate corpses to maintain their status in villages they otherwise visit only now and then, while they actively resist forging binding connections with their urban neighbours and institutions. Apart from Pentecostal churches that often encourage members to distance themselves from non-parishioners, the migrant respondents in our survey belong to few associations; find little value in attending government meetings; and express remarkably low levels of trust in ‘locals’. Many are deeply suspicious of people from their own countries or communities of origin, fearing that close connections with them will result in additional demands or serve as a surveillance function, potentially embarrassing them to people back home (Cazarin, 2018; Kankonde, 2010; Landau & Freemantle, 2016).

This helps explain why across the cities in our survey, one not only sees low levels of civic engagement, but only faint or partial desire for it. To be sure, there are other reasons for this limited orientation – preliminary analysis suggests activism at home is correlated with urban activism – but it nonetheless discourages engagement with formal political structures. This applies even among those who have spent extended periods (or were born) in the city. In Accra, 75% of the locally-born said they would not attend an official, local planning meeting if given the opportunity. That figure was close to 80% for domestic migrants and even higher for those from other countries. Those in Nairobi and Johannesburg were slightly more inclined to attend, but only just. Meantime, similar percentages report interest in attending a political rally, party meeting, or community group. While voting remains high on people’s agenda, other forms of inclusion and local representation do not.

Rather than an analysis measuring ‘inclusion’ or ‘participation’ in localised or dichotomous terms, this too must be respatialised. After all, what looks like exclusion and political marginalisation in one neighbourhood may be part of a strategy for status and influence elsewhere. A worker in Johannesburg, for example, may continue to live in a backyard shack or single, rented room for decades. While he registers in urban data collection as indigent, his urban self-denial allows him to buy land, cattle, and status within the community whose respect he desires. Hiding urban wealth is also a way to shelter one from the redistributed demands of kin and

colleagues, allowing individuals or families to accumulate the resources required for onward movement. Recognising these constellations of belonging and inclusion means explicitly recognising that people seek varied forms of recognition and membership in multiple places. This may create alternative urban cartographies with disconnections between neighbours and municipal institutions, but vibrant conduits between a Nairobi street corner and a village in Somalia and a mosque in Minnesota. It may connect a small shop in Johannesburg to a political party in Kinshasa or a farmer's cooperative or chamber of commerce in Mozambique. As much as supply chains and commuting corridors, these forms of participation shape urban policy outcomes and interactions.

Pentecostalism, one of Africa's most muscular social forces, is perhaps the greatest driver of belonging across corridors and constellations (see Kankonde & Núñez, 2016; Wilhelm-Solomon et al., 2016; Landau, 2014) While relatively few people in our three-city sample attended public meetings or party events, almost all were part (and contributed money to) of religious organisations. Large numbers of the churches build on their strong connections to institutions in Nigeria, Ghana, Congo, and the United States, and many of them are increasingly political. However, their preaching is often extraterritorial, overtly denying the legitimacy of state laws while speaking of the dangers of local connections. Both the state and the sullied are enemies of salvation. If our concern is with the actors shaping urban space and governance, surely these are among the most significant (see Maclean & Esiebo, 2017). Indeed, as they pray, parishioners draw on variegated liturgical language to make demands on cities while locating themselves in an ephemeral, superior, and unrooted condition in which they can escape localised social and political obligations.

The forms of participation (and self-exclusion) we see emerging across many African cities are connected to urban residents' multiple and often translocal economic, social, and political aspirations. Rather than seeking strong, localised relations and influence, some – by choice or necessity – orient their participation elsewhere. This does not justify the active exclusion of populations by political or economic elites, but it raises important analytical questions for policy analysis. Accepting that urban political participation and local recognition is not a normative goal for all (and may counter emic understandings of urban 'success') frees us to treat it as both a subject for empirical inquiry and a potentially powerful heuristic. As scholars seek means of comparing and contrasting urbanism (Robinson, 2016), finding ways of comparing the nature and geographic scale of participation becomes a way of reading the city. Doing this effectively means opening the form and scale of participatory forms and recognising the role 'stateness' and translocality play in shaping urban space. As such, scholars will benefit from considering categories or continua of participation that can provide more nuance and comparative leverage. Seeking a means of assessing participation at multiple geographic scales, individual or collective projects, and residential environments holds the promise of a broader comparative account of urban policymaking.

As Kaufmann and Sydney (2020, p. 1) argue, a core element of many urban policy analyses is to understand 'how institutions hinder or encourage participation'. In the cases described here, I advocate an agnostic approach to this question.

Rather than promote participation as a normative good, participation and other forms of social connection become means of characterising cities rather than judging them. Such a perspective does not take as its goal facilitating participation or identifying local level ‘democratic deficits’. Rather, it looks at forms of participation and, importantly, the desire and geographic basis for it as means to understand political and policy processes. In this regard, formal meetings – consultations with political parties, policing forums, participatory budgeting consultations and the like – become just one way in which citizenship is expressed and participation practiced. These must be considered alongside substantive interactions with non-state actors and with leaders (formal and informal) outside the city’s geographic boundaries. This furthers others’ observations about multi-level policymaking, but again in ways that do not centre state policy as the ‘dependent variable’. It extends the efforts to ‘see like a city’ which usefully positions urban government within a diverse and multi-local ecosystem. It goes a step further in asking scholars to see urban policy as an outcome of processes that may have little to do with direct city government action or are taking shape precisely because city officials are deliberately absent, administratively under-resourced, or effectively kept away from neighbourhoods and policies through the actions of developers, gangsters, and others. Most importantly, by decentring the focus on local authorities, it makes space for the multiple system of political and social authority that intersect (but is not contained) within cities or urban boundaries. All are part of managing diversity when viewed within an urban frame.

In summary, Sub-Saharan Africa presents cities with ill-defined boundaries where people both struggle for and actively resist inclusion. Some seek status where they are but are stymied by economic structures that work against them. Others pursue a kind of distanced deferral in which they seek recognition and futures elsewhere in continental or trans-continental constellations. For them, visibility, group membership, political participation, cross-cutting social ties – the forms of inclusion scholars and activists almost universally celebrate – become forms of entrapment. Rather than rights to the city, which is effectively a right of ownership, many want what I’ve termed ‘usufruct rights.’ They are helping turn parts of cities into ‘nowherevilles’ – a place where almost no one is from and almost no one wants to belong.

2.4 Concluding Remarks: Translocality, Informality, and Urban Diversity Management

This chapter calls for ways of assessing urban diversity management – and urban governance more broadly – in slightly more expansive ways.

First, while recognising that scholars of urban regimes often analytically include non-state actors (e.g. business, civil society organisations), they unduly privilege state institutions as the locus of advocacy and the ultimate standard-bearer of urban

policy. While states remain important actors, the range of alternative modes of local and translocal regulation at work in African cities often mean states are only of secondary, practical concern. Even if cities and ports are among the few sites where Sub-Saharan states have exercised centralised control (see Herbst, 2000; Leonard & Straus, 2003), they are often amalgams of regulatory systems working at different spatial scales and moral registers: what Holston and Appadurai (1996) refer to as honeycombs of jurisdiction and regulation. Like cities elsewhere in the Global South, urban populations' demographic dynamism often outstrips the capacity or interests of state regulators (see Harms, 2016; Simone, 2017; Buechler, 2008; Auerbach et al., 2018; Ren, 2018; Caldeira, 2017; Landau, 2006; Bank, 2011).

Second, that understanding urban governance and policy requires a distinctly translocal perspective that not only considers global supply chains and international institutions (public and private), but often less visible material and moral circuits of exchange. As people increasingly move into and through primary and secondary urban centres, they may spend most of their time in a city while their political and moral engagements remain in sites well beyond the limits of urban policymakers. This results in a form of translocal 'do-it-yourself' urbanism that blurs the geographical and institutional boundaries underlying conceptions of the urban and urban politics (see Myers, 2021; Turner, 2015; Mains, 2011; Jeffrey, 2010; Katz, 2004).

Third, there is need to challenge approaches explicitly or implicitly assessing cities through a focus on inclusion and popular participation. Take, for example, UN Sustainable Development Goals number 11: to 'make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'.³ Underlying this is a normative pronouncement that provides a series of comparative analytical metrics that resonate strongly with much research on urban policymaking. This chapter asks whether a focus on inclusion and local, state-centred participation effectively enables scholars to understand the politics and priorities of urban spaces and populations. This is not to advocate for economic, social, and political marginalisation, but rather to recognise that due to histories of 'stateness' (Dyson, 2009) and scepticism of official interventions, many urban residents have little interest in participating in official policy. Moreover, those seeking to build lives may actively avoid engagements to remain effectively 'uncaptured' (cf. Kihato & Landau, 2006; Hyden, 1980).

Doing so requires a dual recalibration. The first is to shift beyond the localised trifecta of business, civil society, and state that tends to position government as the locus of mobilisation and influence. As work on xenophobic violence in South Africa (and violence elsewhere) suggests, the state often disengages from the de facto regulation of peoples, processes, and places. These become sites for experiments in governmental form (see Iskander & Landau, 2022). The general irrelevance of state policy in many people's lives further suggests the value of coding as regulators and policymakers as actors that may have little engagement or make little reference to official policies or institutions. The second is a recalibration of scale.

³ See <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

While scholars have long recognised the need to see municipalities as ‘nested’ within state and national bodies, there is an increasing awareness that cities are connected horizontally. These connections are often as much social as material. The policies shaping lives in those sites – whether agricultural and land use policy, taxation and banking, even education and housing – affect how people live, engage, and mobilise in the cities in which they reside.

Urban policy analysis must adapt to this approach with a heightened focus on informality and a rescaled epistemology. This should recognise the spatio-temporalities of life in the city – what Lefebvre might call its polyrhythmicity – but also the multiple urban configurations produced through the mobility of people, goods, and ideas. There is a need to go beyond the stacking or nesting of urban policy in vertical relations with provincial, national, and global frameworks. This is invaluable, but a spatial approach considering corridors, catchments, and the constellations forged through material and socio-economic connections will better capture the multiple temporal and geographic policy spaces shaping contemporary cities. Work by Banerjee (2011) and others adopting a ‘transnational’ or ‘translocal’ perspective starts us on this process, but there is need to include constellations and not just connections that can help us build socialised, spatialised, and temporalised approaches that reveal what Johnson (2012) might term, ‘systems of systems’ but with specific focus on material *and* social forms entanglement.

There is also value in reconsidering how many of the normative foundations work as metrics for comparative policy analysis. It is, for example, still possible to use levels of civic participation, social cohesion, and representation as comparative metrics without proffering these as universal objectives: the Weberian distinction between ideal-types and normative ideals. Doing so allows us to assess what, for example, social cohesion and community do and *should* mean when people who live with multiple temporal and geographic trajectories share space. It may also help avoid efforts to make visible populations that might otherwise wish to remain invisible or to avoid the kind of ‘insurgent citizenship’ or ‘autoconstruction’ the literature often celebrates (see Thomaz, 2021; also, Holston, 2008; Caldeira, 2017). These are people who see cities as spaces of extraction, not belonging, and fear inclusion and incorporation as a threat to their longer-term projects.

In an era of informalised work and regulation, a focus on law and formal migration policy – even at multiple scales – is inadequate to explain social, economic, or developmental outcomes. Instead, we must understand the migration experience simultaneously across multiple geographic and temporal scales, both formal and social. At the very least, it requires a more substantive understanding of the multiple trajectories under which urban residents are living their lives and the spatial and temporal horizons informing them. This means new forms of research. It means new forms of engagement. Perhaps most importantly, it requires constant self-reflection on the societies we want versus the societies we are likely to get. Until we reconsider what we mean by justice, inclusion, and sustainability, scholars and planners risk building cities that only exacerbate the inequality and exclusion we seek to address. There will be those who suggest these observations do not apply beyond Africa’s rapidly transforming urban centres. Without fully denying these

distinctions, it is worth remembering that even the cities where modern political analysis began – Frankfurt, Paris, New York, London – are increasingly looking like the kind of fragmented precarious spaces we see across Sub-Saharan Africa.

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Chapter 3

Urban Policy Modelling and Diversity Governance in Doha and Singapore



J r mie Molho 

3.1 Introduction

On 23 April 2020, the Guardian published an article about the fate of Singapore migrant workers in the pandemic headlined ‘We’re in a prison’ and showing a photograph of a masked South Asian migrant worker sitting down anxiously consulting his phone with a chained iron door in the foreground (Ratcliffe, 2020). The story stressed the contrast between the image of global model that the city-state had gained by effectively addressing its first wave of Covid-19 infections and the reality revealed by the vulnerability of its migrant population housed in overcrowded dormitories. At the start of the pandemic, Singapore went from being considered as the ‘gold standard’ of pandemic response, with journalists and leaders from around the world looking at the city state for solutions, 1 week to being vilified for the poor treatment of its migrant worker populations, the next. Many observers drew comparisons with Gulf state cities where migrants endured similar fates, housed in overcrowded and segregated facilities where infections spread quickly. This crisis follows a series of events that have recurrently highlighted the contradictions behind these global cities’ successful growth models and their aggressive branding strategies that promote their rich diversity. This raises the question of how these cities deal with these contradictions and how it affects the way they manage their diversity.

The transnational circulation of policy ideas has been increasingly put forward as a significant factor in the fabric of local diversity policies. On the one hand, the circulation of managerial concepts such as diversity management has contributed to rise of neoliberal urban diversity governance models; on the other, city networks, international organisations and transnational civic movements are promoting progressive urban diversity agendas. The objective of this chapter is to analyse the role of such processes of policy modelling in shaping urban diversity governance. Urban

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policy modelling (Roy & Ong, 2011) refers to how local policies are developed in connection with policies developed in distant locations thus encouraging policy-makers not only to be on the lookout for best practices but to promote their own actions as models. One key manifestation of the increasing prevalence of modelling is the expansion of city comparisons, city rankings, prizes, and fora in which cities promote themselves and measure up their performances in domains such as quality of life, innovativeness, digitalisation. Studies of the effects of policy modelling on urban diversity governance have only emerged quite recently and these effects remain insufficiently understood.

In this paper, I argue that the modelling of urban diversity policies goes hand-in-hand with a compartmentalised diversity governance, whereby different forms and understandings of diversity are framed and managed in a differentiated way. To comply with international standards and top a variety of urban hierarchies, local actors are driven to renounce to an integrated and comprehensive diversity governance approach and instead develop piecemeal strategies, mobilising specific policy sectors addressing particular local and transnational publics. This compartmentalised diversity governance approach seeks to minimise policy tensions, alleviate external critiques, and craft local experiments that can be projected as models on the world stage. While this compartmentalised diversity governance approach may be well-suited for city rankings and to showcase gradual improvements over lingering issues, it tends to avoid fundamental problems and is thereby vulnerable and prone to recurrent crises.

This chapter is based on fieldwork conducted in Doha and Singapore mainly since 2018. I made two-week fieldtrips to Singapore in February 2015, December 2018, and May 2022, and lived in the city from November 2019 to August 2021. I conducted 55 semi-structured interviews with policymakers and stakeholders in various urban policy sectors (such as culture, economic development, urban development, education, and social policy), managers of cultural institutions and art organisations, and representatives of NGOs involved in migration issues. In Doha, I made two two-week fieldtrips in January 2018 and October 2022. I conducted 53 interviews with the managers of cultural institutions and art organisations, migrant community organisation representatives, policymakers, and stakeholders in sectors such as culture, higher education, migration governance, urban planning, and the media. These interviews underpin my understanding of the drive of urban policy-makers to shape their cities as global models.

To illustrate the implementation of these strategies, I analyse public discourses in the media and official documents. I have reviewed a range of documents such as national and sectorial policy documents (for example, the Vision 2030 in Doha and art and heritage policy plans in Singapore), local and international press coverage on controversies related to migration and diversity governance, and documents published by institutions involved in diversity governance (for example Singapore's National Integration Council, Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the national museums of both countries). I analyse how transnationally circulating references and norms contribute to shaping local diversity governance frameworks and how

both cities strive to position themselves as diversity governance models. I show that their modelling strategies rely on the spatial and organisational compartmentalisation of distinct diversity frames.

3.2 Circulating Urban Models and the Compartmentalisation of Diversity Governance

The city is shaped by circulating ideas, the borrowing of forms, symbols, performances of globality, and locality (Pow & Neo, 2015). These processes are driven by the creation of rankings, which create mental maps of best cities (Bunnell, 2015). In contrast with the policy transfer approach, the notion of policy mobility stresses the interactive process of modelling, which goes beyond mere export or import of fix models (Temenos & McCann, 2012). Elaborating on these works, in this chap. I am interested in how urban policy modelling affects urban policymaking. The concept of modelling was initially introduced by Annaya Roy and Aihwa Ong (2011) as a key dimension of ‘worlding cities’. They described modelling as ‘discursive and material activities that are inspired by particular models of urban achievements in other cities’ (ibid., p.14). I understand urban policy modelling as an instrument mobilised by urban policymakers not only to transform their city in compliance with transnational norms, but also to establish it as a blueprint – an example to be followed by other cities (Molho, 2020).

So far, migration and diversity governance has had a marginal place in the urban policy mobility literature (Lacroix, 2021). Yet urban diversity governance is embedded in multi-scalar policy processes as diversity gets mobilised and politicised by states and international organisations as well as local public, private, and civil society actors (Çaglar & Glick Schiller, 2018; Molho et al., 2020). By reviewing the emerging literature on urban diversity modelling, one can identify two main trends. On the one hand, studies on ‘progressive modelling’ look at how local actors in different countries join forces to address challenges and problems that minorities and migrants face in their city, oftentimes in the face of restrictive national policies (Majka & Longazel, 2017; Guma et al., 2019). Progressive urban models provide insights for cities to welcome and integrate people of different backgrounds, alleviate the social injustices that affect minorities and build mutual understanding between individuals and communities of different backgrounds (Fainstein, 2005; Fincher et al., 2014). On the other hand, the critical studies of ‘neoliberal urban diversity modelling’ trace the genealogies of dominant urban diversity policy rationales and denounce the depoliticisation of diversity (Collins & Friesen, 2011). They show that neoliberal city governments ‘celebrate’ diversity as part of ‘success agendas’, drawing on the repertoire of corporate and public management (Raco & Tasan-Kok, 2020). This approach leads to a selective and elitist understanding of diversity and the commodification of communities’ identities according to the consumption desires of tourists and globalised mobile elite (Jensen, 2007).

I aim to go beyond this dichotomy. I argue that urban policy modelling contributes to the rise of compartmentalised diversity governance, where different diversity governance frames coexist despite their incompatibilities. Urban diversity regimes are characterised by tensions between antagonistic frames: colourblind attempts to deny a society's diversity in the name of neutrality; diversity celebration that promotes diversity as a resource; and a critical perspective that emphasises the structural inequalities that minorities suffer from and denounces systemic patterns of domination. The cities' impetus to promote themselves as models results in the coexistence of these contradictory diversity philosophies. This leads to a segmentation of diversity governance into separate policy domains that are associated with specific issues, publics, and international standards. Instead of an integrated system, compartmentalised urban diversity regimes are decentralised systems that allow various understandings of diversity and principles of diversity governance to coexist. From an internal point of view, this results in a reduction of tensions and critiques, which can be confined to more manageable compartments. From an external point of view, this enables to project local diversity management as a global model by detaching it from complex local realities.

The compartmentalisation of urban diversity governance has both organisational and spatial dimensions. The organisational dimension corresponds to the fact that different urban policymakers and stakeholders get assigned the management of a different kinds of diversities. Thus, distinct organisational assemblages within the same city are pushing forward different diversity frames; instead of trying to engage with each other and find compromise, connections, mutual interests, they operate in parallel. Tensions and incompatibilities exist but are only rarely confronted. These different organisations adopt distinct modelling strategies, each referring to particular norms and transnational links that pertain to their own networks.

The spatial dimension relates to the projection of this differentiated understanding of diversity onto the urban space, that is, how the different social groups referred to by distinct diversity frames are associated with distinct spaces in the city. It corresponds also to the distribution of differentiated modes of representation of diversity in the urban space. The separation and specialisation of different spaces of diversity in the urban space is a way to project showcases that frame positive images of the city's diversity governance model. This aspiration of crafting local models can therefore go along with logics of segregation and gentrification. On the one hand it encourages the creation of 'creative spaces' of selective and exclusive diversity. On the other, it leads to the constitution of spaces of exclusion where marginalised populations are concentrated and the discourses on their conditions can be monitored.

As the use of the notion in psychology suggests, compartmentalisation is a defence mechanism, a way to address potential tensions and incompatibilities (Thomas et al., 2013; Rozuel, 2011). The city can resort to compartmentalisation to prevent internal tensions. The forces that push for change and pluralisation in a compartmentalised system are restricted to separate spaces or organisational fields. Compartmentalisation is also a defence against negative external perceptions that

derive from diversity-related issues, such as urban fragmentation, interethnic tensions, racism, and marginalisation of minorities. To divert attention away from those negative aspects, urban elites can resort to compartmentalisation as a way to project positive accounts of the way diversity is lived in the city, emphasising peaceful coexistence and the plurality of forms of expressions in the city.

3.3 Doha and Singapore as Modelling Machines

Doha's and Singapore's modelling strategies need to be situated in their historic, geographic, and political contexts. First, from a historical point of view, for former colonies crafting autonomous paths and evolving from model importers to model exporters signals not only their accession to autonomy, but also their symbolic success (Chia, 2005; Al Raouf, 2010). In the colonial era, racialist theories influenced the shaping of the city. In Singapore, the Raffles Town Plan established in the 1820s conceived a city divided along ethnic lines. After independence, while local governments were able to set their own agendas, foreign experts still played a major role in the imagination of urban futures (Dale, 1999; Boussaa, 2014). In Doha, the British planner Richard Llewelyn-Davies, who was invited shortly after Independence in 1971, and later on the American planner William Pereira played a crucial role in shaping the city's path to modernisation and development. Likewise, after its independence in 1965, Singapore sought support from United Nations experts for the Concept Plan that oriented the city's development.

Until today, global city shapers such as transnational consulting firms and star architects, are regularly mobilised in Doha and Singapore to devise urban strategies and design new districts (Aoun & Teller, 2016). Yet, their mandate is no longer simply about adapting a foreign concept to the local context, but also to elaborate distinctive and pioneering models so that the cities can claim leadership in various domains of global urbanism (Zaina et al., 2016; Shamsuzzoha et al., 2021). Singapore has actively promoted its model, not necessarily as a coherent whole but as a complex assemblage of differentiated elements (Pow, 2014). Since its creation in 2003, Surbana, an offshoot of the Singapore Housing Development Board, has sold urban design services in more than 20 countries around the world. This modelling business builds on the prestige of local urban development projects. Recently, the public housing estate Punggol Town won awards from the Urban Land Institute in 2021 as part of its Global Award for Excellence, recognising its promotion of biodiversity (Parida, 2021). As for Doha, it has put forward both urban regeneration projects and new town developments as models. With the organisation of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Doha created a subway network from scratch at an unprecedented pace, challenging its long-standing car-oriented urban development (Azzali, 2017). This went along with the creation of a 'new Downtown' in Msheireb, promoted as the 'world's first sustainable downtown regeneration project and one of the smartest

cities on earth' (Msheireb, [n.d.](#)). It also launched a new town project in the North Coast, Lusail, promoted as 'fertile grounds for a tech-powered environment' and 'a model sustainable city of the future' (Lusail, [n.d.](#)). Beyond the urban marketing discourse, these projects reflect the significant resources invested to promote innovative urban practices to set these cities at the forefront in the establishment of new standards in global urbanism.

Second, Doha and Singapore's modelling strategy is also a part of their geopolitical strategy to position themselves as interfaces (Tan, [2018](#)). Their status as small independent nations creates a need to diversify their alliances both within and beyond their regional neighbourhoods (Kamrava, [2015](#)). Qatar, although member of the Gulf Cooperation Council, has conflictual relations with its neighbours, revealed by the embargo imposed by the UAE and Saudi Arabia from 2017 to 2021 to coerce it to shift its domestic and foreign policy. Likewise, Singapore is a founding and active member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, but it is also keen to limit strategic dependence on its neighbours (Leifer, [2013](#)). In recent years, some prominent diplomatic negotiations took place in Doha and Singapore signalling their strategic position in regions that are often at the top of the global diplomatic agenda. In 2018, Singapore hosted the Trump-Kim Summit, which was the first meeting between sitting leaders of the United States and North Korea. In 2020, Doha hosted the negotiations and the signing of an agreement between the US and the Taliban after two decades of war in Afghanistan. Hosting these events also reflects the cities' respective capacity to position themselves as mediators that can address antagonistic global players.

Third, their modelling strategies also derive from their respective domestic context. As illiberal regimes, Doha and Singapore use modelling to diffuse consensual visions and avoid their development models and diversity management regimes from being challenged (Harkness & Levitt, [2017](#); Luger, [2020](#)). In the absence of political alternations, these regimes need alternative sources of legitimation. Mobilising apolitical international standards, norms, and models projects an image of good management and diminishes risks of contestation (Mohamed Nasir & Turner, [2013](#)). Their modelling strategies are characterised by a highly centralised governance; they rely on policy plans mobilising external references while formulating a specific path, implemented by entrepreneurial government agencies like the Qatar Foundation in Doha or the Economic Development Board in Singapore. The promotion of their model relies also on the control the media. Reporters without Borders ranks Singapore 139 out of 180 in its Media Freedom Index and points out that 'Singapore boasts of being a model of economic development but it is an example of what not to be in regard to freedom of the press' (RSF, [2022](#)). Qatar appears just 20 ranks above Singapore, reflecting the restrictions that journalists endure to document local issues. In contrast, national media benefit from a lot of resources to highlight the positive achievements that the government wishes to emphasise – and its counter-arguments to any local or international critiques.

3.4 Promoting Urban Diversity as an Asset

Doha and Singapore constitute superdiverse cities and have been keen to promote their long history as trading hubs. They are located in two regions historically characterised by large flows of trade and migration that have shaped the diversity of their citizen populations. Cultural, commercial, and religious exchanges have shaped these regions' heritage (Hall, 2010). In Southeast Asia, Indian and Arab merchants took part in the trade of spices, which enriched the region's religious diversity (Ooi, 2004). In the colonial era, Singapore was a migration magnet, which has led to its ethnically diverse population that consists of Chinese (74%), Malays (13%), and Indians (9%). In the Arabian Gulf, local culture has been influenced by long distance trade with Asia and Africa (Onley, 2005). The Qatari population is composed of different groups that relate to their migration origins: the Arabs originating from the Arabian Peninsula, the *Ajams* who descend from Persian traders and craftsmen, and the *Abds* who are the descendants of African slaves that were brought to Qatar until the 1950s (Nagy, 2006).

In recent decades Doha and Singapore have become global migration hubs. In Singapore, the immigrant population has increased by nearly one million in the last 50 years, and in 2020 represented around 40% of the city's 5.7 million population. This includes nearly one million low-skilled migrant workers employed in sectors like construction or domestic work and who only have a temporary status. In Doha, migration has led to a seven-fold increase of the population to nearly three million between 1980 and 2020. Some 90% of the population are foreign nationals with temporary status (De Bel-Air, 2017).

Doha and Singapore's official narratives put forward their diversity as a distinctive component of their identity. They emphasise their pasts as trading ports, as spaces of cultural exchanges. But while this 'old diversity' is glorified as a rich heritage of the past, 'new diversity' is presented as an undesired necessity. Most migrants have a temporary status and no path to citizenship (Babar, 2014; Baas et al., 2020). National preference is the norm as citizens benefit from multiple social benefits and privileges. Both cities are also adamant to reject the forms of diversity that they present as contradictory to traditional family values. Singapore and Doha authorities explicitly and recurrently opposed the inclusion of LGBT+ community rights as part of their diversity strategies. In 2022, the Singapore authorities removed a long-standing law criminalising homosexuality, only to enshrine in the constitution the banning of same-sex marriage. At the same time, the head of Doha 2022 FIFA World Cup organising committee vilified European teams wearing a symbol in support to LGBT+ communities as a sending a 'divisive message', arguing 'what you're essentially saying is you're protesting an Islamic country hosting an event' (Ingle, 2022). In sum, elites in Doha and Singapore have shaped an illiberal model of diversity governance, founded on national preference and selective exclusions that they deem legitimate and actively defend it against external critiques (Thiollet, 2022).

Doha and Singapore's diversity strategies are closely linked to their aspirations to top world city rankings. Urban elites in Doha and Singapore have developed multiple efforts to build their city's status by investing in the various domains that can contribute to make it regarded as a global city. Success and progress in various global city rankings are often reported with pride. In Singapore, Corinne Kerk from *The Business Times* praised the city-state for having 'moved up 3 ranks' and reaching eighth place in the Schrodgers Global Cities Index, stressing that it had overtaken Hong Kong and 'emerged as the top city in Asia' (Kerk, 2022). Likewise, Sue-Ann Tan in *The Straits Times* played up Singapore's ability to attract global talent recognised by its second-place rank in the yearly 'global talent competitiveness index' published by the Insead business school and the Portulans Institute (Tan, 2021). In Doha, Irfan Bukhari, in *The Peninsula*, highlighted that Doha 'has been declared as the second safest city in the world' out of 431 cities in the Numbeo's Crime Index, crediting 'the continuous efforts of the Ministry of Interior' for this achievement (Bukhari, 2021). The Qatar website Living2022.com website reported Doha's 23rd-place in the Resonance Consultancy Global Place Equity Ranking as providing an interpretation for this success: 'it's not just the quality of attractions, events and entertainment, or even the immense culinary scene in Doha that make it an up-and-coming tourist hotspot. Its diversity and acceptance of other cultures, its quality of life and prosperity, and its peacefulness and safety record also make Doha a welcoming place to visit or to live.' (Living2022.com, 2020).

These rankings often take into account criteria that relate to the city's diversity. For instance, the Kearney Global Cities Index, which in 2022 ranked Singapore ninth and Doha 57th, uses criteria such as the city's foreign-born population and number of international students (Lohmeyer et al., 2022). The importance of 'information exchange', 'cultural experience', and 'human capital' as key dimensions in these rankings has further legitimised investment in culture, media, sport, and higher education infrastructures (Molho, 2021). Doha has created world class museums such as the Museum of Islamic Art in 2008, Mathaf in 2010, the National Museum in 2019, and the 3-2-1 Sports Museum in 2022. Since the 1990s, Singapore, has inaugurated a number of new cultural institutions, like the Singapore Art Museum in 1996, the Esplanade cultural complex in 2002, and the National Gallery 2015. These institutions are at the forefront of projecting a narrative that strategically articulates a cosmopolitan and a nationalist discourse (Levitt, 2015).

3.5 Compartmentalized Diversities

Underneath the image of diversity management models that these cities project in cultural institutions lies a complex diversity governance framework divided along lines of tensions. The first factor of compartmentalisation is socio-economic polarisation and the stark contrast between privileged elites and marginalised working classes (Sassen, 2002). In addition, there is a contrast, in both cities, between an

increasing recognition of the city's 'old' diversity – namely the celebration of the city's migration heritage – and the rejection of 'new' diversity, in particular low-skilled migrant workers (Vertovec, 2015). Both cities have experienced a strong 'globalisation backlash' (Crouch, 2018) and a return of nationalism (Triandafyllidou, 2017).

Deriving from these lines of tensions, four compartments structure the diversity governance of Doha and Singapore. A first compartment refers to the diversity of the national population and relies on a state-sanctioned and cohesive identity discourse. It appears in national museums and national commemorations; it underpins the city's planning and is explicitly projected in heritage neighbourhoods. A second compartment pushes this understanding of diversity towards a more malleable and open understanding of the nation and is mobilised to brand the city as cosmopolitan. This approach is promoted by emerging cultural and higher education institutions. A third compartment targets elite migrants. It constitutes creative clubs of exclusive diversity to promote the city as creative and is formalised in spaces that draw on globally-circulating urban references, such as creative clusters and gentrified urban neighbourhoods. A fourth compartment targets low-skill migrants, especially those employed in manufacturing and construction. It is characterised by various forms of cultural exclusion, but also by the co-optation of NGOs and private actors to project a caring image.

3.5.1 A Nation-Building Model: Essentialization and Securitization

The official national narrative draws on a historical register to explain how the city's historical path has constituted a specific diversity governance framework. Singapore promotes itself as a multicultural society (Yeoh & Chang, 2001). The Chinese, Malay, Indian and Other, or CMIO, model relies on the quantification of each ethnic group. This is used to prevent the formation of segregated ethnic communities: three-quarters of the population are housed in ethnically-diverse public housing. The bilingual education policy enables ethnic Chinese to learn Mandarin, ethnic Malays to learn Malay, and ethnic Indians to learn Tamil. Cultural policies document the heritage of each ethnic group and strive to promote the artists and art forms of these three communities. The creation of three ethnic heritage districts – Chinatown, Kampong Glam, and Little India – is another way in which the city displays its multicultural character. But critiques have pointed out that by reducing the city's diversity to three main ethnic categories, Singapore's multicultural model has homogenised plural and interconnected communities (Huat, 2003). They also argue that it led to the disappearance of intangible heritage such as dialects, as well as the destruction of built heritage to create a sanitised and simplified display of the city's cultural diversity (Kwok & Low, 2002; Yeoh & Kong, 2012).

Singapore presents its multicultural model as a national cohesion imperative. The ‘Guide for Permanent Residents’ (NIC, n.d.) states that the ‘country’s emphasis on racial and religious harmony’ is the result of ‘episodes of ethnic turmoil and strife during its pre-independence past’. The 1950 ‘Maria Hertogh riots targeting Malays and Eurasian communities and the 1964 ‘Communal riots’ between Chinese and Malays are memorialised and commemorated to highlight the risks of inter-ethnic conflicts and highlight the success of the Singapore Republic in ‘fostering and managing good relations between the different racial and religious groups’. At the Harmony in Diversity Gallery, an institution established to project the Singapore multicultural model, the Maria Hertogh riots are represented using multimedia technologies, and Singapore’s successful model of multicultural harmony is displayed in contrast to religious conflicts around the world.

Doha’s identity discourse prioritizes a narrative of cultural unity, leading to a more prominent portrayal of the dominant cultural components as representative of the official culture, rather than emphasizing the diverse and distinct communities within the national fabric. This leads to a dominance of the Arab Bedouin identity and the marginalisation of the nation’s Persian and African heritage (Exell & Rico, 2013; Potter, 2017). The national heritage narrative mainly promotes features related to rural and desert life like falconry. The Souq Waqif conserved in the 2000s as a showcase traditional Qatari heritage is presented as a ‘weekend market used by the Bedouins when they came to town to trade their meat, wool, weaving materials and milk for staple goods’ (Marhaba, 2022).

The presentation of local culture in simplifying terms is justified by the need to preserve local culture against global homogenising forces. The Qatar National Development Strategy 2018–2022 urges to ‘achieve the desired benefits in terms of development and prosperity while preventing any threats to its identity and culture and value heritage’. The *Marhaba Information Guide* asks foreigners to ‘bear in mind that Qatar is a conservative Islamic state’ and provides practical advice such as to ‘dress modestly’ or ‘be mindful when talking to Arab women’ (ibid.). This attitude, which affirms difference between locals and foreigners, is also illustrated by Embrace Doha, an initiative launched by a Qatari woman, Amal Alshammari, and benefits from support from the public authorities, including Qatar University and the Ministry of Tourism (Alfoory, 2016). The initiative invites ‘expatriate communities’ and introduces them to Qatari culture in a hotel space ‘decorated to look like a traditional Qatari majlis’. Alshammari emphasises: ‘We don’t want to end up like Dubai... We as Qataris don’t want to lose our identity; so to keep it, we believe in educating expats about our culture’ (ibid.).

In sum, the official national narrative describes local identity in simplistic and essentialising terms in view of projecting a unifying discourse in the name of stability and for the sake of the preservation of national heritage in the context of globalisation. The construction of this model is not intended to generate emulation but rather to be widely acceptable and limit contestation, both locally and internationally.

3.5.2 Sophisticating the Diversity Discourse in Cultural and Intellectual Networks

With their investments to build knowledge cities, Doha and Singapore have created certain spaces where alternative visions of diversity can be put forward. In Singapore, cultural actors both within formal cultural institutions and in the non-profit sector try to go beyond the celebration of side-by-side multicultural heritage. The cultural institutions and art organisations operating within the conserved ethnic heritage districts, like the Indian Heritage Center in Little India, stress the complexity within each official ethnic category as well as the intense intercultural relations that were taking place in the neighbourhood.

Artistic initiatives are also involved in pushing the boundaries of the official diversity management discourse as they mobilise diverse cultural traditions. For example, Maya Dance Theatre strives to produce ‘trans-cultural dance’. While the choreographer Kavitha Krishnan draws on Indian traditions, like the stories and characters of the Mahabharata, she does not frame her projects as being for and by a particular ethnic community. She engages with contemporary dance forms and collaborates with performers from different traditions and ethnic backgrounds. She also uses these projects to tackle social issues that cut across ethnic and cultural boundaries, such as end of life or domestic sexual violence.

In Doha, cultural actors endeavour to excavate within the urban space the traces of a plural heritage in order to challenge the official unitary discourse. The Msheireb district includes an area with four conserved houses converted into museums. This project, as a whole, takes part in the conservation/redevelopment of the historical core through an imagined and unitary vision of Qatari heritage. However, the conservation of these heritage houses along with the conception of different museum projects taking into account the specific history of each house brought about the possibility to excavate the neighbourhood’s diverse past. The history of each house determined the theme of the various exhibitions: in particular, the Bin Jelmoed House, which was once the property of a slave trader, is dedicated to the history of slavery. Taking a global stance, it situates the place of Doha in the global history of slave trade. Based on the display of testimonies of Qataris of African descent, it offers a local viewpoint to the global issue of the legacy of slavery in contemporary patterns of racism and discrimination.

Globally connected higher education institutions established by the Qatar Foundation to prepare for the post-oil future play an important role in connecting Doha to transnational conversations. Set within the local branch of Northwestern University, the Media Majlis is a museum focused on media ambitions to ‘challenge standard narratives and ‘represent the diversity of voices, perspectives, events and people that contributes to the evolving media world’ using its exhibition to shine a critical light on media representations. As the FIFA World Cup in late 2022 approached, the Media Majlis hosted an exhibition entitled ‘Is it a beautiful game?’, which discussed problems such as ‘injustice, inequality, and a lack of diversity and inclusion’ in football. For instance, it interrogated gender representations,

challenging the stereotypical representation offered of the Qatari woman in the official discourse.

In sum, we see that the creation of new cultural and higher education spaces has opened the possibility of adopting more sophisticated discussions on identity and diversity, which in Singapore move beyond the side-by-side multiculturalism based on ethnic stereotypes and in Doha highlight the plurality of the national identity and give voice to marginalised minorities. This sophistication of the official diversity discourse is part of the integration of these cities in cultural and higher education networks where local issues matter within global discussions.

3.6 Creative Clubs

The purpose of creative clubs is to make the city attractive for elite migrants. In Singapore, attracting highly skilled professionals has been a long-standing priority. In 2000, the Renaissance City Plan aimed to generate ‘cultural and creative buzz’ to ‘attract both local and foreign talents’ (MITA, 2000, p. 5). The impetus to attract elite and hypermobile creative professionals has led to the creation of new urban landmarks like the Moshe Safdie-designed signature building Marina Bay Sands, which became one symbol of the city. It also paved the way to the establishment of exclusive gated communities designed to attract wealthy and mobile professionals like the Sentosa Cove inaugurated in 2006 on the Island of Sentosa, designed by master planners Bernard Sperry, McKerrel Lynch, and Klages Carter Vail. The enclave was promoted as ‘a cosmopolitan community of some 4000 residents of over 23 nationalities’ and as ‘as one of Asia’s premier waterfront residences’ (Lim et al., 2011). Its promoters have been keen to obtain ‘internationally-renowned accreditations’ and in 2012 proudly announced that the Marina Industries Association of Australia had distinguished the neighbourhood with a ‘five gold-anchor rating’ (Lim et al., 2012).

Gentrifying central urban areas using arts and culture is another key pillar of the creative club strategy. Ethnic cultural districts like Chinatown, Kampong Glam, and Little India have been key targets. According to the Singapore Tourism Board, Little India provides creative elites with a ‘unique blend of the best of the modern world and rich cultures to deliver enriching experiences’ (STB, 2009, p. 44). Since the 1980s, urban regeneration projects have emphasised the neighbourhood’s ethnic character, with for example, the development of shopping arcades selling Indian souvenirs, the creation of an Art Belt welcoming Indian dance companies, the commissioning of murals throughout the neighbourhood, and the organisation of an annual art walk. The neighbourhood has also seen the development of high-end residential towers, like the Sturdee Residences, a 30-story building with 305 apartments promoting itself as an ‘oasis above the bustling metropolis’ and ‘surrounded by a rich urban fabric’ (Sturdee Residences, n.d.).

Doha has also invited star architects to establish attractive landmarks like the Museum of Islamic Art designed by Ieoh Ming Pei and the National Museum of

Qatar designed by Jean Nouvel. The conversion of a former fire station into a cultural centre welcoming local and international artists in residence reflects the city's willingness to propose its own model of culture-led urban regeneration. The city has also created an attractive residential offer for deep-pocketed mobile professionals such as The Pearl, established on 32 kilometres of reclaimed coastline, designed by the planner Callison, and inaugurated in view of the 2006 Asian Olympic Games. It is composed of different precincts that use diversity and cultural hybridisation as a marketing resource: the Qanat Quartier is 'modelled after the Italian city of Venice' (The Pearl Island, n.d.-a, b), with canals and Venetian architecture and promoted as 'a private and picturesque community where Venetian charm meets Arabian chic', and the Viva Bahriya precinct boasts its luxury villas inspired by Moroccan architecture that 'echo the very best of the Arab Maghreb' (Ibid.).

While Doha's urban centre long been left to decay, as it was vacated by Qatari families and used to house migrant workers, a process of gentrification is now underway, boosted by the opening of numerous metro stations and the creation of new cultural districts. In particular, the Msheireb district inaugurated new creative spaces like Liwan and M7. Liwan was established in a former girls' school dating back to the 1950s and proposes private studios, co-working spaces, meeting rooms to invite 'designers working across a range of disciplines to experiment and test the boundaries of design'. Not far away, the M7 has been established as 'Qatar's new creative hub' to provide creatives with exhibition spaces, an incubation centre, a fab lab, a café, and a shop in order to boost 'Qatar's innovation and startup scene'.

In sum, to lure mobile creative professionals both cities project an attractive urban lifestyle that combines local and international references by creating new districts or by regenerating central neighbourhoods. Within these creative clubs, diversity is mobilised as a resource to promote the city.

3.6.1 Spaces of Cultural Exclusion

Doha and Singapore's economies are heavily reliant on the cheap labour provided by migrant workers. The construction of a local model to manage these populations has had to deal with the xenophobic hostilities expressed by national citizens and the scrutiny of international organisations and civil societies. Both cities have dealt with these challenges by relocating migrant workers away from the residential areas. In Singapore, foreign workers were initially settled either at workplace sites or rented HDB flats. But as Singaporean nationals expressed reluctance towards their presence, they started being housed in separate dormitories. In 2008, 11 dormitories were planned to host 65,000 workers, and government buildings were converted into housing for migrants. In 2013, the Urban Redevelopment Authority issued guidelines that recommended locating workers' dormitories 'away from residential areas and areas where the use is likely to cause amenity problems' (URA, 2013). Due to the lack of services in these dormitories, Singapore saw the emergence of what Ostertag (2016) called 'transient community hubs', where migrants

gather for leisure and to access services such as remittances'. The main transient community hub in Singapore is Little India, which on Sundays could attract up to 100,000 migrant workers in pre-pandemic times (Goh, 2014).

In 2013, the Little India riots generated international press coverage of the poor living conditions of migrant workers. The New York Times published an editorial on 27 December titled 'Singapore's Angry Migrant Workers' that called for the city-state to 'ensure that the millions of transient workers who contribute so much to the economy are not marginalized and abused' (New York Times, 2013). This was followed a few months later by a report in the Guardian: 'Singapore needs to address its treatment of migrant workers' (Malay, 2014). As a result, the Singapore authorities sought to reduce the presence of South Asian workers in Little India by implementing tough security measures. They also began planning mega-dormitories able to host up to 25,000 workers and which also included leisure facilities. For instance, the Tuas South Avenue 1, which opened in the summer of 2014, has 16,800 beds, a minimart, a food court, a 250-seat cinema, and a cricket field (Tan & Toh, 2014). Locating such recreation centres near the dormitories was conceived as a way to decongest Little India (Toh, 2014).

In Doha, migrants historically settled in the city centre in buildings vacated during the modernisation and construction of new neighbourhoods for Qatari citizens (Boussaa, 2014). From the 2000s, the historical centre's regeneration paralleled the relocation of migrants in peripheral areas (Mohammad & Sidaway, 2016). In addition, there have been reports of South Asian 'bachelors' being banned from mainstream public spaces such as Souq Waqif, the Corniche, Aspire, or malls (Pattison, 2016).

The award of the 2022 FIFA World Cup triggered an accelerated influx of migrant workers, increasing logics of exploitation and an enhanced scrutiny from the international community. In September 2013, the Guardian reported on 'Qatar's World Cup "slaves"' (Pattison, 2013), while in January 2014, the New York Times denounced 'Qatar's showcase of shame' (Aziz & Hussain, 2014). This led to the appointment of a UN Special Rapporteur for human rights, who issued recommendations for improving migrants' living and working conditions; the Qatar foundation also issued its own report (Jureidini, 2014). In addition, dedicated new towns were planned to house migrant workers. In 2015, Doha unveiled a plan to build seven new cities to house 250,000 workers employed in the construction of the infrastructure planned for hosting the football world cup. These initiatives were presented as an attempt to upgrade migrants workers' living conditions. NAAAS, the developer of Asian City, promoted it on its website as 'designed and developed to strategically meet the vision of Qatar 2022 World Cup assuring better living conditions for the workforce', adding that the city contains a 'variety of excellent facilities including open spaces, gardens, gyms and recreation areas, thereby creating pleasing environment and positive outlook'.¹ Along with the creation of a complementary entertainment centre called Asian Town, the housing development

¹ www.naaasgroup.com/asian-city

was presented as an attempt to cater to the specific needs of Asian workers, with a hypermarket, a mall, a 16,000-seats amphitheatre, a 13,000-seat cricket stadium, and four cinemas screening Bollywood movies (Kovessy, 2015).

In sum, the modelling of spaces of exclusion targeted at low-skill migrant workers in Doha and Singapore has been developed to project a controlled image of the treatment of these marginalised migrants to both local and international audiences. This is intended as a response to domestic and foreign critiques, without putting into question the foundations of the exploitative system that maintains migrant labour in conditions of precarity and vulnerability.

3.7 Concluding Remarks

Globalisation has not only brought about a significant diversification of cities, as they attract ever more diverse people and see the affirmation of multiple identities, it also led to the emergence of new modes of governance of diversity. As traditional, nation-centric models such as assimilation and multiculturalism have been challenged and critiqued, urban-centric models started to be seen as potential alternatives able to respond to the specific needs that each city faces with regards to the management of its diversity. This is manifested by the multiplication of city networks and think tanks that promote good practices on diversity governance, as well as consultancies and experts selling solutions for good urban diversity management. These new arenas, which enable urban professionals to search for ideas and solutions, and to situate their achievements within a transnational policy-making sphere, signal the emergence of urban policy modelling as a key process in the governance of diversity.

By drawing on the lessons learned from urban policy modelling studies, I have argued that the analysis of the intrinsic characteristics of urban diversity models is insufficient. It must be combined with an analysis of the organizational dynamics that underpin it. Indeed, urban policy modelling plays an ambivalent role in diversity governance. It can contribute to movements of transnational solidarity and progress, as cities come together to propose solutions to the new challenges emerging from urban diversity, but it can also contribute to a depoliticisation of diversity, along with the diffusion of standardized diversity management models that frame diversity as an asset while legitimising regimes that adopt restrictive views of diversity and marginalise minorities and migrants. In this chapter, I have therefore proposed to approach urban policy modelling as a symbolic resource used by policymakers to interact with a transnational policy-making networks to gain local and global legitimacy. This echoes Caponio (2018)'s analysis of the symbolic functions of transnational city networks, and their role in legitimizing local policies and construct city identities than to tangibly shift integration policies.

The central argument is that as globalising cities are embedded in increasingly complex multiscalar networks, the governance of their urban diversity becomes more compartmentalized. This compartmentalization stems from the decline of

nation-centric grand narratives which claimed to propose overarching diversity management frameworks, and the rise of a global urban diversity modelling competition. Cities that wish to position themselves as successful diversity governance models need to show that they flexibly respond to local issues and propose attractive and inspiring solutions that showcase their openness.

Compartmentalization allows local actors to segment issues to make them easier to address, and to situate their actions in relation to wider global discussions. Compartmentalization leads to the coexistence of apparently contradictory processes. Emerging global cities like Doha and Singapore actively open up to global flows and publicly embrace cosmopolitan values, while at the same time, implementing national preference systems and promoting of a traditionalist national identities. I have shown that these processes coexist, in parallel, in distinct organizational spheres and urban spaces, with relatively little spaces and moments of frictions.

The compartmentalisation of diversity governance restricts progress on diversity matters to transnationally connected elite spaces and organisations. Thereby, it greatly limits the potentially disruptive effects of urban diversity modelling. As they aspire to rise as global cities and cultural hubs, Doha and Singapore have created global centres of cultural and intellectual production that bring up global discussions on diversity issues, but do little to challenge the foundations of the city's diversity governance framework.

The compartmentalization of urban diversity governance derives from the contradictions of the global city. Inter-city competition favours limited redistributive mechanisms and labour regulations. The compartmentalisation of urban diversity governance is closely linked to the inequality that this system generates. It is also generated by the tensions between antagonistic popular aspirations: the preservation of traditional national culture understood in conservative terms and the recognition of the city as a hub of knowledge and cultural exchange. The governments of Singapore and Doha are weary to minimise these tensions and showcase an effective bureaucracy able to anticipate problems and devise rational solutions in line with international standards. Faced with recurrent crises, they respond by providing policy solutions such as the planning new cities, new recreational centres, or reforms that display gradual progress.

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Chapter 4

Urban Diversity and Spatial Justice: A Critical Overview



Amin Moghadam 

4.1 Introduction

Social scientists' interest in diversity as an urban social phenomenon is not recent. It has been a feature of the entire history of disciplines such as urban anthropology and urban geography. What does seem relatively new, however, is the appearance and generalisation of concepts of diversity in the urban policy domain. As emphasised by Lammert and Sarkowsky (2010), diversity policy now traverses a wide variety of national and urban contexts. It is adopted and adapted to each individual context as an element of political rhetoric on diversity and multiculturalism. The transnational circulation of this notion raises the question of how it is appropriated at different geographical levels and in different socio-political systems, and how it becomes the object of negotiations or even tensions and conflicts. Understanding *how* it circulates also enables us to explore the constellation of socio-political actors, institutions, intermediaries, and spheres of influence involved, and more generally, taking into account the historical and geographical specifics of a given place.

At city level, the notion of diversity has also infiltrated the field of urban planning and urban project design. This worldwide trend has led to its appearing in the political agendas of urban stakeholders in the municipalities of cities in both the Global South and the northern hemisphere. Urban diversity as a policy and its management have become watchwords in urban policymaking across the globe, in varied national and urban contexts, taken up and exploited by authoritarian regimes and liberal democracies alike. From the urban planning point of view, the concept of diversity might first be thought of as referring to a city's multiple uses (residential, commercial, leisure, etc.), but also to the diverse populations either living there or passing through, i.e., as residents or visitors.

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Corporate diversity policies – and the development of ahistorical, apolitical and in fact discriminatory diversitising rhetorics – have in addition fed into diversity policies as tools of urban marketing and the legitimization of political power. The political use, even instrumentalization, of notions of diversity in promoting and legitimising urban and economic development policies and projects implies a de facto redefinition of the semantic boundaries of these terms as used in the social sciences. This raises new questions for research into relations between diversity as a locus of everyday interaction, tension, and solidarity, and diversity as circumscribed, recognised (or not), and represented in urban policies (Torino, 2021; Lejeune et al., 2021; Raco & Tasan-Kok, 2019; Steil & Delgado, 2019; Raco & Kesten, 2018; Burchardt, 2017).

Criticism of these processes of generalisation and circulation of diversity as a political paradigm, and so as a vector of the exercise of power, mostly focuses on the depoliticisation of the notion of diversity in public debate and its disconnection in urban policies from issues of socio-economic inequalities and equity.

The examples given in this chapter, drawn from cities of both the South and the North, take a critical look at policies using and promoting urban diversity through the lens of socio-economic inequalities by linking it to the notion of spatial (in) justice. The concept of spatial justice, discussed in the last section of this chapter, provides a means to bridge the gap between policies of diversity representation and management and those addressing socio-economic disparities at the urban level. Examining urban diversity through the lens of spatial justice prompts consideration of wealth distribution across geographical regions, and equitable access to vital urban resources such as housing, education, healthcare, employment, and public transportation. It provides methodologies to prioritize the challenges of equity and inequalities at the heart of urban planning and action. Moreover, urban studies employing the concept of spatial justice aim to uncover the fundamental structural mechanisms perpetuating these disparities. This approach interlinks therefore concerns of recognizing and representing diversity of groups and individuals, and efforts directed at the visibility and inclusion of marginalized groups, with issues of economic development and right to the city. In this sense, this notion refers to the relation between spatial dynamics and justice that translates into ‘the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them’ (Soja, 2009). The nub is whether we can continue to celebrate diversity through identity and recognition policies without taking into account inhabitants’ fundamental rights, such as housing, public transport, and other social services that imply giving priority to notions of equity and spatial justice.

4.2 Diversity, a Fact of Urban Life

A critical, analytical approach to the concept of diversity in the urban context has always been essential to research into cities and city life. A focus on urban diversity helps us comprehend, in all their multiplicity, modes of identification and

belonging, of social interaction and solidarity, but also the tensions and conflicts underlying the power relationships underpinning their interactions. Diversity is in reality just as much about conflict and tension as about coming together and negotiating. It is a fundamental fact of urban life, the essence of the city, evolving constantly in response to how near or far apart, geographically or socially, those who live in and use the city are and is itself a constituent part of it.

In line with the work of the Chicago School, a spatial approach to diversity, e.g. at the micro-level of a neighbourhood, has facilitated research into the emergence of ‘minority urban centres’ driven by dynamics of diaspora and trade and the presence of population groups with similar origins (Raulin, 2009). Nevertheless, consideration of these minority urban centres only makes analytical sense if we examine their links with the rest of society and urban space, while underlining the ‘alteration of the urban environment’ they engender through their interdependence with other social groups (ibid., p. 43). Taking into account issues of class, gender, and ethnic and racial grouping such research sheds light on the processes of re-bordering social groups undergo in different historical and geographical contexts, along with their symbolic practices, exchanges, and transactions. It also demonstrates how cities are reshaped by these practices, as well as by market forces and changes in legal and administrative frameworks and urban policies.

Recent research into links between cities, urban practices, and ‘urbanity’ has stressed the need to embed these notions within an empirical, historical framework helping to demonstrate the complexity of the interlocking of urban life and circulations, seen as the ‘interplay between spatial configurations and social practices, identities and representations, an interplay which is geared towards circulation between worlds’ (Lejeune et al., 2021, p. 4).

With the regionalisation and globalisation of migratory flow, interest in the heterogeneity of urban populations has expanded to new geographical locations beyond such ‘global cities’ as London, Paris, or New York. Research into cities of the Global South thus investigates the factors driving urban diversity at the local level against the historical background of transnational, post-colonial, and nation-state-forming processes. This enables us to carry our investigations into the national framework beyond methodological nationalism and to highlight the political and social mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion in the postcolonial contexts and the othering policies they engender, while taking into consideration various more recent forms of mobility, including the joint processes of emigration and immigration. Moreover, the study of the networks, circulations, and circuits involved helps us understand how local, translocal, national, and global scales interrelate in the production of localities in the material and legal environment of a given city, reminding us that the categories of local and global are co-constitutive and that ‘globalisation is always a localisation process’ (Cağlar & Glick Schiller, 2015, pp. 4–5).

Loren Landau’s chapter in this book illustrates, via his research into the cities of Sub-Saharan Africa, the importance of *informal* practices and forms of mobility in the production of urban space beyond the scope of the state and local authorities. The spatialisation of these informal phenomena in the urban environment muddies the field of urban politics and policymaking, leading to the emergence of informal

regulatory regimes. Meanwhile, the intensity and multiplicity of residents' mobilities between specific points in the city engender translocal dynamics unthought-of and un-considered in conventional urban policies. As a result, as Landau explains, city-dwellers lose interest in participating in official policymaking. This focus on the informal highlights the need to consider the history of state and local authority actions in relation to how urban services are patronised at the local level – the analysis of which is essential to our understanding of the urban. Examination of these informal dynamics, and of how cities and places are interrelated horizontally, leads to the emergence of

alternative urban cartographies with disconnections between neighbours and municipal institutions, but vibrant conduits between a Nairobi street corner and a village in Somalia and a mosque in Minnesota. It may connect a small shop in Johannesburg to a political party in Kinshasa or a farmers' cooperative or chamber of commerce in Mozambique (Landau, Chapter 2).

In terms of research methodology, this also implies researchers must take a historically-informed approach, possess the right cultural and linguistic skills, and understand the cultural affinities and tensions in play – i.e., take an approach that is *embedded* in the cultural area in which the key methods are multi-sited ethnographic research and research into heterogenous populations in a given space. The embedding of cultural studies in ethnographical work on diversity highlights the need for a long-term perspective, rejecting the idea of cultural diversity as an ahistorical phenomenon, whose legitimacy is limited to its recent, ubiquitous presence in the spheres of power and policymaking.

Linked to the concept of diversity, that of cosmopolitanism – viewed as a social condition of meeting and interaction – puts greater emphasis on the normative dimension of politically-driven equality and inclusion projects. Considerable research has, however, also attempted to illustrate its practically-grounded empirical side by broadening its scope to bottom-up social phenomena—a kind of 'situated cosmopolitanism' (Baas et al., 2020; Lejeune et al., 2021; Werbner, 2008). However, between normative preoccupations and its ability to account for social interactions in urban space characterised by logics of exclusion and social inequalities, the ambivalence of the notion of cosmopolitanism raises many questions as to its heuristic capacity to account for power relations and questions relating to social inequalities and socio-spatial justice. Craig Calhoun (2008, p. 113) argues that

cosmopolitanism becomes richer and stronger if approached in terms of connections rather than (or in addition to) equivalence. And cosmopolitans who think in terms of connections – and their incompleteness and partiality – are less likely to turn a blind eye to the material inequalities that shape the ways in which different people can belong to specific groups while still inhabiting the world as a whole.

Criticism of cosmopolitanism as an analytical concept argues that such research, often focusing on identity politics in relation to practices of consumption or strategies of belonging, neglects the issue of socio-spatial justice. They are seen as underestimating the economic and political mechanisms that reproduce inequalities and

impact the material conditions of a city's inhabitants – for example their access to urban resources such as housing.

Some empirical research, bringing the concepts of diversity or cosmopolitanism into play, has paradoxically demonstrated, by taking an ethnographical approach, the difficulties involved in adopting them as an analytical framework. For example, H el ene le Bail and Maryl ene Lieber (2021) have shown how in some gentrifying neighbourhoods of Paris, such as Belleville, where diversity rhetoric is used to give legitimacy to urban regeneration policies, the demands of Chinese sex-workers in the neighbourhood for acceptance and protection have challenged the limits of diversity policies at local level. In this particular context, the authors explain, while policies supposedly promoting urban diversity focus mainly on public safety, the presence of the educated middle class, and the promotion of ethnic forms of consumption, the political tendency is above all to eliminate sex workers or render them invisible in the public space instead of combating the violence they are victims of within it. In this context, the authors forcefully demonstrate the autonomy of the social field and agency of social actors and their ability to subvert and challenge official diversity policies by contesting their geographical, legal, and moral boundaries.

In this sense, the popularity of diversity as a concept deployed in urban policies and governance redefines *de facto* the research questions raised in ethnographic work on diversity as an urban fact: diversity management policies have their impact on city-dwellers' urban experiences – framing them, categorising them, prioritising them, financing them or, on the contrary, devaluing and concealing them, according to political agendas in each particular context. These policies inevitably interact with the modes of legitimation and appropriation of practices and identities in the urban space, whether involving migrants or not, and more importantly with the modes of access to the resources that cities offer.

By analysing the interrelationship between diversity experienced as an urban and social reality and diversity as understood in the various fields of political action, we can now apprehend a form of *governmentality* of diversity that demonstrates the dialectical relations between the political and administrative fields and individual and collective urban practices of diversity. This approach considers diversity policies not only as a response to diversity as an urban and social fact, but considers their role, particularly through the classification and enforcement of categories, in relation to diversity as understood and interpreted by the inhabitants themselves (Burchardt & H ohne, 2015; Burchardt, 2017). The widespread appropriation, even trivialisation, of concepts such as diversity complicate their use in the scientific field, which by defining and redefining them endeavours to preserve their heuristic value. It may actually be feared that their excessive use in the different spheres of influence involved may render them obsolete in the scientific arena.

4.3 Urban Diversity as Policy in Circulation

In the boarding jetways of airports in major cities around the world, HSBC has posted billboards bearing the message: ‘Difference. The only thing we all have in common’, alongside images of birds of various sizes and colours sitting on different-level wires. The subheading, in small print, reads ‘We strive to create a workplace where diversity thrives – it’s in our DNA. Together we thrive’. The use of these concepts by this global banking institution, implicated in a number of money-laundering cases, illustrates how they have been appropriated by varied institutions whose objectives are sometimes far from targeting issues of social inequality and exclusion. Diversity now features on the agenda of many companies and institutions, multinationals, museums, universities, and municipalities in the countries and cities of both the Global North and the Global South. Levels of diversity in such institutions are regularly monitored and audited by human resources departments, based for example on the national, racial, or ethnic origin of the employees or the artists on display. The generalisation of diversity in human resources strategy raises questions as to the actual effect it may have on the structural social inequalities produced and reproduced via the unequal historical and circumstantial power relations to which some of these institutions, such as banks, have made a significant contribution.

How did a concept such as diversity – which theoretically should carry with it notions of equity, justice, and democracy – come to be compatible with (neoliberal) policies reinforcing social inequalities or feature in the urban policies of authoritarian/undemocratic regimes? This question first draws our attention to the modes of circulation of this notion in distinct contexts, then to how it has been appropriated and used in various fields of activities such as educational, cultural, and urban. The interconnections between these fields (e.g. between the artistic and the urban) as far as the concept of diversity is concerned also offer insights into the mechanisms that allow differentiated and sometimes depoliticised uses of it. And finally, the widespread circulation and deployment of the concept of diversity as a legitimating factor also raises the issues of the power it confers on institutional actors at different levels, for instance, when cities seek to promote themselves as being among the ranks of the global metropolis and exploit registers of diversity to this end.

With respect to cities, the concepts of diversity and urban diversity were present in the early days of liberal economic thought as necessary conditions of the market, starting with Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, in which cities are seen as spaces facilitating the interaction of merchants and the movement of goods and capital. They would become the main nodes of social progress and market development (Vormann, 2015). Indeed, the celebration of diversity in urban planning and city planning is closely related to this vision of diversity’s role in the urban economy. In the terminology of urban planners, diversity refers primarily to the mix of urban purposes and uses (commercial, residential, leisure, etc.) to which has been added the social and cultural diversity of users and inhabitants. In urban thinking, since the end of World War II, it appears as a potential aid in correcting the errors of the past

in response to criticism of the great modernist ‘ideal city’ visions (themselves a response to the congestion of the industrial city) of the pre-war period. The latter, by imposing a top-down model, attempted to offer rationalistic solutions to all social issues through a form of urban engineering. Faced with the homogenising processes of the modern city, the defenders of diversity criticised its rationalistic reorganisation and homogenisation by promoting, first, the practice of urban conservation, followed by the inclusion of recreational, artistic, and festive activities in city planning. The diversity of urban functions joined social diversity in visions of the city of the future, which, aware of its history and heritage, would acknowledge its organic development from the bottom up.

Jane Jacobs (1992, p. 4) is probably one of the best-known advocates of this trend.

She emphasised the need for cities to integrate the diversity of economic and social uses at the urban level, stressing the importance of the diversity of the built environment (the type, function, age, and uses of buildings), which would shape interactively economic, social, and cultural diversity. These physical and functional characteristics become the ‘natural generators of diversity and prolific incubators of new enterprises and ideas of all kinds (ibid., 145). From this point of view, diversity is generated by the market but also by the ordinary life of inhabitants with diverse social and cultural backgrounds. As Boris Vormann (2015, p. 123) explains,

For Jacobs diversity is a supreme good because it accounts for difference, systemic complexity, spontaneity and individual needs and desires...It is unnecessary to belabour the point that Jacobs orients her critique against modernist planning ideals and, for this reason alone, her argumentation in favour of more diversity harbours strong affinities with neoliberal discourses against the state.

The state’s retreat from urban planning is defended by this vision of the diverse city, counting on ‘forces of self-diversification’ for the simultaneous development of the market and democracy. Flexibility and diversity would thus sketch new outlines for the urban vision, to the detriment of planners and a vision imposed top down. Oddly – though in fact consistently with this idea of diversity – according to Jacobs, neighbourhoods with a majority of African Americans and Latinos, such as the Bronx and Harlem in New York or Boston’s Roxbury, lacked diversity and vitality, whereas she praises neighbourhoods such as the West Village.

Jacobs lays the blame on the built environment. She hardly mentions the systematic discrimination in housing, lending, education, and employment of the time (Steil & Delgado, 2019, p. 40).

Diversity has thus gradually become a ‘planning orthodoxy’ (Fainstein, 2005) and is now considered ‘both as a new urban condition and a desirable outcome of urban development’ (Vormann, 2015), relying on the development of the market and the circulation of capital and individuals (including migrants and foreign labour) to generate cultural diversity in a virtuous circle. Based on these premises, the concept of diversity has travelled and become a ubiquitous feature of the political agendas of municipalities in cities of the South and the North, in liberal democracies as well as in authoritarian contexts.

To better understand how these ideas and policies circulate, Peggy Levitt (2016) proposes, on the theme of cultural circulations, the concept of ‘vernacularisation’. The matrix proposed by Levitt takes into account the positionality of the stakeholders involved, their social embeddedness in a specific context and field of practice, and their situatedness across geographical and power hierarchies. She also adds that it is important to consider their objectives, their aspirations, and the modes of communication they adopt. This holistic approach also takes a long-term perspective that considers the history of local institutions in an urban context. These elements together are seen as helping a group of ideas become intelligible in a given context, transformed according to local circumstances and adopted in new action plans:

The added value of vernacularisation, therefore, is to combine under one conceptual umbrella the separate but interdependent ways in which the social and spatial status of actors, processes of communication, the subsequent re-articulation of aspirations and goals, and time affect how policies circulate and are implemented (Levitt, 2020, p. 759).

This therefore means understanding how these diversity policy assemblages circulate over widely diverse geographical areas and are translated and put into practice in each local context, with the mediation, notably, of various categories of stakeholders in one or more fields of practice. The notion of policy assemblage is understood here as ‘relational constructs, comprised of heterogeneous and emergent component parts that are arranged together towards certain strategic ends, in particular spaces and time’ (Savage, 2020, 319).

Such an understanding of how policies are vernacularised stresses the multi-scalar positioning of cities, which, as explained by Çaglar and Glick-Schiller (Çaglar & Glick-Schiller, 2018), corresponds not only to the static geographical scales of local to global or large, small, or medium-sized cities, but is concerned with relative power and interdependence as structured *across* scales. Analysis of the distinct but interconnected fields of the urban thus helps us grasp the positioning of cities (ibid.). The idea is, rather than looking for what is identical, to look at what is new about a phenomenon that has circulated and been transformed. Using a multi-scalar approach to the circulation of urban diversity policies leads us to investigate the repertoires of meaning in play, the multiplicity of actors, the involvement and evolution of those spheres of influence contributing to the development of diversity rhetorics, and how urban diversity policies materialise via urban projects.

Comparing Doha and Singapore, Jérémie Molho’s chapter in this book shows how the transnational circulation of policy ideas feeds into local diversity policies. Molho presents critical literature linking the politics of governance and representation of urban diversity to neoliberal policies, underlining their cooptation by the latter. But he also reviews literature on ‘progressive modelling’, emphasising efforts made by cities and civil society to create networks of solidarity by mobilising repertoires of diversity and inclusion. Taking an empirical approach to the cities scrutinised, Doha and Singapore, he highlights the emergence of another type of policy modelling: compartmentalised diversity governance. By defining the characteristics of the latter model, he demonstrates the contradictions and inconsistencies of diversity rhetorics and policies.

The multi-scalar nature of urban diversity policies, understood in terms of differentiated power relations and the multiplicity of stakes and stakeholders involved leads, according to Molho, to this compartmentalised diversity governance, which makes no attempt, when deployed, to fully comprehend diversity. This results in the progressive agenda of these policies being limited de facto to certain categories of the population, targeting in particular the urban elites. Molho rightly points out the shortcomings of this type of consensual governance in the face of crisis situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which led Doha and Singapore to confine migrant workers to overcrowded dormitories and camps lacking basic living services. These contradictions and inadequacies in urban diversity governance policies reveal a disconnect between this type of policy and social policies (or social programming) aimed at implementing sustainable infrastructures for the most fragile communities. Thus, it may be a question of whether this form of compartmentalised governance is an unintended consequence of the paradoxes and contradictions of such policy modelling, and therefore a result of the interaction between politics and policies of diversity management, or whether it refers to an explicit type of governance of diversity. Is this form of compartmentalisation not an illustration of neoliberal approaches as, precisely, a technology (Rose, 1999; Roy & Ong, 2011) or a tool that can be adapted or modelled in various contexts, in authoritarian regimes as well as in liberal democracies?

Raco and Kesten (2018), in their research into urban diversity policies in London, argue that the pragmatic, even consensual, use of urban diversity as policy should be understood through the synchronous, multiple dynamics of politicisation of the term in different contexts. Referring to Latour's (2007, p. 815) definition of politics and politicisation as a way of looking 'around the issues instead of having the issues enter into a ready-made political sphere', the authors suggest we should consider politicisation as a process that revolves around power relations and resource allocation strategies based on different temporalities of a given context. This enables us, they explain, to explore not only how political agendas regarding diversity have been elaborated, but also understand the positionality of those implementing them, along with their aims, often focused on economic growth, the development of a modern creative urban culture, and global competition. Diversity policies incorporating these objectives have, in London in particular, facilitated the access of foreign investors to urban space and the adoption by local institutions of 'diversity-aware' human resource strategies for the recruitment of qualified people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, in line with selective immigration of talents, to bolster London's global competitiveness (ibid.).

In some contexts, so-called inclusive rhetoric and policies on the reception of migrants at the national level may translate into quite different results at city level, or even at the level of individual neighbourhoods or municipalities *within* a single city. For example, in Turkey the welcoming of Syrian migrants is often justified by the state in religious terms and values with reference to Muslim solidarity or historical ones recalling the Ottoman Empire's glorious cosmopolitan past, while at local level, the geopolitical implications of Turkey's hosting policy remain invisible (Danış & Nazlı, 2019). However, how migrants' and refugees' presence is perceived

and accepted varies widely from one district to another within Istanbul, depending on their emplacement, as a processual concept that ‘links together space, place, and power’ (Cağlar & Glick Schiller, 2015, pp. 4–5).

These differences, and the distinct ways diversity rhetoric and policies are deployed, remind us that the socio-spatial and historical characteristics of municipalities within a city must also be taken into consideration. Also, as decentralisation policies give cities and their municipalities more autonomy to join networks sharing urban practices and policies at the supranational level, the vernacularisation of diversity policies at municipality level may be observed in a variety of forms within a single city. In this framework, emplacement helps explain how diversity is translated locally and implemented as policy vis-à-vis other municipalities in the city, but also vis-à-vis peers within a network of municipalities at regional or global levels, such as networks that bring together European or Middle Eastern cities. Ceren Say and Özkul (2020) explored the differing ways the idea of diversity was interpreted and applied in three Istanbul municipalities: Beyoğlu, Beşiktaş and Fatih, depending, on the one hand, on their socio-political and historical location within the city, and on the other, their participation in transnational networks of urban players. They concluded that the identification of beneficiaries of diversity policies under the label of ‘disadvantaged groups’ corresponded to a distinct form of categorisation in each neighbourhood that was not necessarily inclusive of new migrant groups arriving there, such as Syrians, but took in ethnic and religious minorities with a history dating back to the Ottoman Empire, or domestic migrants. In some Istanbul neighbourhoods, such as Tarlabası, undergoing urban renewal projects and aggressive gentrification via foreign investment in luxury real estate projects, the eviction and dispossession of migrants, including domestic migrants such as Kurds or transgender people, stands in stark contrast to political rhetoric on diversity and the welcoming of migrants elsewhere in the city.

Ironically, the same neo-Ottoman rhetoric celebrating the city’s ancient traditions of diversity to support the reception of refugees in the outlying district of Sultanbeyli, based on a particular form of alliance between state actors and civil society (Danış & Nazlı, 2019), feeds into the marketing and promotional strategies of the central district of Tarlabası. Here, in the name of a new cosmopolitanism, these advertising slogans and representations – and the urban and residential projects they promote – contribute above all to the gradual displacement, even eviction, of residents such as Iranian or Syrian migrants of modest economic means or domestic migrants such as the Kurds who have settled in the neighbourhood since the 1990s.

This commodification of ethnic differences in urban projects is seen as contributing to a form of ‘urban governmentality of multiculturalism’ which, according to Torino (2021, p. 710), becomes ‘an apparatus postulated on the financialisation of culture, people, and land through which neoliberal urban planning regulates “diversity” in space’. By analysing the relationship between multi-ethnicity, neoliberalism, urban planning, and racism in Bogotá, Torino has shown how the recent nationwide recognition of the multicultural nature of Colombian society has mostly translated, in the capital Bogotá, into multicultural branding strategies without

feeding into more just forms of urban planning focused on issues of equity and the material conditions of Afro-Colombian communities in terms of access to health services, education, and housing. Instead, Bogotá's multicultural policies are limited to specific areas of the city where capital or government and educational institutions are concentrated. In Bogotá, as in many other cities, diversity serves to flatten out the historical specificities of ethnic communities and the structural inequalities that characterise some of them in favour of a more generic promotion of 'cultural diversity'.

4.4 The Arts, the 'Creative Classes', and Urban Diversity

Among the 'compartments' of this form of governance of urban diversity, to use Jeremie Molho's terminology in this book, the instrumentalisation of culture and the arts and the 'visibilisation', promotion, and mobilisation of the 'creative classes' are indicative of the selective, if not discriminatory, mechanisms at work in the politics of diversity representation and governance. The cultural and arts sectors make up one of the registers of development and urban regeneration projects now nearly omnipresent in cities of the South and North. They have the capacity to deploy a rhetoric of diversity while contributing to market development and, in some cases, to processes of nation-building. An aesthetic of difference emerges from the meeting of these two fields of practice, the urban and the cultural, which often tends to underestimate issues of equity and social inequality. In several cities of the Global South, such as Beirut, Tehran, or Dubai (if Dubai may indeed be considered as such!), both public authorities and the transnational elites involved in projects to develop local art scenes and markets frequently adopt nationalist developmentalist rhetorics. They undertake efforts to internationalise the local scene within a given urban framework, materialised through various forms of cultural neighbourhoods and events (Moghadam, 2021a). These projects and transnational elites thus contribute to both the process of nation-state building and to that of capitalistic market expansion.

In this respect, urban entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 2001), which sees culture as a key urban development tool, also reconfigures the role of public and private stakeholders in defining cultural policy and managing the relevant urban spaces, ultimately legitimating their contribution to regional planning and (often the absence of) redistributive policies (Brones & Moghadam, 2017b). David Harvey sees their integration within the capitalist economy as being based on each city exploiting its own 'monopoly rents,' which enable it to highlight what distinguishes it from others and turn it to profit. He postulates that if 'a monopoly rent is always the object of capitalist desire, the means of gaining it through interventions in the field of culture, history, heritage, aesthetics and meanings must necessarily be of a great import for capitalists of any sort' (Harvey, 2001, p. 409).

In these terms, the cultural and social diversity of some cities becomes another type of rent, and the 'diversitisation' of urban policies through the aesthetics of

difference becomes one compartment among others of broader policies now cosily wedding globalism and nationalism (Moghadam 2021a). For example, in our own research into art districts in Dubai and Beirut, we have shown the disconnect from, and marginal impact of, these projects on their immediate environment, as seen in the lack of infrastructure and housing for disadvantaged populations or foreign labour camps (Brones & Moghadam, 2017a). In these contexts, the rise of the new urban elites driving these projects is connected with the emergence of new spheres of influence and cosmopolitan spaces and sociabilities in which art plays a key role. Coexistence between locals and newcomers may foster urban connections characterised by novel uses and rhythms counter to the predominant lifestyles. However, such spaces remain socially disconnected from their immediate urban environment, owing both to how they are incorporated into the urban fabric and their outward-looking nature as participants in regional and global artistic networks.

The cultural field has thus become a promising arena for the flourishing of diversity rhetoric, even the staging of urban diversity, in political contexts strongly marked, in some cases, by exclusionary politics and spatial segregation. The close association of diversity with urban growth and consumption practices may be seen as explaining its circulation in various political and social contexts, including the political agendas of the (often neoliberal) governance of cities located in illiberal political contexts. However, as explained earlier, understanding these processes of local appropriation of diversity as a mode of governance must take into consideration the local and historical specificities of a given context, which are themselves rooted in the complex relationships between a colonial past, the formation of the nation-state and its political economy, urbanisation, and often of a transnational history of population movements marked by successive phases of settlement in a given urban context.

In Dubai, for instance, where non-nationals represent over 200 nationalities and make up approximately more than 90% of the city-state, I explored how the arts sector is used to portray and talk about the city's diversity despite the non-integrative and exclusionary migration and citizenship policies found there (Moghadam 2021b). In fact, over the past few years the Emirati authorities have elaborated a new official discourse on diversity and inclusion, bringing into play such terms as 'tolerance' or 'happiness'. In this context, these notions of tolerance and happiness are closely associated with efforts to establish connections with other national and international scenes and promote globalising cultural and artistic practices rather than acknowledge the historical transnational past of the country or grant rights to migrants.

As a result, entire communities, for example Iranian or Yemeni whose presence predates the creation of the UAE, have been systematically overlooked (even though some are now naturalised Emirati). In contrast, by appropriating new spheres of influence, such as contemporary art, these diversity representation policies aim to bolster the legitimacy of the political elite and their social recognition at national, regional, and global levels. This trend has resulted in the adoption of an aesthetic of difference disconnected from any granting of political rights to migrants or civic recognition and translates spatially into the emergence of cosmopolitan urban

enclaves that participate, translocally (i.e., through local-to-local connections across national boundaries) in a worldwide network of similar spaces, home to exclusive social groupings.

4.5 Urban Diversity and Spatial Justice: An Approach through Infrastructure

Criticism of consensual, even performative, urban diversity policies embedded in a capitalistic vision of economic growth underlines the need to link these questions to the issue of structural inequalities to envisage a diverse, but above all just, city. As Susan S. Fainstein (2005) points out, the relationship between diversity and tolerance is not direct and the cohabitation of individuals and groups in a given space does not necessarily generate greater acceptability, especially in a context of growing inequalities, e.g. in terms of access to a city's resources. Similarly, recognition policies might lead to recognition conflicts between groups, each seeking to strengthen its social legitimacy in line with political agendas on diversity.

Thanks to the conjunction of postmodern intersectional approaches and the analysis of spatial justice in Marxist-oriented critical urban studies, with their emphasis on class, diversity has become an integral component of debate on justice in the city. This conjunction provides normative and empirical frameworks for questioning the effectiveness of diversity policies by bringing into the debate the mechanisms involved in (re)producing socio-spatial inequalities. In line with the different disciplinary approaches (geography, philosophy, and urban planning) of David Harvey and, later, of Iris Marion Young, Susan S. Fainstein, and Edward Soja, empirical and normative studies of spatial justice demonstrate the institutional, economic, and procedural processes that generate and perpetuate socio-spatial inequalities, as for example in the housing sector.

Postmodern approaches have led to the consideration of the heterogeneity of the urban and the plurality of identities found where ethnic, racial, and gender groups intersect, insisting on the potential of social struggles and other movements to repoliticise the notion of urban governance and looking beyond the posturing of institutional players, which fail to take into account relations of power (Quentin & Morange, 2018; Steil & Delgado, 2019). These latter approaches also show the limits of liberal distributive policies seeking to correct the negative and unequal effects of the dominant capitalist system without actually attacking the foundations of its reproductive mechanisms.

Among epistemological approaches aimed at highlighting links between issues of spatial justice and diversity, an approach emphasising the role of infrastructures seems to respond to these material concerns. From this perspective, 'material infrastructure formations' – transport systems, housing, energy and water supplies, or architectural formations – become and produce at the same time socio-spatial expressions of difference in the city. 'They have to be addressed as sociomaterial

assemblages, linking administrative practices, knowledge, resources and policies, thereby incorporating normative ideas, ideal subject formations and specific modes of placemaking' (Burchardt & Höhne, 2015, p. 2). Analysis of the role of materialities and technologies thus becomes another way to approach the issue of urban diversity. For example, joint analysis of the institutional processes and rhetoric that lead to the creation of public spaces in a city, and lived experiences within them, may reveal the paradoxes and contradictions that this type of space can embody in urban planning when associated with the idea of enhancing urban diversity (Kyriazis et al., 2021).

In Toronto, where diversity is celebrated constantly, with 'Diversity our Strength' as the city's motto, the normalisation of diversity in policy rhetoric seems paradoxically to lead to a form of instrumentalisation of diversity that overlooks systemic inequalities (Özogul & Tasan-Kok, 2017) and reinforces the stigmatisation of racialised neighbourhoods (Ahmadi, 2018). In this context, housing conditions may serve as a key indicator to help question diversity curation policies that take a managerial approach to promoting the external and internal perceptions of a city's diversity, while underestimating the growing material inequalities that result from dynamics of socio-spatial polarisation and poverty (Raco & Taşan-Kok, 2020). While, Toronto, for example, boasts a high level of diversity, spatial segregation is intensifying according to racial and ethnic characteristics and income levels, resulting in the inner city's relative homogenisation in terms of household income and the pauperisation of some of the outskirts (Hulchanski, 2019; Dinca-Panaitescu & Walks, 2015; Hulchanski, 2010). Similarly, federal policies encouraging home ownership and access to mortgages have resulted in high levels of household debt – higher among immigrant communities than among those born in Canada (Simone & Walks, 2019). These kinds of 'financial inclusion' policies, Walks and Simone claim, may lead to the exclusion and social disintegration of migrants, particularly newcomers (*ibid.*, p. 297):

Such high debt-to-income ratios [in particular immigrant-reception suburban areas] not only portend increased spatial vulnerability to various 'shocks' (interest rate increases, job losses), but even in their absence they portend lower discretionary spending and investment relative to neighbourhoods with less leverage, and thus to the restructuring and filtering down of more indebted neighbourhoods. To the degree that concentrations of debt vulnerabilities are related to concentrations of particular immigrant groups who, as a result of the timing of their entry to Canada, disproportionately took advantage of federal policies enhancing their mortgage access in times of rising house prices, it is possible that the places where they are concentrated could become stigmatised, and the groups themselves potentially blamed for the very filtering resulting from their lack of discretionary incomes (e.g. for not sufficiently maintaining their properties like older generations did, etc.).

Indeed, in the absence of credit lines and adequate incomes among many newcomers in Canada, numerous households have resorted to secondary lenders offering variable interest rates. During the recent period of inflation in 2022, this has exposed them to rising interest rates and falling real estate prices, to considerable economic and social vulnerability, and in some cases to the loss of their properties, even including down-payments made when applying for mortgages. These forms of

economic precarity, generated where migration and housing policies intersect, directly affect the quality of migrants' trajectories, their perception of diversity and justice in the city, their family relationships, their modes of sociability and, ultimately, how they integrate in their new living environment (object of the author's current research among Iranian immigrants in Toronto).

More broadly, the perceived connection, whether factual or imagined, between the housing crisis in Canadian cities in 2023, with the increased number of immigrants primarily underscores how the reception of immigrants can be impacted by deficient social policies and the vision for an equitable city. This crisis predominantly stems from the ascent of neoliberal urban policies and growing income inequality since the 1980s, coupled with the absence, or at best, the inadequacy of social housing policies spanning from that era to the present (Keil, 2002; Walks, 2009). Consequently, it has exacerbated social disparities within the housing sector, significantly affecting not only the actual integration of immigrants in major Canadian urban centers, but also directly moulding the perception of immigration in the country.

In the same Canadian context, but also elsewhere in the world, feminist geographers, drawing on work that focuses first and foremost on the political economy of cities, have proposed gendered approaches to the city in order to address the issue of spatial justice and access to the city's resources. These approaches have highlighted the consequences of the transformation of the welfare state and the strengthening of neo-liberalized public policies, and the socio-economic inequalities that have resulted in relation to the multiple, gendered identities of the inhabitants, and the way in which these have translated into space. Above all, these studies have demonstrated the agency of the social movements of women and LGBTQ communities, including immigrants and newcomers, their ability to combat inequalities and their contribution to urban vitality. (Wekerle, 2014; Klodawsky et al., 2017).

Thus the approach that studies infrastructures as socio-cultural and political formations, allows us to examine systematically the politics of diversity; to ensure that class remains present in debates where gender, ethnic, and racial groups intersect; and to explore the productive and reproductive mechanisms of social inequalities while grasping their historical depth in a given context, i.e., by taking seriously cultural, historical, and geographical contingencies.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

The circulation, vernacularisation, and now omnipresence of diversity in urban policies in the cities of the South and the North should encourage urban research to question its very ubiquity. For if the globalisation of urban norms and models and the professional mobility of urban experts and expertise have led to similar terminologies and outlooks showing up in policies in widely varying urban contexts, they are above all anchored in, and produced through, specific sets of historical, political, and social relationships. It is thus essential to consider history, and this anchoring in

a specific cultural area, to comprehend a notion such as urban diversity that circulates around the globe. At the same time, a relational approach to space allows us to take into account the processes of circulation, appropriation, and emplacement a notion undergoes, looking at systems of social and political actors at various geographical levels, their interlocking in unequal power relations, and how they contribute to the production of one space in relation to others. If diversity has become the buzzword of urban policies, it is up to critical urban research to ask ‘Diversity: should we want it?’ (Fainstein, 2005) and if so, what are the conditions for achieving it, what are the links between diversity as experienced by residents on a daily basis and diversity as framed by urban governance, with forms of categorisation informed by the joint processes of inclusion and exclusion.

Without aiming to denigrate recognition policies, this chapter – drawing on the vast critical urban literature with its central focus on socio-spatial justice – has proposed that the study of the urban politics of diversity must systematically take into account the mechanisms underpinning the reproduction of socio-spatial inequalities.

Numerous examples from cities in the South and the North have shown how the term diversity can be used to formulate consensual urban policies whose leitmotif remains economic growth, international visibility as a diverse city, and now as a product of choice for sale on the ‘city market’. In this sense, analysis of the concept of urban diversity and its circulation in the policy arena can only with the greatest difficulty be dissociated from that of class and the modes of capital formation and circulation. This puts into proper perspective struggles over the appropriation of resources, identity issues, and the de facto diversity of urban space with that envisioned by urban governance, and so reveals the mechanisms that perpetuate forms of socio-spatial injustice. Finally, as emphasised by Quentin and Morange (2018, p. 1), when justice is placed at the centre of urban thought, it becomes essential for researchers to base their critique on a value judgement of the situations observed by making an epistemological choice that rejects ‘the twofold illusion of axiological neutrality and of scientific objectivity’.

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Part II
Migration and Diversity Outside the
Urban Core: Small and Mid-Sized Cities

Chapter 5

Multi-level Migration and Multiculturalism Governance Meets Migrant and Refugee Agency in Regional Australian Towns



Martina Boese 

5.1 Introduction

Migration and multicultural communities are no longer an inherently urban phenomenon, and historical and literary accounts tell us that migrants have always also moved to smaller and medium-sized cities, whether to find paid work on farms or to seek out environments that resemble the landscapes they left behind. As geopolitical migration governance has become more elaborate over time and many governments in the Global North are honing and coordinating their efforts in tightening borders to admit only those migrants framed as ‘desirable’ and ‘needed’, some governments have also begun steering migrants towards provincial, regional, or rural areas. These efforts have been labelled partly as ‘spreading the burden of migration’ (Robinson & Andersson, 2003), partly as distributing its benefits from the centre to ‘peripheral’ regions (Akbari & MacDonald, 2014).

In Australia, which this chapter focuses on, such policy initiatives have focused on different groups of migrants and have overall gained positive connotations in the public debate on migration through references to addressing population decline and regional labour shortages. From Working Holiday visas to seasonal labour programmes designed to remedy Australia’s horticultural labour needs and from regional refugee settlement to relocation initiatives, the plethora of regional migration policies has grown and businesses still demand more visa options to attract ‘skills’ and ‘labour’ in locations and areas of employment that have increasingly been deserted by locals. The number of governmental actors in non-metropolitan migration has increased too. While the federal government is the legislative authority of the migration portfolio – which includes the design and size of different visa programmes – state governments have contributed to the shaping of regional migration flows, for example through taking up State Specific and Regional Migration

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Schemes (Hugo, 2008) and in part by championing multiculturalism. Finally, local governments, non-government organisations, and employers have increasingly influenced both the attraction, settlement experiences, and retention of migrants (Boese, 2015; Boese & Phillips, 2017; Wickes et al., 2020).

In this chapter I will review the key policy strands in Australia that have aimed for and partly achieved an accelerated movement of migrants to ‘the regions’, with a view to extend the analysis beyond individual, bureaucratically defined groups of migrants and draw attention to the ways in which a patchwork of policies produces differential – and at least to some degree unintended – outcomes for a variety of migrant groups. Following this review of policies and key findings from regional policy analyses, I will draw on qualitative interviews from two research projects funded by the Australian Research Council – one on regional migration (referred to here as *Regional Settlement* project) and the other on employment experiences of temporary migrants (referred to as *Temporary migrant employment* project) – conducted between 2009 and 2016 to introduce migrants’ and other regional stakeholders’ perspectives on regional migration. The *Regional Settlement* project was an early study of regional settlement of recently arrived migrants and refugees in rural Victoria and collected data in six regional and two metropolitan locations between 2010 and 2012. The project analysed the intergovernmental coordination of regional migration and the settlement experiences of recently arrived migrants and refugees. The research included an online survey of 106 settlement stakeholders, in-depth interviews with 85 recently arrived migrants and refugees, key informant interviews with 47 stakeholders, and 14 focus groups with 90 stakeholders from government, business, and the community sector involved in regional settlement. The more recent *Temporary Migrant Employment* project was a study of the employment experiences of temporary visa holders (including international students, skilled temporary visa, and Working Holiday visa holders) and their shaping by migration and employment regulations. It included semi-structured interviews with 22 horticultural workers, conducted between 2015 and 2016.

My analysis of interview data from these projects will seek to address the following questions: firstly, how do regional migration policies shape migrants’ experiences of regional migration? And secondly, what do their accounts suggest about the limitations and blind spots of these policies in achieving regional migration?

5.2 Literature on Regional Migration and Settlement Policies in Australia

The shift in migration patterns and policies towards regional migration has been reflected in growing research on non-metropolitan migration and settlement in many migrant destinations in the Global North. Demographers, rural sociologists, migration researchers, and human geographers have been at the forefront of studying the trend of non-metropolitan migration and the barriers and potentials for

'successful' regional migration and refugee settlement (Rye & O'Reilly, 2022; De Lima et al., 2022; Morén-Alegret & Wladyka, 2020; Simard & Jentsch, 2009). This section will review scholarship on regional or rural migration and settlement, with a focus on research that has considered the governance of this migration.

Most of the extant research on regional migration and settlement and related policies in Australia as well as Europe and North America has either focused on 'migrants' or 'refugees', and often on more specific groups of migrants or refugees, whether defined by bureaucratic or conceptual categories such as for example 'skilled migrants' (Schech, 2014) or 'labour migrants' (McAreavey, 2018; Rye & O'Reilly, 2022) or by geographic or cultural origin as in 'African refugees' (Correa-Velez & Onsando, 2009) or Syrian refugees (Haugen, 2019). This division of labour between migration and refugee/forced migration research corresponds to the binary treatment of migrants in policies, which are addressed to either 'forced' migrants or other, presumably 'voluntary', migrants. It should be acknowledged here that this binary has been challenged for some time, based on both epistemological and empirical grounds. Firstly, growing numbers of scholars have critiqued the uncritical adoption of bureaucratic categories because of its normalising effects and its reproduction of the categories of the very nation-state migration apparatus that it seeks to analyse (see for example, Dahinden, 2016). Furthermore, such labels cement one dimension of people's lived experiences as the solely defining feature in the perception of non-migrants while obscuring their intersection with other dimensions such as 'race', class, and gender. Empirical arguments against upholding the binary between migrants and refugees in studies of settlement and post-migration experiences also point to the agency involved in the trajectories of people labelled as 'forced migrants' (Scott FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). The agency of people with refugee backgrounds is increasingly considered in studies of refugee settlement and secondary migration (Ahrens et al., 2016; Kelly & Hedman, 2016). Despite these contributions to a more agentic conception of refugees, research on regional settlement is still divided into studies of regionally settling migrants and those that focus on refugees.

Studies of regionally settling migrants in Australia have focused on employment and less so on other dimensions and outcomes of settlement. This can be explained with the policy-produced fact that the majority of non-humanitarian regional residents with migration backgrounds is in Australia on temporary visas, and temporary visas have largely functioned as short-term labour market-plugs. As will be explained further in the next section, this population ranges from very transient groups such as backpackers to skilled migrants with renewable visas lasting up to 5 years. Researchers have tended to focus on specific groups of visa holders and explored their employment experiences. This has included studies of backpackers, international students, and seasonal workers working on farms (Underhill & Rimmer, 2016; Howe et al., 2020; Reilly et al., 2018) as well as research on the employment experiences of spouses of skilled visa holders (Webb, 2015). With reference to skilled migrants, researchers have also investigated the factors that contribute to their retention and social inclusion in regional Australia, highlighting the importance of social connections (Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008) and opportunities

for social mobility (Boese et al., 2022; Webb et al., 2013). The question of retention has also emerged in studies of migrant labour shortages in agriculture, as for example post-Brexit in the UK (Milbourne & Coulson, 2021).

An important strand of policy-focused research in Australia and in Canada has highlighted how migration regulations shape employment experiences of temporary migrants. While these studies have not as such focused on regional destinations, the nature of the work done by some of these temporary migrants has meant that they are primarily placed in regional locations (Weiler et al., 2020; Strauss & McGrath, 2017; Preibisch & Otero, 2014). In Australia, both Working Holiday visa holders, who carry out 88 days of regionally located work to qualify for a one-year extension of their visa, and Seasonal Workers from the Pacific Islands, who participate in either the Seasonal Worker Program or the Seasonal Labour Scheme, tend to work on farms in regional Australia. The increasing attention to the former group in Australian scholarship was ignited by several investigative journalistic pieces on the considerable exploitation of this group of workers documenting how vulnerable backpackers were to economic and even sexual exploitation while working on farms. Socio-legal, employment relations, and labour law studies of the poor employment conditions imposed on backpackers highlighted how the 88-day rule manufactured vulnerability to exploitation (Howe et al., 2020; Campbell et al., 2019; Reilly et al., 2018) while providing a steady flow of labour to Australian farmers and growers.

A second strand of policy analysis in Australia focused on the seasonal worker schemes with several Pacific Island nations, querying the success and development outcomes of this programme, which was initiated as a development policy aimed at a flow of remittances from seasonal workers in Australia's orchards to their Pacific home nations. Development scholars have pointed to the programme's competition with the less regulated backpacker visas (Curtain & Howes, 2020), while political economists and anthropologists have challenged the notion that the programme was a success given the prevalence of exploitative employment relations (Rosewarne, 2019; Stead, 2021).

The third set of policy analyses in Australia and internationally has examined regional refugee settlement, including direct resettlement and relocations. Early studies in Australia were government-commissioned evaluations of direct settlement pilots aimed at identifying the factors that would make direct settlement of unlinked refugees in several regional towns successful (Piper and Associates, 2007, 2009). Research on individual refugee relocation initiatives in several regional towns also explored potential barriers to the longevity of such policies by pointing to the importance of employment and education opportunities (McDonald-Wilmsen et al., 2009; Stanovic & Taylor, 2005). While a growing body of social science research on regional refugee settlement internationally and in Australia has since examined various dimensions of settlement experiences and relations between refugee arrivals and their 'host communities' with less attention to policy (see for example Radford, 2016, 2017 on Australia; Glorius et al., 2020 on Germany), other research has highlighted the complex three-tiered intergovernmental coordination of regional refugee settlement (Galligan et al., 2014) and the variable yet potentially

significant role of local government in shaping regional settlement outcomes (Van Kooy, 2022; Boese & Phillips, 2017 on Australia; Cullen & Walton-Roberts, 2019 on Canada) reflecting the recent ‘local turn’ and attention to multi-level governance in migration policy analysis (Oliver et al., 2020; Caponio & Borkert, 2010; Dekker et al., 2015). Scholars have also highlighted the limitations of governmental understandings of settlement success without consideration of refugees’ subjective experiences (Curry et al., 2018).

An obvious reason for the described separation of research on migrants and refugees in regional Australia is their respective treatment in the policies governing migration and settlement, which I will turn to next.

5.3 Review of Regional Migration and Settlement Policies in Australia

Research on migration has shown for a long time that migrants tend to settle in major cities rather than smaller and medium-sized cities or ‘the countryside’ due to a combination of factors including the presence of prior migrant communities, cultural infrastructures, and relevant services as well as greater opportunities for establishing themselves economically, whether through starting a business or by finding employment. However, migration to rural areas is not a novel phenomenon in many migrant destinations in the Global North including in Australia. In a settler colony all arrivals in what was to become Australia should be understood as ‘migrants’ who colonised not only coastal areas where cities were established but also invaded inland areas. Most accounts of early migrant settlement and ‘cultural diversity’ in what became ‘rural Australia’ tend to name Chinese settlers in the Goldfields or Afghan cameleers as examples of early culturally diverse migration to rural areas (Samad et al., 2022). Queensland’s sugar fields, on the other hand, were a site of bonded ‘temporary’ labour from the Pacific Islands in the 1890s, referred to as ‘blackbirding’ (Stead & Altman, 2019). These early, pre-Federation examples highlight the scope and limitations of migrant agency in moving to regional areas long before twentieth- and twenty-first-century migration policies started shaping and, in Australia’s case, tightly managing further migration to its settler immigration society.

Targeted government efforts at directing migrants towards rural areas in post-Federation Australia were evident as early as after the second world war, when Displaced Persons were resettled from European camps to former army camps in regional areas and bonded to work in rural areas (Jupp, 2007). Following agreements that the Australian government signed with Italy (in 1951) and Greece (in 1952), migrants from these countries were also accommodated in camps or hostels and directed to work in horticulture and agriculture in the 1950s and 1960s. Migrant hostels existed until the mid-1990s and in some areas migrants were able to buy land and establish themselves as growers, but by 1996, the share of all

overseas-born persons living in rural areas had shrunk from a quarter in 1947 to 7.4% in 1996 (Hugo, 1999). In fact, the urban-centric settlement pattern among Australian-born residents was by far exceeded by migrants (Hugo, 2008).

Three developments in Australian migration policies from the mid- to late 1990s affected migration to regional areas either directly or indirectly. The first was a fundamental shift in the orientation of Australia's migration programme from permanent to temporary migration, which eminent migration scholars in Australia have described as 'immigration revolution' (Markus et al., 2009). The second was the introduction of visas aimed at attracting migrants to regional areas (Hugo, 2008) and the third was the beginning of direct regional resettlement and relocation of refugees in or to regional areas (Shergold et al., 2019). Each of these sets of policies, listed in Table 5.1 and discussed below, has contributed to putting regional Australia on the map as a destination of people with international migration backgrounds.

Firstly, the shift towards temporary migration occurred through the introduction of new temporary visas and the rising number of arrivals of certain, mostly uncapped

Table 5.1 Overview of policies and programmes with regional migration significance

Visa	Eligibility	Regional dimension
Working Holiday-visa (subclass 417)	18-30 yr-old nationals from 13 EU-countries, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Republic of Korea, Taiwan, United Kingdom and Northern Ireland	88 days of work in regional area are condition for second and third year visa extension
Work and Holiday- visa (subclass 462)	18-30 yr-old nationals from some EU-countries not included in 417, Argentina, Chile, PRC, Ecuador, Indonesia, Israel, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Peru, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, Uruguay, US, Vietnam	
Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme (PALM)	Nationals from Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	Visa is tied to employers in regional and rural areas
Skilled Regional (provisional) visa (subclass 489) ^a	Nominated or sponsored workers with skills in demand	Visa is tied to working for employer in regional or rural area
Direct regional resettlement of refugees	Recognized refugees	Government-directed resettlement in regional area
Relocation of refugees to regional areas	Recognized refugees residing in metropolitan locations	Assisted relocation of refugees settled in metropolitan locations to regional areas
Safe Haven Enterprise visa (SHEV) (subclass 790)	On-shore asylum seekers (all of whom Australia has denied permanent protection) and Bridging visa holders	SHEV-pathway allows for a transition to some permanent visas after lawful, paid work or FT study in regional area for a total of 42 months

^aThe visas existing during the period in which data was collected had different names and some different conditions but shared the key feature of tying the skilled worker to work in a regional location

temporary visa contingents. The 1-Year-Working Holiday and Work and Holiday visas that could be renewed two times on the condition of working for 88 days in a regional area effectively provided an increasingly important segment of the horticultural labour force. Due to structural shifts in agriculture and horticulture such as mounting supply chain pressures (Howe et al., 2019; Curtain et al., 2018), human capital became the key factor for potential savings (Van den Broek et al., 2019). With fewer Australian-born people seeing a future in farming, migrants became increasingly relied upon as seasonal harvest workers, similar to other countries in the Global North (Kasimis & Papadopoulos, 2005). The numbers of WHM-visa grants almost doubled between 1997–1998 and 2001–2002 and grew 15-fold between 2005–2006 and 2014–2015 (Phillips, 2016). This exponential growth was also assisted by the introduction of a second-year and later a third-year visa on the condition of working for 88 days in a regional location. The realm of temporary visas through which horticultural labour has been strategically sourced was extended in 2008 through the introduction of the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme (PSWPS) – a development scheme aimed at attracting temporary labour from the Pacific Islands that has since grown into the PALM-scheme (DFAT, 2022). More recently the industries in which PALM-scheme workers and also WHM are permitted to work have expanded to the care sector and hospitality in regional areas. At the time of writing none of these visas provides a clear pathway to permanent residency, but they have made a significant contribution to the growing number of migrants working – at least temporarily – in regional Australia. Due to the closure of international borders during the Covid-19 pandemic, this growth was halted and the number of WHM dropped from 140,000 at the end of 2019 to only 19,000 two years later, but since then the number of backpackers has risen again (DoHA, 2023).

The second migration policy trend to note here is the introduction of skilled visas aimed at influencing not only who migrates, but also where they settle (Hugo, 2008). Australia has long applied a very selective, human capital-based points-system for screening skilled migrants, adjusted from the Canadian system, but a new suite of visas introduced in the early 2000s introduced points allocations for regional residency. These visas were clearly aimed at ‘attracting global talent’ to regional sites in Australia. While the factors impacting the retention of these visa-holders in the regional areas beyond the first three years are contentious, with studies pointing to either predominantly economic or social factors (see Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008; Wickramaarachchi & Butt, 2014), their very rationale set these visas apart from previous place-independent migration policies. Another change that accompanied this shift was the increasing entry of policy actors at the state and even sub-state regional level in shaping migration destinations (Hugo, 2008; Boese, 2015; Boese & Phillips, 2017). Programmes ranged from visas within the State-Specific and Regional Migration Scheme in the early 2000s, which directed migrants to areas of economic need (Hugo, 2008) to the Skilled Regional Migration initiatives of Victoria in the 2010s (Boese, 2015), which were aimed at assisting regional employers in sourcing skills in demand from overseas. A key difference between these temporary skilled and the earlier mentioned visas are that they provide a pathway to permanent residency.

The third set of policies that have contributed to the migration significance of regional Australia are part of the Humanitarian Program, which has been separated from the general migration programme in 1993 ‘to provide a better balance between Australia’s international humanitarian objectives and the domestic, social and economic goals guiding the annual Migration Program’ (DIAC quoted in Galligan et al., 2014, p. 68). Policy initiatives to be mentioned here are threefold; they include direct resettlement pilots of so-called ‘unlinked refugees’, relocation initiatives of former refugees settled in cities, and Safe Haven Enterprise Visa or SHEV visas for on-shore asylum seekers. Direct resettlement pilots of refugees without prior family connections in Australia began as federal government-directed pilots in the mid-2000s that sent refugee arrivals straight from the airport to several small and medium-sized regional towns. Evaluations of these pilots provided important knowledge about the necessary conditions of regional refugee settlement (Piper and Associates, 2007, 2009). Since then, the federal government has announced that 50% of refugee arrivals shall be resettled in regional Australia. Alongside, former refugees have been resettled in several relocation initiatives, which have been facilitated by varying partnerships between city- and region-based service providers, government agencies, employers, or a combination of these actors (Galligan et al., 2014). These primarily respond to the difficulties of finding work or suitable accommodation in cities and the increasing labour demands of regional businesses. The third channel to regional towns for people with forced migration backgrounds has been the SHEV, which was introduced in 2014 as a legal pathway to residency for people seeking asylum on-shore. Based on Australia’s very contested deterrence policies, on-shore asylum seekers are ineligible for refugee status. The SHEV explicitly combines labour market and protection outcomes by making a visa pathway to a non-humanitarian visa conditional upon work or study in designated regional areas for three-and-a-half out of the 5 years of the visa duration (Reilly, 2018).

Alongside these attraction and settlement policies and initiatives, there is another set of policies that has accompanied, responded to, and partly shaped regional migration and settlement particularly over the past 10–15 years in Australia. These are multiculturalism, interculturalism, and cultural diversity policies in regional cities and towns (see for example Moran & Mallman, 2015). Whilst not as such aimed at promoting migration, these policies have clearly grown in number and importance as a consequence of increasing regional migration for settlement. Such policies have mostly been established at local government-levels, ranging from more specific initiatives in the community development space to whole-of-government initiatives such as Greater City of Ballarat’s Intercultural Policies (City of Ballarat, 2018, 2022). At the national and international levels, some of these local-level policies have been inspired by movements such as the Welcoming-Australia movement (Wickes et al., 2020) and the Intercultural Cities Initiative (Council of Europe, 2008). While state governments have been variably supportive of regional migration and multiculturalism, with Victoria and NSW at the forefront, it should be noted here that Australia’s federal government has paid more attention to the regulation of

regional migration as quasi-labour and population policy than the governance of regional multiculturalism.

This overview of key policy areas and mechanisms such as visas provides the context of regional migration experiences discussed in the remaining sections of this paper.

5.4 Unintended Consequences of Skilled Regional Labour Migration Policies

Visas in the temporary skilled migration scheme, which have also included the designated area visas, allow the primary visa holder to work either for an employer sponsor or in a specific geographic area. These visas also allow the primary visa holder's partner and dependents to reside and work as secondary visa holders. On the one hand, this is an advantage that sets temporary skilled migrants apart from most other temporary visa holders who cannot bring their family to Australia. For example, Pacific Island nationals who come to Australia on the PALM-scheme for periods of between 6 months and 3 years have had to leave their families behind, and it was only in 2022 that the right of family members to join Pacific Island nationals was for the first time considered by the new Labour-government.

The right of temporary skilled migrants to bring their partner and children to live in Australia is a visa feature that many regional employers appreciate, especially in the context of skills shortages since it makes the residency of the valued employee more likely to last. Somebody who migrates with their entire family is thus considered a safer long-term investment in the business. A Victorian state-government initiative in the early 2010s funded a network of Regional Skilled Migration coordinators as part of Victoria's Global Skills for Regional Victoria policy. Their work involved liaising with both employers and sponsored migrants to facilitate bureaucratic processes, and depending on how individual coordinators implemented their role, this could also involve facilitating smooth regional settlement outcomes. One of these coordinators, whom I interviewed for the *Regional Settlement* project, highlighted that some employer sponsors of skilled migrants went above and beyond their role as employers in supporting the migrant's family in getting settled:

I've got employers who people are staying with, you know, until the husband comes back [to bring his family]. He lives with the employer, the employer helps them find a house in a nice area, then bring out the wife and kids and you know that's something and might put the worker in, organise English classes and sit close to the kids.

However, Australia's regional migration policies, which are designed at the federal government level, focus on the primary visa-holder's employment for a specific employer sponsor, which is the condition of the temporary skilled visa. This single focus ignores the question of the partner's employment pathway or career which often falls by the wayside in a regional town due to the more limited range of available jobs. In the case of highly qualified partners of skilled visa-holders, this can

mean that their career gets compromised by taking on jobs for which they are over-qualified or it is put on hold for the visa duration of the regional employer-tied visa and until a less restricted visa is gained (Boese et al., 2022). This can be illustrated by Sushila, an interview participant in the *Regional Settlement* Project. While her husband enjoyed his work in the area of his qualifications, for which both had been granted the visa, Sushila only found work as cashier in a local supermarket in the regional town, despite her double undergraduate and post-graduate degrees. In the interview she shared what this experience of underemployment meant for her:

when I was walking from my home to the [supermarket] for my very first day when I had to start my job, I was crying and thinking that I worked so hard all my life, and I worked in the top most industries and in the top most school, never ever thinking that one day I'll stand here serving people...at the front desk...it was not something to earn the bread of the family, of course he is the bread winner, but I wanted that independence, I wanted that identity, that I have, I can work and I have to work. So for all those things I went, but yes, I was very disturbed by working there.

The underemployment and its associated emotional toll are all unintended consequences of Australia's regional skilled migration policies that focus on the individual skills-bearing migrant as bearer of 'skills in demand' while providing a potential visa pathway to permanent residency for the migrant and their immediate family members. From an economic perspective, the potential resulting problem is the partner's skills wastage. From the perspective of migrants residing in regional towns, the challenge of underemployment can lead to frustration and onwards migration to larger cities with more employment opportunities once another visa is secured. From the perspective of regional communities, whose hope lies with the population and skills growth outcomes of the policy, any doctor, engineer, or other highly qualified resident who arrived as a skilled migrant and leaves the town is a loss.

5.5 How Labour Migration Policies Structure Regional Labour Markets

Another consequence of Australia's regionally focused migration policies relates to the schemes aimed at attracting horticultural labour to regional Australia and their differential outcomes based on nationality and legal status.

Schemes like the Working Holiday and Work and Holiday visas have contributed a significant share of the seasonal horticultural labour force in Australia until its interruption by the pandemic (Reilly et al., 2018). Alongside these visas for 'back-packers', the predecessors of the PALM-scheme aimed at placing workers from the Pacific Islands in Australian farms for a temporary period of time have gained traction over the years, first only slowly and recently more markedly (Curtain & Howes, 2020). Beside these migrants— with more or less restricted work rights — another important segment of the horticultural labour force has been so-called 'undocumented workers' (Howe et al., 2020). These are migrants without work rights and

often without valid visas, such as for example tourist visa overstayers. Due to their irregular legal status, these workers are vulnerable to deportation and remain unaccounted for in the Census and other population estimates, although there have been various efforts at estimating their numbers (Howe et al., 2019; Howells, 2011). As workers these migrants are most vulnerable to being exploited by employers since they have no access to rights protection (Underhill & Rimmer, 2016). The resulting co-presence of different groups of transient workers in the same location has made access to horticultural jobs more difficult for regionally settled people with refugee backgrounds who look for entry-level labour and compete with other groups.

The local coordinator of an employment programme in a small regional town in the northwest of Victoria, with a population of just over 10,000 inhabitants, illustrated this underacknowledged problem of competition between different groups of workers based on their legal status, when recounting the employment search experience of one of his clients with a refugee background who had gained Australian citizenship.

Some months ago a Sudanese fellow came in, he spent three days driving around the district looking for work on horticulture farms. Two farmers he spoke to, said to him, first question, 'are you an Australian citizen?', and when he said 'yes, I am', they said 'no work for you'. Now how do you interpret that? What does that mean? That's from a farmer, or from farmers. Now not all farmers are doing this, not all farmers are saying this, but the fact is that the labour market is severely distorted by people who are employing those without valid visas, or who are accepting below the proper rate of pay.

Horticultural employers' preference for workers on temporary visas over Australian citizens also emerged in other research and can be further differentiated by visa type and ethnicity (Howe et al., 2020). The tighter regulation and monitoring of the implementation of the Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) and Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) meant that – until the pandemic – many employers preferred to rely on the ongoing flow of backpackers rather than trying to meet the accommodation and minimum employment provision regulations associated with the Pacific labour-programmes (Curtain & Howes, 2020). Investigating employer demand for different categories of workers, Howe et al.'s (2020) national survey of vegetable growers indicated that Pacific seasonal workers were considered as more 'productive and reliable' than people on working holidays, and many more (72%) employers found workers 'from Asian backgrounds' 'very productive and reliable' than was the case for workers from European backgrounds (only 48%).

While recruitment patterns had to change with the onset of the pandemic and associated border closures, together with exceptions made for seasonal workers from the Pacific Islands, it is crucial to note the close relationship between the regulation of migration, employers' perceptions of different groups of workers (whether based on visa status or perceptions of race and ethnicity), and the demographic composition of horticultural labour markets in small and medium-sized towns in regional Australia. Even within the 'backpacker' segment, which encompasses 47 countries from across the globe – 19 mainly European and other Global North countries for the Working Holiday visa and 28 countries in Europe, the Americas, and Asia – employers have been shown to prefer some nationals over others.

A British backpacker, who participated in the *Temporary migrant employment* project offered this explanation for the ethnic segmentation of the labour force on different farms:

I think – I think it’s what the farmer wants – if I think, ‘cause Asians are like very quick with the whole like packing and sorting, so I think that’s why like,’ cause I remember like I’d go in the office and I’d be like, ‘Have I got a job yet?’ And she’d be like ‘Oh they just want Asians at the moment’. And I’d be like ‘Oh’.

A Canadian backpacker shared a similar experience after having worked for different contractors of horticultural workers:

Certain contractors would only hire Asian workers. Whether or not they were being paid as fairly I’m not sure, but maybe because they had a different work ethic that they preferred as well. The same thing. Some people wouldn’t hire French people because they come from a country that has like incredibly high standards of work and this kind of thing, where they were like, ‘Oh no. They’re going to be too troublesome and like I’d rather not deal with them...’

While the demand for workers based on their ethnicity or nationality is often justified by employers through ascriptions of a ‘better work ethic’ or their better suitability based on essentialising and racialising ascriptions of physical attributes such as height, such ascriptions are more likely to reveal employers’ perceptions of compliance with poor employment conditions in combination with racialisation (Nishitani et al., 2023; Anderson & Ruhs, 2010; Maldonado, 2006).

In a country that has officially abandoned its racialising migration policies – commonly known as the ‘White Australia’ policy in the early 1970s – it is striking that the complex set of labour migration schemes aimed at bringing workers to regional farms and orchards has contributed to a diversity of, more or less, temporary migrant flows differentiated by legal status mapped on to nationality. Farm workers from Australia’s neighbouring Pacific Island nations with highly restricted options for internal mobility co-reside with two sets of Working Holiday Makers who are legally free to move between employers across the country but whose experience is highly marked by their ethnicity and processes of racialisation.

5.6 When Migration Governance Meets Mobility-Agency

A paradox at the core of migration policies aimed at steering migrants to regional locations, whether targeted at humanitarian migrants or ‘skilled migrants’, is the very attempt to steer the movements of subjects with high levels of what I describe here as mobility-agency. I understand mobility-agency as the capacity to enact preferences for movement or lack of movement to another location. Similar to Borrelli et al. (2022), I understand such agency not simply as resistance towards the governance of mobility but as shaped and co-produced by this governance. In this final section I will explore examples of such agency drawing on the reflections of mobile

subjects and argue that these indicate an important challenge, if not frontier, of regional migration governance.

To begin with, it needs reiterating that the common distinction between refugees and migrants based on binary ascriptions of agency in their movements is deeply flawed. Both the assumption of refugees' lacking agency in moving to another country and the assumption of pure volition in the case of ('economic') migrants' movements are simplistic since the movements of both bureaucratically defined groups include experiences of decision-making, choice, and aspiration as well as constraint and external pressures. Agency and more specifically, mobility-agency is therefore in the mix of both kinds of international movements, and it does not end with arriving in a specific destination. The underlying motivation for crossing borders to seek 'a better life' either for oneself or for one's children also gives rise to internal movements including those to and away from small and medium-sized towns.

Alongside the previously-mentioned direct resettlement policies at the federal level, there has been a growing number of relocation schemes initiated by various combinations of stakeholders such as regional employers and metropolitan community sector organisations or municipal governments in regional towns and settlement service providers (AMES Australia and Deloitte Access Economics, 2015; ICEPA, 2007). These initiatives often target specific groups of residents with refugee backgrounds who have not been able to secure employment in their current location and are willing to relocate for a job. One such initiative was the relocation of Sudanese men with refugee backgrounds to a regional town in the Goldfields region of Victoria. The local abattoir sought workers and many of the Sudanese men who relocated there because they had struggled to find work in Melbourne were assisted by a Melbourne-based settlement service provider. While the employment opportunity was attractive to the men, their families initially stayed in Melbourne and some partners and children who relocated to the regional town decided to go back to Melbourne. Moses described his family's experience of navigating opportunities:

It was hard coming here, going back, and I decided to bring my family. I was one of the first people to take my family, settled my family here. And they live here until now my family went back because we had a lot of difficulties. My wife wants to learn English and there is no [English language provider], there is no way you can start English from low level so they went back to Melbourne because...my wife cannot work in the factory because they said they need someone who knows English and my wife doesn't know English.

Moses's story illustrates how the basic need for a couple with children to find work may necessitate movements beyond the initial settlement location. The well-documented vexed problem of finding employment in a new country in the absence of local employment experience and the additional challenge of poor recognition of skills and qualifications from overseas, especially for people with refugee backgrounds (Correa-Velez et al., 2015), is not easily solved by a relatively low-paid regional employment offer. In Moses's case, his wife's need to have access to English language training, which was not met in the regional town, caused her to move back to the city.

In another small town in northwest Victoria, an employment service provider reflected on former clients who were no longer around:

That's what I have noticed about the migrant community, if they can't find a job they might come to say [this town] but if they can't find a job then they are quite mobile they will go to the other end of the country if they need to, because they just so badly want to work and get money and settle and look after their families basically.

The issue at stake here is the consideration of other family members and their needs and agency in addressing these needs. This is not only true for the partners of skilled migrants and may cause the move of a family to a bigger city with more employment opportunities and career pathways, following on from conditions of underemployment as described earlier. It applies even more so to people with refugee status whose internal mobility in Australia is not restricted thanks to their permanent resident status. Listening to the aspirations and plans of former refugees in different regional towns it is clear that they consider and weigh opportunities locally and elsewhere in the context of different family members' needs, from education to employment, accommodation and community resources, safety and supports, and the likelihood of a happy life in different places. These opportunities and the potential to benefit from them is furthermore shaped by gender, class, ethnicity, 'race', and other intersecting identity dimensions.

In a 12,000-people town in the southwest of Melbourne, to which many migrants and former refugees moved to work in the local abattoir, some left and moved on to other places because they did not gain access to sufficient shifts. A settlement service provider suggested:

I've just settled four Afghani men who came down to work at [the abattoir]; they did some of their settlement in Melbourne. One of them arrived, I think he arrived in Hobart, went to Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and then came here. And now he's in [another regional town] where he's got the job of his choice, which is fantastic, because his speciality was textiles and he got a job at the textile mill in [another regional town] and his job is also driving trucks up there as well to fill in his spare time because he's not 9-to-5. And the issue with the work down at [the local abattoir] is when they were told about the work and they came down to work it was explained to them that there were two shifts, a morning shift of eight hours and an afternoon shift of eight hours and they assumed from what they were told that they were going to get eight-hour shifts. Well, they didn't, [they got only] four hours. And if they worked any more than four hours the other people that worked, the other full-time people, complained about them.

Many people from refugee backgrounds who leave smaller towns to return to major cities do so to support their children's education opportunities. These choices are often not as straightforward as they may sound since lifestyle advantages of a small regional town may be weighed against the higher education opportunities the city offers. Mobility agency is thus exercised based on navigating different family members' needs at a specific life stage and in the context of cultural customs, class, and gender expectations, as in the case of Mohamad from Afghanistan:

Actually I have to leave [this town] for [studying at the university]. Like, my family wouldn't let me to go alone, they want us to be together with them, and so I have to move and there's heaps of other families that have, they've finished year 12 last year, last year their families move because of them and now they are not happy in Melbourne, like, they're

not with happy with the environment, it's bit busy, is hard to find a house, too much expense. Yeah, so that's the reason they are moving, like, for their further educations.

These examples illustrate how the governance of regional migration and settlement may influence the circumstances of initial movements to regional locations while decisions to stay or move on from regional towns are strongly embedded in people's family and household needs, aspirations, and priorities, which are in turn shaped by life stages and cultural norms and expectations. If place-based opportunities – particularly in the areas of employment, education, and training – do not allow for the fulfilment of needs, aspirations, and priorities, then mobility capital trumps any governance objectives to keep migrants or refugees in a place.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

Regional migration and refugee resettlement are no novel phenomenon in Australia, nor is the governmental promotion of non-metropolitan migration. From the bonded labour-schemes that brought Pacific Island nationals to work in sugar cane fields in Queensland pre-Federation (Stead & Altman, 2019) to the labour camps for displaced Europeans after World War II and later Italian and Greek seasonal workers in regional Australia (Jupp, 2007), Australian migration governance has long extended to places beyond the major cities. What makes regional migration governance in the 2020s different from earlier versions is the complex and highly differentiated policy patchwork with partly competing objectives and outcomes that different federal governments have created over time in an increasingly employer-demand-driven migration regime. This patchwork includes temporary skilled migration policies that are aimed at directing healthcare professionals, engineers, and migrants with other sought-after qualifications to regional towns with an eye to their ongoing settlement and notwithstanding the temporariness of initial visas. It also includes nominal and de facto labour migration policies (Tham et al., 2016) aimed at attracting horticultural and increasingly also hospitality and healthcare workers for short periods to regional Australia without granting them a pathway to permanent residency. Finally, regional migration is governed by direct resettlement pilot schemes for refugees as well as relocation initiatives aimed at attracting former refugees for long-term settlement. Co-existing with these different migration policies are regional welcoming, multi- and interculturalism policies at the municipal level that are variably aimed at facilitating integration, social cohesion, and wellbeing of increasingly culturally diverse communities (Van Kooy, 2022; Wickes et al., 2020; Moran & Mallman, 2015, 2019).

In 1999, eminent Australian demographer Graeme Hugo (1999) observed that the relative lack of success of schemes in Australia and elsewhere to encourage migrant settlement in non-metropolitan centres suggests that the future of Australia's population distribution is more likely to be shaped indirectly by policies which encourage (or discourage) economic development outside core regions of the country rather than by direct interventions to influence where new immigrants to Australia settle.

Two decades later the assessment of such initiatives of encouraging migrant settlement beyond the metropole would look quite different. There are ever more regional migration and relocation initiatives (even though an agricultural visa that was announced under the Coalition-government in 2020, was immediately abandoned by the subsequent Labour government in 2022). The success of refugee settlement in strengthening regional communities and economies has been promoted by government and documented in evaluations of such initiatives (see, for example, AMES and Deloitte, 2015).

What this chapter has sought to highlight is the need to look beyond individual success stories of the ‘triple-wins’ of regional settlement to the sum of policies that seek to redirect migration from major to smaller cities and towns in what is referred to as ‘regional Australia’. Such a holistic view allows the identification of some unintended policy outcomes for the target groups of other policies, illustrated by the example of local citizens with refugee backgrounds who compete with temporary, transient, and undocumented workers in horticultural labour markets. The analysis provided has also illustrated the creation of inequalities between different groups of migrants through visa policies and their effects on regional labour markets. Finally, the chapter has drawn attention to mobility agency as a real frontier of any geopolitical migration governance within one country, which emerges from the movement trajectories and reflections of mobile subjects who vote against short-sighted regional population or labour supply-policies with their feet. To conclude these reflections on twenty-first-century regional migration policies in Australia, I would like to paraphrase the Swiss writer Max Frisch’s much quoted commentary on twentieth-century ‘guestworker’ policies in Europe (‘They called for labour but people came’): ‘They called for either regional guestworkers, or skilled and refugee settlers, but people came, who make their own calls on staying or leaving often despite migration policies.’

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Chapter 6

Immigration Policy and Less-Favoured Regions and Cities: Comparing Urban Atlantic Canada and the US Rust Belt



Yolande Pottie-Sherman 

6.1 Immigration Policy and Less-Favoured Regions and Cities

Immigration drives economic growth and prosperity in receiving countries (OECD, 2022). But immigration also tends to contribute to spatial inequality within states as immigrants gravitate to highly urbanised regions and larger cities with stronger economies (Heider et al., 2020). There is a growing interest in countries like Canada and the United States in spreading the benefits of immigration to ‘less favoured regions and cities’ – places which are ‘excluded from the global circuits of capital, information and knowledge’ (Martin et al., 2022, p. 14). These places may face a myriad of demographic and economic challenges associated with aging or shrinking populations, slow growth, and economic decline (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012; Lichter & Johnson, 2020; Hartt, 2021). How can immigration to such places be encouraged and with what opportunities and challenges?

This chapter uses the cases of Atlantic Canada and the US Rust Belt (Fig. 6.1) to examine how different approaches to immigration impact the ability of less-favoured regions and cities to recruit newcomers. I use the term settlement to describe the immediate needs of newcomers and integration to the process through which immigrants come to participate without barriers in the social, economic, cultural, and political life of the communities in which they settle (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). Welcoming refers to a community’s degree of receptivity towards immigrants. Welcoming initiatives, then, promote ‘warmer receptivity’ and encourage integration (see McDaniel et al., 2019, p. 1142).

The Rust Belt refers to the former manufacturing heartland of the US, encompassing Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and most of New York. It includes cities

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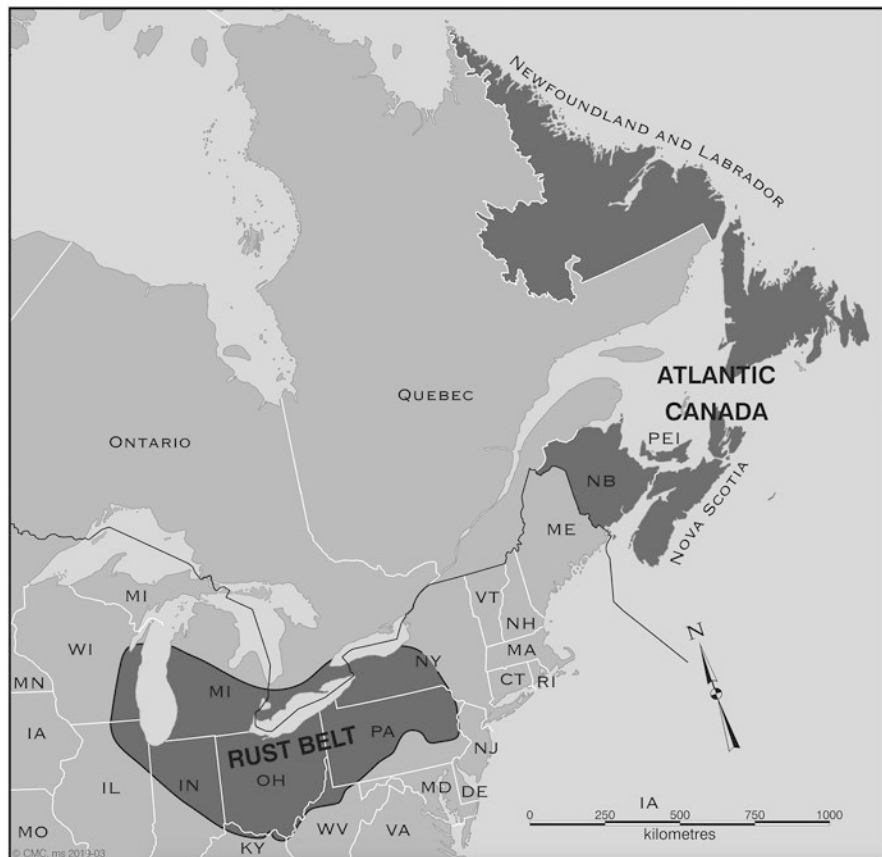


Fig. 6.1 Map of Atlantic Canada and the U.S. Rust Belt

built on metals in southwest Pennsylvania and northeast Ohio as well as cities built on the automotive industry in southeast Michigan, northwest Ohio, and eastern Indiana. Atlantic Canada comprises Canada's four easternmost provinces: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. This region includes cities originally built on fishing, mining, forestry, and offshore oil, as well as shipbuilding. Both Atlantic Canada and the Rust Belt once served as major gateways for immigrants to their respective countries. But having experienced long-standing economic crises, their cities now generally have smaller foreign-born shares (Brodie, 1997; Neumann, 2016; Pottie-Sherman & Graham, 2021). Both can both be understood as 'aspiring gateways' in that they 'proactively aspire to become welcoming, new destinations' for immigrants by adopting initiatives to attract and retain newcomers (Pottie-Sherman & Graham, 2021). Local actors increasingly promote welcoming as a population growth and economic diversification strategy. Yet, they do so with very different policy tools at their disposal.

Canada has a ‘merit-based’ immigration system where immigrants are selected primarily on their economic potential through a points-based federal skilled worker programme, alongside employer-driven programmes (Chand & Tung, 2019). Canada has also devolved some immigration powers to its provinces and territories, allowing them to select immigrants based on regional labour market needs (Paquet & Xhardez, 2020). These Provincial and Territorial Nominee Programs (PNPs) disperse immigration to less-favoured regions like Atlantic Canada and cities like Halifax, St. John’s, and Fredericton, where the population is aging at a faster rate than the rest of Canada, have difficulty recruiting and keeping immigrants, and have long faced challenges of youth out-migration and economic disadvantage vis-à-vis central and western Canada (Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, 2021). One of Canada’s employer-driven immigration programmes – the Atlantic Immigration Program – also encourages immigration to the Atlantic provinces (IRCC, 2020). Alongside these explicitly place-based immigration programmes, immigrant integration is also supported across the country from the ‘top down’ through federally-funded settlement, multiculturalism, and citizenship programs (Griffith, 2017).

In contrast, in the US, family reunification remains the foundation of the immigration system (Gubernskaya & Dreby, 2017). Skilled immigration streams are smaller and employer-driven: skilled workers must be sponsored in the H-1B ‘specialty occupation’ visa lottery by an employer, who may later also sponsor their application for permanent residency (Chand & Tung, 2019). Unlike Canada, the US has no national immigrant integration programme; states have no direct control over immigrant selection although some have introduced inclusionary and exclusionary legislation vis-à-vis immigrant welcoming and access to services (Filindra & Manatschal, 2020). Efforts to use immigration to address spatial inequality are happening outside of formal policy channels from the ‘bottom up,’ driven by networks of local business associations and non-profit organisations that increasingly promote immigration as a tool of economic revitalisation in the Rust Belt and as a solution to specific problems such as urban vacancy, population decline, and economic stagnation (Rodriguez et al., 2018; Welcoming Economies Global Network, 2021). What do these differences mean for how these locations engage with immigration? What are the commonalities and divergences in Atlantic Canada’s and the Rust Belt’s approaches to and framings of international migration?

My findings are based on several years of fieldwork in both regions, involving participant observation at immigration summits and conventions, stakeholder interviews, and media and document analysis. In the Rust Belt, I undertook participant observation at two Welcoming Economies Global Network Conventions in Dayton (2015) and Philadelphia (2016) and conducted 16 interviews with welcoming initiative leaders in ten Rust Belt cities (Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton, Toledo, St. Louis, Detroit, and Buffalo) as well as targeted interviews with newcomers in Cleveland, Ohio, from 2015 to 2017. The Atlantic Canadian findings are drawn from participant observation at a series of immigration consultations and meetings held in the region from 2015 to 2019, including the Atlantic Immigration Summit, Metropolis Conference on Immigration, Pathways to Prosperity Conference, and the NL Provincial Immigration Consultations. I also draw on

interviews with 14 community leaders, government representatives, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations in Atlantic Canadian cities (Charlottetown, Fredericton, Moncton, Halifax, Sydney, Saint John, and St. John's).

This chapter examines the dynamic geographies of immigration policy, illustrating how the challenges, opportunities, and meta-narratives of migration and economic productivity play out across these different socio-political systems. Ultimately, dynamic regions need dynamic solutions and cities in these regions provide a roadmap for understanding the role of immigration in addressing uneven development.

6.2 Immigrant and Refugee-Led Revitalisation in the Rust Belt's Aspiring Gateways

Although Rust Belt cities welcomed large numbers of European immigrants in their industrial heyday, today they generally have smaller foreign-born shares than the US average (Pottie-Sherman, 2020). As many core metropolitan areas in the Rust Belt experienced population decline associated with deindustrialisation, suburbanisation, and the racial stigmatisation of African American-majority neighbourhoods, the migration flows that reshaped Sun Belt cities like Atlanta, Houston, or Phoenix in the second half of the twentieth century largely bypassed them (Singer, 2015; Hackworth, 2016). Over the last four decades, 'former immigrant gateways' like Detroit, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh saw only small increases in their immigrant populations while also experiencing substantial population losses (Singer, 2015; Table 6.1).

Because of these patterns, a new pro-immigration movement has emerged in this region. Many organisations and policy actors have rallied around the notion that immigrants and refugees will 'save the Rust Belt' by injecting population, reinvigorating declining neighbourhoods, and stimulating the economy (Shrider, 2017).

These narratives materialised in the wake of the 2007–2008 financial crisis with the 2010 launch of Global Detroit, a non-profit organisation whose goal is to attract and retain immigrants (Pottie-Sherman, 2018a). A related movement – the Welcoming Economies Global Network (WE Global) – encourages Rust Belt cities to support immigrants as an economic development strategy (WE Global Network 2021). WE Global emphasises the economic contributions of immigrants and refugees as entrepreneurs, as workers in sectors experiencing labour shortage, and more generally as homeowners and taxpayers. As one NGO-leader within this network acknowledged,

people in power are very interested in taking the natural phenomenon like immigration and promoting it and accelerating it for purposes of an economic plan to revitalise. I see that as a very strategic, a very intentional approach of Rust Belt cities to say that we need more taxes, population, and we can't drive the birth rate up, and we cannot attract people from other parts of the country so let's get people from the rest of the world. (Interview, 2015)

Table 6.1 Immigrant percent and total population estimate, selected Rust Belt cities, 2016–2020

City	Foreign born persons, %, 2016–2020	Population estimates, Census, 2020
Hamtramck, MI	40.3	28,433 ↑
Dearborn, MI	29.5	109,976 ↑
Utica, NY	21.6	65,283 ↑
Ithaca, NY ^a	17.5	32,108 ↑
Syracuse, NY ^a	13.4	148,620 ↑
Columbus, OH ^a	12.8	905,748 ↑
Grand Rapids, MI ^a	11.1	198,917 ↑
Buffalo, NY ^a	10.4	278,349 ↑
Milwaukee, WI ^a	10.2	577,222 ↓
Rock Island, IL	9.9	37,108 ↓
Pittsburgh, PA*	9	302,971 ↓
Fort Wayne, IN ^a	8.1	263,886 ↑
Erie, PA*	7.1	94,831 ↓
St. Louis, MO ^a	6.9	301,578 ↓
Akron, OH ^a	6.8	190,469 ↓
Detroit, MI*	6.1	639,111 ↓
Cincinnati, OH**	6.1	309,317 ↑
Cleveland, OH**	6.1	372,624 ↓
Dayton, OH*	4.9	137,644 ↓
Toledo, OH*	3.4	270,871 ↓
Youngstown, OH ^a	2.5	60,068 ↓

Data: Census 2020; ↑↓ = increase or decrease in total population from 2010 Census

*Certified Welcoming; ** Certification in progress. ^aNon-profit or local government WA partner(s)

Such projects view immigration as a solution to systemic issues facing Rust Belt cities, including the fiscal squeeze resulting from the hollowing out of their core areas.

But the string of new local initiatives that surrounds this movement is not exclusively focused on newcomers' economic contributions. For example, the Welcome Dayton process centred on the 'intentional recognition' of immigrants – a practice of community engagement emphasising the autonomy of community members, 'shared humanity', and the 'latent possibility' of the community (Housel et al., 2018, p. 393). The WE Global Network and many other initiatives are now also part of Welcoming America, a national non-profit organisation with many affiliates in the Rust Belt (Welcoming America, 2021). To become 'Certified Welcoming', Pittsburgh, Detroit, Dayton, Toledo, and Erie had to complete WA's six-step process and requirements across seven frameworks ranging from government leadership to equitable access (Welcoming America, 2017). One of these requirements is that the jurisdiction have a policy 'that designates a unit focused on immigrant inclusion work', and this unit must be 'formalised, active, and [with] dedicated staff' (Welcoming America, 2017, p. 11). These requirements aim to ensure that welcoming projects are about more than place promotion. Recent research by Huang (2021)

finds a correlation between Detroit's pro-immigration welcoming policy and the city's foreign-born population, indicating that welcoming policies can have real population impacts.

6.2.1 Red States and Blue Cities: Immigration and Scalar Tensions

This instrumentalisation of migration in the Rust Belt is significant given that family reunification remains the foundation of US immigration policy and much subnational immigration activism in the US has focused on undocumented immigrants' access to the labour market, housing, or other services (Paquet, 2020). Republican-led state legislatures in the Rust Belt have indeed passed restrictive legislation towards the undocumented and so-called red state-blue city clashes on immigration are common between Republican-dominated legislatures and cities with Democrat-affiliated mayors – red and blue symbolising areas where Republican and Democrat voters form the majority, respectively (Interview, 2015). These conflicts are especially salient in the Rust Belt where 'blue' cities like Cleveland and Erie are surrounded by 'red' suburban and rural counties where Trump's anti-immigration messaging appeals (Pottie-Sherman, 2020). But in the Rust Belt, there is also a notable competing regime at the state level which has set its sights on skilled immigrant workers (Pottie-Sherman, 2018b). This regime includes legislation surrounding the attraction and retention of skilled migrants such as Ohio's Global Reach to Engage Academic Talent and Michigan's Global Talent Retention initiatives (ibid.). Like in other jurisdictions, exclusionary policies at higher levels – including attempts by states such as in Ohio to require cities and school districts to enforce immigration laws – have motivated Rust Belt actors to pursue welcoming campaigns (Pottie-Sherman, 2018a, 2020). One leader of a local inclusionary initiative explained this as a desire to be 'on the right side of history' given the clash between these immigration agendas.

Urban actors in the Rust Belt also attempt to recruit skilled workers by exploring pathways in the US immigration system. For example, Global Cleveland, a non-profit organisation, has promoted a stepping stone strategy for international students in Ohio that encourages them to work temporarily after graduation through the 'Optional Practical Training' period. Global Cleveland also encourages employers to sponsor international students in the H-1B lottery, which in theory, provides a pathway to a green card and their long-term retention in Ohio's labour market. In practice, however, students who want to remain in the US face numerous challenges, including sudden visa restrictions, the requirement to find a company willing and able to sponsor them, and the odds of being randomly selected for a highly competitive H-1B visa (Pottie-Sherman, 2018b).

Such tenuous pathways reflect the failure of immigration reformers to introduce so-called Heartland Visas at the federal level that would help disadvantaged

communities recruit skilled immigrants (US Conference of Mayors, 2019). The Heartland Visa proposal, however, has gained traction in recent years; in 2020 it was endorsed by the Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition (an association of business networks across the Great Lakes region) and by Pete Buttigieg (former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and current US Secretary of Transportation) in his presidential campaign, among other actors (see Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition, 2020).

6.3 Refugee Resettlement and Neighbourhood Revitalisation

Many pro-immigration projects in the Rust Belt also aim to direct refugees to particular neighbourhoods in the hopes of addressing core metro area population loss and property abandonment (Pottie-Sherman, 2018a). These projects attempt to harness what Hyndman (2022) describes as the ‘geoscripts’ of refugee resettlement, a term referring to the spatial distribution of service providers and the trajectories of migration (including secondary migration) they engender. Despite their low immigration levels, some Rust Belt places have among the largest per capita shares of refugees in the US, owing to the longstanding role of voluntary organisations serving refugees (VolAgs) in the Great Lakes region. Some cities like St. Louis, Columbus, and Dayton have also attracted considerable flows of secondary refugee migration. In the absence of large-scale immigration in these cities, refugee communities have a considerable economic and social presence. In the words of one Ohio-based service provider, refugees

are playing a huge role in cities like ours...moving in 700 refugees a year helps that population decline. It helps diversify our city. Those refugees are the hardest working people you’ll ever meet...They are contributing to the revitalization of this city (Interview, 2015).

This statement illustrates the complexities (and strange bedfellows) at the core of diversity politics in less favoured regions. VolAgs are tasked with securing safe and affordable housing for refugees and have found allies in growth coalitions that seek to stimulate Rust Belt housing markets and see refugees as a ‘vacant property solution.’ For example, Dayton’s ‘Green and Gold’ investment strategy explicitly supported the revitalisation of the city’s North Side neighbourhood by former refugees (Pottie-Sherman, 2018a). In Cleveland, through the Discovering Home programme, VolAgs have partnered with land banks, real estate agents, and contractors to share the costs of renovating property with the ultimate goal of renting it to refugees (ibid.).

Declines in US refugee admissions have been disastrous for cities like Erie where refugees play a substantial role in the local economy. Squeezed between a supportive local government and Trump-era dismantling of the US refugee resettlement system, VolAgs serving refugees in Erie (and elsewhere) were forced to terminate projects, lay off staff, and close local offices (Ryssdal & Palacios, 2020). This destruction of local resettlement infrastructure has also disrupted efforts to rebuild the US Refugee Admissions Programme under the Biden administration (Zak, 2021).

In the absence of state-sponsored refugee flows, some Rust Belt cities like Cincinnati and Buffalo have attempted to recruit new populations by rebranding themselves as climate havens, citing their relative protection from natural disasters (City of Cincinnati, 2018). Declaring Buffalo a ‘Climate Refugee City’ in 2019, its mayor described the city’s redundant industrial infrastructure as an ‘asset’ for welcoming people escaping environmental hazards (City of Buffalo, 2020). Such efforts can be understood as being part of a ‘new climate urbanism’ as they reflect the competitive imperative for cities to chase new rounds of speculative investment and are likely to reproduce familiar patterns of neoliberal inequality (Shi, 2020).

6.3.1 Racial Equity and the Local Governance of Immigration

Immigrant attraction projects in the Rust Belt must grapple with deeply entrenched racial divides and the relationships between processes like land abandonment and structural racism (Interview, 2015). As the Welcome Dayton (2014, p. 5) strategy notes, immigrant-friendly initiatives must also address the ‘unfulfilled integration’ of long-term African American residents of Rust Belt cities so that projects to welcome newcomers are not seen as encroachments on ‘scarce resources’ (see Mallach & Tobocman, 2021). One key informant in Pittsburgh explained this tension as follows:

we need to keep the community who’s here now, which is our Black American community and then our small but growing immigrant community in mind and try to build that unity so that there’s not this divide and conquer or competition pitting one group against the other. (Interview, 2015)

This tension is also recognised by initiatives such as Global Detroit, and there are efforts in some Rust Belt cities to involve African American communities in the local governance of immigration (Interview, 2015). Some of these initiatives, for example, involve community policing partnerships, given the shared fear and distrust that racialised people have towards law enforcement (City of Pittsburgh, 2015).

6.4 Demographic Demands and the Aspiring Immigration Gateways of Atlantic Canada

Urban actors in the Rust Belt increasingly view immigrant welcoming as a strategy for reasserting their cities within the urban hierarchy and reversing trends of property abandonment and population decline (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2021). These strategies have become increasingly formalised and concerned with substantive issues such as racial equity through WE Global and Welcoming America. In this section, I consider the dynamic geographies of immigration shaping Atlantic

Canada, another region where narratives of immigration and population growth and economic productivity are prevalent.

Like the Rust Belt, parts of the Atlantic region, notably Halifax, were central gateways for European immigration to Canada until the 1970s (Schwinghamer & Raska, 2020). But deindustrialisation in the early twentieth century, followed by crises in natural resources, solidified the peripheral position of the Atlantic provinces vis-a-vis central Canada (Brodie, 1997). Today, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador all face youth out-migration and demographic aging to varying degrees (Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, 2021). When it comes to immigration, the Atlantic region continues to have the lowest immigrant proportions compared to other Canadian provinces, ranging from 2.8% in Newfoundland and Labrador to 7.8% in Prince Edward Island (for reference, according to Statistics Canada (2021), immigrants make up 30% and 29% of the populations of Ontario and British Columbia and 23% of Canada's total population). Thirteen of Atlantic Canada's 18 cities have immigrant proportions below 5% of their total populations, mirroring many Rust Belt cities (see Table 6.2).

The Atlantic provinces also have the lowest retention rates in Canada. Less than half of the immigrants who settled in Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island in 2014 were still in those provinces in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022). Nova Scotia's retention rate is higher at 63% but still much lower

Table 6.2 Immigrant percent and total population estimate, Atlantic Canadian cities, 2016

City	% immigrant, 2016	Total population, 2016
Halifax, NS ^a	9.2	403,390
Charlottetown, PEI ^a	9.1	69,325
Fredericton, NB ^a	8.1	101,760
Moncton, NB ^a	5.5	144,810
Saint John, NB ^a	5.3	126,202
Kentville, NS	4.5	26,222
Summerside, PEI ^a	4.1	16,587
St. John's, NL ^a	4.0	205,955
Truro, NS ^a	3.9	45,753
Edmunston, NB	3.7	23,524
New Glasgow, NS ^a	2.6	34,487
Bathurst, NB	2.3	31,110
Cambellton, NB/QC	2.0	15,746
Miramichi, NB ^a	2.0	27,523
Corner Brook, NL	1.8	31,917
Cape Breton, NS ^a	1.8	98,722
Grand falls-Windsor, NL	1.7	14,171
Gander, NL	1.6	13,234

Data: Census 2016

^aServed by a Local Immigration Partnership. Note: PEI's LIP represents the province (including Charlottetown and Summerside). The North Shore LIP services Colchester, Pictou and Antigonish, Nova Scotia (including Truro)

than Ontario, which retained 94% of its immigrants during the same period (*ibid.*). There are numerous reasons for these low retention rates. Immigrants in Atlantic Canada – particularly educated professionals – often leave the region in search of higher wages or to join family elsewhere in Canada (Ramos & Yoshida, 2011). There are also many spatial and social challenges at play including the climate, geographic isolation, tight-knit host communities, and the relative lack of co-ethnic resources compared to larger Canadian cities (Pottie-Sherman & Graham, 2021). The Atlantic provinces also function as ‘transit’ spaces for immigrants’ secondary migration to other parts of Canada (Baldacchino, 2015).

Immigration in Atlantic Canada is thus framed as a tool to address ‘economic decline, labour force shortages, and ‘looming demographic imperatives’” (Lewis, 2010, p. 244). Local projects across Atlantic Canada recruit newcomers to fill jobs in healthcare, trades, farming, and seafood processing (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021) or, in the case of some Francophone cities in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, to preserve the linguistic balance between French and English (City of Dieppe, 2020).

Despite some parallel rationales for promoting immigration in the two regions, there are major differences. For one, the spatial context of population decline differs in Atlantic Canada as it impacts primarily rural areas and smaller urban communities. While some smaller cities like the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (in Nova Scotia) and Corner Brook (in Newfoundland and Labrador) shrank during the last census period, growth in Halifax and Charlottetown during the same period approached 10% (Statistics Canada, 2021). Rather than experiencing land abandonment, Halifax, Charlottetown, and St. John’s face housing affordability crises, exacerbated by the pandemic’s counter-urbanisation trend (Woodbury, 2021). Immigration trends have also shifted in recent years, with immigration accounting for 64% of Halifax’s population growth between 2019 and 2020 as the city gained nearly 6000 new immigrants, accompanied by a boost in interprovincial migration (Halifax Partnership, 2021). While some places like Charlottetown have seen substantial growth in their immigrant populations over the last decade, others like St. John’s have seen very slow growth, reflecting the difficulties of attracting and retaining newcomers to the spatially isolated capital of Newfoundland and Labrador (Pottie-Sherman & Graham, 2021).

Spatial patterns of urban change are also generally more varied in Atlantic Canada compared to the Rust Belt. Atlantic Canadian cities generally do not exhibit the same racial segregation, land abandonment, or declining urban infrastructure¹ (Kaida et al., 2020). At the same time, however, Atlantic cities also do not exhibit the same intense patterns of gentrification and investment that have transformed the cores of Canada’s major cities (*ibid.*). For immigration, these patterns mean that the

¹Canadian cities may not exhibit the same racial segregation as Rust Belt cities like Detroit because Canadian immigration policy deliberately excluded many Black immigrants from entering the country until the 1960s (Hackworth, 2016). However, there are many examples of racialised exclusion within Canada’s urban landscapes including the destruction of the African Nova Scotian community of Africville in Halifax in the mid-twentieth century (Nelson, 2008).

labour and housing markets of mid-sized cities in Atlantic Canada can be more open to newcomers than traditional destinations like Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal (Sano et al., 2017).

The PNPs have had a significant impact on immigration to Atlantic Canada, particularly in cities. Since their implementation, they are now the primary² attraction mechanism for economic immigrants to the Atlantic region, by 2015 representing from 59% to 96% of economic immigration to these provinces (IRCC, 2015). With the introduction of the PNP, Charlottetown, for example, saw its immigrant population grow by 148% between 2006 and 2016 (Pottie-Sherman & Graham, 2021). With international student permanent residency streams, PNPs have made higher education institutions – mostly based in urban areas – into central gateways for immigrants to the region. Internationalisation efforts at Newfoundland and Labrador’s only university – located in St. John’s – have driven that city’s diversification (Graham & Pottie-Sherman, 2022).

There are even PNP streams for international students who wish to start businesses after graduation, such as Newfoundland and Labrador’s International Graduate Entrepreneur category introduced in 2018 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2019). With immigration and education programmes that support and retain international graduate entrepreneurs, there is a clear relationship between immigration, higher education, and an emerging technology start-up ecosystem in St. John’s that is fuelled by international students (Graham & Pottie-Sherman, 2022). The ability to link immigration to the triple helix of innovation – involving higher education, industry, and government – would be the envy of many US immigration reformers in the Rust Belt who also frame international students as potential innovators.

6.4.1 *Local Immigration Partnerships: Formalised Intergovernmental Collaboration on Immigration*

In urban Atlantic Canada, unlike the Rust Belt, there is a high level of intergovernmental collaboration on immigration. Whereas the US is characterised by intense scalar conflict on immigration, in Canada immigration and settlement are increasingly managed at the local level through federally-funded multi-sectoral networks known as Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs). LIPs originated in Ontario in the mid-2000s to foster welcoming communities across Canada (Burr, 2011). Since 2013, nine LIPs have formed in Atlantic Canada.³ With their introduction, the larger

²Immigrants may also enter Atlantic Canada through federal immigration programmes or the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP), a permanent residency scheme that matches newcomers to jobs and accounted for 29% of economic immigrants to Atlantic Canada in 2019 (IRCC, 2020).

³LIPs have formed in Halifax, PEI, St John’s, Moncton, Fredericton, Saint John, Cape Breton, Miramichi, and the North Shore (serving Nova Scotia’s Pictou, Antigonish, and Colchester counties, including Truro). It is worth noting that smaller communities without LIPs have had to find more ad hoc solutions to address immigrant needs.

cities across Atlantic Canada have become more active in immigration. For example, Moncton launched its first formal immigration strategy in 2014, followed by Fredericton and Dieppe in 2019. And Halifax's LIP supports the city's 2013 Welcoming Newcomers Action Plan (City of Halifax, 2022). Like the welcoming movement in the Rust Belt, LIPs frame newcomer attraction and retention as an economic development imperative.

LIPs also share some commonalities with US 'Certified Welcoming' cities: they both develop through a series of prescribed stages, require horizontal partnerships, establish a strategy, and require progress monitoring (Welcoming America, 2017). LIPs, however, are formal federal-local agreements formed in a context where immigration governance is primarily about reaping the economic benefits of immigration (in contrast to the US where issues of immigration control have dominated immigration debates and family reunification remains the organizing principle of immigrant selection). Canada lacks a large undocumented immigrant population and is geographically isolated from spontaneous immigration. As a result, debates about immigration in Atlantic Canada, when they occur, tend to focus on whether the party in power is doing *enough* to attract and retain newcomers. In contrast, Welcoming America is a non-profit organisation operating without a national immigrant integration strategy and where access-oriented debates about undocumented immigrants dominate.

6.4.2 *Refugee Resettlement and Entrepreneurial Refugee Sponsorship*

Like the Rust Belt, 'geoscripts' of refugee resettlement shape urban Atlantic Canada (Hyndman, 2022). Government-sponsored refugees in Canada do not choose where they settle initially. The responsibility for resettling government-assisted refugees is dispersed across 11 sponsoring institutions in Atlantic Canada. Recent refugee arrivals have had significant impacts on the population shifts of some Atlantic cities. For example, Nova Scotia's intake in 2017 of 1475 Syrian refugees – who resettled predominantly in the Halifax metro area – shifted the direction of provincial population change (Luck, 2017).

Parallel to the Rust Belt, there is an entrepreneurial element to refugee sponsorship in Atlantic Canada, where refugees are seen as important agents of population and economic revitalisation. This element is apparent in recent responses to the Ukrainian refugee crisis. In March of 2022, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador was the first province to send staff members to Poland to establish a Ukrainian Family Support Desk (CBC, 2022). While this has been framed as a humanitarian effort, it is notable that the earliest such effort was led by the only shrinking province in Canada.

6.5 Concluding Remarks: Common Threads and Diverging Spatial Contexts in Atlantic Canada and the Rust Belt

There are common threads between the Rust Belt and Atlantic Canada: both are experimental spaces within narratives of migration as a solution to population loss and economic stagnation and also reflect the embrace of proactive, forward-looking initiatives. These commonalities led me to frame these places as aspiring gateways (Pottie-Sherman & Graham, 2021).

At the same time, as this chapter illustrates, these two regions represent different spatial contexts of demographic aging and shrinking with implications for local migration governance and activism. In the Rust Belt, pro-immigration projects specifically target core neighbourhoods. Framings of migration in Atlantic Canada have been far less spatially targeted, despite a generalised interest in spreading the ‘benefits’ of migration to smaller communities and rural areas. Divergences in immigration federalism shape how these two regions portray immigration and their capacity to attract and retain immigrants. Some US immigration reformers applaud the policy tools at the disposal of provincial officials in Atlantic Canada, proposing a Heartland Visa to drive immigration up in the American Midwest (Ozimek, 2019). The question remaining concerns whether these reformers should be looking to Atlantic Canada (or vice versa)?

One assumption of the US Heartland Visa movement is that place-based immigration pathways will make it easier for regions like the Rust Belt to attract and retain immigrants. But as the case of Atlantic Canada shows, attraction and retention is far more complicated. Retention continues to be a challenge, even after years of provincial involvement in immigration policy through the PNPs and intergovernmental collaboration on integration through arrangements such as the LIPs.

In addition, developments in Atlantic Canada such as the PNPs are part of the broader neoliberalisation of Canadian immigration policy giving the private sector greater control. It is important to ask whether this is a positive step in the governance of immigration. Entrepreneurial immigration programmes in Canada have a chequered past, especially in Atlantic Canada where they have enabled immigration fraud or simply not resulted in business success. While preliminary evidence suggests that new programmes to put universities at the centre of immigrant entrepreneurship policy is positive, the success of such arrangements hinges on the alignment of all levels of government – an alignment sorely lacking in the Rust Belt.

Higher education in Atlantic Canada has clearly been a driver of immigration, but the pandemic has also exposed how precarious this channel is, including at Canadian public universities which have increasingly relied on international student tuition dollars to offset reductions in government spending. Cape Breton University, in Nova Scotia, reflects an extreme case of this trend. The university was under threat due to declining domestic enrolments but reversed its fortunes by recruiting large numbers of international student enrolment in just a few years. Then, when Covid-19 halted international education, CBU was forced to lay off employees and cut wages (Martin, 2020).

Reflecting its rise in the Canadian urban hierarchy, Halifax, at the urban scale, has been the most proactive in terms of pro-immigration policies. While Halifax and Charlottetown have had the most success in increasing immigration numbers, both cities are now facing major housing crises. Immigrants in Canada have traditionally been both major drivers of urban housing markets *and* among the most precariously housed. These trends have been particularly pronounced in Canada's major cities, but we are increasingly seeing them in Atlantic Canada. As the pandemic recedes and immigration levels stabilise, the financialisation of housing and the decoupling of housing and labour markets is making immigrants in Atlantic Canada more vulnerable to housing stress. St. John's, for example, has recently welcomed hundreds of Ukrainian refugees, but 100 families are still living in a hotel because there are simply not enough rental units available in the city (Bulman, 2022).

Clearly, then, there are some lessons for the Rust Belt from the Atlantic Canadian experience. Conversely, from an Atlantic Canadian point of view, what lessons might be learned from the Rust Belt? The Rust Belt experience also shows that even if immigration has not reversed population decline, it still has a significant impact through the offsetting of population loss and changes to the composition of the population. Atlantic Canadian cities with very small immigrant populations might take notes from the 'intentional recognition' goals of the Welcome Dayton strategy, or from Global Detroit's emphasis on racial equity (Housel et al., 2018; Mallach & Tobocman, 2021). For example, in recent years, welcoming and population growth coalitions in Atlantic Canada have begun to grapple with how best to engage Indigenous communities in these efforts (Montiel, 2019).

A central tension emerging from this comparison is around aspiring gateways as potential sources of inspiration versus the risks involved with an instrumentalised welcoming, where the warmth of welcome hinges on the ability of newcomers to reverse structural problems. The preoccupation with restoring population and economic growth may also lead places to ignore the integration needs of longstanding communities (Mallach & Tobocman, 2021). The more important takeaway from both contexts is that immigration is not a panacea for population decline, and it cannot be pursued as a solution without also doing things that make a location a better place to live in.

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Chapter 7

New Zealand's Small-Town Disruptions and the Role of Immigrant Mobilities



Ashrafal Alam , Etienne Nel , and Sammy Bergen 

7.1 Introduction

Globally, rural areas are recognised as areas which have struggled demographically as a result of urbanisation trends that have often led to rural depopulation, rising average ages, de-agrarianisation, and associated economic restructuring (Woods, 2010). Woods's (2007) work on the 'global countryside' challenges us to develop a stronger understanding of how globalisation processes reshape rural areas. In this context, rural areas and the small towns/settlements within them have been significantly impacted by global and national economic, social, and political processes. Recession, neoliberalism, technological advances, urbanisation, and more recently depopulation and ageing have reshaped social and economic realities in the rural areas of most OECD countries. Within this context, one of the more distinctive recent trends associated with increased patterns of global human mobility is the degree to which, in some parts of the world, the countryside is experiencing processes of 'cosmopolitanism' – what Woods (2018a, p. 165) refers to as 'cultural hybridity and openness' (see also Alam et al., 2023; Alam & Nel, 2023). In this chapter a key focus is on how rural New Zealand, and more specifically our study area in the southern half of the South Island, is changing demographically following significant social and economic change, or what we refer to as 'disruptions'. This is, primarily, as a result of the in-migration of new residents from multiple countries who, following immigration policy changes in the 1990s, have helped to fill labour-force gaps and in so doing maintained the vibrancy of local economies which is now becoming far more diverse in ethnic terms.

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In this chapter we explore the notion that there have been disruptions in small-town New Zealand associated with how social and economic changes have played out in them. Mainly we argue that while more recent culturally and linguistically diverse international migration has caused significant disruption to the predominantly White small-town demographic landscape, such disruption is embedded into a series of internal and external disruptions that have historically shaped the regional development trajectories in the country. We use the term disruption (after Balnaves, 2012; Trabucchi et al., 2019) not to refer to individuals but rather to new processes or innovations that disrupt traditional ways of doing things and lead to the pursuit of new development paths, not dissimilar to established thinking with respect to regional adaptation and new path-creation following an internal or external change in a regional economy. The latter draws on notions of resilience and the ability of a region to respond to disruptions by accepting changes and adapting to changes as a way of charting a new development path that may lead to operational and institutional changes from traditional practices (Martin & Sunley, 2015; Gong & Hassink, 2017). The notion of social resilience at the regional scale is particularly relevant and refers to the ability of the local society and institutions to respond to and absorb change (Peng et al., 2017).

Since a consistent body of scholarship theorising the concept of disruption is scant in geographic scholarship, the next section draws on works from multiple disciplines that used the concept, and we try to understand what it entails and how it can be used to analyse the historical and emerging small-town processes in New Zealand, and particularly the Otago-Southland regions in the South Island that we use as a case study. Following the literature review this chapter first explores the key disruptions that have impacted on rural demography, economy, and society in the study area over the last 200 years, but with a primary focus on recent decades. The second section moves on to detail evidence of change and discuss the implications of what we see, and we try to understand how immigrant-led multiculturalism is shaping – and to a greater extent complementing – the changes and disruptions in the regions.

7.2 Conceptualising Disruption for Understanding Small Town Mobilities

The concept of disruption had an early uptake in business and management disciplines and was used to denote new phenomena or developments that were not well-strategised but rather ‘undisciplined’. Often disruption was associated with forms of innovations (e.g. in agriculture) at their early stages, but when they took place, even at a very slow rate, and were able to have devastating impacts on the existing systems by challenging the traditional practices and status quo (Trabucchi et al., 2019; see also Downes & Nunes, 2014). More recently, disruption is a much-used term to explain the ongoing changes in the nature of work and employment as digital

technologies, artificial intelligence, and co-creation and multi-locational work sites are creating new spaces for work and encouraging the merging of work and non-work spaces as never before (Valenduc & Vendramin, 2017; Richardson, 2018). Furthermore, Covid-19 has accelerated digitally induced work and consumption choices at both personal and institutional levels. Scholars argue that disruptions come at a cost as they impose stress on the existing structures and practices, forcing the system to readjust and adapt to changes that society would not make in a normal situation (Trabucchi et al., 2019). For example, studies on societies' risks and responses to the effects of climate change have shown that climate change has caused disruption to human life in many predictable and unpredictable ways of which some are irreversible. However, there are instances that disruption like this may also positively impact communities if it provides opportunities for radical actions (Woodward, 2019) that were impossible otherwise, such as a new division of labour beyond the traditional gender-based ones following a disaster (Alam & Khalil, 2022).

Following Balnaves (2012, p. 132), disruptions can then be referred to as any new processes that 'are perceived simultaneously as creators of new opportunity and a threat to the traditional' ways of doing things that lead to the pursuit of new development (and adaptation) trajectories. Disruption can refer to either short-term or long-term drivers of change. It may have some resonance with the notion of 'crisis', which triggers changes – whether the outcome is good or bad for society. For example, New Orleans's residents, scattered from Hurricane Katrina, saw their public housing services go to private contractors and found themselves excluded [see Klein, 2007 for examples]. In a different context, in coastal Bangladesh, after major cyclones, husbands' out-migration to the city forced their non-migrant wives to adapt through various household innovations and achieve resilience (Alam & Khalil, 2022). So, with the conceptualisation of disruption as a combination of shocks and subsequent transformations triggered by them, the rest of this review section explores the mix of disruptions and continuity that characterise the global small-town landscape, and this will help us to understand the New Zealand-specific case studies in the latter half of the chapter.

Small towns, variously called rural centres and rural settlements, have globally experienced significant endogenous and exogenous disruptions and changes since the last century (Alam et al., 2016). Marsden (2003), in his seminal work that focused on European countries, showed three interrelated, overlapping, and competing dynamics that we may refer to as hard and soft disruptions that influenced the socio-spatial expressions of rural and small towns. The first set of hard disruptions referred to the new agro-industrial linkages through which rural areas became part of the complex global supply chain that relied on technologies to expand (Marsden et al., 2002; Renting et al., 2003), which then led to smart management of rural landscapes by linking farming and non-farming structures (Allanson et al., 1995). This was followed by the second wave of hard disruption, often framed as the post-productivist turn, which led to the recognition of the countryside as a development

space (Marsden, 1995, 1998). Combinedly these two hard, rather physically tangible, disruptions transformed rural spaces – on the one hand, rural areas were vertically assembled to thrive in their agro-food sector economy; on the other, horizontal linkages were developed to align rural areas with the non-farming processes of economic changes (Lowe et al., 1993; Murdoch, 2000). Both these processes were disruptive in the sense that they were seen to endanger local values, historical character, local communities, and their cultural features (Ruda, 1998) because of which conservation and economic development initiatives were integrated with rural land-use planning (Bowler et al., 2002; van Lier, 1998). The third disruption refers to ‘soft’ development initiatives, such as sustainable livelihoods, diversification of income, good governance, and new institutional arrangements without exceeding the rural carrying capacity (Dalal-Clayton et al., 2003; Gallent et al., 2008).

Shifts from a reliance on hard nature of productivist and more diversified post-productivist to soft development regimes were built on ‘new’ activities such as tourism, amenity-based migration, and leisure-based activities that have benefitted some areas, while others have struggled to survive the loss of economic activity and often population numbers (Knox & Meyer, 2009; Vaz et al., 2013). These transitions have led to a growing international literature on how small towns have negotiated new futures for themselves through self-reliance, place-based development initiatives, and by tapping into new economic opportunities and the potentials from having high levels of social capital (Besser, 2013; Wang et al., 2017; Westlund, 2017). In other places, population loss has been linked to the phenomenon of shrinking towns (Wolff & Wiechmann, 2017). In the case of New Zealand, as various studies show, there is strong evidence of the former, and while shrinking towns might exist it is often more a case of retarded development as populations age, young people leave, and economic opportunities narrow. It is in this context that international migrants might alter local demographic patterns and development prospects (Nel & Stevenson, 2014; Nel et al., 2019).

Further to the above-mentioned disruptions, small and rural towns globally have seen a range of exogenous disruptions due to increasing and, more so, fragmented and non-linear (Triandafylidou, 2022) international mobilities to them as places are now more connected due to globalisation, changes in skill requirements attracting new waves of the temporary and permanent workforce in the primary and secondary sectors, and also because of rising human mobilities due to disasters (e.g. war, religious persecutions, etc.) and climate change-related displacements. In places like England, ethnic migrants have disrupted the quintessential, very homogeneous and White countryside that was folded into constructions of Englishness, heritage, and cultural ‘norms’. These places are now being recognised with multicultural, multi-ethnic, transnational, and mobile social imaginaries (see Askins, 2009). For example, Tolia-Kelly’s (2006, 2007) work on the experiences of Asian migrant residents in northern England provides a nuanced reading of disruptions to the English countryside and seeks to:

...unravel multiple relationships embedded in *ethnic* [own emphasis] engagements with [the English countryside] and thus disrupt...the landscape as embodying a singular English sensibility, normally exclusionary of British multi-ethnic, translocal and mobile landscape values and sensibilities. (Tolia-Kelly, 2007, p. 329)

Rural and small towns in other places like in Australia, Canada, and the United States are also facing visible racial and ethnic diversity and 'cosmopolitanising' in the last three decades (Woods, 2018a, b, 2022) as these countries have carefully designed their immigration regimes to direct immigrants to remote and regional areas (Akbari & MacDonald, 2018; Hugo, 2008; Lavenex et al., 2016; Triandafylidou, 2017, 2022) and specific labour market sectors, like agriculture or dairy (for example, see Strauss & McGrath, 2017; McLaughlin & Weiler, 2016; Collins & Bayliss, 2020). On the receiving end, while these smaller centres view international migration as one way to grow the local population and economy – for which a range of actors and support systems are assembled to support newcomer communities – they often struggle to retain migrants because of their low infrastructure base and a lack of robust cultural policies to embrace these changes (Forbes-Mewett et al., 2021). In the context of this chapter, the new demographic mobilities and associated infrastructural and cultural challenges in the small town sectors can be referred to as disruptions. These disruptions are hybrid, both hard and soft, due to introduction of newcomers and various arrival infrastructures, which have locally led and regional level community development interventions have followed.

With the above conceptual understanding of disruption and its perceived and actual implications to rural and small towns, the chapter provides a brief history of the disruptions and their implications in New Zealand small towns, especially as signals of remutualisation in modern capitalist society.

7.3 Early Disruptions: Colonial Settlement, World War II, and 1980s Neoliberalism

The earliest inhabitants to New Zealand are thought to have arrived around 1000 years ago (Statistics New Zealand, 1990). From this, the early Māori culture formed, but as early Europeans arrived in New Zealand some 200 years ago and the Crown purchased land, it became increasingly difficult for Māori to participate in the economy once the country became a colony (McAloon, 2008). The wider economic fortunes of New Zealand changed after the discovery of gold, particularly in Otago, West Coast, and Coromandel. While gold mining was a short-lived boom for many small areas of the country, the long-term benefits of development helped established more sustainable economic activities (Easton, 2010). The growth of the agricultural industry across the late-1800s and large government investment into roads, train networks, and telecommunications helped convert these ex-mining communities into many of the present-day rural farming towns (Statistics New Zealand, 1990). Policies encouraging immigration from Britain were also

introduced to support the growth of these places. Across the early-1900s, the government continued to grow the public sector, investing heavily in agricultural technology and research to establish farm products as the country's key export.

Following the Great Depression in the 1930s, the government took control of the Reserve Bank and implemented wide-sweeping economic reforms, introducing a comprehensive social welfare system and establishing more core infrastructure. The outbreak of World War II and the Korean War brought substantial prosperity for New Zealand as demand for sheep, beef, and wool products soared. The government also introduced more settlement and assisted immigration policies post-World War II alongside more land purchases, with many of the veterans allocated into farming (McAloon, 2008). Across the 1950s and 1960s, rural New Zealand entered a period of substantial prosperity as farm products held high export prices and the government continued to invest in agricultural development, public works, and social services (Statistics New Zealand, 1990). A series of price shocks – the 1966 wool crash, the 1973 and 1979 oil crises – alongside the government's continued overspending on both a declining agricultural industry and the 'Think Big' infrastructural projects saw New Zealand face an economic crisis in the early 1980s. In response to this, across the 1980s, successive governments implemented a series of neoliberal policies to transform the country's monetary and fiscal systems (Wallace, 2014).

The neoliberal shift saw rural New Zealand face significant hardship across the 1980s and 1990s. The removal of agricultural subsidies, falling prices for sheep and wool, amalgamation of local government, and closure or privatisation of many local services saw many towns decline in population (Scrimgeour & Pasour, 1996; Wallace, 2014). Despite their decline, many places sought to diversify their local economies in response. For dairy farmers, the industry and demand for their products continued to grow across the 1990s. Additionally, the growth of the horticulture, viticulture, and tourism industries in New Zealand has helped support struggling rural economies (Keen, 2009).

7.4 Demographic Disruptions and New Mobilities

While neoliberal restructuring severely impacted the economy and forced many rural areas to restructure production, labour relations, and service provision, after 10 or so years and significant loss of employment, population, and the traditional forms of rural production, the agricultural sector started to adapt. The growth of high value dairy production, viticulture, and horticulture replaced the historic reliance on stock farming in many areas, but in so doing created new demands for skilled agricultural workforces that were increasingly difficult to meet locally in the context of rural depopulation and ageing. At a broader level, national skills shortages prompted a rethink on the part of government of their immigration policy which had, traditionally, focused on only allowing in immigrants from a narrow band of Western countries but could no longer meet the country's growing skills shortages.

In response, immigration policy evolved in the 1990s to help address labour force shortages through transitioning to a skills-based rather than an ethnic-based visa scheme. This led to a shift away from the traditional focus on anglophone countries to opening up opportunities in particular to migrants from the Pacific, Asia, and the Middle East (Bedford et al., 2000, 2002; Spoonley, 2014). The introduction of the 'skilled migration' visa in 2003 saw significant increase in the number of new, skilled migrants from a diverse range of countries. In 2006 the introduction of the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme, which provided short term visas to agricultural workers, helped facilitate new arrivals – in this case particularly from the Pacific to meet labour shortfall in the agriculture industries. As of 2022, up to a maximum of 19,000 seasonal workers can work in rural New Zealand and can stay up to seven to nine months (Immigration New Zealand, 2022).

While most of the skilled migrants locate in the larger urban centres (NZ Productivity Commission, 2021) as our research indicates, many smaller centres have also benefitted from the arrival of new migrants from a range of countries. Their arrival has often helped, in both numerical and skills terms, to fill gaps in rural New Zealand left by ageing and by the reduced numbers of young people. Numerous studies have examined the settlement experiences of new migrants in New Zealand and the impact they have had in rural areas, and in particular economic sectors such as the dairy industry (Rawlinson et al., 2013; Spoonley, 2014; Annabell & Nairn, 2019; Collins & Bayliss, 2020).

7.5 Evidence of Changes in Otago-Southland Regions

7.5.1 *The Study Area*

Our study focusses on the rural areas and small towns of the Otago and Southland regions in the South Island of New Zealand (see Fig. 7.1). This is an area with a current population of some 350,000 (Stats NZ 2022). Our focus is not on the largest urban centre of Dunedin (c.120,000 people) but rather on its hinterland, which includes numerous small and large towns, a productive agricultural base anchored on stock farming, dairy, viticulture, and horticultural and an increasing reliance on tourism.

Rural and regional New Zealand, after a period of reduced population growth from 1996 to 2006 and occasional population decline, started to recover demographically from 2006 onwards – a partial reason appearing to be in-migration of migrants, many from non-traditional source countries who have helped fill employment gaps, improve, or in some cases, at least stabilise local population levels and school rolls. Evidence from the study regions of Otago and Southland and selected towns within them certainly supports this argument.

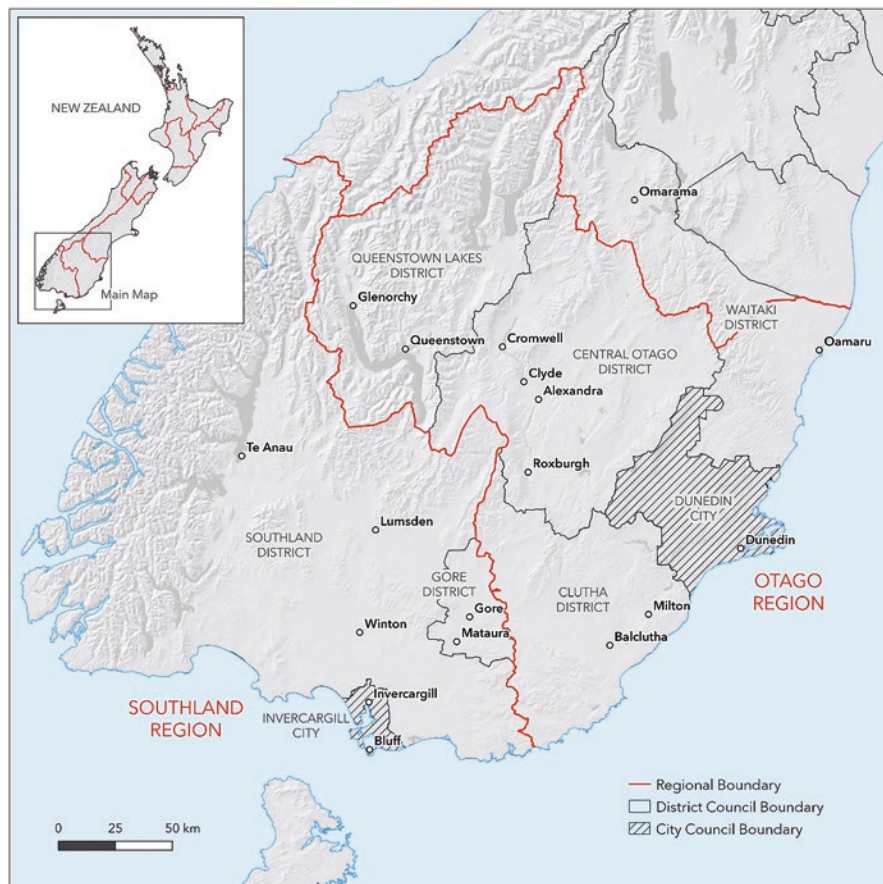


Fig. 7.1 Map of the Study Area

Table 7.1 Population Change in the Study Area, 1996–2018³

	1996	2006	% change 1996–06	2018	% change 2006–18
New Zealand	3,681,546	4,027,947	9.4%	4,699,755	16.7%
Clutha District	18,006	16,839	−6.5%	17,667	4.9%
Southland region	97,058	90,876	−6.4%	97,467	7.3%
Invercargill	53,208	50,325	−5.4%	54,204	7.7%

Source: Stats NZ Census

Table 7.1 indicates the relatively low rate of population growth in the country in 1996–2006 (9.4%), followed by a significantly higher growth rate of 16.7% from 2006 to 2018. In comparison, in the selected areas of the Otago (Clutha district

Table 7.2 The composition of the resident population (in %) in terms of ethnicity, 1996, 2018 and 2023 estimate⁵

	New Zealand			Southland region			Otago region		
	1996	2018	2022 Est.	1996	2018	2022 est.	1996	2018	2022 est.
European	71.7	62.4	61.5	85	76.5	79	87.1	86.9	80.6
Māori	14.5	14.8	15.4	11	14.9	15.6	6	8.7	8.6
Pacific	4.8	7.4	7.7	1.2	2.6	3	0.7	2.7	2.8
Asian	4.4	14	15.4	0.7	5.5	7	2.7	7.1	8
Other	4.6	1.4	–	3	1.5	–	3.5	3.2	–
Total pop	3.7 m	4.9 m	5.1 m	100,758	100,500	102,400	193,134	235,000	246,000

Source: Stats NZ: Census, 1996, 2018, 2022. NZ.Stat 2022

only) and Southland (and its main centre Invercargill) regions, where this study is based, all three depopulated in the first period but recovered slowly thereafter.

While we cannot argue direct causality between the arrival of new migrants from diverse backgrounds and the restoration of positive population growth and the filling of labour and skills gaps, the evidence, as discussed below, suggests that their impact has been significant. Table 7.2 indicates the degree to which New Zealand's population and that of the two study regions of Otago and Southland has become more ethnically diverse since the immigration policy changes took effect in the 1990s. The overall percentage of the national population of European origin fell some 10 percentage points in the period from 1996 to 2022, from 71.7% to 61.5%, with corresponding relative declines in the two study regions. While the Māori population remained relatively constant as a percentage, the Asian population percentage has more than tripled between 1996 and 2022 and the Pacific percentage has doubled both nationally and regionally.

At a local level, anecdotally, the key demographic role played by international migrants in the changing make-up of the population can be discerned. For example, in Southland's main centre of Invercargill, the population fell from 43,850 in 1996 to 40,551 in 2006. It has since recovered to 43,263 in 2018 (Statistics New Zealand, 2022). The growth in the total population by just under 3000 people is strikingly close to the increase in the Asian and MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African) population of 3954 in the same period. In parallel, in the Clutha District, the total population rose by some 900 people since 2006 that includes the growth in number of Pacific, Asian, and MELAA residents by 550 in the same period which must help to account for part of that growth.

At a regional level when one looks at actual numbers and not just percentages, evidence of change is apparent from Table 7.3. For example, between 1991 and 2018, the Asian population of Southland increased from 561 to 4809, while in Otago the same population tripled. Similar increases are identifiable for the MELAA groups in both regions. More modest increases are discernible for Pacific peoples.

Table 7.3 Regional level demographic change

	Southland Region						Otago Region					
	1991	1996	2001	2006	2013	2018	1991	1996	2001	2006	2013	2018
European	91,671	88,761	83,193	69,555	71,613	74,088	167,438	169,032	165,552	148,974	159,093	178,276
Māori	9129	10,638	10,038	10,422	11,607	5229	7410	10,905	10,542	12,273	4383	5619
Pacific	1566	1419	1278	1461	1917	1128	2235	2565	2646	3141	2043	3330
Asian	561	783	852	1149	2841	4809	3072	5370	5769	7779	8708	13,932
MELAA	54	87	111	144	315	438	312	552	768	1284	1749	3360
Other	6	18	12	13,878	2031	1233	15	27	45	26,343	3762	2616
Total	99,951	97,098	91,002	90,876	93,342	97,467	177,528	185,082	181,539	193,803	202,470	226,186

Source: Stats NZ

7.6 Immigrant Settlement Support and Adaptation

To account for increasing numbers of migrants, local and national government have implemented support systems to assist in migrant settlement – primarily in the form of advice and counselling. At a national level, schemes like the New Zealand Migrant Settlement and Integration Strategy have seen Immigration New Zealand take on a central role in migrant settlement policy and efforts across the country (Immigration New Zealand, 2016).

For both Otago and Southland, as populations have become more diverse, local government recognised the need to assist its migrant communities. This recognition is in response to both the requirement that local government promotes ‘wellbeing’ in the areas under its jurisdiction and to the sense of local duty and care that often exists in smaller centres. Councils across the regions have become accredited with the Welcoming Communities initiative, implementing settlement support within long-term plans and aiming to ‘mobilise and involve local residents in welcoming activities’ (Immigration New Zealand, 2017, p.3). Alternatively, councils managing their own initiatives – like the Clutha District Settlement Support – serve as another way for councils to remain involved. Non-governmental organisations such as the New Zealand Federation of Multicultural Councils and the Newcomers Network have also operated for many years and have branches nationally to support migrants locally. These groups often assist in the facilitation of events and other support for migrant communities across Otago and Southland. The growth in numbers has also seen a variety of faith- and ethnic-based groups become involved in settlement, with many churches serving as hubs for migrants. These groups often facilitate events to help migrants learn English, understand the New Zealand ‘way of life’, and provide a social network.

As immigrant proportions have grown in Otago and Southland, so too have their role in local economies. The Regional Seasonal Scheme (RSE scheme) – which allows a set number of agricultural workers, primarily from Pacific Island states, to gain short-term and often seasonal work visas – was crucial to the development of the horticulture and viticulture industries in Central Otago and elsewhere. Further changes like temporary work visas became important in places like Queenstown’s hospitality industry. In Southland, a lack of skilled workers in the dairy industry has seen many migrants employed, supporting the region’s plan to grow its population substantially by 2025. Additionally, some councils, such as the Waitaki District, have noted the role migrant diversity brings to their towns and stressed its importance in their district plan (Waitaki District Council, 2021).

While there are a range of positives noted about migrants in these communities, this has not always been reflected through the migrant experience. There have been several reports over the years of exploitation of migrant labourers, particularly those of the RSE or short-term work permits, with some facing underpayment, long hours, and poor working conditions (Otago Daily Times, 2014, 2016, 2019; Southland Daily Times, 2019). Additionally, for non-migrants, the rapid transformation of ethnic proportions in communities was not always met with ease. In Southland, for

example, racial tensions from locals to the new migrants were noted in the media as early as 2008 (Southland Daily Times, 2008) and received attention over the years. Despite this, in more recent years, Southland was noted to have become far more accepting of other ethnic groups, potentially because of the recognition of the key role new migrants have played in maintaining the employment base and school and church rolls (Southland Daily Times, 2020).

In more recent times, visas have become a core focus as the Covid-19 pandemic was a time of great uncertainty for many migrants. Border closures reduced the inflow of migrants for nearly 3 years (2020–2022) as the migrant workforce tap got ‘turned off’ (Harding, 2021). This caused significant stress in both primary and secondary industry sectors and small towns across the country as, for example, a lack of seasonal workers due to Covid-19-related border restrictions put the NZ\$ 9.5 billion of the country’s horticultural economy at risk in September 2020 (Flaws, 2020). Similar stresses are evident in hospitality and tourism sectors in places like Queenstown and Invercargill due to short supply of skilled workforce. On top, more than 1500 migrant workers in Southland who were on temporary work visas were in limbo as Immigration NZ stopped processing visa applications for skilled residency and (Steyl, 2021). However, later in 2021, a one-off resident visa for migrants already in New Zealand induced some certainty as employers could retain skilled staff (Williams, 2021).

7.7 Situating Immigrants in Small-Town Disruption Discourse

By tracing social, economic, and political processes, it is apparent that small towns in the Otago-Southland regions and, to some extent, in the whole of New Zealand have gone through endogenous and exogenous disruptions, starting with the 1900s uptake of the agricultural sector relying on the rural resource base and European settlement in this part of the world. This followed significant government investments in infrastructure to support the production base in the following five to six decades, based on which rural areas were able to make a solid productivist turn as these settlements presented themselves as ‘development space’ for the state. External factors like wars brought prosperity due to the rising demand for New Zealand-grown produce worldwide. Rural agrarian processes during this time were aligned with the non-agrarian processes of the economic development trajectories of the central government. Thus, in many ways, the fate of the national economic prosperity became intricately tied to the processes that were taking place in the rural production sectors as their contribution became much larger to the national economy. This paralleled successive immigrant waves in the early 1900, mainly from Britain. Later after World War II, some degree of diversity was added as other European people immigrated.

In parallel to these rather prolonged productivist and post-productivist processes in the countryside, in some areas sudden disruptions were also visible – for example, the boom-and-burst of the rural mining sectors in places or large-scale nationally significant infrastructure projects such as the Clyde dam. Although short-lived, these projects had long-term impacts through economic development and development of small-town infrastructures and services. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, a change in the government's neoliberal policy led to the erosion of government subsidies to rural sectors. The oil crisis, loss of trading ties with the UK, and the fall in the price of agricultural products in the global market all contributed to the rural decline. Privatisation of services and growing environmental awareness-led resistance to large-scale infrastructure projects in rural areas were disruptive. In the same period, exclusive sectors like viticulture and tourism partly helped survive the challenges by stabilising the rural economy.

It was in this context that new waves of immigrants from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and with particular skill sets were introduced to rural New Zealand through diversification of immigration policies (Spoonley & Bedford, 2008), and their arrival and subsequent settlement experiences can be understood through the lens of disruption. In fact, there are multiple layers of disruptions, some of which are less prevalent than others, and here we highlight some of them. We provided evidence in earlier sections that these immigrants have made many positive contributions to the small-town sectors as they fill in the skill gaps and keep running the engines of rural primary and secondary sectors. This means that the introduction of skilled immigrants to rural towns can be seen as a larger adaptation pathway for rural towns and regional areas to sustain their productivist and post-productivist dynamics by mitigating the stresses the areas face due to depopulation, ageing of original populations, loss of sector-specific productivities, and so on.

As evident in various small towns in Invercargill, Winton, Mataura, Gore, and Balclutha, immigrants from the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, China, India, and a handful of Pacific Islands have enrolled in the dairy, meat processing, hospitality, and care sectors (Alam et al., 2023). While migrant workers are 'indispensable to many farms', they also 'place stresses on rural communities and community services, e.g., schools' (Trafford & Tipples, 2012, p. 29); therefore, these mobilities do not go uncontested. Our interviews with multiple immigrants suggests that many have experienced varying degrees of racism and discrimination in the workplace and in daily life. While many migrants would not automatically want to disclose this reality, others, particularly in group interviews were more forthcoming about the low levels of racism they had experienced. Until recently, ethnically and racially diverse immigrants' presence was not really normalised within small-towns that hold the constructed notion of a homogeneous 'society' where rural populations are thought of as 'English speaking' and also 'English looking' (Lyons et al., 2011); therefore, racial stereotyping of immigrants in the workplace (Collins & Bayliss, 2020) and everyday settings is not uncommon, which leads to various degrees of selective exploitation of immigrants (Bonnett, 2019).

To a certain degree, often associated with direct employment contracts, one can detect that people from certain countries are tending to cluster in particular economic activities e.g. Pacific Islanders and Malay migrants in meat works and Filipino workers in the dairy industry. In these industries there is generally low level of contact with the wider community and hence there are reduced chances for racial tension. By contrast, one particular sector – that of social care – brings migrants into direct contact with older long-term residents and hence if there are social tensions, this is where they might arise. For example, despite the recognition of high efficiency of Filipino care workers globally (Guevarra, 2014), local evidence (from Invercargill) suggests that the White elderly populations initially were uneasy to take migrant workers' services in aged care homes. Ironically enough, the sector is now dominated by Filipino care workers, with many workers ascending to higher level managerial positions as they upskilled themselves in local institutions. These instances align with the concept of disruptions (Trabucchi et al., 2019) in the sense that immigrant enrolment into the small-town sectors, although it comes with benefits, occasionally has also started to challenge existing systems, practices, and the status quo. In response to these, we have also seen various employment sectors learning the treatment of immigrants in workplace settings, although some of these initiatives rely on racial profiling to understand ('good and bad') migrants who 'are fundamental to the operation of systems of migrant recruitment and selection, while also *informing* into the micro-politics of interactions between migrants and employers' (Collins & Bayliss, 2020, p. 10). The programmes are actively supported by government agencies and organisations (e.g. Great South in Invercargill).

Here we highlight how the immigrant mobilities have also caused soft disruptions (Marsden, 2003) beyond the productivist and post-productivist ones. As argued by Balnaves (2012), disruptions may happen at a slow rate, which is also relevant to international mobilities in rural New Zealand that took nearly two decades to become more visible beyond the gateway cities (Friesen, 2015). The rural areas are now visibly racially and culturally more diverse. Some scholars argue that labour migration to New Zealand, Canada, and Australia is fundamentally different to those historically occurring in countries in the Middle East, Singapore, or Korea in the sense that migrants aspire to become residents and settle in them. This recognition has led central and various local organisations to change their treatment of migrants as a 'foreign solution' (Trafford & Tipples, 2012) to rural sectors. As discussed earlier, since 2017 new support systems (e.g. Welcoming Communities, etc.) have been introduced to assist migrant settlements in small towns. This is a significant shift in the sense that there is a greater emphasis on community development through assembling support networks both horizontally and vertically, within territorial boundaries and nationwide to connect ministries, local governments, local and international NGOs, faith-based groups, and even migrants' own groups. There are also immigrant-led self-help groups that are now being enabled as part of these schemes with the view to enable settlement support for immigrants in small towns. This is a different way to approach the small-town sectors than the previous 'economic' and 'temporary' migrant focus. It can be argued that these regional areas are increasingly adopting soft interventions through community development

and wellbeing, which may be seen as a strategy that seeks to future-proof various rural sectors by attracting multi-ethnic immigrants with skill sets that are in demand and at the same time responding to the needs of these visible ethnic and racial diversity in small towns.

7.8 Concluding Remarks

The chapter has made a modest attempt to understand international migration to New Zealand’s small towns through the conceptual lens of disruption. In doing so, we have tried to understand how social and economic changes have played out in small towns, which already had various degrees of disruption and undertaken subsequent processes of adaptation to changes. Although within the scope of this chapter we did not systematically differentiate those observed disruptions, we still sense there are distinct hard and soft disruptions that complement each other and in them migrant mobility has been a critical element – most often through different waves of migration strategies encouraged in response to other local disruptions. Although the relationships are not linear, we have summarised the disruptions in Table 7.4. We observed a range of hard disruptions beginning with the Crown’s purchase of land, then mining, followed by the growth of agricultural industries, the establishment of rural farming towns, regional infrastructure projects, and so forth. These successive hard disruptions were often followed by soft disruptions, namely immigrant and settlement policies, later more systematic visa regimes, settlement support, and community development strategies in the most recent time. Future research should examine the correlations between specific hard and soft disruptions in their historical and spatial contexts.

Table 7.4 Hard and Soft disruptors in New Zealand’s small towns

Hard disruptors	Soft disruptors
Early stage	
Crown purchase of land Gold mining Growth of agricultural industries Establishment of rural farming towns Investment in agricultural technologies	Early European settlement policies Assisted immigration policies after the world war
Post 1970s	
‘Think big’ regional infrastructure projects High value agricultural products (e.g., viticulture)	Neoliberal regime Erosion of agricultural subsidy Rural depopulation Diversification of immigration policy
Post 1990s	
Growth of primary and secondary sectors Increasing presence of multi-cultural populations in rural areas COVID-19	Skill focused immigration policy Settlement support and community development strategies Residency visa reset during COVID-19

The earlier disruptions in the last century transformed the countryside from productivist regimes to post-productivist ones. In particular, immigrant mobilities in the last three decades since the diversification of immigration policies have not only helped strengthen the productivist and post-productivist regimes but support for the ethnically diverse migrants has also presented these rural and regional spaces as soft developmental spaces. This indicates that small rural towns are becoming hybrid spaces where international mobilities should no more be seen as a disruption, which is often imagined with many negative connotations. Instead, we show that international migration has a specific role to play in the changing rural landscapes, and in many ways these mobilities are adaptation solutions towards achieving resilient rural sectors. This line of thinking has significant practical implications regarding how rural and small towns should prepare with an appropriate infrastructure base to retain migrants for their future-proofing. Theoretically, having the lens of disruption helps rethink immigrants beyond the ‘precarious rural cosmopolitanism’ discourse that has gained momentum in recent geographical scholarship but is not free from criticism.

As a point of departure, we point out that small towns in the Southland and Otago regions will experience new waves of change due to the recent start of large-scale infrastructure projects (such as the establishment of data centres, new energy transition projects, etc.). This means regional areas will attract new waves of migrants, who would be different from the previously received low- to semi-skilled agricultural workforce. These new disruptions will coincide with the most recent reform of the Resource Management Act 1991, which committed to a stronger regional focus with a new requirement for long-term regional spatial planning across the nation (Ministry for the Environment, 2023). With these disruptions underway, how the new mobilities will unfold in small towns and what their interactions will be with the pre-existing primary and secondary sectors are unknown; that said, it is clear that these new disruptions will play a significant role in building New Zealand’s post-2020 small-town futures, and there is a need for future research to look into these changes.

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Chapter 8

Reflections on ‘Welcoming’ Second- and Third-Tier Cities in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States



Melissa Kelly 

8.1 Introduction

Most international migrants choose to settle in large urban metropolises (Collins, 2021). These cities, often referred to as ‘gateway’ or ‘first tier’ destinations, are typically thought to have the most opportunities and amenities to offer new arrivals (Jamal, 2018; Kelly & Nguyen, 2023). In recent years, however, second- and third-tier cities¹ in many parts of the world have shown an increasing interest in attracting international migrants (Gibson et al., 2017; Boese & Moran, 2021; Williamson, 2018). These cities view international migration as an opportunity to meet multiple goals, sometimes simultaneously. These include filling labour shortages, encouraging economic growth, and revitalising and repopulating cities in decline (Pottie-Sherman, 2020; Wulff et al., 2008). As they work to overcome negative stereotypes about small towns and rural areas, diversity and multiculturalism in themselves sometimes become attractive features that second- and third-tier cities wish to cultivate and market to the world (Forbes-Mewett et al., 2022).

The desire to attract international migrants to second- and third-tier cities has led, in some cases, to changes in immigration policy. In Canada and Australia, for example, special immigration programmes have been introduced to incentivise migrants to go to non-metropolitan areas (Wulff et al., 2008). In these and many

¹ Definitions of what constitutes ‘second’ and ‘third’ tier vary across countries. In Canada, second-tier cities generally have populations of 500,000–1,000,000, while third-tier cities have populations under 500,000 (Williams et al., 2015). The scale is very different in New Zealand, where cities tend to be much smaller. For the purposes of this paper, second- and third-tier refer to all cities that are not recognised as long-established gateways for international migrants (usually the largest cities in a given country or region).

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other countries, employer-led schemes to recruit sought-after labour have also been introduced. Complementary to immigration policies, however, has been the introduction of ‘welcoming’ initiatives (Tolley et al., 2012). Such initiatives have a range of diversity, multiculturalism, and intercultural objectives. While not always designed specifically to support incoming migrants, they are increasingly being promoted by communities that are eager to make themselves more attractive and open to those coming from abroad and to integrate and retain these individuals and their families when they come (Wulff et al., 2008). They are therefore seen as playing an important role in securing the success of regional immigration policies.

Welcoming initiatives tend to be celebrated by academics, governments, and community stakeholders (Boese & Moran, 2021). Indeed, they have had many positive impacts. They have helped cities of various sizes to improve their welcoming capacity and make themselves more open to multiculturalism and diversity (Gibson et al., 2017; Tolley et al., 2012). However, despite these successes, many communities are still grappling with how to more effectively welcome new arrivals, and some are wondering why their efforts have not translated into a higher level of migrant attraction and retention.

In this chapter, I draw on academic literature to critically reflect on the limitations of welcoming initiatives in Canada, Australia, the US, and New Zealand. The chapter begins with an overview of how the concept of welcoming is commonly understood and the factors researchers have identified that increase the welcoming capacity of cities. This is followed by an overview of welcoming initiatives in Canada, the US, Australia, and New Zealand. I then go on to argue that when welcoming is used as a means of attracting and retaining international migrants in second- and third-tier cities, success may be limited due to the economic reductionism by which welcoming initiatives are framed, systemic issues and inequalities increasingly faced in these cities, and inadequate attention to what is required for successful integration. The chapter concludes with ideas for future research that may help to improve the outcomes of welcoming initiatives and, more broadly, the sustainability and long-term success of regional immigration programs.

8.2 Understanding the Work of Welcoming

The term ‘welcoming’ is somewhat ambiguous and invites unpacking. To be ‘welcoming’ generally relates to a degree of openness or receptivity to newcomers. A desire to be welcoming may be reflected in political narratives and policies such as multicultural and intercultural policies that encourage countries, states/provinces, and communities to become more open to international migrants and to diversity more generally. Perhaps more commonly, however, welcoming is understood in terms of practical initiatives designed to facilitate the successful reception and social, economic, and civic integration of new arrivals (George et al., 2017). The

specific initiatives employed may vary from city to city but may include things like 'adapting existing services, implementing anti-racism and discrimination programs, or accommodating diverse linguistic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds' (Tolley et al., 2012).

Welcoming must be understood as multidimensional and multiscalar. Federal policies and national narratives around migration and diversity impact how both regional and municipal governments approach the welcoming of international migrants on the ground (Forbes-Mewett et al., 2022; Furuseth et al., 2015). Federal governments have increasingly devolved power to the local level, however, arguing that communities are best placed to integrate new arrivals (Wulff et al., 2008). Importantly, while they may receive varying degrees of support from federal and regional governments, in general communities must draw on their own resources and employ their own strategies, especially when it comes to doing the work of receiving and settling incoming migrants. In recent decades, there has therefore been a strong push across the four countries of study to define what it means to be a 'welcoming community' and to develop and promote one's community accordingly.

Communities may have differing capacities to welcome international migrants based on their history, existing level of ethnic and linguistic diversity, as well as socio-economic factors (Tolley et al., 2012). Researchers have nevertheless identified several things communities can do to increase their ability to welcome new arrivals. For example, Guo-Brennan and Guo-Brennan (2019, p. 40) have highlighted the importance of developing communication and 'a broad consensus' among local stakeholders such as governments, businesses, non-profits, and migrant communities. Some have argued that local government leadership is best placed to facilitate stakeholder coordination (Jamal, 2018; Tolley et al., 2012) and that strong local leadership can help cement local commitment, bring stakeholders together, and foster a local culture of diversity and inclusion.

While recognising that different communities may have different needs, priorities, and challenges, researchers (Gibson et al., 2017; Tolley et al., 2012) have also argued for the importance of developing frameworks that communities can use as they develop their welcoming capacity. Creating frameworks that outline what communities should be doing to achieve their goals may help them to strategise, plan, and troubleshoot. They may also help to inspire action and give communities a way to measure their ability to attract, settle, and retain incoming arrivals. Such frameworks may also be helpful for developing collaborations and the sharing of best practices within and between cities struggling with similar issues. Evidence-based knowledge on how to develop and implement welcoming initiatives has greatly impacted how welcoming communities are defined and the formal measures taken to create them. These strategies are typically executed at the local level but may have input from stakeholders at other levels of geographical scale, including federal and regional governments. Moreover, increasingly not only cities but also countries have shown an interest in learning from one another's experiences of welcoming.

8.3 Welcoming Initiatives in Four Countries

Canada, the US, Australia, and New Zealand are all liberal democratic regimes that have long histories of colonial settlement and European migration. Today, they share several common challenges including ageing populations, post-industrial transformations, and uneven development across their geographical territory. Within this broader context, these four countries stand out in their desire to attract and retain international migrants in second- and third-tier cities, especially those in parts of their respective countries that are losing population or struggling to succeed economically (Collins, 2021; Boese & Moran, 2021; Pottie-Sherman, 2020). Smaller centres across the four countries have become increasingly diverse in recent years, raising questions about how to best integrate established residents and incoming migrant populations. Despite their similarities, few researchers (Wulff et al., 2008) have considered international migration to second- and third-tier cities in these countries by way of a comparative lens.

In terms of policy, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand have all taken a ‘top-down’ approach (see Pottie-Sherman, this volume), using incentives to encourage international migrants to move directly to regional areas. Various immigration programmes and/or special employment visas have been introduced and tweaked over time, but their purpose is generally to encourage migrants to go to areas where they would not otherwise go and where their labour is particularly in demand. The ‘regionalisation’ of immigration in these countries must be seen in broader context. In all three of these countries, international migration has become increasingly defined by its economic imperative (Forbes-Mewett et al., 2022; Haugen, 2022; Simon-Kumar, 2019). Discourses and narratives about the economic and social benefits of multiculturalism have been present in these countries for decades. Nevertheless, it is only in recent years that the economic benefits of international migration have increasingly been stressed to justify the introduction of programmes and visas designed to boost populations outside of major urban centres. Welcoming initiatives, in this context, are viewed primarily as complementary to other policies.

In the US, place-specific visas are being considered, but at present are not in place, so instead a ‘bottom-up’ approach has been employed. Such an approach involves cities and regions competing internally for international migrants by marketing what they have to offer (Pottie-Sherman, this volume). Under the Trump Administration, an anti-migration platform and promises to build a wall polarised voters, making immigration seem like a ‘for’ or ‘against’ issue (Carpenter et al., 2023). Welcoming initiatives therefore became a way to both attract and retain new arrivals in a federal system that has failed to deliver on immigration reform (Rodriguez et al., 2018). Seeing the links between economic development and international migration, Fargo in North Dakota, for example, strived to become a ‘welcoming city’ with the guidance of Welcoming America and the ‘Gateways for Growth Challenge’. With an eye to promoting migrant entrepreneurship, the city assessed how it could better support recent arrivals from abroad. The community

improved interpretation services and promoted inclusivity, and generally tried to further a 'welcoming tone' in the city (Erickson, 2020).

Despite differences in their federal politics and systems of governance, there are striking similarities in terms of how communities in all four countries have recast the value of international migrants to their local economies and how they have attempted to welcome them more effectively. While there are a number of different welcoming initiatives at play in all four countries, some have become particularly popular and well-known in recent years.

Welcoming America, a non-profit organisation committed to promoting inclusive communities across the US, was established in 2009. It created a network of welcoming cities and counties with the aim of initiating a national dialogue on how to better integrate international migrants into local communities by way of plans, practices, and policies (McDaniel et al., 2019; Downs-Karkos, 2016). Welcoming America developed a common set of standards that could be used by communities eager to increase their welcoming capacity. Soon after Welcoming America was introduced in the US, Australia started its own organization, Welcoming Australia, and within it, Welcoming Cities, a network of Australian cities committed to fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion for all local residents. Welcoming Cities created their own set of standards for welcoming communities, with New Zealand following suit with the introduction of a similar program, Welcoming Communities, in 2017.

Canada has taken a slightly different approach by employing a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) model (Burr, 2011). Like the welcoming initiatives promoted by Welcoming America in the US, Welcoming Cities in Australia and Welcoming Communities in New Zealand, this model encourages a whole of community approach to welcoming new arrivals at the local level. While overseen by the federal government, LIPs are nevertheless place-specific and draw on the local resources available in immigrant-receiving communities. While Canada has long had a strong settlement sector that provides government-funded supports, LIPs were meant to help engage community stakeholders beyond the sector in the support of migrants (George et al., 2017). Running alongside the LIP initiative, is the Pathways to Prosperity Project, which provides relevant research by academics on welcoming communities, including evidence-based frameworks that communities can use to develop their welcoming capacities (Esses et al., 2010).

An increase in organisations being willing to sign up to certain standards, explore new models for intersectoral collaboration, or otherwise adopt welcoming strategies shows the commitment of communities to creating a better environment for new arrivals with diverse backgrounds. Some communities have also successfully boosted their populations by way of welcoming initiatives (Pottie-Sherman, this volume). Despite these successes, however, many communities continue to struggle to fully realise their welcoming objectives insofar as immigrants continue to face settlement and integration challenges in many of the areas that have implemented welcoming initiatives. Social divisions and inequalities persist, and some communities have even experienced tensions between those with migrant and non-migrant backgrounds. Moreover, many communities are not able to attract and integrate

international migrants to the degree that they would like and, across all four of the countries, new arrivals tend to eventually move from small to larger centres. While the reasons for this are multifaceted and complex, given the amount of time, effort, and resources put into welcoming initiatives and the continued reliance on these approaches as an economic development strategy, a more in-depth analysis of the limitations of welcoming approaches is needed.

8.4 The Limitations of Welcoming Efforts

While I do not wish to undermine the importance and value of welcoming initiatives, my goal with this chapter is to better understand the systemic and discursive factors that may be limiting the success of welcoming efforts, particularly those that are using welcoming initiatives in order to attract and retain international migrants in second- and third-tier cities. In what follows I will draw on existing studies to argue that the way welcoming initiatives are framed, systemic issues and inequalities within and between communities, and the so-far unaddressed challenges of migrant integration in many second- and third-tier cities limit what welcoming initiatives, as they are currently conceived, can achieve.

8.4.1 The Way Welcoming Initiatives Are Framed

Welcoming initiatives may be used in a variety of cities for different purposes. Some larger centres with established multicultural populations may implement welcoming initiatives to further social cohesion and promote diversity. When they are introduced in second and third-tier centres with the specific aim of furthering the attraction and retention of international migrants, however, the welcoming that is extended is based primarily on economic logic (Kelly, 2023). Smaller communities may believe that without migration, their communities will not be able to survive. In the face of ageing populations, out-migration to larger centres and the labour shortages that have occurred as a result, attracting people – and ideally the ‘right mix’ of people – is often seen as the solution (Norman, 2013). People who have the skillsets needed by local communities or an entrepreneurial drive may be deemed particularly desirable. Across all four countries, the increased desire to attract international migrants to second- and third-tier cities is rooted primarily in the economic needs and desires of local communities rather than a genuine desire to embrace diversity and inclusion.

Welcoming efforts have had some positive impacts. It has been noted that the economic argument for international migration has in some cases transformed the perspectives of stakeholders, making them more open to new arrivals from diverse backgrounds. Welcoming community initiatives have, for example, increasingly strived to engage employers, who are also encouraged to play an important role in

welcoming as they are among those who are thought to benefit most from regional migration projects (Hagar, 2021). While it may be true that such discourses have paved the way toward more positive views on migration and diversity, they may also oversimplify the needs and experiences of international migrants and run the risk of reducing them to economic actors.

Given the close linking of international migration with economic gain, it becomes difficult to disentangle the economic and social imperatives of welcoming efforts. As illustrated by both Pottie-Sherman and Boese (this volume), efforts to make new arrivals feel welcome are sometimes made only because international migrants are expected to contribute to a community's economic development. As Alam et al. illustrate in their contribution to this volume, welcoming initiatives were developed in New Zealand after patterns of economic migration were already established. In other words, the economic imperative of welcoming came first, while the desire to create harmonious, diverse communities emerged out of a realisation that 'foreign' labour was the solution to economic problems faced by a number of New Zealand's small towns.

In some cases, hierarchies of welcome have emerged that depict some international migrants – usually skilled immigrants – as more deserving than others. However, communities across the four countries under study have embraced not only those who are invited to relocate on account of their skills and expected contributions to national labour markets, but also undocumented migrants and refugees. In the US, efforts to counter exclusionary federal policies have emphasised the value that both refugees and undocumented migrants bring to local labour markets and the (economic) value they bring to local communities (Nelson & Hiemstra, 2008). Similarly, in Canada, refugees who have been particularly successful at contributing to local communities are promoted as examples of how valuable refugees can be to local economic development. Consequently, humanitarian and economic ambitions become blurred as refugees and undocumented individuals are also depicted as (potential) saviours for communities in decline. In reflecting on this issue, Haugen (2022) argues that in Canada, where private refugee sponsorship is a common undertaking in rural communities, there is a power imbalance, insofar as the refugees that are admitted tend to be quite dependent on their local sponsors for various types of supports. The lack of transportation and services in non-metropolitan areas contributes to this dependency. As a result, refugees may feel particularly indebted to the people who have brought them to the community and supported them as they settled in.

The economic onus put on international migrants to solve communities' local development problems and to contribute economically, socially, and culturally to second- and third-tier cities has led some migrants to feel that they must constantly perform and fulfil certain expectations. Based on my own research in rural communities in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, which has increasingly aimed to attract international labour in the face of ageing populations and out-migration from the region, refugees feel compelled to show what they are giving society (Kelly, 2023). As one focus group participant who had a refugee background and was now living in a small rural community put it:

I mean, as a new Canadian, we have to show others that [it is] okay, we are here to stand up for Canada. We are here in this country to work, to show the community... We have to show what's the positive things about us.

Thus despite positive discourses regarding communities' desire to attract and welcome international migrants, the reality is that some migrants feel compelled to prove their value and justify their presence; they may also feel that they should become self-reliant as quickly as possible and not make too many demands of the communities they move to. This is actually very unwelcoming, especially for those who are vulnerable or who may otherwise feel that they are unable to contribute in a way that is expected of them. It is therefore a challenge for communities to foster truly inclusive welcoming communities that pay satisfactory attention to human rights and equality, when it is most often economic interests that are placed at the fore.

8.4.2 Systemic Issues and Social Inequalities

While some second- and third-tier cities have been able to maintain strong economies and population numbers, many others are struggling as a result of systemic and structural changes. Walmsley and Kading (2018) argue that uneven development, economic restructuring, and reduced investment into some public services have had particularly negative impacts on smaller centres. The smaller populations of second- and third-tier cities as well as their tendency to have less diversified economies have made them particularly vulnerable to shifts in public and private investment and have often pitted them against one another in competition. While the specific challenges communities face vary (Norman, 2013), many have experienced increasing levels of social fragmentation and inequality in recent years (Walmsley & Kading, 2018).

Often the reasons communities need international migrants is because the conditions on offer in their communities are undesirable to locals, resulting in high levels of out-migration (Wilson, 2015; Forbes-Mewett et al., 2022). This may relate to the availability of desirable jobs but also the paucity of publicly funded transportation, housing, and services in most smaller centres. It is therefore not surprising that devising welcoming strategies is not enough to address these systemic challenges. International migrants may choose to leave for the same reasons as more established residents and may be similarly motivated to pursue better opportunities (Kelly, 2023).

A second challenge is that in contexts where established residents feel a sense of deprivation and loss (which is the case in many small and mid-sized cities experiencing economic restructuring and disinvestment), competition can occur between new arrivals and more established residents. A perception that resources (such as affordable housing and well-paying jobs) are scarce can lead to considerations around who does and does not deserve to access these resources (Stockemer & Halikiopoulou, 2022). It is not uncommon for political leaders and local employers

to see international migration as at least a partial solution to systemic challenges and be eager to welcome new arrivals, while local residents may be less convinced. Instead they may view incoming migrants as competition and may view efforts to welcome them as akin to giving them an advantage over more established residents (Erickson, 2020).

Of course, the notion that international migrants take scarce resources (such as jobs and housing) away from established residents is often based on a lack of evidence (Carpenter et al., 2023). New arrivals are frequently used as scapegoats in the absence of government efforts or capacity to address the very real problems of housing, infrastructure, and social inequality. Regardless, the outcome is that international migrants may receive a formal welcome from some facets of the community but not others. As Williamson (2018, pp. 236–236) writing from the US context notes.

'Efforts to make the case for immigration using facts and figures or generic praise for diversity are usually ineffective and, at least in these new destinations, appear counterproductive'.

Another reason established residents of second- and third-tier cities may feel threatened by international migrants relates to the often-unprecedented level of change their communities are undergoing. The sense of loss and competition that some established residents feel may relate not only to material resources, but also symbolic ones (Pastore & Ponzio, 2016). In particular, the rebranding of cities as 'diverse' and 'multicultural' that often accompanies efforts to attract international migrants for economic reasons is also not something that is necessarily embraced by all residents of smaller centres. Instead, residents may feel that not only is their economic position under threat, but so, too, is their social and cultural dominance. Across the four countries under study, most second- and third-tier cities have not had very much experience with diversity and may even regard themselves as having homogeneous populations. As Alam et al. (this volume) argue, in New Zealand's small towns migration, particularly from countries outside Europe, can be perceived by locals as a source of cultural disruption insofar as many of the smaller communities that receive international migrants imagine themselves to be 'English-speaking' and 'English-looking'. Hence, despite an official local culture of 'welcoming', many new arrivals may struggle to feel fully accepted as part of communities that perceive a threat to their identity or that are otherwise reluctant to embrace other cultures, religions, and ways of doing things.

As noted earlier, research has found that to be welcoming, a community must develop a shared vision and demonstrate a shared commitment to the welcoming of new arrivals by creating partnerships across sectors and (where appropriate) across different levels of government. This is difficult to do when insufficient efforts have been made to address other systemic issues and inequalities, adequately address community members' concerns about these, and help them adapt to the changes taking place in their local communities. Research conducted in larger cities has found that communities that are able to successfully adapt to socio-economic change and reinvent themselves in a way that is beneficial to all residents, are generally more open to migration and other forms of difference (Pastore & Ponzio, 2016).

Simply telling new arrivals that they are welcome and telling community members that they should be welcoming because it will benefit them in the longer term, may not be enough to achieve a positive outcome.

8.4.3 Challenges of Immigrant Integration

Finally, it cannot be assumed that adopting welcoming initiatives is sufficient to solve the real integration challenges that international migrants often experience in second- and third-tier cities. Instead, the extent to which welcoming initiatives foster true integration and help new arrivals overcome barriers to integration needs to be carefully considered.

Studies have drawn attention to both the possibilities and the challenges of migrant integration in second- and third-tier cities. Sanchez-Flores (2018) for example, questions the common perception that rural or smaller cities are inherently more ‘racist’ or less open than larger cities, and instead suggests that on the contrary, their smaller size and the close-knit community connections that they often have may be beneficial for new arrivals. Kelly and Nguyen (2023) similarly highlight several reasons why international migrants may find small and mid-sized cities easier to integrate into than large urban centres. These include, in many cases, the presence of more affordable housing, the lifestyle on offer for children, and the perceived friendliness of one’s neighbours.

It is, however, hard to deny that when compared to gateway cities, the integration of international migrants in second- and third-tier cities is more challenging in many respects. Larger centres may be able to offer recent arrivals things that second- and third-tier cities cannot, such as access to tailored settlement supports and in many cases a community of people who share their country of origin who can offer information, social networks, and resources in their first language (Praznik & Shields, 2018). In smaller centres, where there tends to be less funding for integration initiatives and fewer settlement supports available, new arrivals may be more dependent on the ad hoc efforts of the local community for successful integration (Haugen, 2022).

Communities often make great efforts to fill the gaps and meet migrants’ needs (Haugen, 2022; Crowley & Knepper, 2019; Gibson et al., 2017) by providing much needed supports such as language classes, offering services and information in different languages, facilitating access to healthcare, and ensuring that children access education. Yet migrants may still feel that this is not enough to successfully establish themselves in a place. While the community scale may be suitable for offering a warm reception, institutional preparedness is often low. Moreover, some problems that are federal or regional in scope may be experienced more acutely at the local level. Smaller labour markets, for example, may make it harder for international migrants to find a job aligned with their field of study or they may find it difficult to find suitable housing when facing fewer options in a small-scale housing market (Wulff et al., 2008).

Developing meaningful social connections is one of the most important things for new arrivals when they move to a new place. As Lund and Hira-Frisen (Lund & Hira-Frisen, 2013, p. 77) point out, belonging, and sense of community are also important factors. While international migrants who move to second- and third-tier cities may be met with a high degree of warmth, they may still struggle to integrate, socially and culturally (Kelly & Nguyen, 2023). Like their counterparts in larger cities, they may struggle with isolation and lack a strong sense of connection to those around them (George et al., 2017). As with other types of settlement challenges, however, there are additional factors that may make it harder for international migrants to build social connections in second- and third-tier cities. When speaking about the US Midwest, Fennelly (2008, p. 173) argues that ‘interactions between Euro-Americans and immigrants usually occur in formal settings where relationships are defined and circumscribed by role relations, such as manager-worker, owner-tenant, or teacher-student. These scripted roles establish individuals of European origins as the ones who hold the power and immigrants as those at the bottom of the social hierarchy’. Such asymmetries may also occur in larger centres but are more pronounced when there are fewer migrants and also fewer diasporic communities that can help to bring visibility and voice to those who are not originally from the local area.

Woods (2022), who has written extensively on the integration of international migrants in rural areas, suggests that often deliberate efforts at welcoming are frequently more about migrants adapting to their new environment than the other way around. Despite the eagerness with which Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the US attract migrants to smaller communities, it is typically assumed that migrants and their families should be doing the work of integration, while the work of welcoming is meant to accelerate this process. This contrasts with a more cosmopolitan ethic that embraces difference beyond the superficial and encourages adaptation on both sides (McDaniel et al., 2019). As a result, it is assumed that communities know what is best for new arrivals, in contrast to a more migrant-centred approach that would give due consideration to the needs, desires, and aspirations of migrants themselves (Woods, 2022).

While welcoming initiatives may help international migrants feel at ease in their new environment, they do not compensate for the real work of integration. Given the close links between migrant integration and retention, it is no surprise that welcoming efforts alone are not enough to lead to the successful integration and longer-term retention of migrants.

8.5 Concluding Remarks and Future Research Directions

The notion that communities should be ‘welcoming’ to international migrants has become a very popular and attractive one across liberal democracies that see migration as a key solution to address ageing populations and labour shortages, particularly in second- and third-tier cities. While the true meaning of ‘welcoming’

continues to be somewhat illusive, significant efforts have been made to define what communities can do to make themselves more amenable to international migrants, with the hope of successfully attracting and retaining them over time. The reliance on this approach must be understood within the broader context of the devolution of responsibility for migrant attraction and integration to the local level and the pervasive belief that problems experienced locally are best solved locally (Forbes-Mewett et al., 2022).

It is perhaps because of the notable appetite communities have for advice on what they can do to become more welcoming that most of the academic research in this area has focused on welcoming in terms of practice. Studies have emphasised the importance of fostering coordination between different stakeholders and levels of government, creating benchmarks and frameworks that communities can aspire to, and ways to educate the public to counter racism and discrimination. Significant steps have been taken to use this evidence to implement and institutionalise welcoming initiatives. With time, more and more communities have shown an interest in joining the welcoming movement and implementing welcoming initiatives of their own. This has yielded some positive outcomes in terms of rebranding cities and making them more open to multiculturalism and diversity, yet it has often been insufficient for meeting the outcomes communities are hoping for in terms of attracting, integrating, and retaining migrants.

In this chapter, I have argued that the success of welcoming initiatives employed by second- and third-tier cities in Canada, the US, Australia, and New Zealand have been limited for a number of reasons that, in many cases, are difficult for communities on their own to overcome. The economic focus on the utility of international migration advanced primarily (but not only) at the level of federal governments comes at the expense of building communities that put human rights and inclusivity at the forefront. Moreover, ongoing systemic challenges, including unaddressed inequalities around access to services and basic needs, reduce community buy-in for regional immigration projects and limit the kind of engagement in welcoming initiatives that successful welcoming efforts require. Finally, the challenges of integration are deeper than welcoming initiatives on their own can often address.

To bring a new understanding to welcoming that can help communities overcome the challenges they face, new directions in research are needed. More should be done to reveal the very real challenges communities face when they attempt to welcome international migrants and not only what local communities can do to alleviate these challenges, but also what can be done by governments and stakeholders at other levels of scale. Such an approach is aligned with calls to de-migratise migration research (Dahinden, 2016) by shifting the focus from migrants and what makes them different from non-migrants to the broader structural factors shaping the contexts in which welcoming, integration, and retention are taking place. This may require breaking free of the usual frames used to study migration and integration, and to instead employ theoretical concepts at the heart of social theory (Dahinden, 2016). It may also involve carrying out more interdisciplinary work that helps to further understanding of the various systems and structures impacting second- and third-tier cities.

While it is important to understand structural factors, it is also vital to study the agency of the international migrants that communities are ultimately trying to attract, integrate, and retain. The limitations of current welcoming initiatives have helped to reveal that these individuals are not simply passive actors who can be inserted into existing systems, but rather active decision-makers keen to realise their own ambitions. If their needs are not met in smaller centres, they may choose to leave. As Boese (2023) notes, overlooking migrants' needs and desires may lead to policy failure as migrants may not stay or contribute fully to a place if their own needs are not met. There is clearly a need for more research that centres the perspectives and experiences of migrants in second- and third-tier cities.

Finally, more comparative research may help to push knowledge on welcoming forward. The research on welcoming initiatives tends to be rooted in methodological nationalism (Amelina et al., 2012), and points to the importance of understanding the multiscale realities facing cities in individual nation-states. However, as this chapter has illustrated, trends such as the devolution of responsibility for welcoming initiatives to the local level and the tendency to promote narratives about the economic benefits of diversity are occurring across multiple countries, even if they have different governance systems. Furthermore, researchers have not considered the transnational dimensions of welcoming initiatives. The sharing of best practices through, for example, the Welcoming America movement, has shown how narratives, policies, and practices of welcoming travel across contexts. The contributions by Moghadam and Molho (this volume) similarly highlight how ideas and policies related to diversity and diversity management circulate transnationally. Adopting a comparative perspective therefore makes it possible to identify trends and patterns that might not be easily identifiable with a single-country focus.

Population ageing and an increasingly globalised competition for talent will likely lead to an ongoing demand for international migrants in many parts of the world. On the supply side, sustained refugee flows and widespread dislocation caused by climate change will only serve to increase the number of people forced to move and rebuild their homes. Learning how to build inclusive, multicultural communities that bring people together in a mutually beneficial way will therefore continue to be an important priority. Reflecting on what it means to truly 'welcome' people from diverse backgrounds is an important first step.

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Part III
Migration and Suburbanisation Processes

Chapter 9

Suburbanisation and Migrant Entrepreneurship in the United States



Cathy Yang Liu and Rory Renzy

9.1 Introduction

Suburbanisation or decentralisation of employment and population is a notable trend that has characterised the spatial evolution of metropolitan areas in the United States in the past few decades (Glaeser & Kahn, 2001; Kneebone, 2009; Hill & Brennan, 2005). Suburbs are defined as populated areas spreading outward from a central city's boundaries, often still within that city's corresponding metropolitan area. Sometimes termed as urban sprawl, such spatial transformation is often associated with the decline of central cities (Downs, 1999). Various explanations have been offered to understand these trends. People moved outward by 'voting with their feet' to pursue more spacious housing, better schools, and various amenities (Mieszkowski & Mills, 1993). Businesses were also attracted to suburban locations for their cheaper land cost, proximity to highway transportation, as well as access to workers and clients (Glaeser & Kahn, 2001). In 2000, about 65% of all residents and 60% of all jobs are now located in suburbs, and job growth was particularly strong in higher-income suburbs in the 1990s (Holzer & Stoll, 2007). Newer estimates from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2017 suggest that over 60% of Americans perceive their neighbourhoods as suburban (HUD User, 2022).

The same period witnessed the inflow and growth of immigrant populations in the US and their geographic dispersion from a few established immigrant gateways towards a wider range of metropolitan destinations (Singer, 2004) and rural areas. Within metropolitan areas, immigrants have also gradually suburbanised as part of a spatial assimilation trajectory or settled directly in suburban locations while bypassing a central city ethnic enclave step board altogether. Alongside the location

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choices of the native-born minority population, these demographic patterns have made US suburbs more diverse than ever before, becoming ‘melting-pot suburbs’ (Frey, 2011; Hardwick, 2008). These trends are especially pronounced over the last 30 years. More than half of all minority groups and immigrants now live in suburbs (Frey, 2022; Suro et al., 2011). The suburbanisation of diversity, however, coincides with the suburbanisation of poverty (Kneebone & Garr, 2010; Kneebone, 2017), raising the question of whether they are parallel or interrelated processes (Terbeck, 2021) and blurring the wealth dichotomy between central cities and suburbs. Re-urbanisation by wealthier individuals and families has forced poorer and vulnerable populations further away from central cities toward cheaper housing and other business opportunities.

Immigrants tend to have higher self-employment rates than comparable native-born populations driven by both necessity and opportunity motivations. Immigrant entrepreneurs play an important role in the US economy, creating jobs, generating revenues, and revitalising communities (Bowles & Colton, 2007; Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015). Traditionally, they are depicted as disadvantaged main street business owners who rely on family labour and operate on relatively small scales, serving a largely co-ethnic clientele in central city ethnic enclaves. Examples abound from Chinatown in New York to Little Havana in Miami (Portes & Zhou, 1992) on such business and community landscapes.

The intra-metropolitan geographic distribution of the ethnic and immigrant entrepreneurship is inevitably tied to both the changing characteristics of the businesses themselves and the larger contextual shifts of their communities. Recent years witnessed the expansion of immigrant entrepreneurs into more industries, including the high-tech sector (Saxenian, 2002; Liu et al., 2014) and higher engagement in transnational activities (Wang & Liu, 2015). Such industrial diversification and international linkages loosened their historical reliance on ethnic neighbourhoods and opened new opportunities for their locational choices. For some businesses, ethnic communities are still the sources of protected markets, financing, worker pool, and customer base (Zhou, 2004). As the minority and immigrant populations move to suburbs and create fertile grounds for ethnic business formation, suburban ethnic enclaves also emerge in this context (Logan et al., 2002). Thus, the evolving migrant entrepreneurship in the US is deeply embedded in the spatial and structural shifts within US metropolitan areas among all residents but especially among the minority and immigrant populations. Such business concentrations, interacted with the varying physical, economic, social, and institutional structures of the suburban areas, generate new dynamics and form distinctive entrepreneurial spaces from those in the cities.

Numerous terms were coined to capture the flourishing ethnic business scene in the suburbs, including ‘ethnoburbs’ in Los Angeles metropolitan area (Li, 1998) and ‘globurbia’ in Toronto metropolitan area (Zhuang & Chen, 2017). Beyond the case studies, a comprehensive analysis of the ‘suburban ethnic economy’ found that from 1990 to 2010, ethnic businesses suburbanised for both ethnic markets and the overall economy with around 17% of the variation in ethnic economy suburbanisation attributable to ethnic residential suburbanisation (Somashekhar, 2018). Using

business-level data, Liu and Jeong (2022) also documented the varying suburbanisation trends of Black-, Asian-, and Hispanic-owned businesses for 60 MSAs. Minority-owned businesses maintained strong growth in central cities despite the decentralisation trend, though suburban firms generally outperform their central city counterparts. Immigrant suburbanisation has been both a response to increasing job opportunities and other amenities outside of the city and a catalyst for new economic development (Liu & Painter, 2012). A vibrant and diverse business landscape has, in turn, become an attractive feature of certain suburban neighbourhoods, further feeding into the residential suburbanisation process of minority and immigrant populations. Beyond the interacting residential and business location choices, policy also plays a role. A growing number of cities, especially outside of the traditional immigrant gateways, have sought to take advantage of immigrants' entrepreneurial spirit and harness the economic benefits associated with business formation. These strategies range from information-hub related assistance centres to place-based approaches to address their gaps (Huang & Liu, 2019).

Atlanta serves as an interesting case study in point to portray the intersected dynamics of suburbanisation, immigration, and entrepreneurship in the US within a metropolitan area. The region experienced substantial population and employment growth over the last decades, which also expanded the geographic boundaries of the area. From the 1980s, immigrants' inflow to the south started to surge at a faster pace as the Latino population grew over 300% between 1980 and 2000 throughout the south, a phenomenon called 'Hispanic hypergrowth' (Singer & Suro, 2002). As an important city of the 'Latino New South' (Smith & Furueth, 2006) or 'Nuevo South' (Winders, 2011), Atlanta is considered a prominent emerging immigrant gateway destination that continues to attract immigrants (Singer, 2008). Between 1990 and 2008, the immigrant population grew by over 400% in the Atlanta MSA, with Asian immigrants and Hispanic immigrants registering growth at over 200% and 800%, respectively (Liu, 2012). By 2016, nearly 14% of the region's population was made up by immigrants (Wilson, 2020). These demographic changes happened in a polycentric metropolitan area (Lee, 2011) with shifting economic, social, and institutional dynamics, producing new spatial manifestations of migrant entrepreneurship. Buford Highway, a bustling multi-ethnic retail and residential corridor through western DeKalb County, displays unique traits that are different from traditional ethnic enclaves (Walcott, 2002). Given these contexts, it is not surprising that policy innovations emerge in the area. Welcoming America, a non-profit consortium of immigrant-inclusive welcoming cities and organisations, was headquartered near Atlanta, and efforts were put in place to move policies and strategies from local municipality level to a regional level through a 'one region' pilot programme (McDaniel et al., 2019). This initiative seeks to harmonise the policies adopted by individual participating cities by creating a general inclusive framework that guides local efforts.

In summary, the evolving geography of migrant entrepreneurship in the US is linked to the changing landscape of these businesses, the spatial patterns of their communities, and the policy environments. This chapter follows this framework by answering two related questions accordingly. First, what are the general scale,

growth, characteristics, and industrial composition of migrant and ethnic businesses? Second, what are the intra-metropolitan spatial transformation patterns of immigrant entrepreneurship in the US and how are they shaped by population suburbanisation? We also briefly discuss the local policy responses. Unlike much previous research that uses self-employment as a proxy for business ownership or includes all businesses (non-employer and employer), our focus is exclusively on employer firms. We use Asian- and Hispanic-owned firms for studying immigrant/ethnic entrepreneurship. Finally, we conduct a detailed case study of Atlanta to further illustrate polycentricity, the suburbanisation of businesses and population in a booming Sunbelt immigrant destination and the associated entrepreneurial dynamics and policy responses.

9.2 Migrant Entrepreneurship in the US

We utilise the US Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners (SBO) for 2012, Annual Survey of Entrepreneurs (ASE) for 2014 through 2016, and Annual Business Survey (ABS) for 2017 through 2019 to trace the growth of ethnic businesses. Each of these surveys provides data on ownership and economic indicators, which can then be aggregated at various geographic levels. The representative survey samples come from the universe of all non-farm businesses that file tax forms with the Internal Revenue Service. We focus solely on employer firms in this study, as these Census surveys do not include information on non-employer firms past 2012. This move narrows upon existing literature and has the advantage of focusing exclusively on firms with at least one paid employee and larger economic impact (Kerr & Kerr, 2020; Liu & Jeong, 2022; McManus, 2016). Employer firms represent about 20% of all firms in the US (Liu & Jeong, 2022).

The Census Bureau defines ownership as having more than 50% of the stock or equity of a business. Public SBO data on the nativity status of majority owners is not aggregated at any geographic level lower than the entire country in 2012, and also cannot be linked to our economic indicators of interest in either survey year. Therefore, we utilise majority-Asian and majority-Hispanic-owned firms to operationalise the concept of migrant entrepreneurship. While not a perfect fit, these groups make up a good portion of immigrant-owned firms. In 2017, ABS data show that Asian- and Hispanic-owned firms made up over 62% of employer firms that were majority-owned by an entrepreneur born outside of the US. Furthermore, just over half of all Hispanic-owned employer firms had owners who were born outside of the US; 84% of Asian-owned employer firms had migrant owners. Therefore, this specification allows us to explore implications for both the immigrant and ethnic entrepreneurship spaces. Our performance indicators include firms' number of employees, annual payroll (in thousands of dollars), and annual receipts/sales (in thousands of dollars). Since data are aggregated, we cannot utilise individual firm-level economic indicators or follow specific firms over time. However, averages for each specific ownership group are calculated.

Table 9.1 displays the number of Asian-owned, Hispanic-owned, and total employer firms from 2012 to 2019 at the national level, as well as ethnic owner groups' share of the total. Asian- and Hispanic-owned employer firms grew at a much faster rate (each at about 20%) during that period than did all employer firms, at just over 6%. Additionally, Asian- and Hispanic-owned employer firms grew in their share of all firms from 2012 to 2019 (from 8.87% to 10.07% and from 5.3% to 6.01%, respectively). The average business performance indicators in 2012 and 2019 for employer firms fall into three subgroups, presented in Table 9.2: White-owned, Asian-owned, and Hispanic-owned. It should be noted that firms can fall into a racial group *and* the Hispanic ethnicity group since they are not mutually exclusive. Asian- and Hispanic-owned employer firms have lower mean employment bases, annual payrolls, and annual sales/receipts than their White-owned counterparts at the national level. White-owned employer firms employ nearly three to four more workers than Asian- and Hispanic-owned firms on average, at about 12 against between eight and nine in 2019. Similarly, White-owned firms' average annual payrolls and sales/receipts are at or nearly double that of the averages for the minority groups in both years. However, all subgroups saw growth in their average performance indicators between 2012 and 2019. Asian-owned firms' average annual payroll grew the most of any indicator (39%), while Hispanic-owned firms' average annual sales/receipts grew by the smallest amount (just over 1%). These numbers show the lingering performance disparity between minority-owned and White-owned firms even when we zoom in to the more successful employer firms. It is, however, worth noting the fast-growing trajectory of average Asian employer firms both in terms of number of employees and payroll.

Table 9.3 displays the industry breakdown separately for White-, Asian-, and Hispanic-owned employer firms in 2019. The rows indicate the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) groups that make up the greatest ten shares of *all* employer firms in the country. Each cell represents the percentage of employer firms in a given demographic ownership group that belonged to a particular industry; the top five for each group are highlighted in grey. For example, 14.95% of White-owned employer firms in 2019 were classified as belonging to 'professional, technical, and scientific services'. Nearly a quarter of Asian-owned firms are in the 'accommodation and food services' category, while Hispanic-owned construction firms led that demographic category at 16.39%. A significant share of Asian-owned firms (18.13%) is in 'retail trade' as well. There are overlaps between the three demographic groups: 'professional, technical, and scientific services', 'health care and social assistance', and 'accommodation and food services' appear across each top five concentration. In general, the types of work that Asian- and Hispanic-owned employer firms engage in are considerably different from their broader White-owned counterparts. While both minority groups have made ways into professional services as well as healthcare and other services, main street businesses like accommodation and food services remain a key staple in their industrial portfolio. Still, these trends, along with those presented in Tables 9.1 and 9.2, suggest the strong growth of immigrant entrepreneurship in both number and scale, as well as the expanded line of industries they are represented in. These emerging characteristics

Table 9.1 Number of Employer Firms in the U.S., 2012 to 2019

	2012	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2012–2019% Growth
Asian-owned	481,026	506,595	530,406	555,262	555,638	577,835	581,200	20.83
Share %	8.87	9.32	9.59	9.91	9.67	10.10	10.07	
Hispanic-owned	287,501	298,563	312,738	337,533	322,076	331,625	346,836	20.64
Share %	5.30	5.49	5.65	6.03	5.61	5.80	6.01	
All businesses	5,424,458	5,437,782	5,531,169	5,601,758	5,744,643	5,722,142	5,771,292	6.39

Source: 2012 SBO, 2014–2016 ASE, and 2017–2019 ABS

Table 9.2 Employer Firm Performance Indicators, 2012 & 2019

		2012	2019	Growth %
White-owned	Employment	11.39	11.97	5.01
	Payroll (in 1000s)	434.72	564.11	29.76
	Receipts (in 1000s)	2276.81	2900.32	27.39
Asian-owned	Employment	7.43	8.51	14.59
	Payroll (in 1000s)	229.81	319.71	39.12
	Receipts (in 1000s)	1304.57	1504.85	15.35
Hispanic-owned	Employment	8.10	8.45	4.28
	Payroll (in 1000s)	246.45	312.41	26.76
	Receipts (in 1000s)	1321.72	1335.73	1.06

Source: 2012 SBO and 2019 ABS

Table 9.3 Industry Breakdown for Employer Firms in the U.S., 2019

	White-owned	Asian-owned	Hispanic-owned
Top 10 Industries (all, descending order)			
Professional, scientific, and technical services	14.95	11.21	11.61
Construction	14.46	2.88	16.39
Health care and social assistance	9.63	13.69	9.55
Retail trade	10.53	18.13	8.76
Accommodation and food services	7.93	23.75	12.94
Other services (except public administration)	6.66	10.31	6.98
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	6.46	2.20	9.12
Real estate and rental and leasing	6.06	3.20	3.80
Wholesale trade	5.06	5.86	4.52
Manufacturing	4.58	1.89	3.27

Source: 2019 ABS

Notes: highlighted ones are the top 5

deviate from the traditional small mom-and-pop city storefront stereotype and open up the spatial location possibilities of ethnic businesses – which has implications for their geographic patterns within metropolitan areas.

9.3 Suburbanisation of Migrant Enterprises in Selected Metropolitan Areas

Since the 2012 and 2017 surveys correspond with the five-year Economic Census, we further obtain detailed data at geographic levels below the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) level. This allows for comparison of the number of firms in the central city of an MSA and those in the surrounding suburbs to examine their suburbanisation trends. We create data for ‘suburbs’ by taking the aggregate

employer firm totals for each owner groups in each MSA and subtracting the respective figures from that MSA's central city. This allows us to compare the relative economic impact of central city firms against their suburban counterparts. It should be noted that the Census Bureau shifts MSA boundaries when population distributions change, usually adding or reducing a single suburban/exurban county. Therefore, some MSAs contain slightly different constituent counties in 2017 compared to 2012. Regardless, city boundaries are stable across time. We compiled two separate lists of ten MSAs with the largest absolute number of Asian-owned (Table 9.4) and Hispanic-owned (Table 9.5) firms in survey year 2017; eight MSAs appear on both lists and all of the matches represent highly populated and diverse metropolitan areas.

Before proceeding to a discussion of changes in suburbanisation, we feel the need to make a general note on geography. While the MSAs in this sample represent diverse metropolitan areas in the US, the scope of their central city boundaries varies dramatically. For example, the city of Miami is small geographically when compared to the rest of its MSA, whereas the city of Houston has a large sprawling boundary that makes up much of its MSA. At the same time, a city can have a large city boundary but an even larger MSA boundary, as is the case with Atlanta. Even further, traditional immigrant gateways like New York City may exhibit different patterns based on their pre-existing density (Suro et al., 2011). Therefore, the reference points in 2012 differ among MSAs based on context. Even so, we can assess the relative change in spatial concentration of Asian- and Hispanic-owned firms from 2012 to 2017 and parse out interesting patterns.

The MSAs in Tables 9.4 and 9.5 are in descending order based on growth in the number of suburban firms from 2012 to 2017. As seen in both tables, the vast majority of MSAs, across both the Asian and Hispanic groups, saw increases in the suburban concentration of employer firms. This is especially clear in the Sunbelt, the warm region south of the 36th parallel booming with population and job growth (Olin, 2020). For example, the San Antonio MSA saw the greatest increase in suburbanisation of Hispanic-owned employer firms, at 6.67 percentage point growth, while Houston saw the greatest increase in this measure for Asian-owned employer firms at 4.93 percentage point growth. The former is especially interesting, given San Antonio's location of Hispanic population and firm concentration. Only the Los Angeles, New York, and San Jose MSAs saw a decline in the suburban concentration of Asian-owned employer firms (at very small - 0.52, 0.25, and 1.74 percentage point changes, respectively), while only the Riverside and Washington D.C. MSAs saw declines for Hispanic-owned employer firms.

Additionally, the relative growth rates between Asian- and Hispanic-owned employed firms in the central city and those in the suburbs are noteworthy. From Table 9.4, Asian-owned employer firms in a majority of suburbs dramatically outpaced growth in their respective central cities. For example, the number of Asian firms in the city of Atlanta decreased by 5.26% during the five-year period, but the number in the suburbs increased by 27.12%. The city of Philadelphia saw virtually no change in the number of Asian firms between 2012 and 2017, while the number of firms in its suburbs grew by over 21%. In total, the number of suburban Asian

Table 9.4 Top 10 MSAs Asian-owned Employer Firms, 2012 & 2017

	City			Suburbs			% in Suburbs			Difference
	2012	2017	% Growth	2012	2017	% Growth	2012	2017	2017	
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	2891	3076	6.4	10,067	13,426	33.37	77.69	81.36	3.67	
Houston-the woodlands-sugar land, TX	8905	9474	6.39	6668	8658	29.84	42.82	47.75	4.93	
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	1198	1135	-5.26	10,615	13,494	27.12	89.86	92.24	2.38	
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD ^a	3461	3454	-0.2	6531	7945	21.65	65.36	69.70	4.34	
San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA ^a	6444	7242	12.38	16,450	19,267	17.12	71.85	72.68	0.83	
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI ^a	5069	5499	8.48	12,070	14,046	16.37	70.42	71.86	1.44	
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	1811	1719	-5.08	15,729	17,998	14.43	89.68	91.28	1.61	
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	41,226	47,141	14.35	33,227	37,612	13.2	44.63	44.38	-0.25	
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA ^a	16,775	19,422	15.78	48,275	54,415	12.72	74.21	73.70	-0.52	
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA ^a	5025	5941	18.23	6539	7204	10.17	56.55	54.80	-1.74	
10 MSA total	92,805	104,103	12.17	166,171	194,065	16.79	64.16	65.09	0.92	

Source: 2012 SBO and 2017 ABS

^aStable MSA boundaries from 2012 to 2017

Table 9.5 Top 10 MSAs Hispanic-owned Employer Firms, 2012 & 2017

	City			Suburbs			% in Suburbs			Difference
	2012	2017	% Growth	2012	2017	% Growth	2012	2017	2017	
San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX ^a	4938	4749	-3.83	1320	1825	38.26	21.09	27.76	6.67	
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL ^a	799	1044	30.66	3825	5146	34.54	82.72	83.13	0.41	
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI ^b	4449	4393	-1.26	6727	8802	30.85	60.19	66.71	6.52	
Houston-the woodlands-sugar land, TX	5131	5673	10.56	4003	4889	22.13	43.83	46.29	2.46	
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	455	594	30.55	5215	6189	18.68	91.98	91.24	-0.73	
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	1985	2190	10.33	4820	5671	17.66	70.83	72.14	1.31	
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA ^a	512	795	55.27	6763	7884	16.58	92.96	90.84	-2.12	
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	13,377	12,215	-8.69	15,289	17,545	14.76	53.33	58.95	5.62	
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA ^a	8014	8005	-0.11	19,023	20,197	6.17	70.36	71.62	1.26	
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL ^a	7055	6874	-2.57	36,704	38,886	5.94	83.88	84.98	1.10	
10 MSA total	46,715	46,532	-0.39	103,689	117,034	12.87	68.94	71.55	2.61	

Source: 2012 SBO and 2017 ABS

^aStable MSA boundaries from 2012 to 2017

firms grew faster than the number of central city Asian firms in seven of the ten MSAs; the only exceptions are the aforementioned Los Angeles, New York City, and San Jose MSAs. Table 9.5 mirrors this trend: eight of the MSAs saw higher growth for Hispanic-owned employer firms in suburbs than their central cities. The two exceptions, the Riverside and Washington D.C. MSAs, have the highest concentrations of Hispanic firms in their suburbs, at over 90% each. Similar to Philadelphia in Table 9.3, the city of Chicago experienced a small decline in the number of firms (-1.26%), but its suburbs boomed between 2012 and 2017 ($+30.85\%$). The other traditional gateway on the list, New York City, has about an even distribution of Hispanic firms within its bounds and its (mostly dense New Jersey) suburbs, but the city saw an 8.69% decline in firms while the suburbs grew by 14.76% .

Tables 9.3 and 9.4 are indicative of a larger pattern: Asian- and Hispanic-owned employer firms mirror broader economic trends and experience varying degrees of suburbanisation (Liu & Jeong, 2022). Of the MSAs presented, emerging Sunbelt gateways seem to have greater migrant entrepreneurship presence and growth in suburban areas, while more established gateways still see reasonable presence of these businesses within the central cities, likely due to their historical settlement pattern in those areas. The ordering of MSAs in the two tables makes this even clearer, as Sunbelt cities appear to be leading the way in suburban business growth. Not only are firms (re)locating to areas further away from central cities in this region of the country, but new markets are likely simultaneously emerging out of necessity as population growth in these areas booms (Somashekhkar, 2018; Jones, 2008). Therefore, we should think of suburbanisation and immigrant/minority entrepreneurship as iterative processes instead of separate and linear. The commonly held image of residential suburbs as solely White is misguided under present data, and this seems to hold for business growth as well (Strait & Gong, 2015; Kahn, 2000).

9.4 Atlanta as a Case Study

We provide a case study on the Atlanta MSA in our examination of the interaction between suburbanisation and migrant entrepreneurship as a Sunbelt city. It is an intriguing area of study with regards to suburban sprawl and immigrant populations. Additionally, local policy supports have been developed in localities within the area that have experienced substantive migrant- and minority-owned business development. Figure 9.1 below maps the city of Atlanta and the five core counties in its MSA. The city of Atlanta has 90% of its land in Fulton County, with the remaining 10% in DeKalb County.

Table 9.6 and Fig. 9.2 use SBO data and ABS data to trace the change in Asian- and Hispanic-owned employer firms for the city of Atlanta and these five counties. Cobb County is missing data for Hispanic-owned firms in 2017 and is therefore not included in the table. Additionally, we utilise one-year American Community Survey estimates to track the growth in Asian, Hispanic, and foreign-born

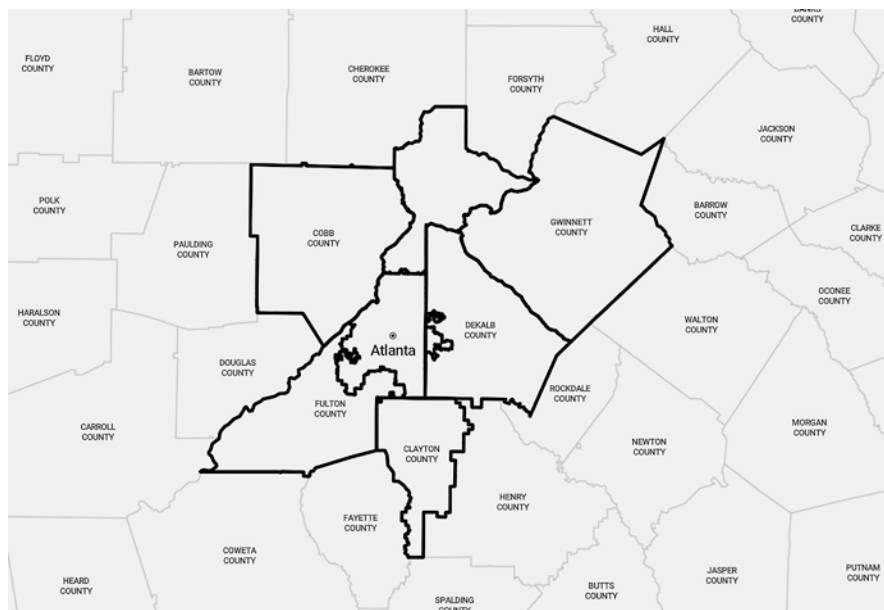


Fig. 9.1 Core counties of the Atlanta MSA, from Social Explorer

populations in each of these six geographies. The share each of these groups comprise in a given geography's total population is also provided.

Across all categories, the city of Atlanta is the least diverse area in the core region. The number of Hispanic-owned firms in the city grew by nearly 50% between the 2 years (most of Fulton County's change can likely be attributed to this difference), while the Hispanic residential population shrank by over 10%. Counting DeKalb as a mostly suburban county, the clear trend is growth across-the-board in Atlanta's suburbs. Out of all the firms and population figures, only DeKalb's Hispanic population and Clayton's foreign-born population declined in this five-year period. The number of Hispanic-owned employer firms in Gwinnett County grew by a striking 64.94% in this timeframe, and sustained growth rates at over 20% in all other localities as well. Asian-owned employer businesses declined in the city of Atlanta but grew in all surrounding counties, especially northern counties, at rates ranging from 15.77% in Cobb County to 28.9% in Gwinnett County.

The Atlanta MSA has long been an example of polycentric urban sprawl. It is now comprised of 29 counties and has a number of population centres supporting the central city's core. As the metropolitan area has expanded, poverty has also followed to the suburbs as poorer populations have been forced to move further out to access jobs and affordable housing (Lee, 2011). Additionally, as early as four decades ago, businesses and professional services' concentration dramatically decreased in the central city (Gong & Wheeler, 2002). This move accompanies increasing 'self-selective' Asian and Hispanic residential movement into suburban counties, which supports the idea of growing ethnic networks within local

Table 9.6 Atlanta MSA: City and Counties Firms and Performance Indicators, 2012 & 2017

		2012	% of Total	2017	% of Total	% Growth
Atlanta (city)	Asian-owned firms	1198	8.64	1135	7.99	-5.26
	Hispanic-owned firms	207	1.49	307	2.16	48.31
	Asian population	19,465	4.39	24,137	4.96	24.00
	Hispanic population	23,322	5.26	20,878	4.29	-10.48
	Foreign-born population	36,115	8.14	36,281	7.46	0.46
Fulton County	Asian-owned firms	2679	10.17	3129	10.91	16.80
	Hispanic-owned firms	512	1.94	677	2.36	32.23
	Asian population	65,985	6.75	85,645	8.22	29.79
	Hispanic population	76,997	7.87	76,270	7.32	-0.94
	Foreign-born population	126,196	12.91	142,718	13.70	13.09
DeKalb County	Asian-owned firms	1827	14.10	2180	15.97	19.32
	Hispanic-owned firms	345	2.66	430	3.15	24.64
	Asian population	41,419	5.86	54,714	7.26	32.10
	Hispanic population	67,461	9.54	65,070	8.64	-3.54
	Foreign-born population	113,382	16.04	121,565	16.14	7.22
Clayton County	Asian-owned firms	586	18.50	614	20.84	4.78
	Hispanic-owned firms	114	3.60	140	4.75	22.81
	Asian population	14,550	5.47	16,066	5.63	10.42
	Hispanic population	35,546	13.37	37,927	13.30	6.70
	Foreign-born population	39,697	14.93	34,203	11.99	-13.84
Cobb County	Asian-owned firms	1370	8.84	1586	9.29	15.77
	Asian population	37,453	5.29	47,958	6.35	28.05
	Hispanic population	89,409	12.64	98,915	13.09	10.63
	Foreign-born population	107,430	15.19	126,475	16.73	17.73
Gwinnett County	Asian-owned firms	3086	17.38	3978	20.00	28.90
	Hispanic-owned firms	773	4.35	1275	6.41	64.94
	Asian population	99,172	11.78	118,668	12.90	19.66
	Hispanic population	174,315	20.70	195,111	21.20	11.93
	Foreign-born population	203,275	24.14	232,817	25.30	14.53

Source: 2012 SBO and 2017 ABS; 2012 and 2017 ACS 1 -Year Estimates

communities (Strait & Gong, 2015). As a notable example, Buford Highway is a long stretch of road running through the upper northeast portion of DeKalb County and the bottom of Gwinnett County, the region’s most diverse geography. The thoroughfare is surrounded on both sides by vibrant immigrant businesses (Walcott, 2002) and intersects Interstate 285 (known as the region’s ‘Perimeter’), about 15 miles northeast of downtown Atlanta. Buford Highway’s economic activity is

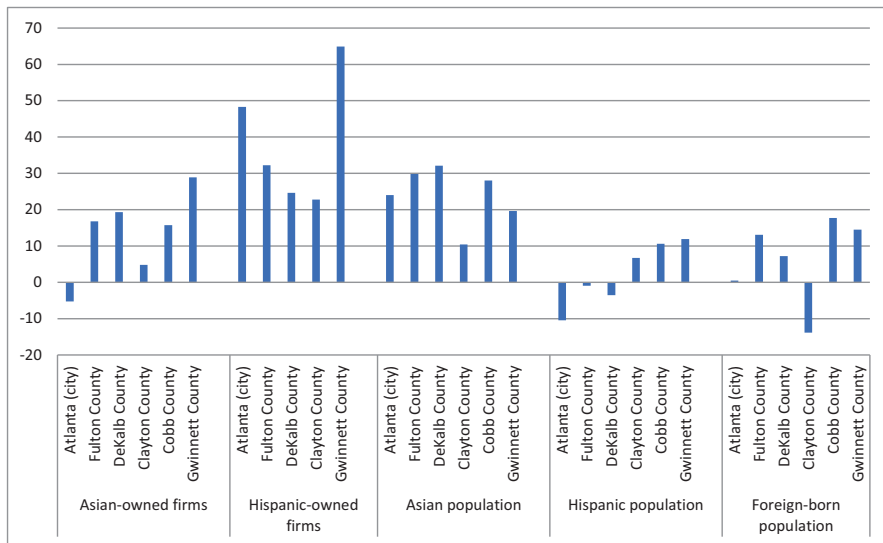


Fig. 9.2 Atlanta MSA: City and Counties – % Growth (2012 to 2017)

inherently local, as most of its community members live near the ‘mom-and-pop’ businesses they patron, own, or work at. In fact, as noted by Walcott (2002) and Strait and Gong (2015), the Buford Highway suburbs were distinctly made by Asian workers that migrated to the US and worked in construction teams in the area and Hispanic families searching for open land and a new life. Such residential mobility decreases overall measures of Black-White segregation in the region, but it also points to a need for specialised local policies to support migrant populations that may lack access to traditional funding sources for businesses or do not speak English or both (Ambinakudige et al., 2017; Altaher et al., 2019). However, another pressing trend for consideration is increasing gentrification, both within inner ring suburbs and Atlanta itself. New urban developments outside of the city and density-oriented developments along the city’s BeltLine corridor have rapidly increased property values and shifted demographics of nearby residents to higher-income and White suburbs (Immergluck & Balan, 2018; Markley, 2018). This has important implications for immigrants, especially those who are lower income and may not be able to start businesses immediately after moving.

Heavy rail public transit in Atlanta, through the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, only reaches the southernmost parts of this international corridor, making business activity relatively isolated to local ethnic communities and other regional residents that travel by car (Wilkins, 2021; Spieler, 2020; Henderson, 2006). However, as the area’s population has continued to suburbanise out of the boundaries of Atlanta, markets for Asian- and Hispanic-owned employer firms have followed car-induced expansion. ‘Atlanta’ definitively no longer simply refers to the city proper, but instead a conglomeration of dispersed regional economic centres. While the strip malls of the state road are mainly known for their international

cuisine, they hold businesses of all kinds. Figures 9.3, 9.4, 9.5, and 9.6 are the authors' pictures of business establishments along Buford Highway. Chinatown and Plaza Fiesta are two large shopping malls that serve both local Asian and Hispanic communities and the broader Atlanta region. Here and all along the road, it is common to see storefront signs labelled in both English and other languages (Fig. 9.3). Shopping and strip malls can additionally provide networks of support amongst migrant entrepreneurs within proximity to one another (Greve & Salaff, 2003). Such a booming business scene has also made the area more attractive to residents and visitors alike, sustaining the residential movement into the region, which in turn provides opportunities for entrepreneurial development.

While the communities in this area may have started as a response to lower costs of living in Atlanta's suburbs, there now exist concrete efforts to maintain community and business diversity along the corridor in face of rising rents. Non-profits and community groups play crucial roles in the process. For example, the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce and We Love Buford Highway Inc. are key actors in the preservation of the area's immigrant-driven business landscape. The former has founded partnerships with ethnic business groups, such as the Georgia Indo-American Chamber of Commerce and the Chinese Business Association of Atlanta (Huppertz, 2021; Malik, 2021).

Besides non-profit organisations, local governments have recognised the importance of immigrants as entrepreneurs and workers as well as their contribution to local economic development. A growing number of cities across the US have adopted welcoming and inclusive policies to better serve the needs of immigrants and integrate them in urban socioeconomic life (Huang & Liu, 2019). In Atlanta,



Fig. 9.3 Chinatown exterior, Chamblee GA, September 2022 by Liu



Fig. 9.4 Chinatown courtyard, Chamblee GA, September 2022 by Liu



Fig. 9.5 Plaza Fiesta exterior, Brookhaven, GA, May 2022, by Liu



Fig. 9.6 Plaza Fiesta interior, Brookhaven GA, May 2022, by Liu

multiple cities have engaged in these efforts and a new One Region Initiative by Welcoming America brings municipal government leaders to the same table to share ideas and best practices (McDaniel et al., 2019). As examples, Clarkston touts itself as the ‘Ellis Island of the South’ and has worked with the DeKalb County Community Development Office to stabilise immigrant businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic and Doraville plans to go beyond its Welcoming Week showcase of immigrant firms by establishing ‘Welcoming Hubs’ at government facilities. While it is too early to assess the relative effectiveness of these policies, there is reason to believe that such policy stances and environments will play a positive role in attracting immigrant residents and businesses to their respective jurisdictions.

9.5 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this chapter analysed the dynamic interaction between population suburbanisation in US metropolitan areas and the changing characteristics of migrant entrepreneurship, as well as the resulting intra-metropolitan geography of ethnic businesses. We first utilised the most recent publicly available Census business data and portrayed the rapid growth of Asian- and Hispanic-owned employer firms in the US in the last decade at rates faster than general businesses as a whole.

While both Asian- and Hispanic-owned firms still fare worse on average than their White-owned counterparts, they have experienced large increases in their economic impact in terms of number of employees, payroll, and receipts/sales. Their industrial composition has expanded over the years beyond historical concentration in a few industries, which opens opportunities for wider locational choices. As a result, migrant entrepreneurship is no longer confined to central city ethnic enclaves but is shaped by the larger urban socioeconomic, spatial, and policy contexts. Our analysis between 2012 and 2017 suggest ethnic businesses exhibit suburbanisation trends similar to residential changes during this time with the growth in suburban counties surpassing that in central cities in most major American metropolitan areas we examined. In addition to national trends, we zoomed in to Atlanta as a case study and offered a detailed account of minority and migrant suburbanisation in a sprawling and increasingly diverse metropolitan area. Suburban counties in Atlanta had seen substantive growth of both minority and immigrant populations and businesses in the recent decade, showcasing the ‘suburban ethnic economy’ phenomenon as an interactive and mutually reinforcing process. Buford Highway stands as a vivid manifestation of a multi-ethnic commercial and residential corridor where ethnic businesses flourish. Recent redevelopment in the area, however, poses challenges for maintaining affordable rents and cost-of-living to accommodate the current residents.

Our analysis also highlighted the importance of policies and local institutions in facilitating and promoting migrant entrepreneurship in their jurisdictions. As compared to central cities that have more established infrastructure in place to support ethnic businesses, suburban areas and polycentric cores might be unprepared to engage with immigrant populations and their firms. A case study from Washington D.C. demonstrates that local government can help avoid further displacement as business costs (e.g. rent) increase and to boost economic conditions (Lung-Amam, 2021). Harwood (2022) outlined in detail different avenues local governments can take to support immigrant communities. Policies can include creative urban land use strategies, the creation of immigrant affairs offices and integration plans, and ‘front-line staff’ involved in ongoing efforts to help migrant businesses (e.g. literacy and sources of funding). An ‘immigrants and entrepreneurs’ local policy focus, with an array of public services and funding sources, may be most effective at attracting immigrant entrepreneurs (Reese & Khan-Welsh, 2022). Finally, community-based organisations can help local governments with implementation and filling in service gaps. This includes bilingual business assistance and microenterprise funds, which are especially important in times of crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic (Theodos et al., 2021).

This chapter examined the changing nature and geographic patterns of migrant entrepreneurship through national trends and a detailed case study of Atlanta, illustrating its spatial embeddedness in suburbanising metropolitan areas and its contribution to the process. Further research is needed to further disentangle such parallel dynamics as well as to evaluate the impact of local policies on immigrant-owned businesses.

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Chapter 10

Stuck in the Suburbs? Socio-spatial Exclusion of Migrants in Shanghai



Jie Shen 

10.1 Introduction

China has experienced rapid urbanisation during the past three decades. The influx of rural-to-urban migrants into Chinese cities had reached more than 270 million persons by 2014 (NBSC, 2015). This group, however, is known as the floating population (*liudong renkou*) because they are not entitled to the same legal rights as permanent urban residents and are treated as ‘internal aliens’ in the cities (Zhang, 2001, p. 23). Regarding their residence, they tend to concentrate at the urban periphery, particularly in urban villages, construction sites, or industrial factory dormitories (Wu, 2008; Wang et al., 2010).

While there is a large body of literature on rural-to-urban migrants in China concerning the effects of the *hukou* system,¹ labour market segmentation, migration strategies, and their marginalisation in cities (Chan, 2009; Fan, 2002; Fan et al., 2011; Solinger, 1999), only recently have scholars turned to examine migrants’ housing experiences and social-spatial exclusion in cities (Wu, 2008; Wang et al., 2010; Huang & Tao, 2014). Many studies have focused on the neighbourhood effects of migrants’ enclaves and the implications for their incorporation into the

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¹The *hukou* system, or Household Registration System, is a means of population registration. A person’s *hukou* is attached to a local municipality and determines where they can access social services like hospitals and schools. In addition, it also identifies a person as being either urban or rural. While it is possible to change the registration location or to convert *hukou* status from urban to rural, there are various barriers to doing so.

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host society (Ma & Xiang, 1998; Zhang, 2001; Liu et al., 2014). However, little has been done to investigate the role of migrants' residential location in their integration into the cities. The latter issue, however, is becoming increasingly important. To facilitate land development and create more governable spaces, city governments have launched various projects to demolish and redevelop urban villages. However, the massive demolition of urban villages in the inner suburban area might push migrants farther away. Consequently, as recently noted by Wu et al. (2013), migrants in remote suburban neighbourhoods might suffer from not having access to jobs and public services, thus making it even more difficult for them to survive.

In the existing literature, understanding international migrants' residential location is an important element in understanding their assimilation process, although there have also been critiques of research that focus on neighbourhood effects (Slater, 2013). Among other issues, there has long been widespread concern over the social implication of the suburbs being their residential location. Earlier spatial assimilation models based on international migrants' experiences in the US considered the group's relocation to the suburbs as an indication of their structural assimilation (Massey, 1985; Warren, 2013). However, recent evidence has indicated that international migrants' spatial proximity to the majority group does not necessarily lead to integration, and residents of the suburban ghettos face more barriers to much needed services than do those in central cities (Logan & Alba, 1993; Murphy, 2007; Murphy & Wallace, 2010).

Drawing on a survey conducted in Shanghai, this chapter aims to examine the place effects of suburban residence on the integration of migrants. While not denying the positive role of suburbs in the supply of low-cost housing, it is argued that peripheral locations may further reinforce migrants' marginal position in the city in the long run.

The chapter is organised as follows. Based on urban experiences from both developed and developing countries, the next section reviews the literature in the field of migrants and suburbanisation. Then, the residential settlement patterns of internal migrants in urban China are summarised and the explanatory framework is developed. Next, the data collection and analysis methods are introduced. The empirical findings from the Shanghai survey are then discussed. Finally, the main findings are concluded, and policy recommendations are proposed.

10.2 Literature Review: Migrants and the Suburbs

There has been extensive research on migrants' settlement patterns in the field of urban studies. Ecologists from the Chicago School claimed that, while newly arrived international migrants usually concentrate in neighbourhoods in the central city, later generations would relocate and disperse to the suburbs (Burgess, 1925, p. 56). These observations were later theorised by Massey (1985) as the spatial assimilation model. There is also empirical evidence that suburbanisation was a key step in the assimilation of international migrants who arrived in the US in the early twentieth century (e.g. Massey & Denton, 1987; Alba et al., 1997; Iceland & Nelson, 2008).

The spatial-assimilation model, however, has been widely challenged since the 1990s. Logan and Alba (1993) proposed an alternative model, known as the place stratification model, to depict the different impacts of suburbanisation on different races. It is argued that because the mechanisms of structural discrimination persist, minority groups might not be able to translate their individual-level characteristics such as income, education, etc., into upward residential mobility. As a result, when they move to the suburbs, they only sort themselves into suburban communities with a low status.

In the US, for example, the barrier to suburban residence was significantly reduced, and many international migrants began to settle in suburban communities immediately upon arriving (Alba et al., 1999). However, instead of dispersing into White native-born communities, international migrants living in the suburbs have continued to concentrate in ethnic neighbourhoods (Logan et al., 2004). Li (1998, 2009) proposed a new model of ethnic settlement, the 'ethnoburb', to capture the emerging suburban ethnic clusters of residential areas and business districts. Moreover, recent studies have indicated that minority international migrants are even more spatially segregated in their new suburban destinations (Lichter et al., 2010). Suburban residence does not necessarily lead to improvements in quality of life and could even make the international migrant groups more disadvantaged than those in the central city (Murphy, 2007; Murphy & Wallace, 2010).

The housing experiences of migrants in other countries do not follow a uniform pattern found in the US. In many developing countries, cities are experiencing the process of urbanisation. Rapid urban expansion reveals a different suburban landscape with high population densities and mixed urban and rural activities. While searching for job opportunities in the cities, urban-to-rural and stepwise migrants concentrate at the urban fringe, which often leads to massive squatter settlements (Gilbert & Crankshaw, 1999; Davis, 2006). Turner (1968) suggested that, in fact, there are two stages of settlement for these migrants. New migrants usually live in rented accommodation in central locations near their jobs. However, later, they tend to move to the urban edge and build informal shanties of their own – a relocation process indicating their permanent settlement in the destination city.

Recently, high-profile projects such as gated communities, industrial parks, and shopping malls have begun to emerge in the urban peripheral areas in these countries. However, most are built as private realms and scarcely contribute to improving the overall local economy and to softening social inequality. For instance, by examining the widespread development of gated communities in one suburban municipality in Argentina, Roitman and Phelps (2011) illustrated a typical dualistic process of suburbanisation in contemporary developing countries: poverty and exclusion in the suburbs increase when wealthy people arrive.

Therefore, in both developed and developing countries, migrants living in the suburbs might face more barriers to integration. Then how might peripheral locations influence the incorporation of newcomers into their destination city? There are several potential mechanisms that may give rise to the disadvantages experienced by suburban migrants. The most common explanation rests on the lack of good job opportunities near migrants' residences. In the US, the decentralisation of low-skill jobs in manufacturing, construction, and services is prominent, and low-wage and

often dead-end jobs dominate the labour market of fast-growing suburban nodes (Kneebone, 2009; Raphael & Stoll, 2010). This provides few routes for migrants to become upwardly mobile (Lichter et al., 2010).

The second explanation concerns migrants' constrained mobility and accessibility on the urban edge. Empirical evidence shows that migrants' economic opportunities and social participation are reduced due to their lack of access to public facilities and services (Foth et al., 2013; Bose, 2014). Poor suburban communities have far less access to social service resources due to a lack of adequate provision (Allard, 2004). As the private provision of public services is increasingly dominant in the suburbs, this problem can become more severe (McKenzie, 1994, 2005). Moreover, because migrants rely heavily on public transport, an inadequate public transportation infrastructure and a lack of car ownership could impose greater restrictions on them in the automobile-dependent suburbs.

Finally, spatial segregation can be worse in the suburbs. To date, no consensus has been reached on the effects of spatial segregation on migrants' integration. Some studies have stressed the social and cultural capital migrants could acquire in their neighbourhoods (Portes & Jensen, 1987, 1989). Others, however, have found that persistent segregation delays the long-term assimilation of migrants and hence is a threat to social cohesion (Nee et al., 1994; Xie & Gough, 2011). Empirical studies have shown that limited opportunities for exposure to members of the majority ethnic groups in the neighbourhoods are associated with higher risks of poverty and unemployment (Galster et al., 1999; Feng et al., 2014). Such neighbourhoods' poor social networks and bad reputation are also important factors leading to negative outcomes for their residents (Musterd & Andersson, 2005; Permentier et al., 2007). These problems can be more apparent in isolated and low-density suburbs as residents will be less frequently exposed to each other compared to those living in densely populated central areas.

10.3 The Spatial Entrapment of Internal Migrants in Chinese Cities

Internal migrants' residential spatial patterns in China show more similarity to those found in many developing countries experiencing rapid urbanisation such as Brazil and India. Migrants tend to concentrate in the urban periphery instead of in central areas (Wu, 2008) and now constitute a major source of rapid population growth in the suburbs (Shen & Wu, 2013). Moreover, they are often spatially clustered through their place of origin in certain types of neighbourhoods, creating migrant enclaves on the urban edge (Ma & Xiang, 1998; Zhang, 2001). However, in contrast to their counterparts in self-help housing on the urban edge in many other developing countries (Turner, 1976), suburban migrants in China are mostly living in employer-provided dormitories and private rental housing (Huang & Tao, 2014).

On the supply side, in contrast to middle-class suburbia in North America, the term *jiaoqu* (literally, suburb) in the Chinese context refers to the periphery of the

city proper or built-up area mainly in a geographical sense rather than a distinctive type of residence. Before the early 1980s, the suburbs were underdeveloped and by no means attractive residential locations, being largely dominated by rural areas and a few small-scale industrial satellite towns. After economic reform, Chinese cities immediately experienced rapid suburbanisation due to the establishment of a land market and consequent changes to land use (Zhou & Ma, 2000). However, central areas have remained prosperous and are the preferred place to live and work (Wang & Li, 2004). Due to the lack of public services and facilities, housing prices in the suburbs are relatively low when compared to those in central areas.

More importantly, there are usually large numbers of low-cost private rental houses on the city outskirts. Both formal and informal suburban developments provide low-cost rental housing for migrants. On the one hand, municipal governments expropriate farmland at a very low price and lease the land for real estate development. Such projects are carefully designed and packaged to make the suburbs seem an attractive place to live. These estates remain beyond the budget of most migrants, but a large proportion of properties in the suburbs are bought simply as investment and are then leased out via the rental market. A new type of living form for migrants known as *qunzu* (literally, co-renting), i.e., an apartment with two to three bedrooms that is divided and leased to several migrant families separately, has become widespread in the suburbs of many large cities.

On the other hand, any market transaction of collectively-owned farmland and villages is forbidden. Former villages have thus been engulfed by rapid urban expansion. Having no right to transfer the land for their own benefit, peasants build or extend their houses and rent them to migrants (Lin et al., 2011; Zhang, 2011). These 'urban villages', or *chengzhongcun*, on urban outskirts have become a major source of low-cost private rental housing for migrants in cities (Wang et al., 2010).

On the demand side, to a large extent, the concentration of migrants on peripheral locations reflects the disadvantage they face in the local housing market, which is rooted in both their socioeconomic status, such as income and occupation, and the unique Chinese *hukou*-based institutional barrier (Wu, 2004). Most migrants are usually at the bottom of the urban socioeconomic and labour market strata (Solinger, 1999; Fan, 2002). Given that the price of commodity housing has risen exorbitantly in Chinese cities, it is almost impossible for migrants to buy their own homes, let alone pay for high-price estates in central locations. Moreover, migrants without local *hukou* are denied welfare benefits, such as affordable housing (Tao & Xu, 2007; Xu et al., 2011). As a result, migrants have very limited housing options, living in either employer-provided housing or low-cost private rental housing.

Settling down in the suburbs is also associated with the important role of hometown-based social networks in facilitating migration. More often than not, when migrants first come to the city, they receive social support in finding jobs or accommodation from earlier migrants from the same place of origin. They usually work in the same enterprises and live in the same neighbourhoods as their relatives or friends who arrived earlier. As a result, suburban migrant enclaves such as urban villages are usually their initial residential location (Ma & Xiang, 1998; Zhang,

2001). So far, debates on the social implications of migrant enclaves are inconclusive. While policymakers usually view migrant neighbourhoods as overcrowded, chaotic, and dangerous places, many scholars highlight the positive role of these neighbourhoods in China's urbanisation. For example, it is in urban villages that migrants can find cheap accommodation and services and adapt themselves to urban lives (Zhang et al., 2003; Liu et al., 2014).

However, a suburban residence does not indicate migrants' spatial assimilation as found in North American countries or permanent settlements in many developing countries. An earlier survey has shown that proximity to their workplace and the availability of low-cost housing are the primary reasons why migrants chose their current houses in the suburbs (Shen & Wu, 2013). Although hometown-based social resources play a positive role in their adaptation to urban life on their arrival, their life chances may later be significantly restricted and their marginal role may be further reinforced by a constrained life in the suburbs.

First, living in migrant enclaves may limit their exposure to other groups and thus their opportunities to build inter-group social networks. Earlier research has demonstrated that those who have lived in migrant urban villages for a longer time are less likely to construct non-hometown-based or neighbourhood-based social ties (Liu et al., 2012). Second, since economic reform, Chinese cities have experienced the massive decentralisation of manufacturing jobs (Zhou & Ma, 2000). Most of these jobs provide poor pay and prospects. Third, poor mobility and accessibility to quality public services and facilities further make it difficult for suburban migrants to reach opportunities for work, education, healthcare, social activities, and so on. Subsequently, with limited social resources and restricted job-search areas, migrants may have few opportunities for upward social mobility and instead remain trapped in the suburbs. The remainder of the chapter aims to empirically examine the differences between migrants living in central and suburban areas, and how residential location affects the incorporation of migrants.

10.4 Data and Methods

This research is based on a questionnaire survey distributed in Shanghai. Since economic reform, the city has witnessed a massive influx of migrants. By the end of 2013, the total number of migrants in Shanghai had reached 9.535 million, accounting for approximately 40% of its total population (SSB, 2014). The spatial distribution of migrants in Shanghai has experienced rapid suburbanisation. While in the 1980s, a large proportion of migrants found their residence in central areas, the 1990s saw inner suburban areas (the zone that is 10–20 kms from the city centre) become locations where migrants would concentrate (Wu, 2008). According to the 2010 census data, high concentrations of migrants are now found in outer suburban districts. The location quotient for the percentage of migrant population shows that, on average, Minhang, Fengxian, Jiading, Qingpu, and Songjiang have a higher

proportion of migrants than Shanghai, and all but Minhang are outer suburban districts (Fig. 10.1). Among others, Jiading, Qingpu, and Songjiang even have greater populations of migrants than of native citizens. In contrast, the central areas continue to be dominated by native residents, who account for 75% of their total population (Fig. 10.2).

Spatial contexts in the central city and the suburbs are different for migrants. While the distribution of migrants is more dispersed in the central city, including

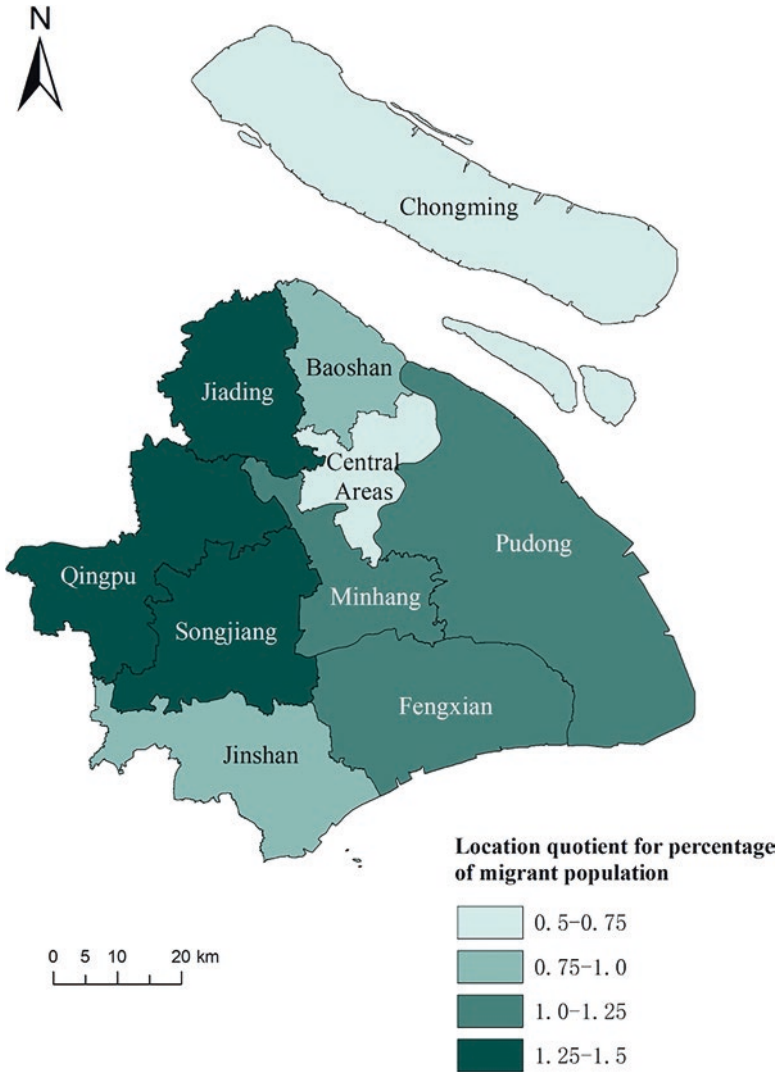


Fig. 10.1 Concentration of migrants in Shanghai by districts. (Sources: 2020 Shanghai census data)

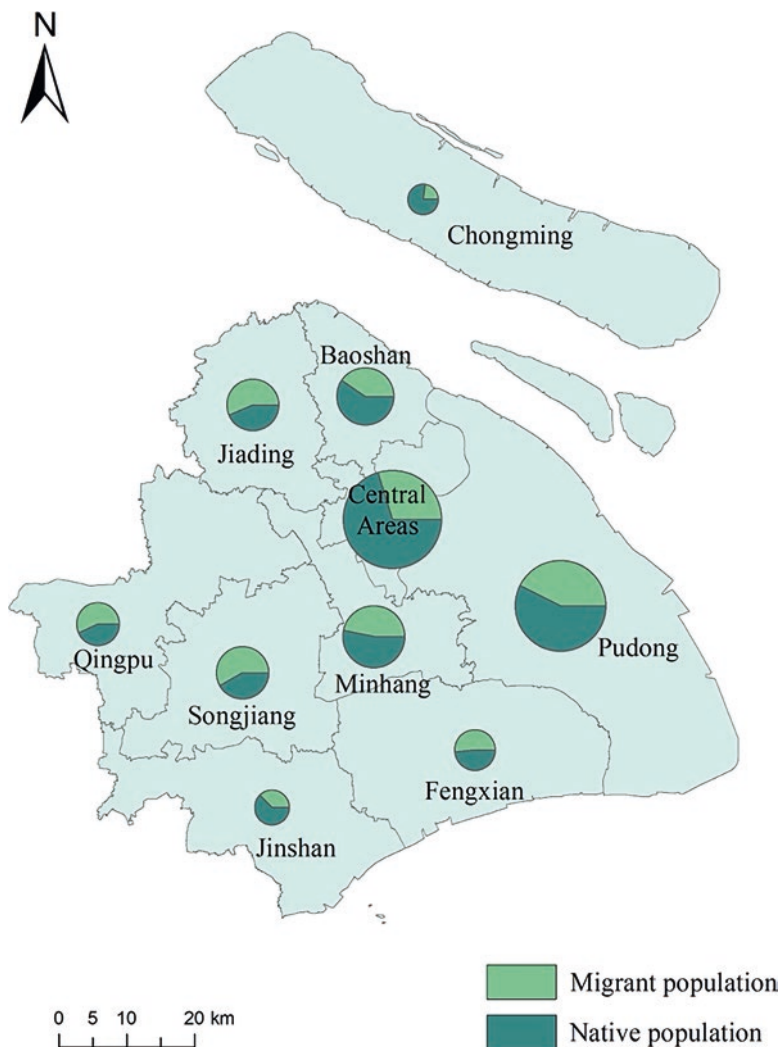


Fig. 10.2 The ratio of the migrant and native population by districts in Shanghai. (Sources: 2020 Shanghai census data)

traditional *lilong* neighbourhoods² – old work-unit neighbourhoods and newly-built commodity housing neighbourhoods – in the suburbs they are much more concentrated in urban villages and factory dormitories. For example, in suburban new

² *Lilong* refers the traditional neighbourhood of lanes featuring old *shikumen* housing in Shanghai. These neighborhoods were built during the period 1842 to 1949, coinciding with the Western presence in the city. They were a major form of residence by the 1980s and accommodated lower- to middle-class families.

towns, about 70% of the migrants resided in neighbourhoods with a proportion of migrants more than 60% (Wang & Yang, 2015). Meantime, residents in the central city enjoy much better accessibility to resources than those in the suburbs. Recent studies have shown that most neighbourhoods with high accessibility to jobs, healthcare facilities, and schools locate within the inner ring of the city (Wu & Sun, 2015; Zhang, 2015; Wu et al., 2012).

The survey followed the principle of random sampling and adopted a multistage clustered sampling method. As Chongming Island remains largely dominated by rural areas and its population accounts for less than 3% of Shanghai's total population, it was excluded from the survey. First, all sub-districts (including both *jiedao* and *zhen*), except those on Chongming Island, were divided into three strata for stratified sampling: the inner city (within the inner ring road), the inner suburb (between the inner and outer ring road), and the outer suburb (outside the outer ring road). The number of sub-districts to be sampled in each stratum was in proportion to the size of the resident population in each area based on the 2010 population census data. In each stratum, sub-districts were sorted according to their per capita income and population density; their de facto population was then adjusted according to their proportion of *hukou* population. This was to ensure that the structure of the sample was representative in these three terms. Then, the method of probability proportionate to size (PPS) sampling was used to select individual sub-districts. The final sample was drawn from 33 out of a total of 225 sub-districts from 12 districts in Shanghai. In each sub-district, one residential committee was randomly selected. Finally, within a chosen neighbourhood, an equal number of respondent households were selected using a simple random sampling method. They were randomly picked starting from a random house number and chosen at a fixed interval. The three-stage sampling technique ensured that the sample was representative of the inter-zone distribution of population.

The survey was undertaken from 20 July to 10 August 2013. Questionnaires were given to household heads, and most were completed immediately and collected by interviewers straight away. The survey was aided by staff from residential committees who introduced surveyors to the selected households and thus ensured a very high response ratio (95%). In total, 1420 valid questionnaires were collected, among which there were 295 migrant respondents. Notably, in this study, the term 'migrants' refers to those who were not born in Shanghai and had migrated to Shanghai from their place of origin. This allows for the examination of the role of *hukou* status in migrants' integration. In the sample, this migrant group is somewhat underrepresented. This is partly due to migrants' high rates of refusal and of non-contact. Nevertheless, because such levels of nonresponse can be regarded as random in this case, errors are tolerable. Table 10.1 compares migrants' educational and occupational attainments according to the 2020 Census and the survey. In both samples, the distribution of migrants' educational attainment is concentrated in junior and senior secondary education, while the distribution of their occupational attainment is concentrated in low-end service and industrial work. However, the survey sample has a higher proportion of migrants with technician and staff jobs. This could be because the survey includes not only rural migrants but also migrants

Table 10.1 Comparison of survey data and 2020 census statistics

Educational attainment (%)	Survey data (N = 259)	Census data (N = 10,301,498)
No schooling	1.16	1.50
Primary school	7.34	14.41
Junior secondary	36.68	36.15
Senior secondary	23.55	16.91
College	9.27	12.03
University	17.37	15.69
Graduate	4.63	3.32
Occupational attainment (%)	Survey data (N = 220)	Census data (N = 737,484)
Manager or head	3.64	3.44
Technician	23.18	14.65
Staff	14.55	6.77
Service worker	40.00	48.19
Industrial worker	15.00	26.14
Other occupation	3.64	0.81

with local *hukou* registration. In addition, the survey does not cover those living in factory dormitories because the lists of dormitories were not available to be included in the sampling frame. Given these two differences, the distribution of migrants' educational and occupational attainments in the survey sample is reasonable as it reflected the compositional and distributional heterogeneity of the target group.

While migrants' residential location and social exclusion might be interactive and mutually reinforcing, this study particularly focuses on the subsequent effects of living in the suburbs on migrants' integration. This is empirically examined by comparing, first, the integration of migrants living in central and suburban locations, and second, their chances of moving into the central city. Regression analysis was employed to test for the independent effects of residential location. In the analysis, place of residence was coded as one simple dichotomous variable indicating whether a respondent lived in the suburbs (including the inner suburbs and the outer suburbs) or the central city (suburbs = 1, central city = 0). Meanwhile, other variables that have been extensively studied in research on migrants' integration were included to control for the effects of other mechanisms potentially influencing migrants' integration (Wu, 2012; Wang & Fan, 2012).

First, the study gauges the importance of residential locations for migrants' integration. As the existing literature conceptualises integration as a multi-dimensional process (Gordon, 1964; Alba & Nee, 1997), two key dimensions of integration are examined here: economic and social. Economic integration is achieved when migrants' earnings are comparable to those of local natives with similar backgrounds (Chiswick, 1978; Duleep & Regets, 1999). Because income is usually skewed, the log of household heads' monthly income is conventionally used as a measure of economic integration. In the survey, the head of a household was

identified as the primary financial supporter of the family, whose income best reflected its economic integration.

Social integration describes the process whereby migrants gradually adapt to social norms and values and participate in a broad range of social relationships in the host society (Brisette et al., 2000, p. 54). Accordingly, the measure used in this study is inter-group friendship. Migrants who are more integrated are supposed to have friends outside their own group, while those who are less integrated are likely to have friends from the same place of origin as themselves. In the survey, respondents were asked where most of their friends came from; the response categories were the same county or municipality, the same province, other provinces, Shanghai, and diverse places of origin. A dichotomous variable was then constructed to indicate whether a respondent's social relations were locally embedded (yes = Shanghai natives and diverse place of origin = 1, no = other migrants = 0).

Specific forms of actual regressions differ depending on the nature of the dependent. For economic integration (logged monthly income as the outcome variable), the ordinary least squares (OLS) linear regression was applied. For social integration (inter-group friendship as the outcome variable), the logit regression model was adopted. As for control variables, the level of human capital was measured by whether a respondent held a university degree (yes = 1, no = 0), which is an important channel for migrants to establish their official residence in cities. Higher education is one of the criteria for obtaining local *hukou* in Shanghai. Occupation was coded based on Chinese Standard Classification of Occupations and collapsed into three categories: blue collar, white collar, and others. Migrants usually have limited access to higher-status white-collar jobs and tend to crowd into peripheral segments in the labour market, which could in turn reinforce their exclusion in both economic and social terms. Length of stay (number of years) may enhance migrants' exposure and acquaintance with the host society and was thus included to indicate the potential for integration. *Hukou* location and *hukou* classification, which are usually recognised as valid measures of migrants' integration, were used to represent the institutional factor. Finally, sociodemographic variables – i.e., age, gender, and marital status – were also included to control for the effects of individual characteristics.

Second, the study used logistic regression analysis to examine further factors influencing the likelihood of migrants' spatial assimilation (i.e., moving to the central locations). Only respondents who reported intra-urban residential moves were included in the analysis. Their current residential location was used as the dependent variable (central city = 1; suburbs = 0). Their socioeconomic variables, economic and social integration variables, and previous residential location were all included as independent variables. If the previous residential location had independent effects on migrants' residential moves, it would indicate migrants might be unable to translate their socioeconomic advancement into locational attainment, and vice versa.

10.5 Results

10.5.1 Comparing Migrants in Central and Suburban Locations

Table 10.2 compares the socioeconomic profiles and integration of migrants in central and suburban areas. ANOVA analysis and Pearson's chi-square test were conducted on the continuous variables and the categorical socioeconomic variables respectively. Overall, the two groups were shown to be significantly different in many aspects, with migrants living in the central city having the better socioeconomic status. Those in the central city were much more likely to hold a university

Table 10.2 Differences between migrants in the central city and the suburbs

Attributes	Central city	Suburbs	Statistic significance
Age (mean)	40.8	36.9	t-test, $\rho < 0.5$
Gender			
Male(%)	55.70	64.6	
Female(%)	44.30	34.4	
Marriage			
Single(%)	16.4	16.2	
Married(%)	83.6	83.8	
University degree			
None(%)	50.8	74.2	χ^2 test, $\rho < 0.001$
Hold(%)	49.2	28.5	
Occupation			
Manager or head (%)	8.2	1.5	χ^2 test, $\rho < 0.1$
Technician (%)	24.6	18.2	
Staff (%)	14.8	11.6	
Service worker (%)	36.1	33.8	
Industrial worker (%)	1.6	16.2	
Other occupation (%)	0.0	4.0	
Retired or unemployed (%)	14.8	14.6	
Hukou location			
Local (%)	16.4	6.6	χ^2 test, $\rho < 0.5$
Non-local (%)	83.6	93.4	
Hukou classification			
Rural(%)	45.9	66.2	χ^2 test, $\rho < 0.5$
Urban(%)	54.1	33.8	
Family income (mean)	14,500	8099.49	t-test, $\rho < 0.001$
Origin of most friends			
Shanghaiense (%)	37.7	16.7	χ^2 test, $\rho < 0.01$
Migrants from same province (%)	59.0	81.3	
Diverse origin (%)	3.3	2.0	
Total	61	198	

degree; nearly half of the surveyed migrants there had a university degree. They also exhibited a much higher proportion engaging in white-collar jobs, i.e., as administrative managers, technicians, and office staff, but fewer numbers of industrial workers. In terms of *hukou* classification, the sample included 61.4% rural migrants and 38.6% urban migrants in total. More than half of the surveyed migrants in the central city were urban migrants, while two-thirds of those in the suburbs came from rural areas. Although both groups had only a small number of individuals with Shanghai *hukou*, more migrants in the central city had managed to acquire one.

Integration of migrants in the central city was significantly better than that in the suburbs in both economic and social terms. The average income of the former group was about 1.8 times greater than that of the latter group (14,500 yuan versus 8099 yuan). Meanwhile, migrants in the central areas were more likely to have local natives as their friends than were migrants in the suburbs (37.7% versus 16.7%), although a large proportion in both groups reported that their friends came from the same province as themselves.

10.5.2 Economic Integration of Migrants

OLS linear regression was conducted to examine the independent effects of residential location on migrants' monthly income (Table 10.3). Because the dependent variable was logged monthly income, we could roughly interpret the estimated coefficient as the effect, in percentage, on earnings. The results confirm that socio-economic attributes – including gender, higher education attainment, occupation, and the length of residence – have important effects on the migrants' earnings. Male migrants earned 20% more than female migrants. Holding a university degree reflected the human capital of migrants and had a positive effect on their income, although the effect was not significant in the full model. In terms of occupation, the income of white-collar respondents was more than 30% higher than that of blue-collar and retired and unemployed respondents. In the full model, there was also an effect of length of residence, as one extra year of residence in Shanghai increased migrants' earnings by 13%. However, migrants' registration status, i.e., *hukou* location and *hukou* classification, was found to be not significant for migrants' earnings.

After controlling for other variables in the full model, living in the suburbs was found to have a negative and significant coefficient, indicating that on average, migrants living in the suburbs earned almost 18% less than those living in the central city, even when they have similar individual characteristics such as education and occupation. The place of residence variable remained in the forward linear regression model, which presented the determinants of migrants' earning returns, further confirming the independent effects of residential location.

Table 10.3 OLS Linear Regression on logged monthly income

Independent variables	Full model		Forward model	
	B	SE	B	SE
Age(years)	-0.128	0.002		
Gender(female = 1)	-0.222***	0.034	-0.221***	0.033
Marriage(married = 1)	-0.033	0.043		
University degree (hold = 1)	0.132	0.048	0.186**	0.038
Occupation (white collar = 0)				
Blue collar	-0.342***	0.038	-0.321***	0.036
Others	-0.069	0.091		
Unemployed and retired	-0.311***	0.075	-0.351***	0.056
Length of residence	0.127*	0.003		
Hukou location (local = 1)	-0.105	0.059		
Hukou classification (urban = 1)	0.11	0.044		
Residential location (suburbs = 1)	-0.179**	0.038	-0.161**	0.037
Constant	3.968***	0.093	3.866***	0.046
N	243		243	
Df	11		5	
F	11.851***		23.3***	
R ²	0.361		0.330	

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

10.5.3 Social Integration of Migrants

Table 10.4 shows the results of logistic regression on migrants' inter-group social ties. Among socioeconomic attributes, age and holding a university degree increased the likelihood of having an inter-group social network. As older migrants were more established, they were more likely to have local social ties. Holding a university degree increased the odds of having an inter-group friendship by 3.5 times. Meanwhile, as length of stay in Shanghai enhanced the exposure to the host society, it had positive effects on migrants' social integration: one extra year of residence doubled the odds of having friends from Shanghai and other places. Interestingly, compared to rural migrants, urban migrants from other cities were much more likely to establish friendships with local natives and people from other places. Although this effect was not significant in the full model, the *hukou* classification variable remained in the forward regression model and was statistically significant. This implies that it is easier for urban residents to adapt to social life in the destination city.

After controlling for the effects of individual attributes in the full model, residential location was again found to affect migrants' social integration. For the migrants in Shanghai, living in the suburbs made them two times less likely to have

Table 10.4 Logistic regression on inter-group friendship

Independent variables	Full model			Forward model		
	B	SE	exp (B)	B	SE	exp (B)
Age(years)	0.048*	0.02	1.049	0.043**	0.017	1.044
Gender(female = 1)	-0.022	0.38	0.978			
Marriage(married = 1)	-0.332	0.474	0.718			
University degree (hold = 1)	1.276**	0.496	3.581	1.337**	0.438	3.809
Occupation (white collar = 0)						
Blue collar	-0.148	0.428	0.863			
Others	1.074	1.02	2.926			
Unemployed and retired	-0.231	0.639	0.794			
Length of residence	0.067**	0.03	1.07	0.068*	0.028	1.071
Hukou location (local = 1)	0.119	0.553	1.126			
Hukou classification (urban = 1)	0.774	0.449	2.169	0.812*	0.413	2.252
Residential location (suburbs = 1)	-0.735*	0.367	0.48	-0.698*	0.357	0.497
Constant	-3.727***	1.05	0.024	-3.954***	0.798	0.019
N	259			259		
Df	11			4		
χ^2	58.264***			56.230***		
$-2 \times \log$ -likelihood	226.826			228.860		
Cox and Snell R ²	0.201			0.195		
Nagelkerke R ²	0.302			0.292		

Notes: * $\rho < 0.05$; ** $\rho < 0.01$; *** $\rho < 0.001$

inter-group friendships. This variable also remained in the forward regression model, suggesting it is one of the determinants of having friends outside the migrant group.

10.5.4 Place Effects of Suburban Residence on Migrants' Residential Mobility

To test the spatial entrapment of migrants in the suburbs, the residential mobility of migrants was further examined. As has been found in the existing literature, migrants in the survey showed a high level of residential mobility. About 49% of respondents reported that they had moved at least once, and about 45.7% of moves had taken place in the last three years. Among those who had never moved after coming to Shanghai, 70.5% had settled in the suburbs, confirming that the suburbs are usually migrants' initial residential location. Moreover, only 7% of those who had previously lived in the suburbs had managed to move to the central city.

Table 10.5 shows the results of the logistic regression analysis, which tests the independent effects of previous residential location on migrants' subsequent location choices. Besides socio-economic attributes and *hukou* status as used above,

Table 10.5 Logistic regress on migrants' residential location after recent moves

	Full model			Forward likelihood model		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
Age(years)	0.065	0.048	1.067			
Gender(female = 1)	-0.608	0.881	0.545			
Marriage(married = 1)	2.571*	1.168	13.08	2.01*	0.929	7.465
University degree (hold = 1)	0.84	1.032	2.316			
Occupation (white collar = 0)						
Blue collar	0.906	0.879	2.475			
Others	-0.861	1.864	0.423			
Length of residence	-0.109	0.079	0.896			
Hukou location (local = 1)	2.823*	1.449	16.824	2.856*	1.184	17.39
Hukou classification (urban = 1)	-0.068	1.002	0.934			
Inter-group friendship Shanghai and diverse places of origin = 1)	3.254	1.587	25.892			
Logged monthly income	0.581*	0.796	1.788	2.784*	1.175	16.18
Previous residential location (suburbs = 1)	-3.889***	0.871	0.02	-3.505***	0.721	0.03
Constant	-15.803***	6.742	0	-11.716***	4.542	0
N	123			123		
Df	12			3		
χ^2	50.780***			44.792***		
-2 × log-likelihood	64.757			70.745		
Cox and Snell R ²	0.338			0.305		
Nagelkerke R ²	0.555			0.501		

Notes: * $\rho < 0.05$; ** $\rho < 0.01$; *** $\rho < 0.001$

monthly income and inter-group friendship were also included as measures of migrants' integration. The results suggest that, among those who move, married migrants are much more likely than single migrants to live in the central city. Local *hukou* also significantly increases the likelihood of moving to the central city. The level of earnings, which is an indicator of migrants' economic integration, has a positive effect on the chance of living in the central city. After controlling for other variables, previous residential location clearly plays an important role in migrants' subsequent residential location. Therefore, for migrants with similar socioeconomic backgrounds, those whose initial residence is located in the suburbs have much less of a chance of moving to the central city and are likely to be trapped in the suburbs.

10.6 Concluding Remarks

There is a growing literature on migrants' residential patterns in China (Wu, 2008; Wang et al., 2010; Huang & Tao, 2014). Earlier studies have found that migrants are disadvantaged in the urban housing market and usually concentrate in the suburbs.

However, little is known about the place effects of suburban residence on migrants. In fact, residential location is not only a well-established indicator of people's socio-economic status but is also a valued resource for them; it is therefore key to migrants' integration into the host society. In the US, there is always debate about whether newcomers to the country could achieve spatial assimilation, or if structural sources of inequality always impede the improvement of international migrants' spatial position (Massey, 1985; Logan & Alba, 1993). Based on a survey in Shanghai, this paper has empirically examined the relationship between internal migrants' integration and their suburban residential locations. While moving to the suburbs could reflect the spatial assimilation of international migrant groups in North America and many developing countries, internal migrants may be spatially marginalised in disadvantaged suburban locations in China.

Specifically, there are three empirical findings. First, migrants living in the suburbs are earning less overall than their counterparts in the central city, even after controlling for demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. This indicates that economic returns to migrants' human capital are spatially unequal. Second, due to the relative lack of exposure to the host society in the suburbs, suburban migrants are less likely to have inter-group friendships or a diverse social network, which is of great significance in their social integration. Finally, while the central city has advantages in terms of more and better job opportunities and living facilities, compared to migrants living in central locations, those living in the suburbs are less likely to move to the central city but instead be trapped in the suburbs. Overall, suburban residence has long-term negative effects on both the socio-economic and spatial integration of migrants.

The interpretation of these results therefore highlights structural factors as the main mechanism leading to the social-spatial exclusion of migrants in the suburbs, lending support to the place stratification model. With the establishment of land and housing markets, Chinese cities have experienced massive spatial restructuring. While both the central city and its suburbs are flourishing, the former remains dominant in both administrative and functional terms. However, because migrants are largely excluded from the formal housing market, they are squeezed out of the central locations where there are more resources to marginal suburban communities such as urban villages. Due to a relative lack of good job opportunities, poorer access to quality facilities and services and more isolated neighbourhoods in the suburbs, their life chances are in turn further constrained.

The integration of rural-to-urban migrants in the cities, which is regarded as a key factor in facilitating urbanisation and social stability, has recently become the focus of inclusive urbanisation in China. This study suggests that migrants concentrating in the relatively underdeveloped suburban locations have limited locational resources and opportunities for upward social mobility. Accordingly, beyond institutional adjustments, such as relaxing the *hukou* system, the improvement of the suburban infrastructure and the provision of good quality public services are also critical for migrants' incorporation.

Another policy implication is associated with recent migrant housing policies, which focus on the demolition of urban villages and the construction of large-scale

social housing communities in outer suburban areas. In fact, many of the first urban villages to be erased are in the inner suburbs of the city. They have played a positive role in providing affordable housing to rural migrants at locations closer to the urban economy. However, after these urban villages have been demolished, migrants may be displaced farther away, making it less likely for them to find a job similar to the one they had previously. Suburban large-scale social housing communities at remote locations are also at risk of being marginalised and alienated. Therefore, to reserve the locational advantages for migrants, future policies of redevelopment should consider upgrading the migrants' current accommodation rather than opting for demolition and displacement.

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Chapter 11

Settlement and Rental Housing

Experiences Among Recent Immigrants in the Suburbs of Vancouver: Burnaby, Richmond, and Surrey



Carlos Teixeira  and Anabel Lopez 

11.1 Introduction

Canadian immigration policy has long acknowledged the importance of immigration as an engine of economic growth. In the face of declining birth rates and an aging population, immigration has become a key strategy for increasing Canada's population and labour force (Vezina & Houle, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2022a). In 2021, about 8.3 million people, or 23% of the total population, were or had been a landed immigrant or permanent resident.¹ This is the largest proportion since Confederation, topping the previous 1921 record of 22.3%, and the highest among G7 nations. The rising proportion of immigrants is mainly driven by the record number – more than 1.3 million – of new immigrants arriving between 2016 and 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

International migration to Canada has become more complex and diverse than in the past when most immigrants came from Britain and continental Europe. Beginning in the mid-1960s, Canadian immigration policy changed to eliminate discrimination based on race or national origin. Since the 1990s, immigration policies have generally been directed at improving economic outcomes, specifically favouring immigrants with more education, labour force skills, capital, and those from selected regions. Humanitarian criteria also shape current immigration policies, with Canada playing a leading role in the resettlement of refugees. The

¹ According to the Census Dictionary (2021), immigrant 'refers to a person who is, or who has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident. Such a person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalisation are included in this group'.

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increasing diversity in Canada is illustrated by the rising number of visible minorities² (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Migrants are increasingly coming from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Middle East. These new waves of immigration have transformed Canadian demographics, as well as the social, cultural, and economic landscapes of Canada's major urban centres.

Upon arrival, most new immigrants settle in large Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) (Statistics Canada, 2022a). This 'urban bias' is stressing the urban infrastructure, including schools, transportation, healthcare services, and has led to a lack of affordable and suitable housing to accommodate the needs of increasingly culturally diverse immigrant populations. As a result, provincial and federal governments have implemented immigration policies, programs, and investments to reverse this trend and balance the geographical distribution of recent immigrants into both small and large cities (Drolet & Teixeira, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2022b). Recent data suggest the proportion of recent immigrants settling in Canada's three largest CMAs – Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver – is declining, but most new immigrants (53.4%) arriving between 2016 and 2021 still chose to settle in these cities because they offer the best job prospects and other benefits such as cultural support networks (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Canadian census data reveal that Canada's largest urban centres continue to grow and spread in part as the result of new arrivals to the country (Statistics Canada, 2022a). The inner cities and suburbs of Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver are now characterized by immigrant groups settled in ethnic neighbourhoods (Ley & Smith, 1997; Qadeer, 2016; Hiebert, 2017; Keil, 2020).

A shift to neoliberal housing policies since 1993 has led to a national housing crisis (Government of Canada, 2017; Valenzuela Moreno et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2021; Singh, 2021). Disinvestment in purpose-built rental and social housing has made housing unaffordable and unattainable for many immigrants and has increased demand for affordable housing. Growing social polarization has also affected housing affordability (Ley & Lynch, 2020; Grant et al., 2020), especially in Vancouver and Toronto, Canada's most expensive housing markets (August & Walks, 2018; Government of Canada, 2017; CMHC, 2018; Cox & Pavletich, 2019). Consequently, immigrant groups are settling in diverse patterns. Some still concentrate spatially to form ethnic enclaves – initially in immigrant reception areas close to downtown and later in the suburbs, or by going directly to the suburbs – while others disseminate across the urban and suburban landscape (Murdie & Skop, 2012; Qadeer, 2016; Fong & Berry, 2017; Zhuang, 2021). In Canada, immigration plays an increasingly important role in the high demand for housing (rental and homeownership), especially in large urban centres and their suburbs (Carter & Vitiello, 2012; Moos et al., 2015; Addie et al., 2020). While some affluent immigrants, such as entrepreneurs and investors, settle in high-priced single-family detached dwellings in the suburbs

²The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour', e.g., South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese (see Dictionary, Census of Population 2021).

of Vancouver or Toronto, the landlord's market often forces low-income recent immigrants and refugees into lower-rent private-sector apartments, many of which are old and poorly maintained. The corresponding transformation of ethnocultural mosaics in cities and suburbs has been marked by increased segregation and poverty levels, and by high levels of residential mobility, including forced relocations (evictions) and suburbanization (Government of Canada, 2017; Jones, 2020). This has presented major challenges for local governments, policymakers, and social service providers as services are typically concentrated in urban cores (Zuberi et al., 2018; Keil, 2020; Addie et al., 2020; Zhuang, 2021).

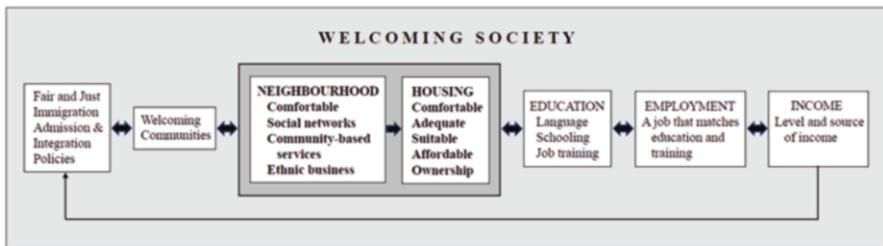
Despite the numerous housing challenges faced by new immigrants, relatively little is known about their housing experiences and the barriers they encounter in the suburban rental housing market. Moreover, the ethnocultural dimension has generally been overlooked in research on immigrant suburbanization in Canada, for example where and why immigrants move and how this affects the social geography of suburbs. Therefore, this chapter explores the settlement and housing experiences of recent immigrants in Burnaby, Richmond, and Surrey – three culturally diverse and fast-growing Vancouver suburbs. The following sections summarize the literature, describe the methods, and present the results, which can be classified into the following main themes: origins and socio-economic characteristics of immigrants; settlement experiences and the importance of social networks; current housing situation and housing costs; mobility, housing search, and barriers encountered; and housing and neighbourhood satisfaction. A final section summarizes the results and identifies areas for further research.

11.2 Housing New Immigrants

Success in accessing affordable and adequate housing is determined to a considerable extent by the nature of the local housing market – the opportunities that are available within the constraints of household resources. In addition to housing supply, housing needs and preferences are important. The household needs of many immigrants differ from those of native-born Canadians; for example, they may have different living arrangements with larger households and be more likely to double up, sometimes with two or more families living in the same dwelling (Murdie & Skop, 2012; Murdie & Teixeira, 2003). In the case of Vancouver suburbs, location and lower housing costs are important considerations among recent immigrants, as are the social/cultural, economic, health, and education benefits afforded to those living in the suburbs (Statistics Canada, 2022a). The fast-growing suburbs of Vancouver have become important ports of entry for recent immigrants and refugees who are now seeking housing in suburban submarkets that are still expensive, but less so than in the city of Vancouver. As a result, many recent immigrants and refugees are bypassing Vancouver to go directly to older suburbs (e.g., Burnaby) or newly developed suburbs (e.g., Richmond and Surrey).

The diverse housing attitudes, preferences, and requirements of immigrants filter through the complex housing market, both rental and homeownership, in turn affecting the landscapes of the suburban communities they live in. In addition to economic factors affecting affordability of housing, race and ethnicity are key dimensions in the formation/stratification of suburban housing submarkets. Local housing markets involve complex historical, structural, and racial/cultural forces that are difficult to untangle because they are experienced in different ways by different immigrant groups (Teixeira & Li, 2015). A comprehensive analysis of how immigrants integrate into Canadian society must, therefore, include the interactions between suburbanization processes and the everyday housing strategies of new and more established immigrant groups. To date, very few studies have focused on the housing experiences of recent immigrant groups in Canada, including visible minorities in the suburbs.

Housing is a critical indicator of quality of life, health, social interaction, community participation, economic activity, and general well-being; it is also an essential element for a receiving society to be deemed a ‘welcoming society’ (Fig. 11.1). The process of integration is dynamic and geographically uneven and occurs differently at different times and for different groups (Kobayashi et al., 2015). For many immigrant groups, integration takes a long time, and some experience more social exclusion than others. Recent immigrants, especially renters and refugees, face a wide range of challenges during their settlement and housing experiences, including limited financial resources, language barriers, and housing discrimination based on ethnicity or race. This is all exacerbated by the current tight housing market, as well as a labour market that often does not recognise the credentials of immigrants. Many low-income immigrants and refugees live in crowded conditions with others of the same ethnic background (Fiedler et al., 2006; Preston et al., 2009; Hiebert, 2017). These diverse and complex barriers can collectively put immigrants at risk of social dislocation and exclusion, poverty, or even homelessness (Dowling, 1998; Hiebert & Sherrell, 2010; Walks, 2020). While these barriers have long been a concern in Canada’s urban centres, they are increasingly a factor in suburban areas that lack the physical and social resources to serve rapidly growing and diversifying populations (Teixeira, 2014; Lo et al., 2015; Mukhtar et al., 2016; Zuberi et al., 2018).



Source: Adapted from Teixeira and Li, 2015

Fig. 11.1 The importance of neighbourhood and housing in immigrant integration

Type of housing and neighbourhood affects recent immigrants in terms of social networks and access to employment opportunities, as well as sense of security (Fig. 11.1) (Murdie & Teixeira, 2003; Newbold, 2010; Hiebert, 2017). Access to affordable and adequate housing varies according to class of entry and socio-economic profile, but on the whole immigrants and refugees tend to be more vulnerable than others in the housing market (Fiedler et al., 2006; Ley & Lynch, 2020; Singh, 2021). Immigrant renters and owners experience higher levels of core need (a composite measure of adequacy, suitability, and affordability) than non-immigrants (Carter & Vitiello, 2012; Hiebert, 2017; Singh, 2021) and housing affordability is the greatest barrier faced by new immigrants (Leone & Carroll, 2010; Zhu et al., 2021).

Immigrants often attach significant importance to homeownership, but immigrants and visible minorities face huge challenges in expensive suburban Vancouver housing markets (Cox & Pavletich, 2019; Grigoryeva & Ley, 2019; Singh, 2021). Historically, a significant proportion of immigrants and refugees would undergo a progressive housing pattern over time with improving income levels, better housing, and rising rates of homeownership (Simone & Newbold, 2014; Hiebert, 2009, 2017). But homeownership rates have been declining with successive cohorts of immigrants (Maroto & Aylsworth, 2016; Jones, 2020). Recent trends indicate that refugees and recent immigrants are usually at higher risk of experiencing poverty than the Canadian-born population (Statistics Canada, 2022c; Carter & Vitiello, 2012; Ley & Lynch, 2020). Homelessness and poverty are on the rise in some suburban neighbourhoods associated with recent immigrants (Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Teixeira, 2014; Hiebert, 2017). Research has associated these patterns with low-income households clustered around public transportation (e.g., Jones, 2020). Low household incomes, compounded by supply cost and discriminatory constraints, mean that many immigrants end up in public housing.

Culturally diverse Canadian suburbs represent an excellent social laboratory for the study of immigration. Toronto and Vancouver remain major reception areas for immigrants, whose increasing suburban concentration is changing the social, cultural, religious, and economic landscapes of suburbs through the establishment of enclaves and ethnic economies. In Vancouver, examples of enclaves include Chinese in Richmond and Southeast Asians in Surrey; economic shifts include Asian malls in Burnaby and Richmond, and Indian and Pakistani plazas in Surrey. In Toronto's suburbs, Chinese, Tamil, Pakistani, and Indian enclaves have emerged in Markham, Brampton, and Mississauga. The increasing socio-cultural diversity over the last three decades has been accompanied by greater religious diversity, evidenced by the many churches, temples, mosques, and other institutions, some of which have been met with strong opposition from local White communities (Qadeer, 2016; Addie et al., 2020).

Overall, the rapid population growth and concentration of immigrants in Canadian suburbs has led to a need for more research to explore: (a) the meaning of housing and home for immigrants and how this affects the remaking of suburban housing sub-markets; (b) the importance of social networks and ethnocultural organizations to help community members adapt to life in the suburbs; and (c) the

geographical and social dimensions of housing-affordability stress in the suburbs, and how immigrants overcome housing barriers. The strategies used by immigrants to overcome barriers will have important implications for the social well-being and economic growth of North American cities – and their suburban edges – in the future. Immigrants face constraints that lead to exclusion and poverty, as well as ethnic and racial segregation in urban and suburban markets (Bunting et al., 2004; Lo et al., 2015; Zuberi et al., 2018; Ley & Lynch, 2020; Zhu et al., 2021). These are all factors of the complex urbanization process taking place today in North America and leading to the emergence of suburbs as both separate cities and as satellites (‘edges’) of the larger urban centres (Li, 2009; Addie et al., 2020; Zhuang, 2021).

11.3 Methodology

Data were collected in two stages: in 2011, a questionnaire was administered to recent immigrants living in Richmond and Surrey; and in 2019, the same questionnaire was administered to another group of recent immigrants in Burnaby and Surrey (Fig. 11.2) (Teixeira, 2017; Salinas & Teixeira, 2022). The research completed in 2019 also involved interviews with 60 key informants or stakeholders (Salinas & Teixeira, 2022). The questionnaire included closed- and open-ended questions about settlement and housing experiences and related challenges: (a) demographic information; (b) transition from source country to Canada; (c) settlement experiences and housing history since arrival in Canada; (d) details about their

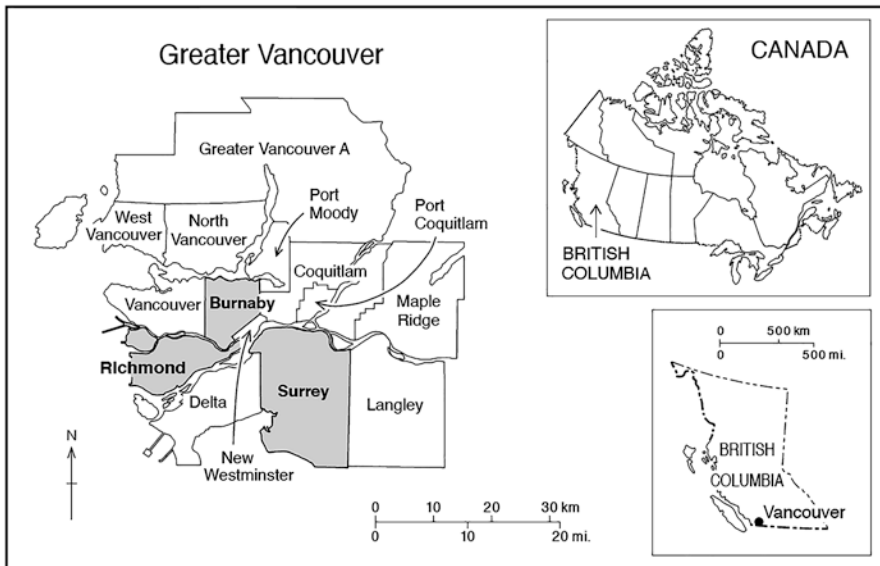


Fig. 11.2 Suburban Municipalities of Vancouver: Burnaby, Richmond, and Surrey

housing searches and access to housing information; e) current housing situation; (f) housing barriers encountered in accessing housing as a renter; g) advice on improving the supply of affordable housing as well as housing services and programmes to new immigrants in search of affordable housing in the suburbs of Vancouver; and (h) final demographic information.

The questionnaire was initially completed by renters and homeowners, but the following analysis reports only on the settlement and housing experiences of 137 renters who participated in the 2011 and 2019 surveys: 62 in 2011 (30 from Richmond and 32 from Surrey) and 75 in 2019 (50 from Burnaby and 25 from Surrey). Eligible participants were recent immigrants who had arrived in Canada within the previous 10 years and were living in the suburbs. Participants were recruited through personal contacts and immigrant-serving agencies. In 2011, almost two-thirds of participants self-identified as Chinese, African, Filipino, Korean, or Southeast Asian, while in 2019 all participants were Mexican immigrants. Responses to open-ended questions were analysed and coded according to common themes and words using NVivo. The relatively small sample size and the fact that participants were recruited using a purposive snowball technique, together with the exploratory nature of this study, means the results do not support generalizations and must be interpreted with caution.

11.4 Survey Results

11.4.1 *Socio-economic Characteristics*

Participants were recent immigrants: about half were family-sponsored and about one-third were economic class (skilled workers or business class).³ Fewer than one-quarter had arrived in Canada as refugees or via another country, and most came alone. At the time of the surveys (2011 and 2019) about half were landed immigrants and some had already become Canadian citizens.

Most were born in Asia (China, Hong Kong, Philippines, India), the Middle East (Iraq), and Latin America (Mexico). Most were female (77 out of 137), and the average age was 40. About two-thirds were married or common-law, and about one-third lived in large households (five to six people). More than two-thirds had a university degree or some university/post-secondary education, and the majority reported speaking and reading English fluently; their high levels of education were

³ 'Admission category' refers to the name of the immigration programme or group of programmes under which an immigrant has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities for the first time. Admissions categories include: (a) economic immigrants; (b) immigrant sponsored by family; (c) refugee; and (d) other immigrant, which 'includes immigrants who were granted permanent resident status under a programme that does not fall in neither the economic immigrants, the immigrants sponsored by family or the refugee categories' (see Dictionary, Census of Population (2021)).

not commensurate with their earnings. More than two-thirds were working full-time or had their own business; fewer than one-quarter were looking for paid work or going to school to improve language or job skills. Of those who had a job, most had low-paying blue-collar positions: most (84 of 137) had a low annual household income under \$50,000, with about one-quarter (38 of 137) struggling with an annual household income under \$30,000. Many reported difficulties obtaining suitable employment for a variety of reasons including non-recognition of foreign academic and professional credentials, lack of social and professional networks, and lack of Canadian work experience.

11.4.2 Settlement Experiences in the Suburbs and the Importance of Co-Ethnic Social Networks

About half of the participants had bypassed the city of Vancouver and came directly to the suburbs of Burnaby, Surrey, or Richmond. This settlement pattern conforms with other recent immigrant groups, including refugees who are changing the historic geography of immigrant settlement by bypassing the city of Vancouver on arrival and going directly to both its older and more newly developed suburbs (see Murdie & Skop, 2012; Hiebert, 2017). Many found their first experiences of Canada's rental housing market discouraging; some referred to it as culture shock. Some thought it would be easier to find affordable, quality housing, including government housing:

I expected better housing...The apartment [in Richmond] is old, there are not enough rooms, plumbing gets broken once in a while, the carpet is dirty and old, windows are old, curtains too (Chao, Chinese women, in her early 40s, Richmond).

It is unclear to what extent settlement and integration experiences were eased by the presence of well-established co-ethnic social networks or ethnic enclaves or both. 'Older' immigrant groups tend to concentrate together (e.g., Chinese in Richmond, Southeast Asians in Surrey). In contrast, more recent immigrant groups (e.g., Latin American, Black African, and Middle Eastern) tend to be more dispersed without institutionally complete communities and therefore may rely more on their own informal ethnic networks to find housing during initial settlement.

About half of all participants knew someone in the area before arriving in the suburbs. Unsurprisingly, about one-third shared temporary accommodation with relatives or friends when they first arrived. This is a common coping strategy when facing a new culture and unfamiliar housing market, and many commented that it is a way to save money to rent their own place. One said:

My [Black African] community in B.C. was very important, finding me housing on arrival. Had it not been for them I would probably end in a shelter (Meja, Kenyan man, in his mid 30s, Surrey).

These well-developed social networks have many advantages for immigrants in their first year of settlement, including emotional, cultural, and economic support, especially during their housing searches. By mobilising strong networks of co-ethnics (relatives and friends), participants developed ‘survival practices’ and ‘resilience’ (‘which includes not only changing one’s own situation but also attempting to rework one’s circumstances, opening up new possibilities’; Katz, 2004, p 242 cited in Triandafyllidou, 2018, p. 4) while facing a wide range of challenges during their settlement and housing experiences on arrival.

Sharing accommodation on arrival with relatives or friends provided many participants with a social, cultural, and financial ‘comfort zone,’ but it also had disadvantages, including overcrowding that could create tension:

When I [Mexican immigrant] first arrived, I lived with my cousin in his basement. It was not that bad because we had a kitchen and two bathrooms, but there were almost ten people, two to three people in each room. We did not have any privacy, not even to talk to our family in Mexico over the phone. The worst thing is that this is the reality of many newcomers to this place where the rent is very expensive (Alejandro, Mexican man, in his 40s, Surrey).

Another important issue related to shared accommodation is the time period during which many of the participants (e.g., Mexicans) in this study arrived (2008–2019). This period was characterized by exponentially escalating housing costs in the rental and real estate markets in Vancouver and its suburbs. Most Mexican and other renters in the suburbs were confronted with a ‘landlord’s market’ characterised by very low vacancy rates and high housing prices, and those with socioeconomic disadvantages had little choice but to share accommodation on arrival.

Although ethnic networks can be valuable resources with regard to housing, the information they provide may be ethnically biased (e.g., encouraging them toward residential areas with concentrations of low-income recent immigrants). Co-ethnics may also have limited knowledge about the complexities of local housing markets and neighbourhoods, for instance, housing types, prices, and vacancy rates; access to community organizations and services to immigrants; housing laws and tenant rights or strategies to resolve housing disputes.

Despite the existence of a few local community organizations (government-sponsored or NGOs) in the three study areas, few participants (17.5%) had accessed them for assistance with information on settlement, including housing. New immigrants often fail to reach out to local organizations because they don’t know they exist or are not aware of their programmes to assist newcomers. Earlier awareness of these community organizations could help facilitate integration:

To come and be supported by friends and family, it is very important. But when you arrive with family members, you do not get to know of settlement and support organizations. I now believe that I have found a job in my professional area sooner if I had known from the beginning about these places (Fernando, Mexican man, in his late 30s, Burnaby).

11.4.3 Constrained Residential Mobility and the Role of Legal (Formal) and Illegal (Informal) Basement Suites

The most common reasons for moving to Burnaby, Richmond, or Surrey were job opportunities in the study areas and proximity to the city of Vancouver (where jobs were available), followed by accessibility to public transportation/shopping malls/amenities and to live near family members/friends.

After arriving in the suburbs, many participants moved from temporary to permanent rental housing, some more than once. Half of participants had moved between one and three times, possibly due to their newcomer status combined with a lack of affordable rental units, including social housing. Most were renting an apartment (45.3%) or basement suite (33.6%); some (27.7%) were dealing with repair issues, and many were overcrowded (32.1%). Anecdotal evidence suggests that certain ethnic groups, notably Chinese and East Indians, were more willing than native-born Canadians to accept tight living quarters or living with extended members of the family (multigenerational). Ethnic bonds and solidarity among recent and more established immigrants from the same ethnic background can lead to a strong chain of friendship and loyalty linking potential renters to immigrant homeowners/landlords. Thus, rental housing (from room(s) or flats to basement suites) is often exchanged in both formal (legal) and informal (illegal) ways among people who share a similar identity or culture, thus creating an important supply of rental housing in the suburbs that helps both immigrant renters and homeowners alike. As previous studies have emphasized, basement suites are the only way for many recent immigrants to enter the rental housing market. They also provide a way for immigrant homeowners to supplement their mortgage costs (see Mendez & Quastel, 2016).

For those renting a basement or ground floor suite, affordability was a major issue and many had encountered barriers to moving out: a limited supply of social housing and long wait lists made it difficult for this group of renters to access affordable rental housing in the short term. Many also lacked information about how social housing works and how to apply: only 17 participants (12.4%) were on a wait list for social housing. The lack of adequate, suitable, and affordable housing choices led many participants to use coping strategies such as holding more than one job, sharing overcrowded housing with relatives and co-ethnics, or renting a basement apartment of poor quality. The adoption of such strategies may affect immigrants' quality of life, health, and general well-being (see Fig. 11.1; Teixeira & Li, 2015; Newbold, 2010).

11.4.4 High Housing Costs: At Risk of Homelessness?

The rental market was characterized by low vacancy rates and high rents. Approximately 33% of participants were paying CA\$1000–\$1500 per month, and 10.2% were paying more than CA\$1500 per month. One participant commented:

I thought it was easy to find affordable housing when you have a job. It turns out that you need at least three members of the family to work in order to afford the cost of living in Richmond (Wei, Chinese women, in her late 40s, Richmond).

Insufficient income, lack of references, or poor credit history were identified as barriers to housing accessibility. One participant commented:

When I arrived, I didn't know anyone and had enough money to rent a shared apartment, but it was very difficult because I had no references, work, or credit history. Therefore, I had to rent a shared room in a house where we were a total of 16 [persons], eight in the main part and eight in the basement (Miguel, Mexican man, in his 30s, Surrey).

According to the Canada Housing Mortgage Corporation, housing is affordable if it accounts for no more than 30% of total income before taxes. Based on this criterion, the majority of participants were living in unaffordable housing, with half spending 30–50% of their household income on housing; a high proportion (40.9%) were spending more than 50%, putting them at risk of homelessness. Among the three study areas, participants in Burnaby (e.g., Mexicans) struggled the most to access affordable rental housing. The high cost of housing in this mature, well-established inner suburb is likely due to its proximity to the city of Vancouver (and available employment) and public transportation (Grigoryeva & Ley, 2019; Jones, 2020). Despite their low incomes and the numerous barriers they encountered in the suburban rental housing market, almost all participants across different cultures aspired to eventually become homeowners. They cited several benefits, highlighting investment and financial security, and greater privacy for their families and control:

As a Chinese, in our culture is that the place we own is our 'home.' Otherwise, we feel not settled before buying our own place (Xu, Chinese women, in her mid 40s, Richmond).

My husband and I are working overtime and sharing the basement with another couple because we want to save for a down payment and be able to buy our apartment in one or two years (Margarita, Mexican women, in her early 40s, Burnaby).

11.4.5 How to Find a Home: Compromise, Relocation, and the Role of Co-ethnic Sources and the Social Media

The search for housing can be difficult and complex, particularly for recent low-income immigrants who lack established social networks and are unfamiliar with suburban neighbourhoods and housing markets. Most participants had moved from their first permanent residence in Burnaby, Surrey, or Richmond more than once, usually to improve their housing conditions and to live in better, safer

neighbourhoods. About half (54%) cited neighbourhood conditions (quality and safety of the area, good school) and accessibility of jobs, amenities, and their ethnic communities as their main reasons for moving to their present residence. About one-third cited housing costs/rents (affordability) or better housing conditions (size and number of rooms, privacy) as their main reasons.

The finding that respondents placed so little emphasis on adequate or suitable housing, and particularly affordability, when choosing their current residence was striking. Housing unaffordability is a major issue in Vancouver's suburbs, and participants took a practical approach to the trade-off between cost versus quality and amenities. Additionally, unexpected rent increases forced almost one-quarter (23.4%) of participants to seek out even less expensive rental housing – including illegal or unsafe rental units.

The search for rental housing can be stressful and time-consuming, especially in Vancouver's suburbs; half of our respondents described their most recent housing search as 'somewhat or very difficult.' Lack of affordable rental housing and poor access to transit were the most frequently cited difficulties, as well as the lack of adequate/suitable housing, finding housing in a safe and desirable location, and inadequate information about the local rental market. One said:

Finding a place with good transit/accessibility options was not easy...The price of renting is getting somewhat high but trying to reach a balance between cost of renting and access to services, public transportation was a priority...number one issue (Sandeep, East Indian man, in his early 40s, Surrey).

These experiences reflect those of others who settle in the car-oriented suburbs of Canada's major urban centres, where inadequate and inaccessible transportation and expensive housing markets are problematic (Preston et al., 2009; Hiebert, 2015).

Potential renters and homebuyers can obtain information about housing vacancies from a wide variety of sources. These range from market sources such as newspapers, real estate agents, and housing agencies as well as different forms of social media to more-specialized community-oriented sources such as friends, relatives, and real estate agents from the same ethnic background (Sarre et al., 1989). The amount, quality, and biases of housing information provided by these sources can vary from one source to another and may ultimately determine the efficiency of the search strategy and the final outcome of the relocation process (Teixeira, 2017).

Our respondents used a variety of methods when looking for their current residence; most (40.1%) relied on advice and information from relatives and co-ethnic friends as well as social media (38%), an increasingly popular resource despite reports of online scams. This growing role of social media in the housing search process of recent immigrants and its impact on relocation processes and the spatial structuring of the housing market (rental and homeownership) in the suburbs remains largely unstudied. Very few of our respondents (6.6%) sought or received assistance from government or non-government organizations when looking for housing. Barriers to accessing settlement agencies may include language barriers, lack of trust in Canadian sources of information, and lack of knowledge about available programmes and services. Results show that social networks played an

important role in the lives of our participants, particularly with regard to their housing searches and ‘housing-neighbourhood’ choices. Extensive use of relatives and co-ethnic friends when searching for housing can be a factor in maintaining racial and ethnic segregation in the suburbs of Vancouver.

11.4.6 Suburban Gatekeepers: Covert and Overt Discrimination as Barriers to Housing

Some obstacles to a successful integration in the suburbs involve structural and racial/cultural barriers in the housing market. Previous research has emphasized that racism is an important dimension of Canadian society and a barrier to equal access in the housing market. However, Canada is known for having a less constrained housing market compared with other industrialized countries like the US, UK, or France (Fong & Berry, 2017; Cox & Pavletich, 2019), but this may be changing, especially in the suburbs of major metropolitan areas like Vancouver.

When asked if they had experienced discrimination (defined as actions by landlords in which one is refused an apartment or pays higher rent than others for no valid reason), 38.7% of participants reported experiencing some form of discrimination (‘a moderate amount’, ‘quite a bit’, or ‘very much’). Examples included stereotyping and prejudice by local landlords regarding income, number of children, immigrant status, and general mistrust of cultural, religious, racial, or ethnic background. No participants made an official complaint to local authorities (e.g., BC Residential Tenancy Branch), possibly due to language barriers, lack of money, limited knowledge of their rights as tenants or fear of retaliation (or both).

Even when respondents were willing to sacrifice a high proportion of their income for rent, some landlords may not trust immigrants and their applications, relying instead on their own assessment of whether rent will be paid. Screening out low-income applicants has become more common in recent years, and unsurprisingly, many participants mentioned feeling unwelcome as ‘foreigners.’ One commented:

I have felt discriminated because one immediately realises how Canadians [landlords] treat people differently when they realize we do not speak the language well or that we come from other places, especially Latin America. They usually make comments around how many children we have or how much we earn and whether or not we have papers...There is discrimination in the search for work and/or housing, especially when property owners ask why we came to Canada and about our immigration status. There is a sense that they believe all Mexicans are undocumented outside of our country (Antonietta, Mexican woman, in her late 30s, Surrey).

Low vacancy rates and a limited supply of affordable housing allow landlords to function as ‘suburban gatekeepers’ with the power to ‘filter’ tenants by ethnicity, race, cultural and religious background, gender, or income. Some require newcomers to pre-pay rent, often illegally. Other landlords require that potential renters show proof of sufficient funds to support their family for several months. This

screening and ‘steering’ behaviour enables landlords to covertly discriminate against renters and can shape the social, cultural, and economic landscape of suburban housing submarkets.

11.4.7 Coming to Stay: Satisfaction with Current Dwelling

Regarding levels of satisfaction with their present residence and neighbourhood, two-thirds of participants were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with their situation; 55.5% rated their housing situation as having ‘improved a lot’ or ‘improved a little’ since they had arrived, while 34.3% indicated it had ‘stayed the same’. Relatively few participants (10.2%) indicated that their housing situation had ‘got worse’ with concerns about safety being the major factor. Despite this promising result, many respondents needed to balance the quality and size of their dwelling against location and neighbourhood safety. When commenting about their home and neighbourhood, many highlighted feelings of safety, security, and acceptance by neighbours, which some equated with feeling ‘at home.’ Despite the barriers they had encountered, almost all participants were satisfied with their lives in Canada, and most were highly committed to their new country: two-thirds indicated that they ‘came to stay’ and had no plans to return to their country of origin.

11.5 Concluding Remarks and Areas for Further Research

The new geographies of immigrant settlement in North American suburbs – particularly the significance of ethnic suburban enclaves – have become of more interest to scholars, as the US’s and Canada’s largest urban centres and their increasingly culturally diverse suburbs continue to grow (Singer et al., 2008; Teixeira & Li, 2015; Keil, 2020; Zhuang, 2021). The suburbanization of immigrants in Canada is a relatively recent phenomenon and their settlement and housing experiences in the suburbs are varied and complex. Higher costs of living in large urban areas, particularly housing costs, may explain in part why recent immigrants are bypassing Canada’s major ports of entry (Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver) and settling directly in suburbs. Immigration continues to play an important role in the increases in housing demand (rental and homeownership) and prices in Canada’s largest cities and their increasingly diverse suburbs (Hiebert, 2009; Moos et al., 2015; Addie et al., 2020; Singh, 2021).

Immigrants are changing the social, cultural, religious, and economic landscapes of suburbs by establishing enclaves and economic niches. For example, some wealthy Chinese immigrants in Richmond and some South Asians in Surrey are building or buying so-called monster homes. Their financial resources sometimes lead to racial tensions with long-established residents, especially when they buy older houses and tear them down to build large houses to accommodate multiple

households (Qadeer, 2016). These homeowners are creating domestic spaces that suit their cultural preferences (e.g., multigenerational, or multi-familial living arrangements or both).

In contrast, lower-income immigrant homeowners may use strategies such as renting a portion of their property, for example a basement or secondary suite, to members of their ethnic or religious background to supplement their income and reduce borrowing costs; this also contributes to the changing geography of ethnicity and housing in Canadian cities and suburbs.

With regard to low-income immigrant and refugee renters, many have settled in concentrated pockets, particularly in neighbourhoods that follow the Sky Train line from East Vancouver through the older suburbs of Burnaby and New Westminster toward Surrey (Grigoryeva & Ley, 2019; Jones, 2020). Additionally, many visible minority immigrants have been forced to access public housing due to their low household income, compounded by discriminatory actions by landlords. Overall, the numbers of low-income recent immigrant renters, including refugees, continue to increase, consequently shaping the built environment and the social geography of Canadian suburbs. In the current context of the national housing crisis and the competitive housing market in cities and suburbs, more research is needed to explore the negative effects on recent immigrants and other at-risk groups.

As a result, suburbs have become a mix of wealthy immigrants living in expensive detached homes as well as little pockets of poverty where some refugees, rent-stressed families, and low-income immigrants, including visible minorities, coexist. These recent trends have countered the traditional assumption that recent immigrants and refugees begin their lives in Canada in inner-city neighbourhoods (Murdie & Skop, 2012). At this stage, more research is needed to investigate the geographic and social dimensions of this relatively new phenomenon.

Increasing social polarization in the suburbs has also affected housing affordability and poverty levels, presenting major challenges for local governments. Rapid population growth in the suburbs has increased the need for more infrastructure, transportation, and services of all kinds, and has led to environmental concerns about car-dependent cultures and encroachment on farmlands, wetlands, and wild-life (Statistics Canada, 2022a). The urban growth and development of the Canadian suburbs is now a priority because in the near future home prices may force many new immigrants to settle in the 'exurbs' – distant suburbs at the edges of major cities such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

Our research findings revealed that almost all study participants were relatively new to the suburbs; about half had bypassed the city of Vancouver and came directly to the suburbs upon arrival in Canada. Low household income was another characteristic of these suburban recent immigrants. Findings from this study point not only the weaknesses of the spatial assimilation model (Massey, 1985; Massey & Denton, 1985; Murdie & Skop, 2012), which suggests 'that the residential mobility of immigrants is directly related to their socio-economic status and degree of acculturation,' but also to the need for further research.

Given the escalating housing costs in the rental and homeownership markets and low vacancy rates, most participants had difficulties finding housing. About

one-third shared temporary accommodation with relatives or friends to create a social, cultural, and financial ‘comfort zone.’ For many this was a short-term solution prior to finding permanent housing. Consistent with previous findings in the suburbs of Vancouver and Toronto that new immigrants feel more comfortable relying on their own informal social networks than on formal sources like government organizations, NGOs, or housing service agencies, few participants in this study had received assistance from local community organizations (Sherrell, 2009; Preston et al., 2009; Teixeira, 2007, 2014; Lo et al., 2015). More research is needed to clarify the cultural and structural forces influencing newcomers’ use or non-use of these services.

Ethno-specific social networks offer new immigrants many advantages in the early stages of settlement, especially the search for housing; less is known about the disadvantages. This finding points to the importance of ethnicity and cultural attributes as significant variables in shaping recent immigrants’ suburbanization and local housing markets. Further study is required to investigate the efficacy and reliability of social networks, including local community organizations, and how they help – or hinder – the search for housing and adaptation into society. Additionally, few studies have explored ethnocultural organizations outside Canada’s major urban centres. This lack of comparative research is remarkable, given the recent phenomenon of immigrants settling directly in the suburbs or in small- and mid-size cities. Therefore, more research is needed to explore the extent to which co-ethnic social networks, including ethnic organizations, shape the cultural and social residential geography of suburbs and smaller cities, as well as the amount, quality, and cultural biases of housing information provided by these sources.

Once in the suburbs, most immigrant renters want to improve their housing and neighbourhood conditions. Participants cited better neighbourhood and housing conditions, location/accessibility to jobs, amenities and their ethnic communities, and affordability as prime reasons for moving to their current location. Most participants indicated that their housing situation had improved since their last move but that they had made some trade-offs and compromises in terms of housing space, quality, privacy, safety, access to amenities, and location to transit and jobs. Some coped with high housing costs or rents by subletting basement suites in their homes or subletting part of their apartment; others live in crowded rental circumstances, and a few were forced to move after being evicted. Overall, the diversity of housing experiences and coping strategies used by recent immigrants means that there is no such thing as a ‘typical’ experience related to rental housing in the suburbs of Vancouver. However, access to affordable housing remains the biggest factor. More longitudinal research is needed to clarify the housing trajectories of immigrants over time, e.g., from renter to homeowner, including their levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their neighbourhood conditions and how this affects their integration into the new society.

Low household income was a major challenge for respondents. Half were under enormous financial pressure, spending 30–50% of their monthly household income on housing. Another half were paying more than 50%, putting them at risk of homelessness. Many had experienced hidden homelessness (couch-surfing and living in

multi-family households). Such housing challenges are typical in major Canadian cities and their suburbs (Fiedler et al., 2006; Preston et al., 2009; Hiebert, 2017; Singh, 2021). More qualitative research is needed to clarify how unaffordable and unsuitable housing affects social exclusion and integration among new immigrants, as well as how adequate, suitable, and affordable housing can improve quality of life for suburban immigrant households.

Currently, limited supply and long wait lists make it difficult for renters to access affordable, subsidized housing in the short term. Legal and illegal basement suites are a typical market response to the chronic lack of affordable housing, including social housing (Mendez & Quastel, 2016). Homeowners from older and well-established immigrant groups (e.g., the Chinese and Southeast Asian communities) sometimes rent parts of their properties as a financial coping strategy and mortgage helper. This kind of 'ethnic steering,' however, can also lead to the concentration of low-income immigrant renters in poor areas as well as to substandard rental housing complexes. More qualitative research is needed into the motivations of immigrant landlords subletting parts of their dwellings to co-ethnics, the financial benefits of this practice, and how basement suites affect the supply of affordable rental housing in the suburbs. Research could also clarify the role of immigrant and non-immigrant landlords as 'urban gatekeepers' or 'agents of change' in shaping the social and cultural geography of suburban neighbourhoods and the formation of housing submarkets.

Searching for rental housing in the suburbs of Vancouver can be stressful and time-consuming. Half of our participants described their most recent search as 'somewhat or very difficult.' Most had relied on advice and information from relatives and co-ethnic friends as well as online searches and social media, though there is evidence that online rental housing scams are common (see Boeing, 2019). This finding points to the importance of 'ethnic' sources of information to look for and locate a new rental dwelling: the housing information provided by ethnic sources of information such as relatives and co-ethnic friends has cultural biases that affect search strategies and the potential location of a new residence. From this perspective, ethnicity or race itself seem to be a more complex and important variable than the literature on housing and suburbanization has shown (see Li, 2009; Preston et al., 2009; Fong & Berry, 2017). However, at this stage less is known about the increased use of web-based resources; further study is needed to explore the advantages and limitations of social media as a source of housing information in immigrants' relocation process and the implications for housing outcomes.

Race and ethnicity matter when accessing housing in diverse and expensive real estate markets. Clearly, immigrants have played a significant role in transforming the social and physical landscape of Canada's suburbs, including its complex housing markets. However, the ethnocultural dimension has been generally overlooked in research on immigrant suburbanization. Moreover, many of the intricacies of the suburbanization of immigrant groups remain unclear. Overall, more research is needed to clarify the role of race and ethnicity in the suburbs where vulnerable populations, including racialized groups such as refugees and recent immigrants, are more likely to live in the future. More comparative studies are also needed to

explore (a) why some groups are more likely to move to the suburbs than others; (b) the main barriers they encounter in the relocation process; and (c) why some groups, once established in the suburbs, are residentially more stable and attain higher levels of homeownership than others. Immigrants are increasingly redefining the social and cultural geography of the suburbs, so it is important to ensure that newcomers are able to access affordable, adequate, and suitable housing in safe neighbourhoods, and ultimately integrate into society – both socially and economically.

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Chapter 12

Suburban Migration: Interrogating the Intersections of Global Migration and Suburban Transformation



Zhixi Cecilia Zhuang 

12.1 Introduction

Suburbanisation as a global phenomenon has presented multifaceted patterns of evolution and transformation in various contexts. As Keil (2018, p. 4) argues, ‘We live on a suburban planet’, yet the suburban environments are shaped in remarkably differentiated ways. Global suburbanisation take many different forms, including but not limited to the typical low density, single-family-home dominated suburban sprawl in many North American cities, high-rise housing in European and some Canadian cities, urban villages, new towns and vertical suburbs in the peripheries of Chinese metropolises, squatter settlements in the Global South, and peripheral expansion, informal settlement, and new centralities in African cities forming a world of suburbs we live in (Keil, 2013, 2018; Mabin, 2013; Nijman, 2013; Wu, 2013). These different suburban built forms and various processes of suburbanisation suggest that the term ‘suburb’ could have different meanings attached to it and can be understood in multiple dimensions. For example, a twentieth-century suburb was characterised as a settlement in a peripheral location, partly (or wholly) residential, with low density due to cheaper land, a distinctive way of life, and a separate community identity (Harris & Larkham, 1999, p. 8). Yet, suburbs and the associated meanings are evolving with time and geographic location. Contemporary suburbanisation is conceptualised as ‘the combination of non-central population and economic growth with urban spatial expansion’ (Ekers et al., 2012, p. 407), and manifested in various built forms and densities, demographic compositions, economic activities, and governance structures (Phelps, 2017).

Suburban population and economic growth are often driven by (im)migration, a process that is in juxtaposition of the planetary suburbanisation. Global migration is

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a significant demographic trend across the world, with 3.6% (281 million) of the world's population living outside their country of birth in 2020 despite travel restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic (Natarajan et al., 2022). Europe and Asia were home to the most migrants, with 86.7 and 85.6 million respectively. However, immigrants in North America make up a larger share of the population (15.7%) than those in Europe (11.6%) and Asia (1.8%). The United States has 50.6 million international migrants, the largest share than any other country by a wide margin, whereas Canada takes up eight million migrants (*ibid.*). Within this North American context, immigrants have increasingly been settling in suburban areas in recent decades. In the US, the majority of immigrants (61%) live in suburbs (Singer et al., 2011). In Canada, the suburbanisation trend of immigration has also intensified. According to the 2011 census, the three major gateway cities – Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal – showed a significant suburbanisation rate, i.e., the proportion of immigrants living in a peripheral municipality, of 51%, 72%, and 33%, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2017). This trend has been observed in Europe and Australia, among other regions, such as the subcity districts in Berlin, the boroughs of London, and the suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne (Eurostat, 2016; Phelps, 2017; Forrest et al., 2017). Migrant suburbs in Chinese cities also ‘illustrate a case where diverse population and types of [suburban] development are juxtaposed’ (Shen & Wu, 2013, p. 1823).

The suburbanisation trend of immigration has been driven by a variety of ‘pull’ factors, including the availability of affordable housing, job opportunities, schools, safety, and proximity to established ethnic communities (Alba & Nee, 2003; Wilson & Svajlenka, 2014), as well as ‘push’ factors such as racial exclusion and gentrification-induced displacement (Hulchanski, 2010; Keil, 2018; Tzaninis, 2020). The spatial settlement patterns are generally manifested in either ethnic concentration in specific neighbourhoods or housing developments, such as the so-called ethnoburbs coined by Li (2009), or dispersion throughout the area as a way of spatial assimilation (Forrest et al., 2017; Zhuang, 2019, 2021). These spatial patterns can vary over time and can differ depending on many factors, such as the location, the size of immigrant communities, group characteristics, and receptivity of the host society and infrastructure.

On one hand, immigration has had a significant impact on the demographic makeup and economic and cultural landscapes of suburban areas, such as greater ethnocultural diversity of the local population and increased immigrant-owned businesses and cultural amenities and services (Liu & Jeong, 2022; Zhuang et al., 2015; Zhuang, 2019, 2021). On the other hand, while (im)migrants are rapidly suburbanising, residential segregation has increased in metropolitan areas across the US, among other countries (Alba & Foner, 2015; Farrell, 2016; Wu, 2013). Socio-spatial exclusion further deepens the marginalisation of migrant communities who are trapped in disadvantaged suburban locations with downward mobility (Shen, 2017). Unlike central cities that are more likely to adopt sanctuary policies, some suburban communities have resisted the influx of immigrants and implemented policies to restrict their settlement along with anti-immigration political rhetorics (Forrest et al., 2017; Leitner & Preston, 2011). Additionally, immigrants may face systemic

discrimination and challenges in accessing resources and opportunities and participating in decision-making, raising concerns about social justice and rights to the city (Edge et al., 2020; Kim & Bozarth, 2021; Loewen, 2005; Lung-Amam, 2020; Vitiello, 2014; Zhuang, 2021).

In sum, migrant settlements in suburban spaces just add more complexities to suburbia by bringing diverse demographics, (inter)cultural practices, new built forms, and new meanings of space and community. These migrant spaces challenge conventional suburban socio-spatial organisations of land, infrastructure, and resources, as well as suburban governance, planning, and design. The manifestations of migrant suburbs where diversity and urban growth are juxtaposed inevitably present profound implications for governments, practitioners, and academics in a myriad of ways, such as changing land uses and physical forms (e.g. neighbourhood characters, heritage preservation), competing claims for space and rights to the city (e.g. who has the access), and increasing awareness of equity and social inclusion (e.g. who belongs to and in the community). Despite the established suburban settlement trajectory, there is still a lack of knowledge about how diversity is manifested at the suburban neighbourhood level, how immigrant settlement patterns are transforming suburban spaces, or how municipalities and the host societies should respond to promote inclusive community-building. As a result, understanding the patterns and nuances of immigrant settlement in suburbs is crucial for policymakers and practitioners who aim to promote the integration and well-being of immigrants and their host societies.

This chapter draws on the research work in this volume by Cathy Yang Liu and Rory Renzy (Chap. 9), Jie Shen (Chap. 10), and Carlos Teixeira and Anabel L. Salinas (Chap. 11) that explore the migration-related suburbanisation processes in different contexts (i.e., the US, Shanghai, Vancouver) to cast light on the narratives of everyday suburban life, diversity management, growth and development, policy and governance, and socio-spatial (in)equity and (in)justice. Specifically, the above chapters address many imperative issues around suburban migration in terms of housing, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, access to services, social networks, and public infrastructure (e.g. transit). The various settlement needs are primary to migrants and interrelated in their everyday suburban life, but unfortunately are often neglected in the peripheries due to limited access to resources and opportunities, segregation and isolation, and the lack of migrant-oriented and culturally-responsive policies, infrastructure, and services. It raises the following critical questions. What are the systemic barriers that prevent us from understanding migrants' needs, and thus creating welcoming and inclusive communities to support migrants' settlement and integration in the suburbs? How do race, class, ethnicity, gender, or other forms of diversity play out in shaping migrants' lived experiences and their socio-economic integration outcomes in the suburban context? How do we reconcile the competing needs of diversity in the rapid process of suburban growth and transformation? What are the policy implications for suburban municipalities and policymakers to tackle inequitable access to resources and services in suburbs?

Given that the meanings of suburbs and the processes of suburbanisation vary in a myriad of ways, there is no one-size-fits-all template to address these questions.

Rather, this chapter adopts Henri Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the production of space as a theoretical framework to unpack the nuances of migrant suburbanisation and the varied lived experiences; help researchers, policymakers, and the hosting societies gain a better understanding of migrants' perceived and lived experiences in suburbia; interrogate the juxtaposed realities (both challenges and opportunities) of migration and suburbanisation; and further explore migrants' agency and rights to the city. It concludes with several implications for suburban planning *for* and *with* immigrants.

12.2 A Theoretical Framework: The Production of Space in Immigrant Suburbs

Henri Lefebvre's (1991) seminal book *The Production of Space* explores how space is mentally, socially, and physically produced, reproduced, and transformed in society, and how it is used to reinforce social relations of power. Lefebvre provided a three-part, triadic model for the assessment of the production of space, which argued that space (e.g. the built environment) is not simply a physical structure for spatial practice where people encounter in urban reality and during daily routine, but is socially constructed by diverse, human experiences and abstractly controlled and conceived by a dominant class or the experts (e.g. scientists, planners, architects, developers, technocrats, engineers, etc.). He distinguished *perceived*, *conceived*, and *lived* spaces (in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces) that encapsulate the social production of space; that is, the contention between the technocratically-planned, conceived, and perceived construction of space with the differences of the subjective lived-experiences of those in the lived-space. He also emphasised that 'the lived, conceived and perceived realms should be interconnected, so that the "subject", the individual member of a given social group, may move from one to another without confusion – so much is a logical necessity' (ibid., p. 40).

More simply, the theory regards the notion that space is implicitly controlled and planned by a dominant class, 'all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived' (ibid., p. 38), but has differential impacts on people's everyday life, thus asserting that the organisation of space can affect people's mobility, access to resources and amenities, and participation in social and political life. Lefebvre further posited that society's spatial organisation reflects and reinforces social hierarchies and inequalities. Therefore, the understanding of space is a crucial element of political and social struggles, and social relations of power, as it shapes the possibilities for resistance and change.

It is worth noting that Lefebvre's work was composed during a context where the heterogeneity of cities was relatively less stark than the contemporary context of global migration and diversity. An intersectional lens, in particular through race and ethnicity, ought to be considered when evaluating the theory of the production of

space (McCann, 1999). Intersectionality was conceptualised by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to recognise the intersection of race and gender in converging disadvantage and oppression. Intersectionality is particularly relevant under the context of migration and suburbanisation due to ethnocultural diversification of the demographics through immigration, although some of the suburbs may not necessarily be as diverse as central cities.

Existing research on migrant suburbs highlights settlement and integration as a multi-scalar process. For instance, the policy (macro-level) implications at various levels of government have been attested to evaluate the management of migrants in suburbs (Walker, 2014). On a more local level, researchers have empirically examined community (meso-level) factors that contribute to migrant suburbanisation such as housing accessibility (Teixeira, 2017; Salinas & Teixeira, 2022) to the role of community organisations and spaces (Lo et al., 2015; Mukhtar et al., 2016). Attention to individual (micro-level) and subjective/lived experience factors that impact suburban settlement and integration is emerging (Dean et al., 2018; Kim & Bozarth, 2021; Salinas & Teixeira, 2022) while, notably, studies tend to focus on specific groups' characteristics and experiences.

There is a lack of an integrative approach synthesising and integrating the macro-, meso-, and micro-level factors to better understand the epistemological underpinnings of migrant settlement and integration in suburbs. The theory of production of space offers a relevant theoretical framework to understand how spaces in migrant suburbs are *conceived* as a result of planning policies and processes at the macro-level, *perceived* in daily encounters and spatial practices at the meso-level, and *lived* through actual human experiences at the micro-level. This multi-scalar framework contributes to the understanding of the gaps between suburban planning, settlement, and integration services, and cultivating a sense of belonging through the actual lived experiences and agency of migrants. This may provide practical considerations to better improve the process and outcome of suburban planning and implement physical and social infrastructure needed to support migrant settlement and integration. The following sections will elaborate more on how to apply the triad lens of space to interrogate the interactions of migration, settlement, integration, and suburbanisation.

12.3 Unpacking the Conceived Suburban Space and the Inherent Socio-spatial Segregation

Lefebvre's theory lends itself to an understanding of how the suburb was first conceived as 'an ideal, the good life: it was harmonious, predictable, and secure, and change was not a part of that dreamy constellation' (Nijman, 2013, p. 162). Under this abstract and imaginary representation, North America as the 'birthplace of the prototypical twentieth-century suburbs' (ibid.) has witnessed an accelerated process of suburbanisation after World War II, with the relocation of industries, economic

activities, jobs, and middle-class nuclear families from the central city. Duany et al. (2010, p. 6) defined the five components of suburban sprawl that are strictly segregated from each other: housing subdivisions, shopping centres, office parks, civic institutions, and roadways because 'suburbs are designed based on the assumption of massive automotive transportation'. As a result, suburbs are typified with low-density, car-dependent, and segregated land use development patterns, where single-family homes characterised by detached houses on large lots are often separated from commercial or industrial uses. Shopping centres, strip malls, and big boxes are prevalent retail forms mainly accessible by automobiles.

The cookie-cutter zoning regulations in suburbs have led to a fragmented, homogeneous, and car-dominated landscape coupled with inadequate public transit and limited access to public amenities and services. Historically, suburban space was conceived by the dominant building industry, regulatory authorities, capitalists, and state power. As Nijman (2013, p. 165) pointed out, 'suburbanisation was the business of an extremely powerful industrial conglomerate that employed (and helped generate) the American suburban imaginary to full effect', which included huge corporations, local 'growth machines' (e.g. developers, builders, banks), local governments that regulate land uses and sometimes direct subsidies, and the federal government 'that was central to the financing of homeownership, the construction of highways, and that in various ways espoused suburban ideologies'.

Suburbs are also segregated by socioeconomic status and ethnicity, as evidenced in higher poverty rates than in central cities and spatial segregation/exclusion of immigrant groups (Farrell, 2016). Experiences of eviction, displacement, homelessness, discrimination, and racism (Fiedler et al., 2006; Hepburn et al., 2022; Hulchanski, 2010; Loewen, 2005; Preston et al., 2009) further deepen the socio-spatial divide between the rich and poor, between the native-born and immigrants, and between White and minority populations. The land use segregation exacerbates immigrants' needs for public infrastructure and services as they tend to rely more on public transit than the native-born to access affordable housing, job opportunities, and social services (Farrell, 2016; Lo et al., 2015; Teixeira, 2017). This can result in reduced social mobility, spatial inequality, and the lack of a sense of community, challenging the conventional suburban planning ideals. Duany et al. (2010, p. 45) contested the suburban sprawl reality and concluded that 'the unity of society is threatened not by the use of gates but by the uniformity and exclusivity of the people behind them'.

Suburban segregation in land use and by socioeconomic status has a significant impact on the character, liveability, and sustainability of suburbia and the lived experiences of immigrants, highlighting the need for a more integrated, equitable, and sustainable approach to suburban development. City builders such as planners, architects, engineers, developers, and policymakers 'should endeavour to ensure that what gets built on the urban fringe is as environmentally sound, economically efficient, and socially just as possible' (ibid., p. 185). This can help reduce dependence on cars, increase equitable access to resources and services, and promote more diverse and inclusive communities. After all, suburban planning must be 'based on a foundation of spatial equity' (ibid., p. 147) rather than imposing elite

experts' imagination and ideology upon suburban space. Lefebvre's theory is useful when applied to planning immigrant suburbs as it urged the producers of space to reconsider the following critical questions: Whose representation of space is attested to by the plans? Where does it derive? Whose vocabulary does it make use of? Whose code does it embody? Whose interests are served? What intervenes between representations of space and representational spaces, how, why, by whom, and for whom?

12.4 Making Suburban Places and Building Social Infrastructure

Lefebvre's work links the abstract, conceptualised, or imaginary representations of space with the physical spaces and the spatial practices of everyday life which are central to the understanding of suburban life and the production of immigrant places. The spatial practices of various immigrant groups with different identities, cultural practices, and uses of space can be at odds with the conventions in suburbs that were intended to be predictable and homogeneous. As a result, the needs of migrants are often ignored or underserved due to the lack of social and physical infrastructure (Lo et al., 2015). Suburbs, especially when compared to the central cities, are generally less serviced or insufficiently equipped with the infrastructure to support migrants' social and economic integration. Additionally, local municipal planning practices affecting the delivery of public infrastructure and services are often influenced by upper-level policies and funding structures (Mukhtar et al., 2016).

Despite the infrastructure deficiency in suburbs, research has identified the role of spatial capital – that is, the concentrations of co-ethnic or mixed-ethnic populations – in utilising local resources to meet community needs, maximise business performance, contribute to place identity, and achieve institutional completeness (Hewidy & Lilius, 2021a, b; Li, 2009; Zhuang, 2019, 2021). Many of these ethnic concentrations serve as important community hubs including ethnic retailing, places of worship, community organisations, and other ethnic-oriented institutions, and form an important social infrastructure to support social integration, place-making, and community bonding (Klinenberg, 2018; Tasan-Kok & Ozogul, 2017; Zhuang, 2021).

The spatial practices of immigrants in the suburbs can be multifarious and at multiple scales. For example, Basu and Fiedler's (Basu & Fiedler, 2017) study in Scarborough, Toronto's inner suburb, captured immigrants' everyday encounters through schools, festivals, ethnic grocery stores, places of worship, and community centres that have transformed indistinct suburban spaces into places imbued with new meanings and identities. As a result, migrants perceived and framed Scarborough 'in multiple and metaphorical forms: from a City of Refuge and Peace; City of Memory, Desire, and Imagination; City of Multifariousness; to a City of Civic Engagement and Fluid Resistance. This stands in stark contrast from how the city is

framed in dominant discourse and the unsettling debates on how to reform it' (ibid., p. 25). Toronto is atypical compared to most of the North American suburbs in that its suburbs 'had always been physically and socially diverse' (Harris, 2015, p. 31), intensified with high-rise apartments and subsidised housing, and mainly occupied by immigrants and racialised minorities. Yet, many towers are crowded and in dire need of repairs, impacting the physical and mental health of immigrant renters who experience environmental injustice at multiple scales of their housing units, high-rise buildings, and neighbourhood (Edge et al., 2020).

Lefebvre's theory sheds light on the importance of understanding the spatial practices of a perceived space in the light of changing demographics. How have these suburban immigrant neighbourhoods evolved over time? How is the space perceived, encountered, and transformed into meaningful places? What are the community needs for space and services, especially those related to immigrant settlement? What are the provisions for community infrastructure and services? How do immigrants create their own sense of belonging, identity, and place in their neighbourhoods? These questions are worth further exploration.

12.5 Immigrants' Agency and the Right to the City

Lefebvre's (1991) constant attention to the lived experiences of space or the representational spaces makes his work applicable to the discussions of immigrants' actual experiences of suburbs, their agency and practices of rights to the city. His concept of 'everyday life' emphasised that space is experienced differently based on subjective lived experiences. He argued that 'representational space is alive: it speaks...It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time ... It may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic' (ibid., p. 42). He further suggested investigating how the user's space is lived (not represented or conceived). Here, he refers to the 'users' as those who are underprivileged or marginalised. Lefebvre argued strongly against the so-called advocacy planning, a major planning theory that calls for planners' representation of various groups' interests (Davidoff, 1965, pp. 364–365). Specifically, he challenged that:

When the interested parties – the 'users' – do not speak up, who can speak in their name or in their place? Certainly not some expert, some specialist of space or of spokespersonship; there is no such specialization, because no one has a right to speak for those directly concerned here. The entitlement to do so, the concepts to do so, the language to do so are simply lacking. How would the discourse of such an expert differ from that of the architects, 'developers' of politicians? The fact is that to accept such a role or function is to espouse the fetishization of communication – the replacement of use by exchange. The silence of the 'users' is indeed a problem – and it is the entire problem.

Lefebvre (1996) later coined 'the Right to the City', a burgeoning concept that has gained much attention in advocating for people's spatial rights to achieve urban justice: the right to be involved in the process of space production; the right to

access city advantages; the right to avoid spatial segregation; and the right to access public services (Harvey, 2003, 2008; Jian et al., 2020; Soja, 2010). Harvey (2008) highlighted the role of resident agencies in (re)shaping their inclusion and belonging in cities. Specifically, he described ‘the right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is the right to change ourselves by changing the city’ (ibid., p. 23). It is a fundamental human right to ensure everyone’s access to resources, amenities, and services, and full participation in social, economic, and political life as well as decision-making. Soja (2010) further elaborated on the two dimensions of spatial justice: distributional justice is the fair distribution of resources, opportunities, and power, and procedural justice refers to the involvement of all people in decision-making processes.

The literature has demonstrated immigrants’ agency to claim their Right to the City as evidenced in the creation of a welcoming refuge city (Kim & Bozarth, 2021), the production of place identities through everyday and political practices (Main & Sandoval, 2015), the negotiation of space and rights in the face of fast-paced suburban (re)developments (Zhuang, 2021; Zhuang & Chen, 2017). Yet, a bureaucratic process has been linked to the challenges of engagement of migrants in the suburban planning process (Allen & Slotterback, 2021; Dwyer et al., 2016; Poppe & Young, 2015; Zhuang, 2019, 2021). Empirical studies that evaluate the Right to the City have documented inequities faced by migrants in physical and social space (Jian et al., 2020; Tsavdaroglou, 2020).

Immigrant integration happens at the local level, where individuals encounter existing systems and physical spaces in their everyday lives leading to nuanced lived experiences (Housel et al., 2016). Mackay-Brown and Ashton (2021, p. 105) argue that no one model of integration ‘explains the generalities and specifics of all the lived experiences’. Therefore, more empirical research in this regard is needed, not only to develop a thorough understanding of the everyday lived experiences of immigrants in different places, but also to explore group dynamics and intersectional identities of immigrants and their role in shaping settlement and integration outcomes.

12.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter applies Lefebvre’s (1991) theoretical framework to interrogate the intersections of migration and suburbanisation through the production of conceived, perceived, and lived spaces, and evaluate the process and implications of suburban planning *for* and *with* migrants. It first provides an overview of how capitalism and planning conceptualisation influences the representation of suburban space and leads to socio-spatial segregation and injustice. It further explores the spatial practices of immigrants through making meaningful suburban places and building social infrastructure despite the physical constraints of the space and infrastructure. Last, under the notions of the Right to the City and spatial justice, it argues for an understanding of immigrants’ lived experiences and agency to encapsulate the role of

space and place towards cultivating a sense of belonging and integration of immigrants and refugees in various suburban contexts. The three modalities of space production are interconnected and mutually dependent. When applying Lefebvre's theory, it is important to contextualise the production and representation of racialised geographies in immigrant suburbs (McCann, 1999).

Cities can be generative spaces rather than mere canvases, and each city is different and exerts a 'distinctive pull' on immigrants who in turn 'reshape cities' (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2016). Each urban and suburban environment is uniquely shaped by historical events and regional planning policies or practices or both. When considering the evolution of suburbs, it is important to be aware that they have been characterised by regional diversity (McCann, 2006). Similarly, each immigrant settlement has its own unique ethnic composition, class structure, business niche, customer base, and development trajectory, and different actors who are involved in neighbourhood transformation. As Lefebvre (1991, p. 42) argued:

We should have to study not only the history of space, but also the history of representations, along with that of their relationships – with each other, with practice, and with ideology. History would have to take in not only the genesis of these spaces but also, and especially, their interconnections, distortions, displacements, mutual interactions, and the links with the spatial practice of the particular society or mode of production under consideration.

There are practical implications for suburban planning *for* and *with* migrants as outlined in the following action items with attending questions to consider.

First, examine the role of municipalities and city builders in facilitating or impeding immigrant settlement and integration in suburbs and identify effective and inclusive community-building strategies. For example, what are the policies or best practices that effectively respond to diverse community needs? What is an equitable and inclusive community engagement process? How can municipalities and immigrant or marginalised communities work together to bridge gaps in city and community-building? How can more opportunities and spaces be created to encourage community engagement?

Second, identify immigrant places and everyday spatial practices. How have immigrant groups physically (re)shaped their neighbourhood over time? What are their spatial needs? How do they create their own sense of belonging, identity, and place, especially within a planning context that does not always consider cultural values and support the expression of cultural identity?

Third, develop an understanding of immigrants' lived experiences of suburbs and their agency to claim the rights to the city. Space is experienced differently by different social groups and that shapes the way they understand and use space. To help us gain a better understanding of suburbanisation on various immigrant groups and the places that have shaped their settlement and integration experiences, an intersectional framework is needed to underpin the role of age, gender, religion, class, sexuality, race, and ethnicity in the creation of spatial justice. We may further address the following questions: How are immigrant communities engaged in planning processes? What is the role of agency in relation to the production and governance of space and how we define space?

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Part IV
Bordering Migration in Cities

Chapter 13

The Urbanisation of Asylum



Jonathan Darling 

13.1 Introduction

Recent years have seen a growing focus on the role of multiple urban actors in shaping policies and practices towards refugee reception and accommodation. Driven in part by attempts to account for the complexities of governance in contexts of displacement, this work has drawn attention to diverse relations between local governments, humanitarian organisations, private contractors, NGOs, and public and private service providers. At the heart of these discussions has been the city, as the practical and political realities of displacement and asylum have been brought to the fore in cities across Europe (Darling, 2017; Kreichauf & Mayer, 2021) and beyond (Carpi, 2020; Üstübcici, 2022).

Debates on asylum and the city in Europe foreground two connected trends shaping how cities are positioned in relation to forced migration. On the one hand, discussions of asylum and refuge have been situated in relation to the city as a result of the growing presence of refugees and asylum seekers in urban environments, either through the agency and spontaneous arrival of such migrants (Van Meeus et al., 2019) or through the purposeful dispersal or resettlement of asylum seekers and refugees into cities (Robinson et al., 2003). In either case, across Europe debate has focused on how cities may engage with and support asylum seekers and refugees, whilst also exploring the ways in which migrants are reshaping cities through their agency and the appropriation of space (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018). This first dynamic names a ‘politics of presence’ (Darling, 2017) through which cities become the focal point of contestations over rights, refuge, bordering, and control (Lebuhn, 2013). At the same time, European cities have begun to show significant degrees of autonomy and even activism in relation to asylum, such that refuge becomes an area of urban policy and a site of contestations between municipal and national

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authorities (Garcés-Mascareñas & Gebhardt, 2020; Miellet, 2022). The city has thus been argued to represent a ‘battleground’ for responses to displacement, as diverse actors and authorities assert different visions of how cities can and should respond to often restrictive national policies and assertive claims to urban rights (Ambrosini, 2021).

It is the confluence of these trends that I examine through this chapter, terming such developments the ‘urbanisation’ of asylum. This implies the growing prominence of urban contexts, but also urban authorities and politics, in shaping and influencing debates on asylum and refuge that have traditionally been orientated at the nation-state (Gill, 2010). Countering the ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002) of past work in Migration Studies, the last decade has seen the role of the city as a space of both *refuge* and *regulation* for forced migrants being critically explored. In this chapter, I focus on the case of Glasgow in Scotland. I focus on Glasgow not as a ‘border city’ in any standard reading of the term; whilst a port city, Glasgow is not situated on an international boundary and carries few of the migratory journeys associated with transit and border cities. This is not, however, to suggest that Glasgow does not exhibit any of the fraught tensions associated with migration. Rather, Glasgow has a history of negotiating these challenges, not least because since 2000 it has been the city at the forefront of the UK’s approach to accommodating asylum seekers through a system of dispersal. Thus, rather than representing a ‘border city’, Glasgow can be understood as a *bordered city*. In the context of UK government policy to create a ‘hostile environment’ for all but the most privileged of migrants (Goodfellow, 2020), cities are key sites for the everyday bordering of the state (Cassidy, 2019). Focusing on the UK’s accommodation of refugees and asylum seekers takes us to cities like Glasgow as the policy of dispersal is a predominantly urban process, housing asylum seekers in community settings, often in poor quality accommodation and with limited access to services and support (Darling, 2022a).

In discussing Glasgow, this chapter considers three trends in the urbanisation of asylum. First, how asylum seekers and refugees have been positioned within urban economies of value extraction. Second, how cities have been sites of considerable experimentation over the containment and accommodation of asylum seekers and refugees. Third, the frictions of government and solidarity that urban asylum foregrounds. These are often frictions between local and national governments and between community initiatives to support refugees as neighbours and the patterns of bordering practiced by various state and non-state actors. These three themes – extraction, experimentation, and friction – reflect the economic, social, and political dynamics of contemporary urban asylum.

In exploring these issues, the chapter develops as follows. In the next section, I situate the case of Glasgow within recent debates over urban asylum, foregrounding a focus on ‘local’ and urban negotiations of refuge. Drawing on such work, the chapter then considers how trends of value extraction, policy experimentation, and political friction are evident in Glasgow’s relationship to asylum. The chapter concludes by considering some of the implications of these interwoven dynamics for understanding the urban dimensions of asylum and for taking seriously the role of cities within networks of displacement and structures of social solidarity.

13.2 The ‘Local’ Turn in Migration Studies

The wider context within which these issues are situated is work on a ‘local turn’ in migration policy and politics that has foregrounded the growing trend for municipalities to develop responses to migration that are distinct from those of the nation-state (Bauder & Gonzalez, 2018; Spencer & Delvino, 2019). Notable within these debates has been the recognition that whilst restrictive policies towards refugees may be legislated at a national level, these are often not implemented in full at an urban level (Ataç et al., 2020). As a range of work shows, restrictions on welfare access that encourage the removal of asylum seekers, for example, are often questioned, challenged, or undermined by local governments and street-level bureaucrats (Ataç et al., 2020; Kos et al., 2016). A multitude of urban actions is in evidence through such work. We might consider the growing literature on sanctuary and solidarity cities as exemplars of this trend of divergence between national and urban scales of policy and practice (Bauder, 2021; Darling & Bauder, 2019; Kreichauf & Mayer, 2021). Or the recent European turn to examine how municipal actors publicly obstruct national policy in forms of ‘governmental activism’ (Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2017) or ‘municipal activism’ (Spencer & Delvino, 2019, p. 27), where access to services is facilitated in spite of restrictive national policies. Reflecting on these developments, Kos et al. (2016, p. 356) suggest we witness a European context in which urban authorities find ways of ‘cushioning, bypassing, resisting, and counteracting various aspects of exclusionary asylum policies’.

The potential autonomy of cities as policy actors on asylum varies considerably across different national contexts and with different legislative regimes, with two trends evident. First, is the way in which municipal authorities are understood as one actor amongst a range of authorities who navigate and negotiate the realities of displacement. Discussions of how ‘local’ regimes of bordering, support, and settlement are produced as a response to refugee mobility, and the extent to which these may diverge from the policy intentions of national governments, are notable across work in Germany (Hinger et al., 2016; Werner et al., 2018), Greece (Sabchev, 2021), and the UK (Darling, 2022b), and have also fostered comparative perspectives that explore transnational connections and networks (Kaya & Nagel, 2021). In these discussions the significance of urban environments as sites of multiple and overlapping authorities are brought to the fore as relations between public services, private accommodation and security contractors, charities, and wider public opinion on refugees shape the discourses that surround asylum and the lived experiences of urban refugees. At the same time, work on urban asylum and the potential autonomy of the city has looked outwards too, highlighting the production of transnational networks of solidarity between cities as they seek ways to support and welcome new arrivals (Oomen, 2020). The alignment of common values of welcoming at an urban level can be a useful source of connection and support between cities, something evident in both the City Initiative on Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe network (Spencer, 2022) and the International Alliance of Safe Harbours, a network established in Palermo and involving 33 European cities, designed to advocate for

the resettlement of refugees across European cities and a reduced reliance on Mediterranean cities to accommodate refugees. Both independently and collectively, cities in Europe have become prominent actors within discussions of refuge, often presenting sites of considerable contestation and tension.

Whilst empirically these recent discussions have been driven by the growing presence of refugees and asylum seekers in European cities, conceptually they have drawn on relational accounts of the urban that foreground qualities of urban complexity, connectivity, and heterogeneity (Amin & Thrift, 2017; Magnusson, 2011). This strand of urban theory challenges assumptions of singular or coherent sovereign authority, and views politics, from the perspective of the city, as entailing not only a multiplicity of authorities vying for influence, but also the necessity of negotiation among and between these varied authorities. Approaching urban asylum from this perspective is less to see the role of the city as a regulatory device or container aligned with the imposition of sovereign authority, rather, it is to read asylum through the complexity of how urban worlds are composed, contested, and conceptualised. Whilst rarely acknowledged explicitly, this frame of thinking the complex and relational contingencies and uncertainties of asylum as a matter of *situated negotiations* and *temporary fixes* to governance challenges, informs many discussions of the ‘local’ or ‘urban’ nature of asylum governance and practice (Ambrosini, 2021; Darling, 2021). It is with these dynamics of presence, divergence, and complexity in mind, that I focus on Glasgow as a city at the centre of the UK’s politics of refuge.

13.3 Researching Refuge in Glasgow

Since 2000, the UK has operated a dispersal system for the accommodation of asylum seekers. After an initial period in temporary reception centres, asylum seekers are relocated to cities across the country to be accommodated whilst awaiting decisions on their asylum claims (Robinson et al., 2003). This system is almost exclusively an urban phenomenon, reflecting both the location of available low-cost housing and a presumption that for those successful in gaining refugee status, integration will be easier in cities. The regulatory role of dispersal means that the location and type of accommodation provided is on a ‘no choice’ basis, and this lack of autonomy has been argued to mean that dispersal serves to marginalise and socially isolate asylum seekers (Hynes, 2009). In this respect, the UK system bears similarities with dispersal policies in a number of other European countries (Robinson et al., 2003), with a key distinction being that in the UK dispersed asylum seekers are accommodated among urban communities rather than in segregated reception facilities.

This chapter draws on a larger project that examined the UK’s dispersal system, focusing on four cities: Birmingham, Cardiff, Glasgow, and Sunderland. This project explored how changing dispersal practices impacted local authorities, refugee

support organisations, advocacy groups, and asylum seekers. This project involved 105 interviews with stakeholders in the asylum accommodation and support sector to critically examine the changing nature of dispersal and its effects on refugees and asylum seekers. These interviews included local authority representatives, councillors, service providers, support organisations, third sector groups, and refugees and asylum seekers. Empirically, this chapter draws on interviews from the Glasgow fieldwork, together with a local media analysis, tracing narratives of dispersal from 2000 to 2015. Taken collectively, dispersal has placed asylum at the heart of several towns and cities across the UK and it has led to considerable economic, political, and social change. In the remainder of this chapter, I focus on Glasgow as a high-profile, but by no means atypical, example to examine some of these economic, social, and political trends.

13.4 Extraction

The first dynamic to foreground is how urban asylum has been bound into circuits of value extraction and profit making, for both private actors and cities themselves. In this sense, there is a need for further critical examinations of how urban political economies are entwined with what Lauren Martin (2021) has termed the ‘carceral economies’ of migration control. This speaks to how the diversification of actors and agencies involved in asylum and refugee reception at an urban level has produced new governmental assemblages and new sites of value production. In particular, she argues for a concern with ‘status value’, the value specific to migration control regimes and forms of categorisation. It is this value, she argues, that circulates through the economies of migration control as

status decisions make migrants valuable to firms and NGOs working in the asylum sector, addressing the needs produced by the exclusion from work or other forms of care. Migrants’ status value rests in their potential in/voluntary labour, revenue for service contractors, transaction data and waiting time (*ibid.*, p. 747).

In the context of asylum, status value is associated with the restricted rights of those awaiting decisions from the state and the forms of dependence this produces, aligned with the position of asylum seekers as temporary and insecure residents, subject to enforced mobility and regulation. Migration control practices thus create and organise circuits of value that both rely on, and produce, the dependence of asylum seekers and refugees (Coddington et al., 2020). In being denied the right to work in the UK, and unable to access mainstream benefits or the housing market, asylum seekers are produced as destitute subjects reliant on the state, or its outsourced contractors, for survival. Importantly though, as Coddington et al. (2020, p. 1429) note, carceral economies are often highly localised and place-specific, taking on different forms as legal frameworks differ, the actors (both public and private) involved vary, and the urban economies into which carceral conditions are entwined present their own constraints and possibilities. Thus, far from a global logic of carceral

extraction, a far more localised set of extractive relations are at play, shaping local, and often quite intimate, carceral economies (Conlon & Hiemstra, 2017).

In the case of Glasgow, these contextual patterns of value extraction are evident in multiple processes. First, is the way in which accommodating asylum seekers was positioned as a form of revenue generation for the city in the early stages of dispersal. This began in 2000, when the UK government moved to distribute asylum seekers across the country and sought the support of urban authorities to provide housing. At a time when the city had a surplus of hard-to-let social housing, the offer of funding through dispersal became a means to gain an income from otherwise empty properties (Darling, 2022a). This produced two forms of value extraction. In the first instance, property that was at the end of its useable life could be employed to accommodate a social group who were a low priority in policy terms and who garnered limited public support or sympathy. Initial accommodation in a series of high-rise towers was used – blocks that were subsequently demolished when asylum accommodation contracts were outsourced a decade later. In this instance, the last vestiges of value could be extracted from poor quality accommodation before it was demolished. At the same time, dispersal also represented an opportunity as Fiona, a city councillor, noted:

with dispersal, there was the money that came in that allowed the city to bring void housing up to standard and get it back into use. And areas that had been very much in decline, the services weren't being used, there were new people come into those areas and started to use the schools and the shops and things like that.

In this way, as dispersal progressed throughout the 2000s, asylum accommodation became a form of income generation for the local authority and also a means to promote urban regeneration through bringing properties back into use. This approach has resonances with work by Kreichauf and Dunn (2019) in Berlin, where they argue that the use of formerly industrial land for the temporary accommodation of asylum seekers was a necessary precursor to that land being reintegrated into commercial and residential use. Through this process, they argue, asylum seekers 'recycle' such property, as their presence as temporary residents leaves land ready for future investment. Similarly, in Glasgow, the presence of asylum seekers in formerly disused and void housing served to not only 'recycle' property but also to help sustain and produce demand for services, effectively positioning asylum seekers as early actors within processes of urban renewal (Phillimore & Goodson, 2006; Hill et al., 2021).

In both Berlin and Glasgow, it is the status value of asylum seekers that matters for such processes. The temporary status of asylum seekers renders them available for commodification and exploitation as Martin (2021) notes, enabling the provision of poor quality housing and the enforced mobility of asylum seekers into and out of communities and neighbourhoods. In these instances, the city extracts value from asylum directly through accommodation contracts and support service provisioning and indirectly through pathways to urban regeneration and social transformation, contributing to and reshaping urban economies in the process.

Over the last decade, however, that extractive calculation has shifted. In 2012, the accommodation and support of asylum seekers was outsourced across the UK, with three private contractors taking on the accommodation of asylum seekers and employing subcontracted housing from the private rental sector. The security contractors Group 4 Securicor (better known by their acronym G4S), the multinational services company Serco, and the housing company Clear Springs were the new contract holders. Similarly, in 2015, contracts for support and advice services to asylum seekers were outsourced and centralised into one nationwide contract with a single charity (Darling, 2022a). Aside from the dramatic impacts such a shift had on the lives of asylum seekers and refugees facing delays in decision-making and held in limbo as they wait, outsourcing diminished the role of local authorities in engaging with asylum seekers. At a time when European municipalities have found ways to assert their autonomy on asylum, the outsourcing of asylum accommodation and support served to undermine local authorities and limit their capacity to effect policy (Darling, 2022b).

For Glasgow, these shifting contractual arrangements meant both a loss of revenue for the local authority and significantly reduced the political influence and engagement in dispersal from local government. In its place has arisen a series of what Raco (2016) terms ‘public-private hybridities’, in which private contractors navigate between central government contracts for accommodation provision and local government tensions over the nature and location of that accommodation. Urban authorities such as Glasgow are not totally removed from such assemblages of governing, but their position and capacity for influence is greatly reduced, not least because they are no longer the ones extracting value from asylum. In the place of a governmental agreement between the state and the city, dispersal is now the domain of multiple, locally specific, configurations of actors, including chains of housing subcontracting, fractured support services, third-sector organisations reliant on precarious frames of funding, and local government with limited regulatory powers. It is in the negotiations of these varied actors that the status value of asylum is now to be extracted, as the capacity to decide on housing outcomes and conditions is distributed across a range of interested parties. Importantly, whilst the status value of asylum seekers remains critical, the specific dynamics of these economies of extraction vary on an urban basis. The assemblages of authority that pattern asylum accommodation in Glasgow, and that partly construct and construe value to different parts of the city, will differ to those that shape dispersal in Newcastle, Manchester, or Birmingham. In part because of devolution in Scotland, but in part because the composition of ‘public-private hybridities’ of interest are contextually located and determined (Raco, 2016), with the nature of localised support services and third-sector groups playing a role as they vie for funding and influence. For example, in the wake of outsourcing, Glasgow city council reacted with anger and frustration at the decision taken by the government in Westminster as they felt this undermined much of the good work they had invested into asylum support services and integration networks throughout the 2000s (Piacentini, 2015; Wren, 2007).

Indeed, at the point of outsourcing, the municipality bid for a contract to continue providing accommodation and support services to asylum seekers, only to be undercut by bids from the outsourcing giants G4S and Serco. By contrast, in Birmingham, a city which also had a history of involvement in dispersal since 2000, local government was supportive of outsourcing, going as far as pre-emptively withdrawing from dispersal and casting asylum seekers as a ‘burden’ unfairly imposed upon the city.

Despite these shifting contexts, what remains constant throughout the period of dispersal is the ability to extract value from the lives of those seeking asylum, be that for private contractors, housing providers, landlords, NGOs, or urban authorities. In cities across the UK, a first strand of the urbanisation of asylum is how dispersal has served to integrate urban economies and accommodation practices into circuits of value and profit that accrue through the maintenance of the structures of bordering. Through dispersal, cities like Glasgow play critical roles within carceral economies of migration that produce value from the regulation, containment, accommodation, and removal of asylum seekers.

13.5 Experimentation

Within the turbulence of changing accommodation and support arrangements, Glasgow has seen a considerable degree of policy experimentation in relation to asylum. Asylum seekers and refugees have often been groups subject to varying forms of experimental social policy, groups on whom policy ‘innovations’ are tested before being rolled out more widely, from restrictions on work and welfare conditionality to the use of vouchers in place of cash assistance. Dispersal itself might be considered one such experiment at a national level, as the UK had no experience in such a large-scale process of population management and regulation prior to the inception of this policy in 2000. This was an experiment in migration management and regulation that was made manifest in cities across the north of England, Scotland, and Wales that had limited experience of supporting the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. One effect was to force the development of urban support sectors that were themselves experimental, untested, and often haphazard in their early iterations. As Mark, a refugee support worker, recalls in Glasgow:

A lot of that sort of support structure, obviously didn’t exist in the first place, in terms of, for example, immigration lawyers, there was nothing here, so expertise had to be built up, and expertise within the local authority. So yes, there’s a lot of community support networks and NGOs, but there’s actually a lot of expertise in terms of housing now, in terms of health and so on, but that wasn’t the case at the start.

The inception of dispersal was a relatively rapid policy change and one that demanded the creation of support networks that would become embedded and increasingly expert over the coming years. In this sense, given its high numbers of initial asylum dispersals, Glasgow was a key testing ground for the

development of a nascent refugee sector and the embedding of that sector within the various networks and partnerships of the local state, be they legal services, healthcare, education, or integration networks (Wren, 2007). For example, Burns et al. (2022, p. 11) argue that ‘Glasgow has its own ecology of third sector expertise’ on immigration, driven by ‘a long history in the city of providing all kinds of support, information, human rights advocacy and campaigning since dispersal was introduced in 2000’ (see Mainwaring et al., 2020). As with the question of value and extraction, the multiplicity of competing interests and actors within the city comes to the fore in this history and its ongoing effects into the present.

Alongside this nascent support sector, the city has been subject to forms of political and legal experimentation following the outsourcing of accommodation and support contracts. In 2018, the international services firm Serco, which held the accommodation contract at the time, began a controversial programme of lock-changes on properties used to accommodate asylum seekers (Darling, 2021). This was a means of forcibly evicting those who had reached the end of the asylum process. Multiple legal challenges followed, and a judicial review into the practice found in favour of Serco’s right to evict asylum seekers into destitution. Whilst robustly opposed by asylum support groups, the practice has continued and in advance of the pandemic, was actively producing a destitute population on the city’s streets in an effort to force migrants to leave the country. This production of destitution is not new in the UK asylum system (Coddington et al., 2020), nor is it unique as other European countries have implemented similar measures (Ataç et al., 2020). What we witness here though is an experiment, both politically and legally, from Serco into the extent to which they will be supported by the Home Office, by politicians, and by the courts, if they enforce exclusionary measures.

A further dynamic of experimentation has been those experiments in accommodation that arose as emergency forms of provision and that have since become embedded as ‘mainstream’ forms of housing for asylum seekers and refugees. In Glasgow, the use of hotels as a form of temporary or overspill accommodation for asylum seekers provides one such example. Hotels have been used to accommodate asylum seekers and refugees throughout the dispersal policy, often as short-term gap filling measures. Yet since 2019, as demand on accommodation has risen and asylum case decisions have slowed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and systematic disinvestment in the UK Home Office, hotels have become a much more prominent form of accommodation. Indeed, in Glasgow the housing provider Mears took the controversial decision to transfer almost all asylum seekers into hotel accommodation on a temporary basis to manage demand as the pandemic hit, and suspended evictions temporarily. Restrictions on mobility and access during the pandemic translated these hotels into de facto detention facilities, as asylum seekers were confined to their rooms during lockdown. As with the use of hotel facilities for migrant accommodation and containment elsewhere in the world (BurrIDGE, 2020; Pugliese, 2009), this use drew criticism from both asylum advocates and those on the centre and far-right who oppose the rights claims of asylum seekers.

In the first instance, the use of hotels was critiqued as an insecure and unsupportive environment that would damage the mental health of those detained. Such concerns came to a head in May 2020, when a Syrian refugee took his own life in a hotel used as emergency accommodation in Glasgow and one month later when a Sudanese asylum seeker attacked and injured six people in the Park Inn Hotel in the city, a hotel that at the time was closed to the public and only being used for asylum accommodation (Dearden, 2020). The mental health impact of containment within hotels was foregrounded as contributing to both tragedies, as hotel confinement was argued to reflect similar carceral pressures as immigration detention (Akhtar, 2022; Sullivan, 2020). As Burns et al. (2022, p. 8) find, the use of such contingency accommodation significantly increased feelings of uncertainty and isolation among those seeking asylum in Glasgow, with people moved into and out of hotels at short notice and with no sense of how long this situation would persist. At the same time, those on the political right argued that accommodating asylum seekers in hotels, however poor their condition, was ‘too generous’ a policy and risked acting as an attraction for refugees to the UK (Paxton, 2022), despite longstanding debunking of such myths. The symbolic politics of the urban hotel as a site of accommodation was mobilised by politicians such as Nigel Farage to push the government toward ever more restrictive measures, culminating in plans to offshore asylum processing entirely to ‘partner’ countries such as Rwanda.

Experimental forms of third sector and activist response also emerged in the ‘ecology of expertise’ around asylum that developed in Glasgow (Burns et al., 2022). The structures of third-sector support developed in Glasgow throughout the 2000s sought ways to respond to the use of hotel accommodation through the delivery of food and mobile phone top-up supplies to hotels, providing toys to families, and purchasing bus passes to support people in their shopping needs (ibid.). At the same time, civil society organisations in the city had shifted their focus since the inception of dispersal, beginning to look beyond immediate integration needs and to longer-term strategies for community development. Part of this work involved broadening the range of social groups targeted for support. For example, Mainwaring et al. (2020) highlight how a number of Glasgow integration networks that had been funded initially to support refugees and asylum seekers at a neighbourhood level, broadened their focus to become place-based community projects, engaging with a wider range of diverse communities and building transversal forms of solidarity as a result. The concern with integration that underpins much of this work is, again, a specific feature of the policy landscape and possibilities within Scotland, as due to devolution the Scottish government has control over a wide range of areas of social policy.

The experiments in accommodation that occurred in Glasgow during the Covid-19 pandemic, and that continue to this day, are thus not divorced from the wider context of national debates over asylum policy, entitlements, and devolved authority. Indeed, the ongoing arguments over the use of hotels as contingency measures that have remained in place for over 2 years, highlights many of the failings of the asylum system and its impact on urban communities. In Glasgow, we see multiple experiments that may reshape how the city is experienced in the case of developing a refugee support sector, or that may push the envelope of possibility for

punitive measures and conditions in the case of lock-changes and hotel-based detention. It is to these tensions between experiments and between outlooks on asylum that I turn in the final thread running through the urbanisation of asylum.

13.6 Friction

The final dynamic I want to note is the contentious nature of negotiations between different actors in urban asylum. This means situating the city as a space of frictions between governmental impulses and forms of solidarity. Looking to Glasgow, we might see multiple examples of such friction, be that in the tensions that accompanied the start of dispersal or in community responses to displacement. Forms of ‘municipal activism’ (Kos et al., 2016) from the city council are evident in the ways in which they have challenged government policy on dispersal, going so far as to suspend dispersals in protest at the widespread use of hotels as accommodation since the start of the pandemic. At the same time, efforts to control and order asylum in the city through the reach and authority of the Home Office and their contractors present opportunities for response, as the ‘overlaps and dissonances between competing modes of sovereignty or projects of rule create navigable channels’ for both the governed and the governing (Dunn & Cons, 2014, p. 100). It is in navigating these channels of rule that points of friction emerge between different visions of how the city should respond to the needs, and agency, of those seeking refuge.

In highlighting these frictions, I conclude not with governmental dynamics but with the unintended consequences of dispersal, as in Glasgow dispersal has produced not just the development of a skilled refugee sector or an extractive economy, but also a more assertive politics of dissent that demands rights for asylum seekers. For example, in 2009 activists in Glasgow and Bristol founded the ‘Dignity not Destitution’ campaign aimed at challenging government policy on the removal of support for asylum seekers after decisions on their status have been taken. In opposing the use of destitution as a deterrent within the asylum system, the ‘Dignity not Destitution’ campaign argued that asylum seekers should be provided with sufficient support so that they can meet their essential living needs and be given permission to work if their case hasn’t been resolved within 6 months. The campaign was focused on addressing demands to national government *through the city* as a conduit for advancing a refugee rights agenda. Through public demonstrations, lobbying of councillors, and public petitions, the campaign focused on galvanising support within urban authorities against ‘central’ government (Darling, 2017). One unintended consequence of dispersal is that it produced the conditions within which opposition to government policy could be fostered and alliances of interest between activists, local government, and asylum seekers could be forged. From efforts by asylum seekers to monitor and record their unsafe housing conditions to anti-deportation activism in support of fellow asylum seekers, forms of ‘minor’ politics of registering dissent and seeking recognition of political presence, were often the starting points on which such campaigns were built (Squire & Darling, 2013).

A recent example of these forms of emerging solidarity came in May 2021, when community campaigners in Glasgow were successful in halting an immigration raid as over 200 protestors surrounded a UK Visa and Immigration van and prevented the removal and detention of two asylum seekers. To chants of ‘These are our neighbours, let them go’, the crowd peacefully blocked the path of the van and secured the release of the two men (Brooks, 2021). Whilst a high profile and visible event due to significant media coverage, this protest was part of a long-running campaign in the city to challenge and disrupt the practice of dawn raids by the Home Office. From establishing networks of observation and early warning of immigration enforcement on the streets to arranging shelter for those evading such raids, anti-deportation activism has a long history in Glasgow. The highest profile of which were the so-called Glasgow Girls, a group of seven young women who campaigned against deportations in the city, initially focused on protecting one of their friends (Haedicke, 2017). The group went on to gain public and political support from the Scottish Parliament and became the subject of a documentary and musical, securing national attention for anti-deportation activism in the city. What was significant in the May 2021 protest was the breadth of support this protest drew. This was an action undertaken not only by asylum advocates and activists, but by a community that saw its neighbours being targeted by the state. In this sense, the actions of a community to protect its neighbours reflects Kundnani’s (Kundnani, 2007, p. 163) argument that opposition to everyday urban bordering increasingly emerges ‘through networks of support established through schools, churches and community campaigns’ and it is in these prosaic spaces ‘that the efforts of the Home Office to remove failed asylum seekers are being thwarted’.

Whilst cities have long been argued to present ‘battlegrounds’ for competing claims to citizenship and belonging (Ambrosini, 2021; Isin, 2002), in Glasgow we see these frictions in the multiple rights claims expressed by those challenging deportation and destitution. At the same time, the conditions of such friction are founded in relation to policies of dispersal, accommodation, and the regulation of refugee lives in and through the city. The frictions of encountering asylum are a critical part of the urbanisation of asylum, as the extraction of value and experimentation with policy that has shaped Glasgow’s current relation with asylum produces fraught moments of critique and fuels alternative imaginaries of how the city might produce and perform solidarities that support those present despite distinctions of immigration status, class, community, and nationality.

13.7 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have explored just a few of the dynamics of urban asylum through a concern with value extraction, policy experimentation, and political friction. These are by no means the only dynamics at play in the urban politics of contemporary asylum, but they do offer insight into the new configurations of power, influence, and contestation shaping how cities are playing increasingly prominent, and

often contentious, roles in the politics of refuge. In Glasgow, we find a city that has been at the forefront of these debates over the last two decades, a city that has seen shifting patterns of dispersal and contentious forms of anti-deportation activism and opposition to government policy. Glasgow represents one of the many urban ‘battlegrounds’ in which asylum policy and practice are being constructed in contemporary Europe, a site of tension where competing actors and interests seek to determine how the city should respond to displacement (Ambrosini, 2021). Looking to a city like Glasgow highlights two dynamics of such ‘battlegrounds’, with implications for how we understand the urban tensions of asylum. First, is the way in which cities are *constructed as battlegrounds*. In Glasgow we see this through the convergence of policies of dispersal and bordering that have shaped political dissent around asylum in the city, interwoven with the varied interests of public and private actors who have a stake in the economic value, and political status, of asylum in the city (Hill et al., 2021). Cities like Glasgow do not become ‘battlegrounds’ overnight. Rather, their specific histories of migration, socio-economic disadvantage, and political situation condition the extent to which they will form contentious sites for the claiming of asylum rights. Second, looking to Glasgow highlights how ‘battlegrounds’ of asylum are relational in nature; they are situated within tensions that extend not only to national scales of policymaking and political rhetoric (Spencer & Delvino, 2019), but also to transnational connections to other cities and to struggles for migrant rights and solidarities that are not confined to any single city, territory, or national context.

To consider the urbanisation of asylum is to take seriously these varied roles and to situate cities like Glasgow within these relational networks of bordering, such that decisions on accommodation, support services, and displacement here have impacts that resonate outwards, both in terms of political effects in Westminster, Calais, and Kigali, but also in terms of personal effects for those displaced as transnational networks of kinship, solidarity, and friendship connect Glasgow to a wide range of sites of global transit, containment, and potential refuge. Looking to the urban dynamics of asylum in this way offers one means to comprehend and account for the significance of urban conditions and contexts in shaping how displacement is experienced and how displacement is situated within wider circuits of economic, social, and political turbulence and change.

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Chapter 14

‘Urban-itarian’ Ecologies after Displacement from Syria



Estella Carpi 

14.1 Introduction

Over the last decade, and especially after the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul (Türkiye), NGO practitioners, policymakers, and scholars have encouraged humanitarian agencies to recognise the importance of integrating urban infrastructure and resources into humanitarian programming when intervening in crisis-affected settings. Donor investments have increasingly focused on enhancing urban responses to crisis, mostly identifying any kind of built and physical environment outside of camps as ‘urban’. With an increasing focus on urban areas (Patel et al., 2017), the humanitarian sector began to develop a more nuanced understanding of urbanity: its infrastructure, service provisions, societal and spatial processes of segregation and fragmentation, (in)formal and community-based networks, and the broader relationship between transient humanitarian actors and the population at large (Landau et al., 2016; Sitko, 2017).

Against this backdrop, Lebanon, Jordan, and Türkiye have become important destinations for international humanitarian actors (e.g. NGOs, UN agencies, and other smaller scale initiatives) during the Syrian humanitarian crisis, which started as a result of an extremely violent governmental repression of a popular uprising in Spring 2011. According to UNHCR data (2022), the three countries have since received the largest number of refugees from Syria, in addition to previous migrations from other parts of the region (e.g. Iraq, Sudan, and Afghanistan).¹ The need

¹UNHCR’s most recent statistics show that Türkiye hosts approximately 3,980,000 refugees; Lebanon nearly 855,000; Jordan more than 3,000,000 refugees (<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>)

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to discuss the interface between the urban and the humanitarian does not only stem from these refugees predominantly residing in cities but also from the fact that humanitarian actors established their presence in different urban localities and, hence, in their respective (peri)urban histories. In this context, the relationship between humanitarian actors, urban actors, and local authorities has become an object of greater interest for humanitarianism and forced migration scholars.

International research has shown how the political management of refugee arrivals is not homogenous across Lebanon, Türkiye, and Jordan. While Türkiye's and Jordan's responses to displacement (especially from Syria) tends to develop at a national level, as both are generally characterised by centralised forms of state power, Lebanon's response largely develops through fragmented municipal responses (Boustani et al., 2016; Callet-Ravat & Madoré, 2016: 15; Şahin-Mencütek, 2020). However, even in the case of Jordan and Türkiye, where higher levels of administrative centralisation are expected, local authorities adopted nuanced security and management strategies towards the refugee presence – for instance, towards refugees from Syria – therefore implementing a nuanced response to crisis (Memişoğlu & Yavçan, 2022).

In light of increasingly urban-focused discussions within the humanitarian system, this chapter aims to unravel the concept of 'urban-itarian' (a crasis of 'humanitarian' and 'urban') and its relevance to contemporary humanitarian and urban worlds. First, it is built on some revisited considerations on previous comparative research (Carpi, 2017; Carpi & Boano, 2018a, b) that I conducted during 2016 and 2017 in Halba (the main city in the governorate of Akkar, northern Lebanon, approximately 20 kms from the Syrian border), in Kilis (a border town in southern Türkiye) and, through remote interviews, in ar-Ramtha (a border town in north-western Jordan). Second, it will build on my previous research on the politics of livelihoods and identity politics in Gaziantep in southern Türkiye (Carpi, 2020). Finally, the chapter is also built on my socio-spatial observations and conversations with Syrian refugee residents during summer 2022 in the Istanbul districts of Esenyurt, which today counts thousands of refugees among its own inhabitants, and Beyoğlu, an historical urban district generally identified as Istanbul's 'old town'. I believe both districts are relevant to unravel the idea of the 'urban-itarian' since these host a large number of aid and service providers. In these two districts, as will be evident, aid and service providers emerge as more or less visible in the public space.

I approach the 'urban-itarian' concept as a spatial and relational intersection between the humanitarian and the urban. As such, it can neither be reduced to governance nor to a mere discussion around the built environment. My longstanding reflections on how the urban-itarian concept works in these different field sites led me to value the importance of understanding how humanitarian actors inhabit these different places and how humanitarian assistance becomes diversely (in)visible across Middle Eastern countries receiving refugees. In this vein, both humanitarian and urban actors actively contribute to local urban histories. Their spatial relationship as well as their relational history comprise relational and spatial ecology that I

am interested in investigating. More specifically, this urban-itarian ecology is made up of encounters as well as missed encounters between these two worlds – namely, my multisite-based reflections on this ecology relate to the relational and spatial interplay of humanitarian and urban actors; a vernacular understanding of the urban; and, the urban-humanitarian management of refugee arrivals.

Displacement scholarship has primarily focused on the increasingly urban nature of forced displacement and on the urban future of humanitarian crises (e.g. Archer, 2017). Against the backdrop of such extensive research on 'urban refugees', my endeavour in conceptualising the urban-itarian is instead aimed at understanding the interspace where urban and humanitarian worlds encounter or do not encounter. In fact, both actors and their respective built and physical environments come to give rise to such a complex ecology that I endeavour to investigate. Thereby, urban-itarian encounters involve a discussion about coordination/lack of coordination in aid and service provision, and deliberate or unwilling modalities of co-governance (Boustani et al., 2016; Mourad & Piron, 2016). Importantly, they can also shed light on how development assistance and welfare provision became interrelated with humanitarian assistance (Gabiam, 2016), especially in Türkiye's urban areas (Kubat, 2010, p. 33).

On the one hand, in the longer term capturing urban-itarian encounters can serve the important purpose of evaluating how the refugee and the presence of humanitarian actors have affected the longstanding hardships of urban life (e.g. chronic poverty and lack of decent housing, potable water, work, sanitation, and food security). Scholars have focused on such hardships especially after the 'diversity turn' (Berg and Sigona 2013 in Biehl, 2015), where innumerable national groups co-exist and new variables shape such a co-existence in urban contexts (ibid.; Tsavdaroglou, 2020). On the other hand, the concept of the urban-itarian is largely informed by those segments of displacement scholarship that have discussed how urban actors manage refugee life. However, beyond the focus on urban life and refugee management, it is the dwellers' lived experience and the politics in practice of urban and humanitarian actors that I intend to unpack here rather than their official modes of governance.

In this framework, I intend to advance an understanding of the relational and spatial ecology to which the humanitarian and the urban worlds give birth. By 'worlds' I not only refer to the actors who inhabit it, but also to symbols and other visual forms as well as to the political negotiations and relations between urban and humanitarian actors normally assembled under the broad and less fluid label of 'governance'. In this chapter, I will show how both displaced people and local citizens in Lebanon, Türkiye, and Jordan lead hybrid lifestyles while developing complex livelihood strategies, building their worlds across the urban and the rural. In this scenario, the working concept of 'urban-itarian' does not intend to mark those spaces as *exclusively* or *predominantly* urban, but rather as an interface where humanitarian and urban actors and negotiations end up marginalising or assimilating the rural and the peri-urban (where a place presents both rural and urban characteristics), regardless of environmental complexities.

I conceptualise the urban-itarian through Lefebvre's (1991) social theory of *lived space*. Notably, I do not engage with his conception of *perceived space* – which would imply a space syntax analysis of the study area – but instead with the space perception of residents and humanitarian workers and how they make symbolical use of space and its objects (*ibid.*, p. 39). This means that some symbols and places are not necessarily the official cues that generally make a city; similarly, such symbols and places may not necessarily be marked by humanitarian logos or images (Carpi, 2022). Yet, the lack of visual symbols or images does matter in order to show how humanitarianism is entangled in the different urban fabric of each locality analysed here.

Unlike in the border towns of Halba, Kilis, and ar-Ramtha, in the extremely dense urbanity of the city of Istanbul, the humanitarian presence is less likely to make services publicly visible and to create a clear-cut landscape easily recognisable as 'humanitarian'. In this vein, in the places where the humanitarian presence is more difficult to be identified, the urban-itarian ecology still undergirds the provision of services, although in less overt ways. Moreover, such an urban-itarian ecology is characterised by opposing timeframes: while humanitarian symbols, logos, flags, and offices appear as temporary to international dwellers, for local and refugee residents they are often a 'permanent topography of assistance' (Smirl, 2015, p. 111). With compounds having often become a metaphor of contemporary humanitarian intervention (*ibid.*, p. 113; Duffield, 2015, p. S85), my experiences in Lebanon, Türkiye, and Jordan instead come from out-of-camp open spaces where the transformation of a social space into a humanitarian space can still happen through less straightforward avenues.

Against this backdrop, first, I will explain what a vernacular understanding of 'urban' involves in the different field-sites. Second, through the case of an internationally-funded market in Halba and the hybrid economies in border towns, I will discuss the relational dimension of the urban-itarian ecology and how local (peri)urban histories and relationships go unheeded. With research conducted in Lebanon and Jordan, my observations will point to how the urbanisation of aid increasingly sheds light on the importance of the relationship between humanitarian actors and local authorities. Finally, the research I carried out in the two Istanbul neighbourhoods will show the spatial dimension of the urban-itarian ecology and the need to go beyond overtly visible forms of humanitarian assistance to capture the spatial politics in place. Drawing upon local scholarship, I will show how, while the humanitarian in Türkiye has hardly been investigated in relation to the urban, processes of migration, vulnerability, and marginalisation (which, yet all speak to humanitarianism) have been researched in relation to the urban in the growing field of '*Gecekondu Studies*' in Turkish (Karpas, 1976). In the three countries, the urban-itarian helps to spell out and comprehend the ongoing relational and spatial processes.

14.2 Vernacular Understandings of 'Urban': Does Humanitarianism Make the City?

Whenever international scholars broach migration-related issues (e.g. integration), the urban as a system and a way of life re-emerges in its primary importance. However, most of the research conducted on urban migration adopts a normative understanding of 'urban', with mainly local municipality and governorate actors being viewed as 'urban actors'. Alternative vernacular understandings of the latter, such as figures who, from local people's perspective *make* the city, often go unheeded. Instead, I seek to adopt a contextual understanding of 'urban', which meaningfully emerged in my research on Halba (Lebanon). This small city, counting approximately 4000 inhabitants (with no official census conducted in Lebanon since 1932), is still characterised by a rural economy and poor urban infrastructure. However, unlike the surrounding hamlets, Halba still offers more job and shopping opportunities. The 'urban', in my research across Halba, was locally identified as the presence of a university branch, library staff, shops, malls, and cafeterias (cfr. Carpi, 2017). Such vernacular understandings indicate that entertainment and learning spaces were perceived as a sign of urbanity that humanitarian actors can further empower. By this token, my interpretation of 'urban' goes beyond 'systems-thinking' in defining cities (Campbell, 2016), which has inadvertently dictated the orthodoxy of what urbanity *should* involve in any space and at any time.

More specifically, in the research I carried out on Gaziantep in southeast Türkiye (Carpi, 2020), I observed how the urban settings receiving large numbers of refugees from Syria were perceived as 'enlarged cities' after such arrivals. Gaziantep, a city of more than two million residents, has been a main destination for refugees from Syria in Türkiye (some 462,000 people who now make up nearly one-fourth of the city's population). It has been considered a place where skilled and unskilled employment is way more likely than in nearby smaller towns located on the Syrian-Turkish border. At that time, I noticed that especially the presence of Syrian businessmen was able to trigger the local perception that Gaziantep had become 'more of a city' after 2011 (ibid.). In other words, Syrian businessmen in border cities such as Gaziantep further marked the urban character of the city's politics of livelihoods as well as its urban lifestyle. From a local perspective, the presence of 'refugee businessmen' had amplified the urban character of Gaziantep.² Along with the presence of libraries, shops, and university branches (like in the case of Halba), Gaziantep's urban space was described by local residents as 'more urban' than ever.

² 'Refugee businessmen' from Syria do exist in Türkiye. However, this does not imply that every Syrian national is allowed to set up a commercial activity in Türkiye. For instance, although these everyday regulations are perceived as being more enabling in Türkiye (Irgil, 2022) than in Lebanon (Carpi, 2020), people holding the temporary protection status are not allowed to start businesses. Most of these businessmen have Turkish citizenship. Here I refer to some refugee men I met in Gaziantep in summer 2017 who viewed themselves as 'refugees', i.e., as unable to return to Syria if they ever wished but not official refugees in the Turkish context.

Importantly, I do not intend to compare the urban space of Halba – which is rather a ‘peri-urban’ space that local inhabitants refer to as ‘neither a village, nor a city’ (Carpi, 2017) – to large urban areas such as Gaziantep and, later in this paper, Istanbul. Indeed, in the small urban and demographic space of Halba, humanitarian logos and offices could play a substantial role in *making the city*. Instead, in large Turkish cities such as Gaziantep and Istanbul, the physical humanitarian presence blurs into a large space where urban visibility continuously needs to be negotiated and, according to NGO practitioners (conversations in Gaziantep in 2017; Istanbul in 2022), it even puts subaltern humanitarian actors at risk of symbolical absorption into state-led hegemonic practices of aid provision. Particularly in Istanbul, Türkiye’s most-populated city with nearly 16 million inhabitants and 540,000 Syrian refugees (3.4% of local demographics), humanitarianism is certainly deemed unlikely to make the city-space. Yet, while here we do not need humanitarianism to make the city, the power relations underlying the urban-itarian ecology in these large urban areas go unheeded in contemporary scholarship. This also shows a telling tendency of scholars in contemporary Türkiye to predominantly associate the relevance of humanitarianism with border areas and societies. Importantly, as will be evident, my conversations with aid practitioners and refugee residents in Istanbul highlighted power relations and negotiations around the humanitarian presence.

14.3 The Relational Dimension of the Urban-itarian Ecology

14.3.1 *The Urban Shift: A Standardised Approach in Border Towns*

Previously, I researched the humanitarian tendency to understand the space of intervention as dichotomic, centred on addressing either urban or camp refugees as though they were obviously separate realities and environments. As a result of the increasing urbanisation of humanitarian response, some towns in the border regions neighbouring Syria retain a rural character despite rapid growth accelerated by the arrival of large numbers of refugees. Indeed, in such areas, rural livelihoods are still at the centre of their economies. While these settings cannot be fully categorised as either urban or rural – rather implying a spatial continuum between the two – I observed how the urbanisation of humanitarian action, which sets urban livelihoods as a priority, is often applied regardless of spatial specificities. Moreover, often disputed, rapidly changing border territories are particularly complex environments (Carpi & Boano, 2018a).

Border towns hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees in the Middle East – such as Halba in northern Lebanon, Kilis in southern Türkiye, and ar-Ramtha in north-west Jordan – function as an interface between the rural and the urban. Halba, Kilis, and ar-Ramtha can be called ‘peri-urban’ as they form a mosaic of agricultural and urban ecosystems. A lack of systematic planning has meant that these towns have grown organically, with a proliferation of unauthorised and unregulated housing

and limited infrastructure development (Tacoli et al., 2015). Finding the right balance between urban and rural approaches, therefore, is a requirement for planning and for the development of humanitarian policies that reflect socio-spatial diversity. By this token, the 'urban shift' also proves to be exclusive, as it ends up both neglecting rural forms of livelihood and promoting inappropriate approaches to the complex systems and spaces at the peri-urban interface. The case of ar-Ramtha, Halba, and Kilis shows how the ways of life that cut across rural and urban spaces are inherently hybrid (Allen & Davila, 2002).

In the interviews I conducted with refugees from Syria in each of these localities, their majority believed they predominantly needed rural means of livelihoods to survive, while they noticed that international humanitarian support was growingly urban-centred (ibid.). This lack of balance in focus between rural and urban suggested the neglect of contextual specificities in traditional border economies. As an example, in the small city of Halba, most livelihood programmes revolved around IT classes and training to start private businesses that would strengthen the third sector's urban economy. The Syrian women interviewed in Winter 2017 (Carpi, 2017) affirmed that rural livelihood programmes were better able to provide them with sustainable income than urban livelihood programmes in Halba. While a large proportion of urban livelihood projects focus on making refugees employable in hairdressing and beauty salons or food groceries, Lebanese law allows them to work only in construction, gardening, cleaning, and agriculture. In the southern Turkish border town of Kilis, which is historically characterised by a traditional economy, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) started helping municipal authorities improve local service delivery in waste management and recovery with delay. Livelihood programmes initially prioritised agricultural activities (e.g. olive-picking) in the surrounding countryside as urban job opportunities for refugees and other low-income residents were rare. However, in the longer run, the refugee inhabitants I spoke to during 2017 negatively assessed the apparently abrupt, recent de-prioritisation of rural income activities vis-à-vis the urban. Unlike Kilis and Halba, in ar-Ramtha, humanitarian support has mainly been directed towards agriculture (Carpi & Boano, 2018a). While this is appropriate in this context where (non)governmental support has historically favoured urban dwellers over farmers (and where a large proportion of food needs is met on international markets rather than through domestic production), according to refugees and humanitarian practitioners living there, a better balance between support for urban and rural ways of life still needed to be achieved.

14.3.2 The Halba Market

A further example of how local urban histories and relationships are ignored by humanitarian actors is offered by the case of the urban market in Halba – a 2016 initiative that pumped large amounts of funding into the new project, allegedly aimed at enlarging local economic capacities (Carpi & Boano, 2018b). Funded by

UNDP and UK-Aid, the market was built in Halba's surroundings. Set in 6000 square metres of public space and with the potential capacity to accommodate 390 traders, the market was inaugurated in December 2016 (UK-Aid, 2016). However, it was shut down after four days as the newly appointed municipal authorities had not given permission for its operation.

According to the local governor (in local Arabic, *mohafez*), whom I interviewed in February 2017, the market would soon have failed because an extremely small segment of local consumers could have reached the area. The area was poorly frequented since public transport – the only type of transport that local and refugee residents can generally afford – does not reach this isolated area. The case illustrates how the provision of public infrastructure needs to be carefully planned and coordinated with the relevant municipal authorities and how the local urban systems of trade and consumption work. Over time, in this viewpoint, the market would have implied a waste of resources (Carpi & Boano, 2018b). As a result, even though UNDP had provided financial management and capacity-building support to the Halba municipality, the market was short-lived. Ignoring the socio-spatial implications of the market's construction, the actual needs and the local infrastructure ended up unused, abandoned, and ineffective (Fig. 14.1).

In light of my more recent research on the urban-itarian, the case of the Halba market further shows how, despite their need to build access to local populations in need, foreign humanitarian actors are usually reluctant to involve local authorities in their own work. Many interviewees (six NGO practitioners in Halba, March 2017) openly declared they desire to keep humanitarian action out of local politics.



Fig. 14.1 Foreign aid funded market in Halba, February 2017. Photo credits: Estella Carpi

Yet their attempt at avoiding involvement in local politics and the decision to exclude public authorities, who still gatekeep urban settings to a certain extent, remain neatly political, often impeding multilateral knowledge transfers that would eventually lead to actual collaborations and exchange.

In the Lebanese scenario, foreign humanitarian actors, with meaningful delay, resorted to local authorities to guarantee legitimacy merely as a way to build quicker access to refugee populations rather than to seek in-depth knowledge of the peri-urban history and local life. The Lebanese case shows how training urban actors and seeking only their formal approval to operate should not be mistaken for substantive engagement from the side of foreign humanitarian actors. These findings appear as antithetical to my research experience in Türkiye, where the approval of humanitarian programming and the subsequent operationality of foreign humanitarian actors had to come directly from governmental administration (interview with UNDP officer in Gaziantep, 2017; conversation with two NGO practitioners in Esenyurt, 2022). In the case of Türkiye, therefore, the urban-itarian encounter, rather than missed, emerges as imposed since any form of humanitarian and civilian support is increasingly bound by the rulemaking and monitoring of the central state (Şahin-Mencütek et al., 2021, p. 8). Similar to Lebanon, however, a deeper mutual understanding between local governance and the humanitarian system is lacking along with the possibility for them to integrate.

More broadly, scholars have reported diverse accounts on the either cooperative or reluctant attitude of foreign humanitarian actors towards urban actors in the countries receiving refugees from Syria. For instance, according to some sources (Betts et al., 2017), municipalities in Lebanon and Türkiye were eager to collaborate with humanitarian actors and improve their urban infrastructure. By contrast, during my 2016 and 2017 fieldwork in Lebanon, the Halba municipality's deputy mayor and mayor explicitly said they lacked, to some extent, the incentive to improve the city (Carpi, 2020): in their view, even when humanitarian actors began offering greater support, developing solid infrastructure and well-functioning urban systems might attract larger numbers of refugees from other areas that are less well served. From this perspective, as the Global North's borders are mostly inaccessible, preserving the *status quo* in the towns receiving refugees, rather than enhancing the capacity of urban actors and infrastructures, spares these areas having to host even larger numbers of refugees in search of job opportunities and better quality of life. Hence, my past research in Lebanon illustrates that the international failure in upholding and sharing responsibility often resulted in the lack of cooperation from urban actors (Carpi & Boano, 2018b) and in a missed urban-itarian encounter. The lack of incentives for improving local infrastructure questions the oversimplifying *dictum* of 'working with urban actors and local authorities', which overpopulates today's experts' recommendations contained in policy briefs and humanitarian accounts.

In response to these systems of urban governance, on the one hand, in Lebanon, foreign humanitarian actors implicitly ask for unconditional intervention, denouncing bureaucratic hurdles and local power dynamics with which they must comply. In Türkiye, on the other hand, the foreign humanitarian actors I met over the years

in Gaziantep and Istanbul all vehemently advocated for ‘democratising urban governance’ as the centralised system of aid provision and coordination is deemed to be ‘suffocating’ (interview with UNDP officer in Gaziantep, 2017; conversation with two NGO practitioners in Esenyurt, August 2022). In sum, while in Lebanon, as mentioned above, foreign humanitarian actors did not opt for building relations with urban actors to illusively remain disentangled from local politics, in Türkiye, foreign humanitarian actors were expressively invited to not participate in local politics (conversation with NGO practitioner in Esenyurt, January 2022).

In Lebanon-focused humanitarian reports, where the central government’s continuous abdication of responsibility is often indulged due to presumed ‘state fragility’ (Mouawad & Baumann, 2017), Lebanese municipalities are increasingly cited as an actor to be supported for improving the livelihood and the basic service delivery of both Syrians and local residents and as actors of social cohesion activities (Callet-Ravat & Madoré, 2016, p. 21). This, as seen, clashes with what Halba’s mayors and deputy mayors hoped for. There is therefore a need to acknowledge municipalities in humanitarian action (*ibid.*, p. 6).

The case of the short-lived Halba market thus not only shows the need for in-depth knowledge of local urban histories before supporting local urban infrastructure and acknowledging the close interconnection of urban and the rural lifestyles, but also the peculiar relational history between urban and humanitarian actors, which, at times, cannot be learnt through mere official plans and agreements in place.

14.4 The Spatial Dimension of the Urban-itarian Ecology

14.4.1 *The ‘Urban-itarian’ in Two Istanbul Districts*

I will now integrate my earlier reflections on the ‘urban-itarian’ with observations and conversations during 2022 with nine NGO practitioners and faith-inspired charity coordinators, six refugee families, and eight refugee individuals in the municipalities of Esenyurt and Beyoğlu within the city of Istanbul, the icon of public life (Birkalan-Gedik, 2011, p. 2). Unlike Lebanon and Jordan, Istanbul (and Türkiye in general) is a place where humanitarian actors historically intervened to assist people affected by disasters. As a result, it is noteworthy to specify the type of humanitarian actors I refer to here. According to the practitioners I spoke with and in line with my personal observations throughout the districts of Esenyurt and Beyoğlu, the humanitarian actors dealing with forced migrants – especially from Syria – have the longest presence. Notwithstanding, some of the providers who initially came to assist local dwellers displaced from disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and landslides enlarged their mandate to forced migration and, thus, in some cases, remained on the ground for a longer time. In the Turkish context, therefore, the urban-itarian encounter does not merely happen as a result of humanitarian actors coming to assist in conflict, but, instead, it continuously occurs in various Turkish cities often

faced with natural hazards which, historically, caused the loss of many human lives (Johnson, 2011; Candaş et al., 2016, p. 669). When such disasters occur across Türkiye, international humanitarian actors mostly intervene in indirect ways, namely, in the capacity of donors or temporary aid providers (conversation with NGO practitioner in Esenyurt, January 2022). In this sense, it is hard to identify a continual presence of disaster-focused humanitarian actors in Türkiye's urban spaces.

With humanitarian agencies being barely visible in the space of the big city, I was interested in observing how their (mostly temporary) emplacement challenged, completed, or preserved Istanbul's urban systems, spatial negotiations, and inequalities. Wondering how the international humanitarian presence, overall, relates to Türkiye's urbanity means understanding how it relates to areas of residency, leisure, social mingling, and necessity. To capture the emplacement of the international humanitarian into local urban life requires an up-close look at vernacular understandings of city-making and urban history. Beyoğlu, with some migrant and refugee groups living in old buildings (mostly in the Taksim area), emerged as a particularly relevant space. In fact, after a year-long observation, it was possible to identify many faith-inspired aid and service providers, often cooperating with the nearby churches, which, as a Beyoğlu-based foreign Catholic priest I spoke to affirmed, 'intentionally prefer keeping a low profile to not be absorbed into the hegemonic way of doing humanitarian aid, such as the *Kızılay* (Turkish Red Crescent, which is led by the national government)'. Indeed, due to the scarce visibility of such refugee and migrant support services, Beyoğlu is mostly viewed as a touristic neighbourhood that has become increasingly middle-class oriented and gentrified over the last two decades.

Esenyurt, however, emerged as a greatly relevant urban area due to the large number of refugees inhabiting this one-time village. Located 20 kms from Istanbul, it initially had no proper urban infrastructure in place, with local population and constructions growing rapidly, appearing like an 'end-of-century urbanisation' and acquiring a class-based segregation character (Robins & Aksoy, 2003, p. 344). Although during the 1970s, it turned into 'a city in its own right' (ibid., p. 343), it is generally considered to be a place of disorder and a hotbed for political violence and conservatism (ibid.).

Looking at the urban-itarian in the Levant and Türkiye is an effort that needs to consider how the 'urban' is loaded with antithetical connotations that stand against the 'Rural Other' (Erdi, 2017). In this vein, local dwellers often view international humanitarian actors (which tend to temporarily settle in small or large cities) as 'foreigners who strengthen the capacities of places that are already doing way better than Turkish rural areas, because the political capital at stake is higher' (conversation with Syrian resident, Esenyurt, August 2022). As in Lebanon – merchants on the urban coast and mostly peasants and shepherds in inner villages (Khater, 2001) – urbanity in Türkiye implied access to different job opportunities and sectors. Therefore, ruralness is a meaningful political representation that carries specific spatial stories of labour migration towards Turkish cities (Mansuroğlu et al., 2006, p. 176; Nalbantoğlu, 1997) and diverse forms of vulnerabilities among the rural population during the urban age (*kent çağı*). Meaningfully, the 1930s and early

1940s had seen unprecedented efforts to realise Mustafa Kemal-led republic's 'civilising mission' in rural settlements (Nalbantoğlu, 1997, p. 200), where urbanity became a synonym with imperative secularisation and modernisation (Bozdoğan, 1997).

How Turkish urban scholars convey their vernacular understanding of urbanity particularly stands against rurality. Indeed, if we adopt a retrogressive perspective, the traditional Ottoman settlement fabric remained the same until the 1940s, when multi-group migration from the rural areas to the cities rapidly gained momentum. The resulting uncontrolled development of cities gave rise to the reshaping of some settlements, which became very different from the traditional (Kubat, 2010, p. 34) while remaining ambiguously connected to rurality. In the Turkish context, architects, urban geographers, and historians have long emphasised the impact of party politics on such urban-rural relationships (e.g. Kubat, 2010; Çaylı, 2022). In this framework, unravelling the urban-itarian therefore means digging into multiple state politics of space (Çaylı, 2022) as Türkiye's urban spaces have been built upon multi-parties interventions happening across different historical stages (Lotfata, 2013). Such political actors, in turn, interact with short or long-term humanitarian actors.

14.4.2 Invisible Urban-itarian Ecologies in Esenyurt and Beyoğlu?

In Istanbul both local and foreign humanitarian actors have been made invisible in different ways. On the one hand, according to the practitioners from international NGOs and local faith-inspired charities I spoke to, the local government administration often relegated official humanitarian aid provision and logos to marginal spaces to make refugeehood invisible in the city. This first process of 'invisibilisation' is related to the historical formation of refugee-friendly urban areas in cities like Istanbul. Poverty, difficult living conditions, and slums (*gecekondu*) were part of Türkiye's urban normality during the 1970s; nearly half the population of Türkiye's largest cities Istanbul and Ankara had been living in *gecekondu*. However, slum housing for low-income local, refugee, and migrant residents was surely not unique to Türkiye (Avcı, 2014, p. 212). Indeed, in the broader region, there has historically been a large gap between rapid urbanisation and slow industrialisation, which can be further exacerbated by limited public funds and poor urban infrastructure (ibid.). As a result of rapid urbanisation (*kentleşme*) and the migration of low-income people to urban slums, 'user-built first-generation squatting was progressively replaced by higher-rise, multi-unit apartments, now produced by a speculative process of commercialised, profit-driven, frequently illegal, and substandard construction' (Bakır, 2019). In this context, such transformations in the urban landscape involved interruptions on the 'urban morphology' (Eren & Tökmeci, 2012, p. 206), that is, on the formation and marginalisation of human settlements in the urban space.

On the other hand, the invisibilisation of the humanitarian presence in Istanbul pinpoints how different political ideologies have impacted the physical environment. Some local opinion-makers from upper and middle classes, ideologically aspiring to urban Türkiye's 'Westernisation' – and echoing the Kemal's 'civilising mission' – also contributed to making refugeehood and humanitarianism invisible to plan the transformation of the 'Oriental city' into an 'Occidental city' (Erkan, 2010, p. 189).

It is indeed dutiful to consider vernacular trajectories of humanitarianism in the city. Without getting too deep into this longstanding terminological debate (e.g. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Fiori, 2020), Istanbul's urban history suggests that 'humanitarianism' per se may not be a suitable term and concept for referring to some forms of local relief. Over the course of history, humanitarian aid, welfare provision, charity, and other altruistic activities do not easily give rise to clear-cut categories of philanthropic action. Besides, the urban-itarian encounter in Istanbul does not necessarily happen between domestic and international actors. In this case, importantly, the humanitarian and welfare regimes in which local society engaged, as well as forced migration and chronic poverty, were enmeshed within the city's historical fabric. As Kubat (2010, p. 33) narrates, from an historical perspective, welfare provision, humanitarian services, religiously-inspired philanthropy, and urbanisation are all closely enmeshed:

The Ottomans employed systematic measures, such as resettlement policies linked to voluntary and forced migrations... They interpreted the *wakf* (pious foundation) as an institution to supply the religious and socio-economic needs of society through service facilities and buildings and created *imaret* complexes (charity establishments for distributing food to the poor) which were founded and managed by the *wakf* institution. These principles, especially the institution of the *wakf-imaret* system, played an important role in the creation and development of Turkish cities.

My observations and conversations in Esenyurt and Beyoğlu explicitly point to the intention of the urban administration to make humanitarian action invisible in the public sphere. While many NGOs are located in districts such as Esenyurt and Fatih with a majority of foreign migrants and refugees who can afford low-cost rent and living, humanitarian symbols and logos are still deliberately concealed in such spaces. This deliberate politics of invisibility of alternative providers is a response to the Turkish government's tendency to centralise aid provision while obfuscating the multiple origins of its funding and its multiple actors. Indeed, it has recently been observed that the well-known Türkiye-European Union deal reshaped local welfare by empowering the public sector mandate vis-à-vis international humanitarian actors (Yilmaz, 2019). Consequently, the role of the public sector expanded at the expense of NGOs, especially in social assistance and healthcare (ibid.). Local scholars (e.g. Kubat, 2010) showed how unravelling this longstanding muddled relationship between welfare, humanitarian assistance, and the violent rural-to-urban transformation is a challenging yet worthy task to undertake if we are to investigate the urban-itarian ecology in Türkiye.

14.5 Concluding Remarks

As discussed in this chapter, the urban-itarian does not focus on urban refugees *versus* camp-based refugees and their respective urban demands (Azizi et al., 2021, p. 4455), but rather on the urban-itarian ecology: namely, the relational and spatial interplay of humanitarian and urban actors, their vernacular imaginary of the city, and the increasingly discussed urban-humanitarian management of refugee arrivals. In the cases cited, urban and relational histories barely informed humanitarian action in these contexts.

Within the urban humanitarianism literature itself (e.g. Campbell, 2016), key concepts such as ‘urban planning’ and ‘urbanisation’ have mostly been approached as ideal-types of city-related phenomena rather than how such processes are experienced and understood at an endemic level. If urbanisation is believed to radically transform every aspect of social life, institutions of governance, climatic processes, and lifestyles, how the urban-itarian ecology plays out seems to suggest a different story. It indicates that people lead hybrid lifestyles while developing complex livelihood strategies, building their worlds across the urban and the rural. Despite decades of humanitarian and urban studies and efforts, standardised strategies meant to integrate the urban and the humanitarian risk ignoring longstanding urban life histories and the vernacular understanding of space and society that local and refugee populations uphold.

By the way of conclusion, the urban-itarian ecology can flesh out how the reflections on migration in urban areas should not be limited to discussions around normative definitions of urban infrastructure, governance, and landscape or around exclusively visible forms of assistance provision. As seen, the urban and humanitarian worlds interact in an ecology undergirded by both continuities and disruptions across urban and rural spaces and relationships while overshadowing the rural component that still defines the livelihoods and lifestyles of many who inhabit the urban-itarian ecology.

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Chapter 15

Sheltering Extraction: The Politics of Knowledges' Transitions in the Context of Shelter Organisations in Mexico and the Netherlands



Cesar Eduardo Merlín-Escorza 

15.1 Introduction

*Casa para Todos*¹ (House for Everyone) is a *Casa de Migrantes*² (Migrants' House) located at the southern border region of Mexico, where people who have crossed the border from Guatemala, relatively outside the regular channels and procedures of the state, find temporary accommodation, food, basic physical and mental health care, and free legal assistance regarding their claim for asylum and the regularisation of their migratory status (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2021). *Iedereen Welkom* is a *Bed, Bad, Brood*³ (Bed, Bath, Bread) shelter located at the eastern border region of the Netherlands, where people who have been rejected from the procedure for obtaining asylum find accommodation, along with food, basic physical and mental health care, and free legal assistance related to their asylum cases.

In their own ways, the two shelter organisations discussed here are part of regional and national networks of NGOs and grassroots initiatives filling the gaps left by the state in the provision of such basic services for so-called migrants,

¹ Shelter organisations and people's names are pseudonyms.

² Shelter organisations in Mexico are commonly known as *Casas de Migrantes*; these can be found from the southern to the northern borders of the country. Among other characteristics, they have been historically articulated by different Catholic congregations (Candiz & Bélanger, 2018).

³ Since 17 December 2014 and following a decision from the Central Appeals Board (case number: 14–5507 WMO-VV), the European Commission of Social Rights dictated that municipalities in the Netherlands are obliged to provide shelter for undocumented migrants experiencing homelessness, providing accommodation, shower, breakfast, and dinner. These facilities have been commonly known as *Bed, Bad, Brood* (Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (<https://vng.nl/sites/default/files/publicaties/2016/20150326-factsheet-bed-bad-brood.pdf>))

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asylum seekers, and refugees. At the same time, these organisations are (in)directly implicated in the architecture of migration management. However, this chapter aligns with the volume's intention to not focus exclusively on the migration management and governance aspects characterising the work at these organisations and the border cities where they are located, but rather on their quality as spaces for 'transit and in transition' (Triandafyllidou et al., Chap. 1). Shelter organisations are thus presented as spaces for the transit of people and their knowledges – some of which are also in transition to becoming academic knowledge.

Shelters have been understood in literature from a spatial/material perspective as places in which temporary protection is provided (Colosio, 2020, p. 195), mostly in emergency contexts of displacement. Ian Davis (1978) proposed a shift to understand shelters as processes, more than objects (Colosio, 2020). In this sense, recent elaborations on shelters point to the process of sheltering as fundamental for the facilitation of living-environments for 'crisis-affected communities and individuals' (George et al., 2022, p. 12), highlighting the importance of an even fulfilment of such peoples' needs along with those of the 'host communities and environment' (ibid.). Migrant shelters, in particular, are important in the protection of people in mobility across national borders experiencing risky journeys (Mainwaring & Brigden, 2016; Infante et al., 2012) and different kinds of violence (Jones, 2017; Olayo-Méndez et al., 2014; Vogt, 2013). Shelter organisations have also been studied through lenses questioning the humanitarian (e.g. Gomez et al., 2020; Sandri, 2018; see also: Cuttitta, 2018; Malkki, 2015) and hospitality-related practices and discourses, highlighting the degree of discipline and control within their dynamics (e.g. Ticktin, 2011, 2016). Moreover, and despite their undeniable importance for the protection of migrants' lives and the advocacy for their rights, shelters are also implicated in bordering dynamics (Angulo-Pasel, 2022) as at the same time they perpetuate and destabilise migration management architectures (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2021) in many of the world's regions.

Situating the above-mentioned organisations within these intersections, this chapter explores the power relations inherent to sheltering practices, especially when migration research is performed while or within sheltering. While many studies focus on aspects of 'controlling mobility', as suggested above, I focus on questions of controlling and transference of knowledges. This is important for two reasons. First, with the entanglement of trajectories, knowledges are central to people's⁴ navigation of shelter spaces and the practice of sheltering. Second, it is through questioning the research practices framed in sheltering that we better understand what knowledge is foregrounded and valued and what knowledges are marginalised and ignored. Throughout the chapter, the word 'knowledge' refers to that which is valued by the shelter organisations and thus formalised within their practices, as well as the knowledge resultant from the process of academic research; in contrast, the word 'knowledges' refers to that which has not yet been formalised

⁴Engaging with the problematic use of the categories like 'migrant', I will mostly refer to people. Sometimes I distinguish between people looking for shelter and people looking to shelter; to the latter I constantly refer as volunteers, which also entails a degree of categorisation.

by the shelter or extracted to produce academic knowledge. In his paper 'The dynamics of epistemological decolonisation in the 21st century: towards epistemic freedom', Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020, p. 18) argues that 'epistemic freedom is about democratising "knowledge" from its current rendition in the singular into its plural known as "knowledges"', emphasising that 'knowledge cannot be reduced to "philosophical and 'scientific'" forms only [as the] recognition of various forms of knowledge and knowing is called for in decolonisation'" (ibid., p. 19).

As a consequence of this focus on knowledge/s, this chapter goes beyond dealing with dynamics between the two archetypical actors present at the shelter, i.e., the hosts and guests, or migrants and volunteers, or indeed *people-looking-for-shelter* and *people-looking-to-shelter*. It focuses on the questions of whose/which knowledges and experiences are important for the production of academic migration-related knowledge? How has the shelter been naturalised as a space for *doing* fieldwork and what does this daily practice entail? In that sense, it turns the analytical gaze to ourselves – the researchers in question (including me), our daily situated (research) practices and choices to access 'the field'. To deal with these questions, I relate the reflexivity of Migration Studies to the notion of extraction. For Acosta (2012) *extractivismo* is a massive form of accumulation that began 500 years ago (1492) with the conquest and colonisation of the Americas, Africa, and Asia – regions from which the extraction of natural resources served the demands of the European metropolis, giving birth to the capitalist world-system (see e.g. Galeano, 1971). Because it is such an inherent dimension of how our world continues to unfold, Grosfoguel (2016, pp. 41–42) sees *extractivismo* as 'a form of being in the world...a form of existence, an ontology'. In this chapter, this notion of extraction relates to the question of academic knowledge production, often produced by the double-role of volunteer/researcher, or indeed by *people looking to research while sheltering*.

The chapter is divided in three parts. First, an analytical lens to understand extraction in sheltering practices and the naturalisation of the shelter as a space for *doing* fieldwork. Second, context is given by positioning the shelter as a space where knowledges entangle and become differentiated through sheltering. Third, (auto)ethnographic insights on research practices are analysed to scrutinise the implications of extraction in migration research. The final section consists of a reflection on how to prevent extractive practices in research projects.

15.2 Knowledge, Extraction, and Reflexivity: An Analytical Lens

This analytical lens is informed, firstly, by the reflexive approaches to migration taken by Janine Dahinden (2016) and Anna Amelina (2021) that help reflecting on the naturalisation of difference and sheltering in the production of academic migration-related knowledge. Dahinden's work on de-migrantisation criticises the

entanglement of migration and integration research with a migration apparatus producing discourses that naturalise ‘migration- and ethnicity-related difference’ (Dahinden, 2016, p. 2208). In this sense, categories originated from a ‘national-container’ logic of inclusion and exclusion as ‘the migrant’, ‘the refugee’ or ‘the asylum seeker’, appear as anomalies and primordial markers of difference to be investigated and theorised (ibid., p. 2210; see also Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). Since migration-related difference is fundamental in the epistemologies of state and academic migration apparatuses, it has become one of the dominant criteria for developing ‘research questions, research design, data collection, analysis and theory’ (ibid., p. 2211). Amelina’s doing-migration approach appears as a tool to identify ‘processes that, on a daily basis, transform individuals into “migrants” and that coin some practices of spatial relocation as “migration” and others as “mobility” and/or “flight”’ (Amelina, 2021, p. 2399). In her work, Amelina gets in conversation with ‘coloniality-attentive thinkers’ (ibid., p. 2397) like Mayblin and Turner (2021) and Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2018), suggesting that her approach might help detect ‘patterns of spatial relocation and colonially coined power relations’ (Amelina, 2022, p. 2398) in sites often used for migration research, while questioning ‘the epistemic privilege of “Northern” knowledge in migration sciences’ (ibid.).

The reflexive approach helps to understand why migration scholars are particularly interested in knowing about the experiences of people fixed as ‘migrants’ and other ‘categories of inequality’ (Amelina, 2021, p. 3). Moreover, as we will see in the following sections, it helps to understand why some knowledges and experiences seem worth being selected, taken, and processed into academic knowledge (Aparna et al., 2020). Shelters thus become ‘naturalised’ as sites where researchers assume they will find the information they *look* for, others being camps, borders, ‘slums’, etc. Using tools and techniques such as (auto)ethnographic and qualitative methods/analysis and framed on daily-basis research designs, the in-situ embodied quality of the research process is legitimised. In this sense, *doing* fieldwork is the researchers’ daily practice of transforming people into ‘migrants’, contributing to their migrantisation by differentiating them and their knowledges from those of ‘non-migrant’ subjects to then select, take, and process them.

Secondly, the analytical lens of this chapter delves into the issue of extraction within the *doings* of producing academic migration-related knowledge. Acosta (2012) insists that *extractivismo* has served as a looting mechanism for colonial and neocolonial appropriation through which not only natural resources but other kinds of raw materials are extracted from the Global South for the ‘industrial development and well-being of the Global North’ (Acosta, 2012, para. 12). Grosfoguel (2016) works with Acosta’s argument, adding that *extractivismo* is justified by the ‘eurocentred’ (p. 36) notion of ‘nature’ for which the human subject and the natural object are unconnected, with the former (human subject) using the latter (nature) as a means for obtaining something. He expands on the notion of *cognitive extractivism*, introduced by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson since 2013 (Grosfoguel, 2016). Simpson denounced the pressures for the extraction of knowledges from indigenous peoples as the Mississauga Nishnaabeg by scientists who aimed to integrate these into a Western-produced narrative on environmentalist matters (ibid., p. 38).

Grosfoguel argues that this attempt, to extract such knowledges intends to de-politicise, re-signify, and appropriate them as Western-centred 'symbolic capitals' more suitable for the market and the 'academic machinery' (ibid.). In that sense 'colonialism and capitalism are based on extracting and assimilating' knowledges (Betasamosake Simpson in Klein, 2013, pp. 03, 06). Following this argument, in relation to migration research – and more precisely the practice of researching – the shelter becomes the 'natural' space where researchers find the source from which they 'mine' raw materials in the form(s) of information, processed and assimilated into the Northern migration apparatus via theoretical and analytical frameworks with the potential of re-signifying and de-politicising the experiences, knowledges, and claims of peoples found in such space. However, we are yet to discuss the complexities and nuances intertwined in such assertion.

15.3 Sheltering and Knowledges; Differentiation and Formalisation

This section contextualises how knowledges are shared, differentiated, and formalised in the daily practices at the shelter. I begin by explaining what I mean by sheltering. Next, I move to examples of how the differentiation of knowledges is embedded in sheltering practices, and finally describe which knowledges are formalised.

Sheltering consists of the wide variety of practices of shelter organisations through which a number of services, aid, and assistance are provided to people categorised as 'migrants', 'refugees', or 'asylum-seekers', but also the effects and consequences these practices have for the people interacting in such places (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2021). At Casa para Todes *people looking for shelter* are considered to be in transit and 'en route' not only by the organisation, but also by migration scholars and activists; at Iedereen Welkom they are usually seen as having reached their final destination. At the same time, at both organisations it is considered that *people looking to shelter* volunteer with the intention of assisting *people looking for shelter*. Many are volunteers, only present at the shelter for short periods, while many also have international trajectories related to study programmes. Shelters are thus defined by the inward and outward mobilities of actors whose life-trajectories are 'characterised by movement and stillness, loss and hope, and emplacement and displacement' (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2021, p. 12; see also Schapendonk, 2020).

These persons' lives entangle with each other and with the communities outside the shelter, being in place, working, waiting, caring, and being cared for while also learning, teaching, planning, and exploring future life-possibilities (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2021). Despite the points in common these actors may have, their mobilities, motives, interests, needs, and aspirations for which they have arrived to the shelter are differentiated through sheltering practices. 'Migrants' are expected to be in need

of safety, care, or protection; ‘volunteers’ are expected to provide such things. For the former, ‘need’ is expected to be the main motivation to access the shelter, while for the latter, the need to shelter is related to acts of solidarity, humanitarianism, or ‘interest’ in practicing and improving professional skills or knowing more about the context (see also Malkki, 2015). By normalising these differences, sheltering produces a *divide* between both actors, migranticising the lives and aspirations of the former while not doing it for the latter. From a doing-migration perspective (Amelina, 2021), sheltering practices thus help to transform specific people into migrants.

Through (auto)ethnographic insights I have extended such understanding of sheltering in relation to knowledges, problematising how these are transferred, differentiated, and recognised (or not) as useful for sheltering. For example, it is generally assumed by the organisations’ staff that only volunteers have knowledge and skills relevant for undertaking sheltering tasks – something evident in the expectations the shelters have on both actors to perform as either ‘the migrant’ or ‘the volunteer’. At Casa para Todes, only volunteers with an educational or professional background on immigration law (or law in general) can be part of the team in charge of assisting people, for instance with their asylum procedures. ‘Migrants’ knowledges’ are not formally considered relevant for this practice, even if people have experienced the process of applying for asylum. They are not expected or even allowed to officially assist or advise others who are going through similar situations. This is not to disregard the preparation and professional experience volunteers may indeed have in such matters or the positive impact their work has in people’s asylum procedures, but to highlight that some knowledges are foregrounded and formalised, while others remain hidden and unacknowledged. Undoubtedly, the validity attached to ‘higher education’ plays a role in considering the knowledge framed within such validation system to shape formal sheltering tasks. Besides academic or higher-education knowledge, those coming from formal local and international organisations are also considered to have a certain authority in sheltering, as in the case of NGOs such as Doctors Without Borders or Doctors of the World, which are given the space by these shelters to provide workshops or courses to both typical actors at the shelter who are also encouraged by the shelters’ staff to attend these.

The formalisation of knowledge, however, is not only linked to the question of academic degrees, but also to the recognition and formalisation of skills gained through the shelter. For instance, at Iedereen Welkom volunteers receive recognition for their effort in teaching the people being sheltered computational skills and the Dutch language or for helping them navigate bureaucratic aspects of Dutch society, e.g. making appointments with the doctor or enrolling in sports or education courses. Besides these moments framed as part of the formal sheltering tasks, volunteers share their knowledges with the people being sheltered on matters they consider important despite not being included in the organisations’ workplan. At Casa para Todes, for instance, volunteers have given workshops on gender identities, toxic masculinity, and sexual harassment even though these topics are not necessarily part of the organisation’s agenda. At this organisation, the topics and how these are communicated to the people being sheltered result from a continuous negotiation

between volunteers and coordinators (paid staff) that is shaped by the hierarchical positions these actors hold. Despite both organisations' efforts to communicate knowledge to the people they shelter, I have not yet witnessed moments in which such people are given the space to teach volunteers anything that might contribute to the formal knowledge structure sustaining sheltering practices.

Both organisations under study do design moments where people being sheltered are asked or encouraged to share elements from their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic knowledges. When such sharing is planned and organised by the shelters – thus framed within sheltering practices – a type of formal recognition, albeit less prestigious and authoritative, recognition is given to the knowledges of people being sheltered. Casa para Todes, for example, organises fairs and kermises and ask people to participate by sharing their knowledges, mainly through cooking and handcrafting. These events aim to create moments for the local (mostly Mexican) community to know the city's 'guests' by learning from their ethnic, cultural, and national identities. Iedereen Welkom connects their 'residents' with people interacting at spaces in the city, such as community gardens, community kitchens, and social centres where they can participate by sharing their knowledges with the local (mostly Dutch) community outside the shelter. In both cases (and in other sheltering activities) people being sheltered work as volunteers for these spaces, usually without receiving a payment. Although these are moments especially produced to achieve conviviality (Gilroy, 2004; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2020) between the people being sheltered and the communities beyond, the power relations from the shelter resonate in these interactions as these relations of potential conviviality are mediated by volunteers.

Knowledges are informally shared between people looking for and looking to shelter when they perform daily chores of cooking, cleaning, and maintenance together. At the same time, these moments shape how formal sheltering tasks are performed, e.g. by sharing stories containing knowledges regarding for example a specific way of washing bedsheets, possibly helping both actors to better perform this sheltering task. This implies a constant passing between formal and informal exchanges of knowledges, of which only some get recognised by the organisations as part of their sheltering practice. This process of recognising some knowledges, even to the degree of formalising them, while others remain 'unknown' is a complex and multi-layered process that is gendered and racialised. It is worth considering knowledge dynamics not only in terms of their usefulness for sheltering, but also in terms of their usefulness for people on their way to better futures. Shelters are places people share their knowledges about asylum procedures, borders, and mobility pathways, where new contact details are shared, where a lot of comforting occurs, and where new friendships are created. These knowledges are perhaps not central to sheltering as a formalised activity, but they are crucial to the process of social navigation of the sheltering practices and the wider migratory landscape, including its border violence (see also González, 2018; Triandafyllidou, 2019; Schapendonk, 2018). At times, however, the same kind of information is appropriated by the shelter organisation. At Casa para Todes, for example, people's travel stories are stored in databases and transformed into statistical reports subsequently used by journalists, NGOs, and researchers like me. In this process of transition from knowledges

to knowledge, the issue of extraction becomes visible. The next section delves further into this issue.

15.4 Extraction and Migration Research

Having described how knowledges are differentiated and formalised in sheltering practices, I now focus on how knowledges are extracted through migration research. The argument questions the naturalisation of the shelter as a space for research and *doing* fieldwork as the daily practice of re-producing people as ‘migrants’, thus, as subjects of migration research. First, a self-reflexive analysis of my practices and choices is presented, followed by an analysis of dynamics in which extraction is at stake, and finally a reflection on the linkages and implications of such extraction with greater circuits of research practice for academic knowledge production. The analytical take on extraction points to the colonial difference implicit in the practice of *doing* research at the shelter and the transition towards knowledge related to it.

Scholars, undergraduate students, journalists, practitioners, and independent/NGO researchers interested in migration-related topics approach shelter organisations to have access to people and situations from which they aim to obtain valuable information to produce papers, theses, articles, reports, and audio-visual outputs. In disciplines such as anthropology or geography, the use of methods and tools providing ‘first-hand’ information have gained importance and prestige in the production of attractive or promising research designs. Such logic has driven me and other researchers to choose the shelter as a site for research. Many of us combined the research with volunteering as part of our methodological strategy and tools. For us, volunteering, as both (auto)ethnographic tool and research strategy, seemed a promising way to gather information. For the shelter organisations presented here, volunteering is the core of their daily practice and is promoted as a practical and educational enriching experience to attract people driven by the ‘need’ to experience the shelter (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2021; see also Malkki 2015). However, as Khosravi (2020, p. 294) so powerfully argues, we need to ask ourselves how our focus on ‘migrant/refugee experiences of border crossings, journeys, camps [and we may add *shelters*], or asylum processes does not contribute to the othering of them’. This question only gradually entered my research project, as explained below.

As a master student and then PhD candidate, I decided to volunteer at Casa para Todes and Iedereen Welkom as part of my fieldwork strategy, both to access these ‘sites’ and participate in their dynamics while making observations and gathering information. As I saw value in having ‘embodied experiences’ from a situated perspective, I chose to use autoethnography as my main methodological tool and analytical lens. For other researchers too, volunteering seemed ethically right, in the sense that there was something to offer in exchange for the access given by the organisations. Over 2 years, I met at least six anthropologists, three lawyers, and one international relations expert volunteering at Casa para Todes as part of their internships or research. In addition, I know of a dozen papers and theses written

from the same shelter organisation. However, researchers are certainly not the only actors seeking stories and knowledges in this shelter. I have seen numerous journalists and NGO representatives come and go for the same reason. At Iedereen Welkom, I met at least six master students from anthropology and geography programmes volunteering as part of internships or research projects, in addition to several students who applied or had the intention to volunteer and finally did not do it. In the 3 weeks following this chapter's submission, fellow academics and the shelter's coordinator, asked me to speak with four students who intended to do research at this shelter. Such abundant presence of *people looking to research-while-sheltering* showed me how naturalised the idea of the shelter as a space for fieldwork has become.

Now, the choices and views sustaining such naturalisation of the shelter embed with my way of *doing* fieldwork. Following Amelina (2022), I can claim that my choices and research practices contributed to the re-production of 'migrant subjects', not only from engaging in the academic research performance but also by participating in sheltering dynamics that control and discipline such people (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2021). From my proposal's research questions, my first interviews and diary notes to my first reflections and presentations in academic settings, I overlooked the question why 'the migrant' was so central. Reviewing these moments, I realise that after having formed relationships with people at the shelter, listening to and empathising with their stories while also sharing my stories and daily struggles with them, I still described their lives as migrant lives, their movements as migrant trajectories, and their resistance to oppressive migration regimes (present in their border-crossings) as part of the nomenclature foundations making them undocumented or irregular migrants. In this sense, *doing migration* (Amelina, 2021, 2022) as transforming people into 'migrants' appeared central in the reasonings and interpretations that composed my daily practice of *doing* fieldwork.

Looking through the lens of *extractivismo*, three elements have facilitated extraction in my fieldwork *doings*. First, the geopolitical privilege of having a Mexican passport and a Dutch temporary residence permit, which allowed me to go in and out 'the field'. Second, the use of academic authority to request these shelter organisations access to encounter people interacting there. Third, the fact that I am being paid to do a job that encourages people to 'collect' information containing the experiences and knowledges of people oppressed by migration regimes. Determinant for *doing* fieldwork, these aspects allowed me to select and *grasp* (Aparna, 2020, based on Glissant's notion of grasping⁵) pieces of information from these spaces and produce specific sets of ideas. It was the feeling of 'taking' that particularly helped me question the extent to which migration research is implicated in dynamics of extraction. I illustrate this with two cases below that are situated in the Casa para Todes shelter.

⁵Aparna (2020, p. 23) writes: 'The verb "grasp", as Glissant reminds us (1997, pp. 191–192), contains movements of hands that grab their surroundings and bring them back to themselves'.

Marc is an anthropologist and PhD researcher working at a Canadian university who also volunteered and conducted research at Casa para Todes. He focused on collecting stories related to people's traveling experiences – something he did at different shelters of the region. Very soon after meeting, we discussed and disagreed with a few aspects of our research methods and objectives. While I argued these should generally aim to achieve more immediate transformations striving toward social justice, Marc considered that although this is important, it is also important to acknowledge our researches' limitations for having a positive immediate impact in people's lives. He was convinced that his research would not have that kind of impact, thus, he would rather be honest and tell his interviewees he could not do much about their life situations. What I interpreted as Marc's passivity toward the structural conditions of inequality affecting the lives of his interlocutors and his complaisance with methodological choices focusing on 'the migrant' and 'grasping' their stories at different shelter 'sites' made me imply his collusion with extraction.

Alex, a writer and the editor of an audiovisual production funded by a major public university in Mexico, was given access to interview people at the shelter. She was interested in collecting the stories of persons who had travelled through the Darien Gap⁶ and use them to write a fictional book. Alex left after conducting a few interviews over 2 or 3 days, then came back with eight 2.5-litre Coca-Cola bottles that she had brought as a 'donation' in return for the access she was given by the shelter. Although I never had the chance to ask Alex about it, her 'donation' and the way she had conducted interviews, going in and out of the shelter rather quickly, raised concerns among a few of the volunteers. This was mostly because we knew how difficult it was for people to talk about traumatic and violent events, which we realised was an important part of the target information she aimed to collect. Besides, it was concerning to some of us that someone wanting to voice the injustice implicit in the mobility of people often displaced by extractive corporations would not be able to see the symbolic violence implicit in her donation. In Mexico, the Coca-Cola corporation is implicated in the dispossession of water from indigenous communities, extracting and transforming it in Coca-Cola, with consequences on the public health (Pskowski, 2017, pp. 9, 13). Furthermore, during her stay, Alex approached Marc and me separately and invited us to write something related to our experiences regarding sheltering for a scientific magazine published by the same university, which would pay us 5000 Mexican pesos each for our contributions. After leaving the shelter, she kept contacting us to ask if we could assist her in getting more informants to interview, and although she had explained that she would use these stories to write a book, about 1 month after her visit to the shelter, the audio-visual production company she works with broadcast a show in which a 'migrant' was invited to tell about his journey through the Darién Gap.

⁶ *El Tapón del Darién*, or Darién Gap, is a region located between Panama and Colombia through which many people transit in their way to Mexico and the United States (see Winters & Reiffen, 2019).

Regardless of our different research approaches and outcomes, Marc, Alex, and I – as well as the students doing research at Iedereen Welkom – approached the shelter considering it a source of information, thinking of people's experiences as valuable for our work. To engage in extraction, the three of us used our geopolitical privilege to get in and out of the shelter as a fieldwork site; we presented ourselves as part of national and international academic institutions, which justified our research engagements there; and we were paid to collect and use people's knowledges and experiences for producing academic outcomes that would serve our careers. In consequence, the department where I work at the university will receive a monetary compensation if I obtain my degree on a specific time and shape. Universities benefit from the fees paid by students 'choosing' to do their internships at these types of 'sites' or by reproducing academic content to be massively consumed. Publishing companies and scientific journals benefit from the fees researchers pay to publish their work and the earnings these obtain from doing so. As Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012, p. 104) notes: '...just as in the global market for material goods, ideas leave the country converted into raw material, which become regurgitated and jumbled in the final product'. People's knowledges and experiences are the raw materials that gain value once transformed into scientific/academic outcomes (Burman, 2018, p. 50) – like this chapter, Marc's papers, and Alex's audio-visual production. In relation to *extractivismo*, the shelter can be seen as a mine, from which resources are extracted and the activity of 'mining' information a part of research practices.

Based on a coloniality-sensitive lens, the productivity that is related to extracting data seems to operate through a long-lasting effect of colonialism through which the difference existing between people entitled to humanity and people who are not takes the spatial configuration into 'zones of being' and 'zones of not-being' (Fanon, 1963 in Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 35). Fanon's notions, opportunely worked by Grosfoguel in relation to *extractivismo*, help us understand that shelters, as spaces emerged from colonially-shaped power dynamics, are places where only the 'wretched of the earth' dwell (Fanon, 1963). Following Fanon's and Grosfoguel's ideas, I argue that the shelter, as an institution shaped by migration governance, regimes, and architectures (van Riemsdijk et al., 2021) produces within itself zones of not-being. Students, practitioners, and researchers embedded with Northern migration apparatus(es) via study programmes, internships, grants, and work contracts access these peripheral zones *to take* or *grasp* some-thing(s) through the daily practice of *doing* fieldwork to then transform what has been taken in products to be consumed at the centre.

Although my overall intention in this paper is to critically address extraction in migration-related research, there are ways in which researchers might in many cases have the possibility to counter it via their research practice. At Casa para Todes, I was able to contribute to the conformation of a more thorough protocol to better assess the intentions, methods, and strategies of journalists and researchers who approached the shelter for research. It is an unfinished process in which hopefully other volunteers and researchers will become involved in the future. At Iedereen Welkom I have contributed in a more indirect way, by thinking along with students at the university and helping them question the presumed centrality of the shelter

and ‘the migrant’ in their research designs. These efforts to go against extraction aim at creating spaces in mainstream Northern academia from which we can undertake research practices that also contribute to shelters as zones of being.

15.5 Concluding Remarks: Transit and Transitions in Migration Research – A Stubborn Reminder

The research projects I have come across while working at the shelter varied considerably in terms of *doing* research, including its ethics. However, even in case every individual project has taken into consideration research ethics as a central component of their doings, the aggregate reality of all these projects together still results in something problematic: the naturalisation of the shelter as a research site. When the societal engagements of each researcher are brought to the collective practice of academia, the reality turns into a nasty cocktail of othering, political relevance, ‘good intentions’, academic careers, voyeurism, exoticism, and, indeed, knowledges extraction. If extraction is always present in research involving people being sheltered and sheltering practices and organisations, it seems the only way to avoid it is leaving academia.

At the same time, it is precisely through my research practice at these shelters that I have become aware of the naturalisation of the shelter as a fieldwork site and the extraction implicit in it. Moreover, I have witnessed and participated in dynamics where shelters not only produce zones of not-being but zones of being, where people organise to resist and counter the oppressions coming from such migration regimes and architectures. In this light, we could re-value the reluctance of many migrantised people to give yet another interview or engage in yet another research dynamic that leave not many things besides fatigue (e.g. Wajsberg, 2020). It is not just a ‘no’ to a possibly kind researcher with ‘good intentions’. It is a ‘no’ that has a wider connotation of resisting the different forms of extraction that Leanne Simpson and others denounce that articulate with longer and deeper anti-colonial, anti-patriarchal, and anti-capitalist struggles.

I approach shelters as spaces of ambiguities. Shelters are places for care and protection as well as control and discipline. Shelters are mines for extraction, but also places of creation and sharing. In that sense, shelters as zones of not-being *and* of being produce moments in between, interstices, where people looking for shelter also take and *people looking to research-while-sheltering* avoid taking and even sometimes give. In that sense, Marc’s perspective regarding the limitations of researchers to bring transformative change helped me in reflecting on the problematic side of attempting to bring transformations into people’s lives by the means of research practice. His acknowledgment about his limitations helped me detect my own limitations and assumptions on how my research was indeed different to more extractive designs. Such a self-reflexive process influenced my further engagements in the improvement of the protocol for researchers at Casa para Todes, and in the practice of a more critical guidance for students at the university’s departments

where I work. In perspective, these efforts certainly add up to moments in which mutual aid and conviviality were not determined by the institutional side of the shelters but by the need to counter the effects of migration regimes. Altogether, they open possibilities to pass from extraction in dynamics of *doing* fieldwork to dynamics that aim for *undoing* or *redoing* fieldwork (see for instance Bejarano et al., 2019). This final reflection is therefore a stubborn reminder of the work in progress that not only aims to critically and self-reflectively analyse how *doing* fieldwork transforms people into 'migrants', but also aims at changing the research practice itself. *Undoing fieldwork* then could imply understanding and valuing research as a process instead of only focusing on the fixation of its outcome – process aimed at being part and parcel of social transformation.

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Chapter 16

Temporality and Permanency in the Study of Border Cities and Migration



Zeynep Şahin Mencütek 

16.1 Introduction

The city has been increasingly at the heart of discussions on displacement and asylum in recent years (Glorius & Doomernik, 2020). This emphasis can be attributed to the fact that many refugees, asylum seekers, and ‘irregular migrants’ worldwide now live in urban spaces and expectations about the urban future of humanitarian crises, including climate-induced displacements (e.g. Archer & Dodman, 2017). As Kreichauf and Glorius (2021) note, ‘forced migration is an urban phenomenon – an integral part of twenty-first-century urban landscapes, as well as an urban story of those displaced’ (p. 869). In the displacement literature, any kind of physical environment outside of refugee camps is identified as ‘urban’, while terms like urban refugees (Grabska, 2006), urban mobility (Kihato & Landau, 2017a, b), urbanisation of asylum (Darling, 2020), and urban asylum policymaking (Bazurli & Kaufmann, 2022) have become popular.

Although research interest on cities prioritises the spatial perspective, the temporal dimension is an indispensable part of urban and asylum discussions. The cities on the borders serve as urban spaces of transit and in transition (Dotsey & Lumley-Sapanski, 2021). Small or mid-sized border cities become important transit hubs and temporary settlement spaces for people looking for opportunities to migrate onward. Due to the protracted nature of migration journeys and associated risks, people on the move often stay in the temporal locations longer than initially envisioned, making them transit-turned-host spaces. Hence, they become critical for understanding not only accommodation and reception (Oliver et al., 2020) but also integration (Dekker et al., 2015) and protection of displaced people (Artero & Fontanari, 2021, p. 631). They emerge as ‘a place of care and control, of incentivisation and eviction and of inclusion and exclusion’ (Oginni, 2021, p.1).

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With the migrants' arrival, the cities also face the appearance of a range of service providers, from international humanitarian NGO workers and practitioners to international organisation employees (see Carpi, Chap. 14, this volume) and private housing companies (see Darling, Chap. 13, this volume). Additionally, they observe a proliferation of people who conduct research on migrants like journalists, researchers, students, and audio-visual producers (see Merlín-Escorza, Chap. 15, this volume). Short or long-term stays of these diverse actors lead to physical, economic, and socio-cultural transformations in urban neighbourhoods and border towns, sometimes temporal, other times permanent. Also, the temporary and transitional nature of programmes targeting urban refugees (e.g. humanitarian aid, sheltering/housing, employment) interact with spatial dynamics, bringing new visible materials such as symbols and offices of humanitarian NGOs (Dotsey & Lumley-Sapanski, 2021).

Service fields at the local level, such as housing (Darling, Chap. 13, this volume), sheltering (Merlín-Escorza, Chap. 15, this volume), and livelihoods (Carpi, Chap. 14, this volume) turn into contested fields because of the entanglement of the diverse stakeholders involved and changed dynamics over time (Werner et al., 2018). The several actors involved in the urban asylum management are not only implementers of policies but also creators of local discourses and interpreters of central or international discourses on the ground (Lowndes & Polat, 2020). All these dynamics related to asylum stimulate spatial, societal, and institutional transformations in and of urban spaces.

Against this background, chapters in this volume's fourth part on 'Bordering Migration in Cities' have already provided insights for debates on asylum and the city and the socio-spatial changes in border cities in Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. Jonathan Darling addresses the example of Glasgow, defining it as a *bordered* city because it is at the forefront of the UK's approach to accommodating asylum seekers through a dispersal system. As Darling notes, 'the policy of dispersal is a predominantly urban process, housing asylum seekers in a community setting, often in poor quality accommodations and with limited access to services and support' (Darling, Chap. 13, this volume). Estella Carpi looks at encounters and missed encounters between the urban and the humanitarian worlds, drawing on cases of small border towns and enlarged cities in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. Cesar E. Merlín-Escorza discusses the performativities of (dis)location at shelters in both the southern border region of Mexico and the eastern border region of the Netherlands. He exclusively focuses on questions of controlling and transference of knowledge.

This chapter aims to synthesise these chapters' analytical insights. It identifies current debates and research fields regarding asylum and urban places. It briefly maps the most-used theoretical perspectives and concepts in the existing literature and links them to the chapters mentioned above. To do that, the chapter begins with an overview of prevalent theoretical perspectives and concepts in the existing literature. Nevertheless, the goal is not to review past literature but rather to carry the discussion further by focusing on the analytical reflections from single chapters. Next, the chapter focuses on mechanisms of interactions and concludes by outlining some key questions to consider in further debates.

16.2 Intersection of Governance Approaches with Urban and Humanitarian Studies

Scholarship on asylum and city draws on several theoretical frameworks to examine the web of actors, interactions, and contestations. We should consider at least three theoretical angles, namely, governance approaches, critical humanitarian studies, and critical border studies. Empirical studies in this volume tend to select one of these theoretical perspectives or adopt them eclectically to analyse complex cases.

Among the governance approaches, the multilevel perspective has been one of the dominant, putting specific emphasis on cities because the vertical dimension of multilevel migration governance (MLG) considers the relevance of local, national, and the supra- and the international (mainly EU) processes in shaping migration policies and practices (Scholten & Penninx, 2016; Panizzon & Van Riemsdijk, 2019). MLG is basically defined as the dispersion of authority away from central government – upwards to the supranational level, downwards to subnational jurisdictions, and sideways to public-private networks (Hooghe et al., 2001; Scholten, 2020). MLG scholars paid attention to theorising *local turn* in relation to this framework (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). MLG is especially used to comparatively analyse municipal responses to national policies such as welfare provisions for non-removed rejected asylum seekers (Ataç et al., 2020) or integration programmes for refugees. It helps to explain the relations, including alliance-building of municipalities with civil society actors and other local governments. Although studies adopting MLG put particular attention on asylum and cities across Europe (Bazurli & Kaufmann, 2022; Dekker et al., 2015; Oliver et al., 2020), there has been growing interest in governance and local actors in non-European cities like Istanbul (Lowndes & Polat, 2020), Cairo (Grabska, 2006), or Nairobi, Johannesburg, and Kampala (Kihato & Landau, 2017a, b).

Going beyond the lens of levels, multiscalar perspective addresses relations and power dynamics across time and space (Oomen et al., 2021; Triandafyllidou, 2021). Multiscalar perspective proposes to focus on how ‘socio-spatial spheres of practice...are constituted in relationship to each other and within various hierarchies of networks of power’ (Çağlar & Schiller, 2018, p. 10). It makes a call for critically assessing the relationships between local actors and other nodes and networks of power (Oomen et al., 2021, p. 20). In particular, it has garnered increasing attention of migration scholarship focusing on urban scales (Darling & Bauder, 2019). This research aims to comprehensively describe how cities respond to, transform, and are transformed from the refugee migration by building bridges with urban studies. Particularly, ‘the relational accounts of urban studies highlight the urban complexity, connectivity, and heterogeneity’ by ‘challeng[ing] the assumptions of singular or coherent sovereign authority (Darling, Chap. 13, this volume).

The concept *urbanisation of asylum* (or *urban asylum*) emerged at the intersection of migration governance and urban studies perspectives. Darling notes that urbanisation of asylum ‘implies the growing prominence of urban contexts, but also urban authorities and politics, in shaping and influencing debates on asylum and

refuge that have traditionally been orientated at the nation-state' (ibid.). Rightly, the concept does not only ask to consider 'the role of city as a regulatory device or container aligned with the imposition of sovereign authority, rather it is to read asylum through the complexity of how urban words are composed, contested and conceptualised' (ibid.).

To identify complex and relations contingencies of asylum in urban contexts, scholars use a plethora of concepts such as the politics of presence, negotiations, and battlefield. The 'politics of presence' refers to ways in which 'cities become the critical space for 'contestation over rights, refuge, bordering and control' (ibid., citing Lebuhn 2012). The concept of 'urban negotiations of refuge' is adopted for foregrounding a focus on local in debates over asylum (ibid.). The contestation(s) among different actors are described with the concept of a *battleground* of asylum (and immigration) policies: 'they are a contentious field in which different actors interact, cooperating or conflicting' (Ambrosini, 2021, p. 374). It is argued that the adoption of a 'battleground' perspective adds 'a more dynamic basis for the MLG approach' (Dimitriadis et al., 2021, p. 251).

Diverse actors have their own agendas and strategies regarding integration and diversity accommodation, on the one hand, and exclusion and bordering, on the other (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017, p. 242). The actors include local ones such as 'pro-refugee civil society; coalitions of diverse pro-refugee actors; opponents to refugee reception; local governments acting for and against refugee and migrant reception and asylum seekers and irregular immigrants themselves' (Ambrosini, 2021, p. 374). The list also comprises scholars, undergraduate students, journalists, practitioners, and independent/NGO researchers interested in migration-related topics (Merlin-Escorza, Chap. 15, this volume) as well as humanitarian and development agencies and their partners (Carpi, Chap. 14, this volume). So, all these diverse actors, sites, and encounters create 'an assemblage' (Merlin-Escorza, Chap. 15, this volume), 'urban world' (Darling, Chap. 13, this volume) and 'ecology' (Carpi, Chap. 14, this volume). To define this, a popular notion coined in the last years is the '*arrival/urban infrastructure*'. The term enables the capture of the spatiotemporal and material conditions of arrivals and the different dimensions of struggles in the process of arrivals (Meeus et al., 2019). These urban infrastructures (such as settlements, marketplaces, transit camps) are important as they are intertwined and constitute the displaced person's everyday reality (Oginni, 2021, p.1). An arrival infrastructures concept seeks to merge sovereign and agency-oriented approaches by focusing on understanding the organisation, production, and power negotiations of migrants and urban space (Meeus et al., 2019; Nettelbladt & Boano, 2019).

Critical humanitarian studies also offer analytical tools to interrogate the roles of local contexts in urban displacement, given that forced migration is a central issue for providing humanitarian assistance. Cities – particularly in the Global South – increasingly turn into the main sites of humanitarian action. Humanitarian agencies respond to forced migration in meeting the acute needs of displaced people and accessing services beyond camps. Over the years, 'the humanitarian sector began to develop a more nuanced understanding of urbanity: its infrastructure, service provisions, societal and spatial processes of segregation and fragmentation, (in)formal

and community-based networks and the broader relationship between transient humanitarian actors and the population at large' (Carpi, Chap. 14, this volume). In addressing the various facets of the urbanisation of asylum, humanitarian actors engage with municipal authorities, cities' populations, and displaced people.

Drawing from the intersection of displacement, urban, and humanitarian studies, Carpi offers a new concept: 'urban-itarian' ecologies (ibid.). 'Urban-itarian' refers to a spatial and relational intersection between the humanitarian and the urban. As such, it can 'neither be reduced to governance nor to a mere discussion around the built environment' (Carpi, Chap. 14, this volume). The concept underlines that the physical importance of the humanitarian presence also means considering the impact of the 'material expression of places and practices on the residents, the urban actors, and the humanitarian actors' (Smirl, 2015, p. 7). Carpi (Chap. 14, this volume) argues that humanitarian and urban actors share a relational and spatial ecology ('worlds') made of encounters as well as missed encounters. The originality of the concept lies in that it does not only refer to actors 'but also to symbols and other visual forms, as well as to the political negotiations and relations between urban and humanitarian actors that are normally assembled under the broad and less fluid label of "governance"' (Carpi, Chap. 14, this volume). With this conceptual innovation, Carpi invites students of displacement and humanitarianism to rethink narrow understandings of urban actors or governance perspectives (which often focus on local municipality and governorate actors) and urban settings influenced by the displacement(s). She directs our attention to focus on the local people's perspective as well as sites of entertainment and learning where locals, refugees, and humanitarian actors interact.

Besides these approaches, critical border studies also feed the debates on the urbanisation of asylum. Inspired by critical border studies, previous research has examined how asylum seekers and refugees experience and negotiate borders as part of their everyday lives, including in urban/suburban neighbourhoods, naming the process as everyday *urban bordering* (Laine, 2016; Tervonen et al., 2018; Walsh et al., 2002). The scholars of urban asylum adopt broader interpretations of bordering. In this edited volume, chapters focus on both the *border* city and the *bordered* city. The border city is defined as an urban space situated on an international boundary. Bordered city is a city¹ that is a key site for the everyday bordering of the state (Cassidy, 2019). Darling (Chap. 13) identifies Glasgow as a bordered city for being subject to the dispersal policy of the UK government. Carpi (Chap. 14) focuses on more diverse border settings that are primary destinations for refugees from Syria. She draws from the example of three border towns in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan. Additionally, she looks at the Turkish city of Gaziantep and two Istanbul neighbourhoods that resemble bordered localities as they are subject to several bordering processes, like the Glasgow example (Karaman & Islam, 2012). Similarly, Merlín-Escorza's case selection in Chap. 15 reflects a broader interpretation of

¹ 'Bordered city' is also used to refer cities where polarisation and deep-rooted dichotomies of communities take place in the everyday engagements in the streets, neighbourhoods, meeting places, and other communal or public spaces.

border. He focuses on the two shelter locations. One is located at the southern border region of Mexico, where people have crossed the border from Guatemala. Another is a shelter located ‘at the eastern border region of the Netherlands, where people who have been rejected from the procedure for obtaining asylum, find accommodation next to food, basic physical and mental health care, and free legal assistance related to their asylum cases’ (Merlín-Escorza, Chap. 15, this volume). All these bordered and border localities are complex environments because of often disputed and rapidly changing characteristics (Carpi, Chap. 14, this volume).

Chapters in this volume’s fourth part and growing literature make calls to understand local bordering practices (occurring beyond territorial borders of sovereign states) in relation to ‘the multitude of the actors; legal pluralism; and the contextual role of social, economic, and spatial factors’ (Oomen et al., 2021, p.16). They also pay attention to the ‘relational networks of bordering’ (Darling, Chap. 13, this volume). For example, Darling argues that accommodation and support services regulations have potential impacts in a wide range of sites (e.g. transit, origin) as well as the impacts on persons and networks in the situation of containment and onward migration (ibid.). Carpi shows how ‘urbanising’ humanitarianism in these border and bordered towns and cities emerged as insufficiently responsive to local specificities and histories.

16.3 Encountering Mechanisms/Dynamics

There are various dynamics at play in the urbanisation of asylum. These dynamics offer insights into the ‘new configurations of power, influence and contestation that are shaping how cities are playing increasingly prominent and often contentious roles in the politics of refuge’ (ibid.). I will review some of these mechanisms drawn from chapters in this Part IV on ‘Bordering Migration in Cities’ and bring some other examples, as these trends are also observable in cases addressed here.

16.3.1 *Extraction*

It is observable across cases that accommodating asylum seekers became an opportunity for revenue generation for local authorities.² In earlier research, Kihato and Landau (2017a, b, p. 414) discuss how humanitarian agencies put ‘greater emphasis on market-based solutions as a means of both improving protection and limiting seeming unnecessary spending on top-heavy bureaucracies’ as observed in the cases of Nairobi, Johannesburg, and Kampala.

²In other settings, this value extraction is also called ‘incarceration economies’ (Martin, 2021) and ‘destitution economies of migration control’ (Coddington et al., 2020)

For the case of Glasgow, in the early stages of dispersals, a surplus of hard-to-let social housing was turned into asylum accommodation places, thus they were recycled and readied for future investments. For this trend, Darling highlights that ‘the temporary status of asylum seekers renders them available for commodification and exploitation as Martin (2021) notes, enabling the provision of poor quality housing and the enforced mobility of asylum seekers into and out of communities and neighbourhoods’ (Darling, Chap. 13, this volume). Similar value extraction mechanisms are also discussed by scholars focusing on urban humanitarian actions in the Global South cities. Carpi shows that the same trend has been observable in the Syrian refugee-hosting border towns. She elaborates on the case of an internationally funded market in Halba, Lebanon, and points to wide gaps at the programming level. While refugees living in border towns ‘predominantly needed rural means of livelihoods in order to survive, international humanitarian support became growingly urban-centred’ (Carpi, Chap. 14, this volume). This, in turn, led to the emergence of hybrid economies in border towns. Her examples are also important for thinking about two consequential mechanisms: how foreign humanitarian actors ignore local urban histories and relationships and how they are usually reluctant to involve local authorities in their own work with the intention of keeping humanitarian action out of local politics.

The value extraction from refugees to urban development does not always emerge in material forms. Drawing from the example of resettling refugees to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Watson (2019, p. 983) shows that some welcoming cities ‘see building and promoting “diversity” as an economic exigency. As such, locally resettled refugees are incentivised to participate in a “symbolic economy” valuing images of diversity, cosmopolitanism, and immigrant contribution’. Merlin-Escorza, in Chap. 15, takes a similar approach, with a focus on non-material extraction(s). He relates the same concept of extraction, innovatively with the academic knowledge production processes. Drawing from the notion of cognitive extractivism, he offers to look at the mechanism of extraction in migration research. It is considered similar to the means of extraction in governance, which is marked by spatial relocation and hierarchical (also colonially-coined) power relations among migrants and governing actors. In the case of migration knowledge production, the epistemic privilege of Northern academic knowledge to fix or categorise some people as ‘migrants’, ‘refugees’, and ‘asylum-seekers’ and treat experiences in some sites such as those in shelters, camps, borders, or ‘slums’ as worth being selected, taken, and processed into the knowledge (Merlin-Escorza, Chap. 15, this volume).

16.3.2 Frictions, Battlegrounds and Solidarities

One important mechanism discussed in the literature and chapters reviewed here concerns the frictions and struggles observed during the urbanisation of asylum. These frictions may occur between local and national governments and between community initiatives to support refugees as neighbours and the patterns of

bordering practiced by various state and non-state actors. Recent discussions on these frictions adopt the battleground notion (Ambrosini, 2021) to focus on governing actors operating at different levels (local, national). For example, refugee placement has become politicised and a point of struggle between state and city governments in many parts of the world due to the contradictions inherent to resettlement policies and backlash from local actors (indicatively, for the US, see Benson et al., 2022). In other instances, frictions may arise when municipal actors like mayors seek to engage more interactively with the national scale (e.g. ministries or directories) or transnational scale via city networks or humanitarian actors, leading to institutional changes or empowerment (Betts et al., 2021) and may take advantage of new opportunity structures to promote their leadership (Sabchev, 2021).

Carpi, in Chap. 14, opens a new perspective in considering frictions that emphasise the encounters of urban and humanitarian actors. It is common that international humanitarian actors (and donors) serving refugees find themselves in highly politicised and politically fragmented urban spaces. They operate amidst conflicting global norms about protection, the needs of vulnerable populations, and local struggles for limited resources, on the one hand, and humanitarian principles (neutrality, impartiality, and independence), competition for donor resources, and expectations about quantifiable efficiency, on the other (Kihato & Landau, 2017a, b). Carpi argues that both actors build a complex ecology in which ‘urban-itarian’ encounters occur. These encounters also ‘involve a discussion about coordination/lack of coordination in aid and service provision, and deliberate or unwilling modalities of co-governance’ (Chap. 14, this volume). It is important to understand how humanitarian assistance influences urban setting and how it increasingly interrelates with development assistance that often directly targets the transformation of urban infrastructures. Nevertheless, the physical humanitarian presence needs to be negotiated in some city spaces like Istanbul or Gaziantep, where local repercussions are likely (ibid.). Carpi thus highlighted similar power relations and negotiations around the humanitarian presence in the border and bordered cities.

Interestingly, Merlin-Escorza focuses on the potential frictions emerging between two archetypical actors present at the shelters, i.e., the hosts and guests or migrants and volunteers. His chapter turns the analytical gaze to researchers. He argues that researchers are also part of this ‘battleground’ as players, and they may encounter frictions with other actors when focusing on urban refugees as in shelters. His reflective research questions – whose and which knowledge and experiences are essential for the production of academic migration-related knowledge and how has the shelter been naturalised as a space for *doing* fieldwork – can be raised in other research contexts as well.

Darling’s case pushes us to consider how the frictions at the governance levels interact with the forms of emerging solidarities run by communities, asylum advocates, and asylum seekers together as in the contentious forms of anti-deportation activism and opposition to government policies in the city. This can be situated within the debates on inclusive policymaking of cities vis-a-vis the regulatory policies of the national state (Ataç et al., 2020; Bauder, 2021). This mechanism is termed urbanising migration-policymaking (Kaufmann & Strebel, 2021). In the

European context, for instance in the example of Dutch municipalities, these actors may find ways of ‘cushioning, bypassing, resisting and counteracting various aspects of exclusionary asylum policies’ (Kos et al., 2016, p.356).

Besides debates about contestations, the existing literature provides ample examples for solidarity, in particular dynamics in sanctuary cities (Bauder, 2017), solidarity cities, or cities of refuge (Christoph & Kron, 2019; Koellner, 2019). These cities develop urban actions or policies that address the precarious situation of irregular migrants. Their policies, such as regularisation programmes, counter the national policymaking by challenging the national state’s authority as the only regulatory body over immigration.

Debates around cities can be also linked to citizenship and rights discussions, introducing the notion of ‘urban citizenship’ (Varsanyi, 2006; Prak, 2018). Kihato and Landau (2017a, b, p. 420) note that ‘as rights are increasingly negotiated “horizontally” (cf. Kabeer 2005) with neighbours, not states, a state-centred language of rights can be impotent and potentially perilous’. Ethnographic studies focusing on the everyday practices of refugees in certain neighbourhoods of Istanbul and Athens illustrate that refugees take action against top-down social segregation and exclusion through their communing practices; hence they claim spatial justice, visibility, and the right to the centre of the city (Tsavdaroglou, 2020; Tsavdaroglou & Kaika, 2022). Refugees thus emerge in the battlegrounds through claim-making, negotiation, acts of everyday resistance, and organised opposition. Nevertheless, there are also cases in cities and towns that refuse asylum seekers despite the national allocation plans’ requirements (Marchetti, 2020). In both situations – accommodative and restrictive – urban settings turn into the site of negotiations and argumentations, politicising the topic of asylum and reception further.

16.3.3 *Temporality*

Temporality is often a vital component of encounters and outcomes in the urbanisation of asylum. Although many forced migrants arrive in cities via their own spontaneous journeys, it is also the case that some are settled in cities because of dispersal, allocation, residential obligations, and resettlement policies set by national governments (Robinson et al., 2003). In some cases, the urban refugee population increases due to the closures of refugee camps. Hence, temporality emerges as an essential part of the experiences of asylum seekers awaiting settlement or processing and refugees in conditions of protracted displacement and onward migration (Brun, 2016; Fontanari, 2017). It is not rare that ‘arrival [is] practised and lived temporally and relationally among the displaced persons’ (Oginni, 2021, p.1).

In many situations, cities become sites of a considerable degree of social policy experimentation in relation to asylum. These policy innovations have impact on cities, for example, forcing ‘the development of urban support sectors that were themselves experimental, untested, and often haphazard in their early iterations’ (Darling,

Chap. 13, this volume). Examples include outsourcing accommodation and support contracts to private companies or using hotels as a form of temporary or overspilled accommodation for asylum seekers (*ibid.*). This experimentation also related to the fact that governance challenges, including uncertainties, divergences, and complexities in the field of asylum are often responded to either by authorities' 'temporary fixes' or by 'situated negotiations' of diverse actors (*ibid.*). Regarding temporalities, Carpi's chapter makes us think on the temporariness of encounters between the urban and the humanitarian worlds. Humanitarian actors' permanent or temporary presence not only influences the refugees but also impacts local residents' perception of them. One site of intense temporal encounters is shelters. Merlin-Escorza situates shelters as spaces characterised by the transit and transition of people, their knowledge, and experiences.

Temporality of actors (e.g. volunteers), sites (e.g. shelters), and relations emerge as important components of the 'battlegrounds' mentioned above. No doubt engaging on the battleground necessitates choosing some tactical moves and building alliances, on the one hand, and being subject to unexpected outcomes, on the other. Drawing from empirical research in three African cities – Nairobi, Johannesburg, and Kampala – Kihato and Landau (2017a, b, p. 408) rightly underline that 'promoting rights for refugees living amongst equally poor and vulnerable host populations requires tactical political alliances with community-based organisations and local actors. In many instances, humanitarians need to be all but invisible, promoting rights indirectly to avoid political ire and popular backlash'. In many cases, humanitarian programming remains inconclusive despite attempts to transform refugees' urban life (or assimilate the rural and peri-urban). Instead, migrants lead hybrid lifestyles and develop complex livelihood strategies, as Carpi shows. Accordingly, Carpi's chapter urges us to think on hybrid lifestyles of displaced people living in border cities because some may have to build their worlds across the urban and the rural. Hence, it makes us reconsider urban-rural dichotomies. Merlin-Escorza's reflexivity about his engagements in the shelter as a volunteer/researcher also offers us nuanced understanding of temporalities experienced by different actors. He notes that 'many volunteers are only present at the shelter for short periods of time' and that 'shelters are thus, defined by the inward and outward mobilities of actors, whose life-trajectories are characterised by movement and stillness, loss and hope, and emplacement' (Merlín-Escorza, Chap. 15, this volume).

16.3.4 Spatial Changes

It should be added that material spatial changes may occur in the bordered and border cities. In particular, control policies subject some border cities to top-down physical changes, such as the construction of border walls, accommodation centres, or camps, deployment of extra security measures, and even the creation of cemeteries for unclaimed corpses of migrants. Some material changes remain permanent,

while others (like camps or accommodation centres) might be temporal, as they are dismantled over time.

Besides permanent or temporal top-down spatial transformations, urbanisation of asylum may lead to bottom-up changes in the cities. Some neighbourhoods may observe spatial changes due to the arrival of many refugees, solidarity groups, and multiple humanitarian actors. In such neighbourhoods (called urban refugee neighbourhoods), communal houses, social centres, and collective kitchens are created through the cooperation of refugees, humanitarian organisations, and local solidarity groups. In some cases, the simultaneous arrival of refugees and humanitarians may make ‘urban space more urban than ever’ or transform peri-urban spaces (like some towns) into real cities or enlarge cities. Meanwhile, as Carpi notes, ‘humanitarian symbols, logos, flags, and offices appear as temporary to international dwellers, for local and refugee residents, they are often a “permanent topography of assistance”’ (Chap. 14, this volume). These play a sizeable role in making cities.

Merlin-Escorza’s chapter is illustrative to think on the transformative power of spaces of ‘transit and in transition’. He highlights that although ‘shelters have been long understood in literature from a spatial/material perspective as places in which temporary protection is provided’, they are more than this because they serve to meet of needs of people in mobility across national borders along with those of the ‘host communities and environment’ in the crisis-like emergencies, as well as they work for the advocacy of migrant’ lives. With these characteristics, they are not solely a humanitarian service actors/site, but rather among forces contesting the state-led migration management architectures (ibid.). Nevertheless, as observed in other sites, ‘the power relations inherent to sheltering practices, especially when migration research is performed while or within sheltering’ (ibid.).

16.4 Concluding Remarks

As the brief review of existing scholarship and chapters in the fourth part of this volume reveals, a local turn in Migration Studies has been well received by scholars studying asylum in urban settings. Diverse relations and various entanglements in urban spaces are created and transformed by migrants and asylum seekers, often in the shadows or against national and urban migration management policies. All these developments also influence power relations horizontally and vertically.

Chapters in the volume’s concluding part offer thoughtful insights into the new power, influence, and contestation configurations. They also provide some ideas for the temporality of changes. They contribute to developing an ‘interdisciplinary way to urbanise debates on forced migration’ (Kreichauf & Glorius, 2021). They provide insights into multiple actors, spatial transformations, and engagement mechanisms. Nevertheless, they warn us against the dangers of binary thinking, suggesting relational thinking instead. For example, Carpi (Chap. 14) notes that ‘the urban-itarian does not focus on urban refugees *versus* camp-based refugees and their respective urban demands (citing Azizi et al., 2021, p. 4455), but rather on the urban-itarian

ecology: namely, the relational and spatial interplay of humanitarian and urban actors’.

Although there is no doubt that cities are playing an increasingly prominent role in the politics of refuge, we still face some difficult questions in developing a more elaborated research agenda on politics of urban space and asylum from a relational perspective. These include: one, how to analytically focus on the temporality dimension (constant change of socio-political dynamics); two, how to better identify diverse relations and mechanisms of negotiating among multiple actors; and, three, how do practical and political realities of displacement and asylum in urban settings show similarities and differences across countries and various localities. All these questions also bring us back the broader question of the extent to which we can treat cities as autonomous policy actors on asylum. It further raises the issue of whether we can expect that the gap between restrictive legislation and (liberal/positive) urban actions facilitating migrants’ access to services will reform the asylum regime from the bottom up through practices. An initial response to the first question is that cities are only one among the range of authorities navigating and negotiating the realities of displacement, but not the sole actors. Regarding the second issue, it can be tentatively said that actions taken by cities undoubtedly make changes in the life of asylum seekers and may strengthen democratic policymaking, even triggering some policy changes, but they rarely turn into a deeply-rooted reformist wave.

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