Amandine Desille, Charlotte Räuchle, Ilona van Breugel, Juan Carlos Triviño-Salazar, and Antonie Schmiz

Negotiating Migration in Cities: A Relational Comparative Perspective

Abstract

This discussion paper calls for broadening the scope of research on cities and migration, both empirically and theoretically, by applying a relational comparative perspective. It pleas to rethink how cities are studied and compared in migration studies. Although cities have become central reference points in migration research since the ›local turn‹, most studies still focus primarily on capital cities and gateway cities as self-contained spaces in the Global North. These biases lead to blind spots in the production of knowledge regarding the migration–city nexus. Newer theoretical, empirical, and methodological perspectives offer possible ways out by decentering migration and focusing on the multiple relations sustained in and across cities in the Global South and North.

Keywords

Local, cities, migration, comparative, Global North, Global South, knowledge production

---

Dr. Amandine Desille, Universidade de Lisboa, Université de Bordeaux
Dr. Charlotte Räuchle, Freie Universität Berlin, Institut für Geographische Wissenschaften
Dr. Ilona van Breugel, Hogeschool Rotterdam
Dr. Juan Carlos Triviño-Salazar, Universitat Pompeu Fabra
Prof. Dr. Antonie Schmiz, Freie Universität Berlin, Institut für Geographische Wissenschaften

Zeitschrift für Migrationsforschung – Journal of Migration Studies (ZMF) 2023 3 (2): 129–146, DOI: https://doi.org/10.48439/zmf.190

Die Aushandlung von Migration in Städten: Eine relational vergleichende Perspektive

In diesem Diskussionspapier rufen wir dazu auf, die Forschung über Städte und Migration sowohl empirisch als auch theoretisch um eine relational vergleichende Perspektive zu erweitern. Es plädiert dafür, die Art und Weise, wie Städte in der Migrationsforschung untersucht und verglichen werden, zu überdenken. Obwohl Städte seit dem ›local turn‹ zu zentralen Bezugspunkten in der Migrationsforschung geworden sind, konzentrieren sich die meisten Studien weiterhin hauptsächlich auf Hauptstädte und Gateway-Cities als in sich geschlossene Räume im Globalen Norden. Dieser Blick führt zu blinden Flecken bei der Produktion von Wissen an der Schnittstelle von Stadt und Migration. Neuere theoretische, empirische und methodische Perspektiven bieten mögliche Auswege, indem sie Migration dezentrieren und sich auf die vielfältigen Beziehungen konzentrieren, die in und zwischen Städten im Globalen Süden und im Globalen Norden bestehen.

1 Introduction

Research on the migration–city nexus dates to the development of the Chicago School of Sociology and the birth of urban sociology in the 1920s. Urban sociology began with the study of European migrants to Chicago. Today, its theory of ecology for which human behaviors are shaped by the natural environment is considered largely deterministic. Despite this promising start, in the years that followed, the rise of the nation state and the concomitant focus on the interrelation of states and migration left cities in research largely ignored, even though they played a crucial role in migrants' reception during World War II.[1] Since the end of the 1970s decentralization reforms in Europe coupled with the realization that the so-called guest workers were staying for good, led to a renewed role for cities in migrants' reception. For instance, at the European institutional level, cities are acknowledged as places of integration, and when it comes to governance, their role as actors in European migration policies is increasingly acknowledged and researched (Payre and Spahic 2012; Russeil and Healy 2015). Yet it has taken a few decades for this political redistribution of power and resources to be accompanied by a critique of »methodological nationalism« in migration research (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) and an ontological shift to the local scale in research: the

1 For more on this topic, see the work of Jacques Semelin (2018) on municipal actors and exiles in France 1940–1944, and the special issue edited by Shaev and Hackett (2021) in the *Journal of Migration History* for the postwar period.

»local turn« (Scholten and Penninx 2016; Zapata Barrero et al. 2017; Caponio et al. 2019).

With the ›local turn‹ in migration studies, scholars have again recognized that cities have become central reference points in migration research. Indeed, a bibliographical review of English publications on this nexus shows that »between 1975 and 2018, […] the annual number of publications on urban level has grown by 28 times, while the field of migration studies as a whole has grown by 8 times« (Pisarevskaya and Scholten 2022, p. 764). In such a prolific subfield (and not only in the English language), a broad range of concepts and empirical studies with variegated disciplinary frames have engaged with the migration–city nexus. While contributing to empirical knowledge on the local level, we argue here that this research still suffers from three major biases. First, it has a strong focus on the Global North (Collins 2011; Natter 2018; Schmiz et al. 2020). While intense urbanization and migration processes have shaped the Global South, this has not resonated in (mainstream) migration studies (Lacroix and Desille 2018; Martiniello 2013). Second, studies tend to focus on capital and gateway cities, leading to a knowledge gap in the analysis of small and medium-sized cities (Bloemraad 2013; Martiniello 2013; Schmiz et al. 2020). Third, the large number of studies on migration and diversity at the city level resulted in competing theories as to what constitutes the »local level« (see e.g., Alexander 2003; Caponio and Borkert 2010; Zapata Barerro et al. 2017). But rather than problematizing and unraveling the production of place in (translocal) migration regimes, cities have been studied as self-contained spaces, replacing »methodological nationalism« by »methodological urbanism« (Pott 2015; Räuchle and Schmiz 2019) or »methodological localism« (Filomeno 2017).

To overcome these theoretical and methodological biases, we suggest bringing forth a relational comparative approach, as developed in urban studies, to show the potential of this epistemology for migration studies. For this exposition, we largely rely on the works of Robinson (2005, 2006), Ward (2010), Allen and Cochrane (2010), and McCann and Ward (2013), which have proposed ways out of Eurocentric, hierarchical, contained views of the governance of socio-spatial matters in cities, to focus instead on the unbounded, dynamic, dispersed processes transforming cities. Some seminal literatures in migration studies have already taken that direction (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011; Filomeno 2017), but despite their affinity with comparative urbanism, they have not succeeded in radically convincing the research community to overcome the abovementioned biases. We argue instead that taking comparative urbanism seriously enables a new focus on the relational embeddedness of the local and its construction through different processes, both empirically and theoretically. In this line, it is essential to rethink how

cities are studied, brought together, and compared in migration studies. As a result, this approach could lead to an informed and spatially sensitive knowledge production on the migration–city nexus.

We proceed by, first, defining the relational comparative perspective. Second, we will take a closer look at the three abovementioned biases in local level migration studies and suggest ways out of these biases by proposing a relational approach to the study of migration in cities and its methodological and empirical operationalization. We conclude with a summary of the main findings and propose a few initial steps on how to circumvent the biases in subsequent research projects.

2 A Relational Comparative Perspective of How Urban Migrations are Governed

For us, the authors of this paper, the work of anthropologists Nina Glick Schiller and Ayşe Çağlar has undoubtedly been a milestone in their understanding of migration processes as relationally produced, rather than bounded and static (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011; Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2021). In a conversation with Ayşe Çağlar in 2018[2], she reiterated that despite her disciplinary affiliation with anthropology, human geography and the concept of ›scale‹ had provided her with necessary tools for her analysis.

As a matter of fact, debates on the constructed nature of geographical scales and cities can help to approach the migration–city nexus in a more open manner, without presuming fixed positions in hierarchical orders. In the past two decades, a critical conceptual reflection of traditional comparative research has argued for the epistemological value of relational comparative studies (Ward 2010; Robinson 2006, 2013). This approach entails that cities are not only territorial fixed entities (containers) but are also open, historically embedded, and interconnected spaces. It means that we ought to understand (migration) policy making »as both a local and, simultaneously, a global socio-spatial and political process« (McCann and Ward 2013). Therefore, »an object of study – e.g. a policy – is approached as a complex social construction (but no less ›real‹ for all that), which can only be understood by studying both its apparently ›internal‹ characteristics and, simultaneously, its ›external‹ relations, which are co-constituted« (McCann and Ward 2013, p. 4).

In this vein, Robinson (2005) conceptualizes the city as »both a place (a site or territory) and as a series of unbounded, relatively disconnected and dispersed, perhaps sprawling activities« (p. 763). Arguing from a decolonial perspective, the author warns against the generalization of Western-centered

2 Informal conversation between Desille and Çağlar, May 2018.

urban perspectives (Robinson 2006). This connects to the idea of provincializing cities as ›ordinary‹, without categorizing and labeling them.

For research on local migration processes, this means to study migration not only within a city but also across its various relations. This is why Glick Schiller's and Çağlar's work is such a widely recognized approach: the adaptation of rescaling in the field of international migrations (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009, 2011) forms an interesting direction for research. It argues that the way immigrants integrate in different localities is linked to the scalar positioning of a city. While the rescaling approach offers several enriching conceptual thoughts on how to circumvent the biases identified above, the approach itself also categorizes cities and reproduces hierarchical orders, as it is based on a notion of neoliberal, linearly progressing globalization (Räuchle and Schmiz 2019). Moreover, Glick Schiller and Çağlar still leave methodological questions unanswered, as their publications are empirically thin on the access to the field.

To overcome the strong focus on discrete governance levels in migration research, and to rather focus on their interconnectedness and fluidity, Ward (2010) (developing Robinson's argument further) proposes a relational comparison that considers different cities. Such relational comparison questions »how different cities are implicated in each other's past, present, and future« (p. 480), thereby recognizing their contextual embeddedness. Speaking in relational terms is a welcome solution to the analytical »local trap« that conceptualizes the city as the only scale of reference (»methodological urbanism/localism«) (Pott 2015; Räuchle and Schmiz 2019). Filomeno (2017) proposes that »the limitations of the localist mode of explanation make necessary a relational mode of explanation, capable of accounting for broader processes that encompass, link and cut across multiple localities, generating interdependencies« (p. 8). This means to at least consider global, national, and local contexts to understand the migration–city nexus.

The adoption of a relational comparative approach has its methodological implications. In-depth comparative case studies provide options to overcome case study selection and causal assumptions based on numbers of inhabitants or other quantitative indicators. The suggestion is to instead select case studies based on qualitative indicators, such as cities with similar trajectories of migration, similar relational positionings, similar arrival policies, or ones similarly affected by economic or migratory crises (e.g., harbor cities in the Mediterranean). In her research on transnational city networks, Oomen (2019) claims that we ought to »capture the complex interplay between actors and institutions positioned at different levels and in different places that characterizes migration governance today« (p. 5). In fact, researchers have tended to pay »too little attention to agency and the process of policy mobili-

zation and the wider contexts that shape and mediate the agency of various policy actors« (McCann and Ward 2013, p. 6). McCann and Ward promote the use of qualitative and ethnographic research methods, among others, as they elucidate how scales are assembled relationally by particular interested actors. These methodologies – well developed in the fields of human geography and anthropology – provide a focus on a range of scales, sites, interests, actors, and relations within and beyond the state. Indeed, policies and governance practices – including the ones focusing on the lives of migrant persons – are »gatherings, or relational assemblages of elements and resources – fixed and mobile pieces of expertise, regulation, institutional capacities, etc.« (McCann and Ward 2013, p. 8). Let us see how this could be brought into migration studies.

3 Biases in Migration Studies

3.1 Focus on the Global North

The scholarship on international migration and urban studies has overwhelmingly focused on cities in the Global North. Portrayed as main reception sites, New York, Vancouver, London, Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris and others are subjected to regular comparative research (Penninx et al. 2004; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009; de Graauw and Vermeulen 2016). This is also shown by Schmiz et al. (2020) in bibliometric research on articles within this academic field. Their study demonstrates that while cities in the Global North are primarily conceptualized as places of arrival, cities in the Global South mainly appear as places of origin. In this context, international migrants who settle in the Global North are scrutinized based on concerns of ›diversity‹, whereas the same migrants in the Global South are studied as agents of development, or in transit (Lacroix and Desille 2018). The Global North focus shapes the lens through which cities and migration are studied globally: it considers the Global South as the sending or development region, while South–South migration is growing bigger than South–North migration. The magnifier placed on the Global North distorts the empirical reality of international migration, and thus neglects intraregional dynamics (Robinson 2006).

In today's academic, political and social context, this is no longer acceptable. Calls for the decolonization of knowledge have multiplied (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2018; Römhild 2021), especially in the light of the externalization of European border- and migration control and the intensification of social movements related to the decolonialization of urban public spaces and ›Black Lives Matter‹.

Yet in the literature, little attention is paid to the (migration) diversity within ›Southern‹ cities. Even though specific cities in the Global South – those that are located in the vicinity of Europe such as some North-African cities – have gained exposure in migration trajectories (Bredeloup and Pliez 2005; Alioua 2020), they are often only regarded as ›transit‹ cities. Similarly, work on migration and cities in South America (Reboratti 1986; Dubucs and Imbert 2014) highlight the temporariness and circulation rather than the long-term effects of migration. In Africa, cities in Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, and South Africa benefit from a little more exposure than cities in the rest of Africa (see Balbo 2005; Lacroix and Desille 2018).

Although few scholars include case studies from the Global South, there are some notable exceptions. Seto (2011) compares the impact of migration on delta cities in Asia and Africa, and the extent to which migrations reshape these spaces. Landau (2018) has offered a rare and insightful window on migration processes in cities across different countries in Southern Africa, arguing that people create »nodes in national and diasporic networks of social and economic exchange [through] multilocality and mobility for socio-economic survival« (p. 217). In one of the few comparative works available on Global North and South cities Berry-Chikhaoui et al. (2007) show that metropoles in the Global South fully participate in internationalization, including new forms of cohabitation of populations from different continents and various migratory traditions.

The focus on the Global North is also reflected in the fact that scholars from the Global North are overrepresented in international knowledge production in migration research (Schmiz et al. 2020, p. 12). The privileged access to academic publishing, funding, and academic networks results in knowledge production dominated by theories and epistemologies originating in the Global North (see Zhang and Geiger [2021] on migration research in China). However, European and North American researchers should be cautious in any rush to include the Global South at all costs too, as blindly applying Eurocentric knowledge and concepts to realities outside of North America and Europe would prove counterproductive at best. Doing so would be part of the coloniality of power (Quijano 2000) and reinforce its impact on the geopolitics of knowledge (Mignolo 2002). One must also be careful that the inclusion of Global South cities does not mean convergence, but rather that it takes into account the multiple socio-spatial configurations of these variegated spaces (Berry-Chikhaoui et al. 2007; Porter and Yiftachel 2019). This calls for a decolonization of migration knowledge production both in theory and practice (Kosnick 2021). For instance, using the concept of diversity may entail imposing Global North frames on realities that are not equivalent in the Global South. Furthermore, the selection of case studies is decisive: com-

parison often occurs *a posteriori* when the editors of an edited volume (see, for instance, Zincone 2011) or a special issue bring together various local case studies. Rather, we suggest building *joint research projects*, with diverse case studies, such as the Soli*City project[3], and a collaborative working methodology allowing for comparison, and building relations. But it could also include conjointly organized conferences, workshops, academic stays, and more.

3.2 Focus on Capital and Gateway Cities

Besides the focus on the Global North, both migration and urban studies have focused predominantly on (global) capital and gateway cities. Indeed, this also applies to seminal works of the migration–city nexus. This is the case for Friedmann and Lehrer's analysis of the making of a municipal integration policy in Frankfurt (1997), as well as the seminal volume *Citizenship in European Cities: Immigrants, Local Politics and Integration Policies* (Penninx et al. 2004). Despite providing migration scholars with groundbreaking empirical studies on the issue, they set the tone for a discussion on large gateway cities.

The ›local turn‹ has supported this direction. Spurred by, inter alia, the critique on »methodological nationalism« (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), the »local turn« (Scholten and Penninx 2016; Zapata Barrero et al. 2017; Caponio et al. 2019) led to focusing on capital and gateway cities that attracted migrants and were considered beneficiaries from a (global) capitalist model that undermined the state. This results in the ascription of an open and tolerant character to cities, which welcome accommodating diversity, as contrasted to its national context (see e.g., Alexander 2003; cf. Scholten 2013; Oomen 2019). The work of Sassen (1991) has been influential in this regard, as she brought global cities to the forefront, and built a sustainable basis for a lasting consensus: global cities' networks are more powerful than the nation states hosting them. The work of global cities has had the effect »to leave most of the world ›off the map‹« (Robinson 2005, cited after McCann and Ward 2013, p. 5).

Schmiz et al. (2020, p. 12) have substantiated this bias with their data set, showing that metropolitan cities, defined as cities with 1–5 million inhabitants, are the main focus of research. This emphasis on metropolitan areas overlooks small and mid-sized towns as well as megacities. Thereby the literature on the local level insufficiently addresses how »migration and integration dynamics vary between types of cities« (Bloemraad 2013, p. 34), both in

3 Led by the Canadian geographer Harald Bauder at Toronto Metropolitan University: https://www.torontomu.ca/urban-sanctuary-solidarity-hospitality/

the Global North and particularly in the Global South (cf. Lacroix 2015), as megacities are to a large extent located in the latter.

The year 2015 and the ›crisis‹ of the EU border regime and its migration management can be seen as a turning point. Small and mid-sized cities gained visibility as the operating scale of dispersal and forced settlement (see Darling 2020 for the UK; Hinger 2020 for Germany). Although this new visibility reinforced the idea that living in small cities is ›non-voluntary‹, a growing number of studies has explored the broader spectrum of local settings of migration diversity. This shows the increased research interest in understanding migration in a variety of spatial settings (Walker and Leitner 2011; Bonizzoni and Marzorati 2015; Kreichauf 2015; Glorius 2017; Triviño-Salazar 2018; Desille 2018; van Breugel 2020; Hillmann and Samers 2021; Kreichauf and Glorius 2021; Pisarevskaya et al. 2021; Glorius 2022). In fact, recent research projects such as the Whole-COMM Horizon 2020 project[4], which focuses on the integration of migrants in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas, and the CAMIGRI program[5] in France, which studies the French countryside through the prism of international migration, signal the enthusiasm of funding bodies for these locales.

Focusing on cities, beyond their capital/non-capital position, entails moving beyond the simplification that smaller cities are usually the homogeneous and assimilative counterpart of the diverse and open city (van Breugel 2020). In fact, the claim of gateway cities as free havens of tolerance and cultural diversity is, however, now often disputed, instead calling attention to the politics of exclusion (Ambrosini 2013) or scales of global salience (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009). Instead, it is time to make the case for a relational comparative perspective where cities need to be seen in relation to their context. Here, the *choice of the case studies* is decisive to avoid reproducing the biases described. For instance, studying cities that do not belong to the category of capital gateway cities in the Global North may hold surprising findings. In this way, peripheral cities, smaller villages, municipalities entangled with big cities in the Global North and Global South alike become of interest.

With a relational comparative approach, we could look at migration through and across cities more carefully, as well as rural-to-urban internal mobility (Dines 2021). In general, this would mean taking into account a wider array of displacements and emplacements, including tourism, rural-to-urban migration, Internally Displaced Persons, migrants, and refugees (Desille and Sa'di Ibraheem 2021; López-Gay et al. 2021).

---

4 https://whole-comm.eu/, see also Caponio and Pettrachin (2021).
5 https://camigri.hypotheses.org/

3.3 Conceptualization of Cities as Self-contained Spaces

Although constructivist conceptualizations of space are common sense in critical migration studies, the essentialist perception of cities and parts of the city, like neighborhoods as self-contained spaces, has been very influential in (governance-oriented) research on local migration regimes in and across European countries, as Martiniello (2013) shows. This happens at both the city as well as the neighborhood level. Under the heading of ›segregated neighborhoods‹, empirical studies have analyzed whether neighborhoods with a high share of migrant population have positive or negative effects on the lives of their inhabitants, e.g., when it comes to so-called »neighbourhood effects« (Schnur 2014). Accordingly, many social neighborhood development measures in European cities intervene in these ›segregated neighborhoods‹ based on statistics of migrant population and social transfer payments, geared toward creating group-spanning contacts, in combination with the idea of a »social mix« in a demarcated space (Phillips 2015). However, there is the risk that this spatial political access co-produces stigmatized neighborhoods and that the social-mixing debate is often a hidden agenda for ethnic mixing, as exemplified in the current ›Ghetto-debate‹ in Copenhagen (Olsen and Larsen 2022).

While studies on the neighborhood scale are important to understand migration, discrimination, and the effects of integration policies from ›below‹, this research risks to step into the ›local trap‹ of methodological urbanism by not taking into account social networks and infrastructures beyond the neighborhood. Here again in contrast to »methodological localism« (Filomeno 2017), »what we ›code‹ as local might actually be national or even global« (p. 8). Thereby, a relational comparative perspective allows us to take the entanglement of neighborhood processes with global, national, and metropolitan processes into account.

In a similar vein, the third bias also has effects on the analysis of suburban areas as spaces of migration and their entanglements in the context of migration processes. A multitude of empirical studies has analyzed the influence of immigrant and racialized ethnic communities on the transformation of suburban places (e.g., Marchal and Stébé 2012; Depraz 2017). However, such studies tend to portray the suburban as »leftover spaces«, while their relations to the »core« city are overlooked (e.g., Zhuang 2021 on the study of the Greater Toronto Area) – even if Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009) have pointed out that in particular these regional entanglements through issues of migration can be decisive for the scalar positioning of cities. A similar situation can be observed with suburban municipalities with high rates of migrant residents. Although they have received important scholarly attention in recent years, a clear relational perspective that compares them with other sub-

urban municipalities beyond the economic dependence and entanglement with capital cities is still missing.

The conceptualization of cities and city spaces as self-contained has also raised the question of how place-specific the empirical production of local migration policy making is, or what other factors play a role here (e.g., economic and political power of a city or its positioning in the national/global hierarchy). Or, in other words, would a different conceptual and theoretical perspective on space allow for other empirical results?

3.4 Overcoming the Three Identified Biases: A Few Proposals

The *way of conducting comparative research*, i.e., the research design itself, can help to avoid empirical and methodological pitfalls (Filomeno 2017; Ward 2010). A relational approach (Ward 2010) creates space for new insights into different ways of conducting comparative research, from the research design. Essentially, this means not to approach cities as self-contained spaces but rather to understand them in their relation to other cities, be it regionally, nationally or globally, and in their regional embeddedness, as developed above. Unusual ways of comparison can lead to particularly interesting results. As such, the now completed CITYDIV project brought together 40 French and German cities, permitting relational analysis and bringing front collaborations with immigration advocacy bodies (Schiller et al. 2020). Furthermore, the French collective project CAMIGRI has adopted a geographical lens. This has meant that a few regions were selected, and so all types of migration and mobility experiences (labor, youth, privileged, asylum, tourism and short-term residents) were included in these particular regions, towns, and hinterlands. All emplacements participate in what transforms the regions under scrutiny, breaking away from distinctions between long-term, seasonal, or transit migrations.[6] This ›relational plea‹ thus goes beyond broadening the scope empirically only or »subscribing to a fantasized vision of ›small is beautiful‹« (Flamant et al. 2020, § 5). Rather, as suggested by Ward's relational approach, we should make sense of these places ›through each other‹ so that from this broadened empirical field conceptual innovation can emerge.

The relational perspective can be adopted when looking at *(transnational) networks* of cities (see Leitner 2004; Caponio 2019; Oomen 2019; Lacroix 2021) and *policy mobility* along them. Here, the starting point is the network itself, often a cluster of cities meeting similar challenges when it comes to migration. While geographically far apart, they can be characterized by similar

6 For a full list of publications generated by researchers of the CAMIGRI project, see https://camigri.hypotheses.org/ressources/publications-et-communications-de-lequipe

urban challenges related to their location, demography, and political opposition to national policies. Some cities' leaders find support for similar challenges elsewhere rather than within their own national boundaries. By sharing best practices, local policy responses may converge (Jorgensen 2012). The increase in refugee arrivals in Europe in 2015 and 2022 showed that cities gain political power when they cluster as in, for example, the ›Solidarity City Network‹[7], which promotes and exchanges sanctuary policies among European cities – by standing together they gain weight against the national level. As Lacroix (2021) shows with his unique data set of migration-linked transnational city networks, there is a tendency toward regional organization and inclusion of smaller towns, thus reinforcing city coalitions. However, research of these networks is often trapped in a ›good practice‹ bias and further research on hostile policies or ›anti-solidaric‹ cities is needed. Collective projects are important, not only when they include a wide range of urban settings, but also when ethnographic data is brought together and compared. What appears in such discussions[8] is that networks of actors are not necessarily institutionalized, but leaders, activists, and workers move around, borrow from others, adopt, and adapt, so that in sum these more informal networks lead to the processual transformation of local reception realities.

A relational comparative approach can also be translated in visual tools, including visual representations of actors' networks. Related to the development of multilevel governance and the analysis of complex actor arrangements toward immigration policy making (cf. Caponio and Jones-Correa 2017), these visual representations offer deterritorialized understanding of a city embeddedness in other processes. Pettrachin (2020), basing his work on social network theory, has created dense actor-network representations for the Veneto region in Italy. This mapping unveils »the often-neglected role of politics in asylum policy-making and governance« (Pettrachin 2020, p. 209), usually explained though structural inefficiencies. Desille (2022) did similar visualization work. Here, the visuals helped discover that specific national, regional, and transnational actors had intervened in the migration governance of four small Israeli cities, explaining some policy convergence. In this way, visualizations of actors' networks can aid in bringing a multilayered understanding of the embeddedness of local migration (governance).

---

7 https://solidarity-city.eu/de/

8 Such as the Localacc program, a French project looking at networks of actors and cities, of which author Desille is a participant. See: https://www.icmigrations.cnrs.fr/recherche/les-projets/localacc/.

4 Conclusion

This paper pleads for the adoption of a relational comparative approach when studying migration in cities. Cities are open, historically embedded, and interconnected spaces. When studying local migration policy making, we ought to include local, regional, translocal, national, and supranational governmental and civil society institutions, actors, and processes.

A few works following this human geography tradition are already in the canon of migration scholars – notable are the works of Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009, 2011) and Filomeno (2017). Yet studies on the Global North, large cities, and an understanding of cities as self-contained still seem to dominate a major part of the newer empirical studies. Our exploration leads us to propose a set of guidelines when designing new projects focusing on the interrelations of migration, urban studies, and governance. We thus suggest that future research strives:

- To understand and reflect on the embeddedness of cities within national, global, and other local realities;
- To select case studies that deliberately favor localities as interconnected, including diasporic links and colonial links;
- To mobilize epistemologies and theories from the Global South, thereby decolonizing knowledge production;
- To build collective projects with teams located in different regions, and not only by Global North scholars studying the Global South;
- To take into account a wider array of displacements and emplacements, considering exiles, (forced) migrations, internal mobilities, visitors, and more;
- To use innovative methods to give thickness to these processes, including visualizations and critical mapping;
- To study the mobilities of inhumane, material, or conceptual objects, such as policies.

Despite editing these guidelines together, we admit that we have not yet fulfilled all our ambitions. The only author here who is non-European is still affiliated to a prestigious European university, while another is European but gained her BA and her PhD in Asian universities. We also believe that we should not necessarily be the ones studying cities beyond Europe at all costs: our research projects fit our own positionality. However, it is our responsibility to acknowledge the relations that the cities we work in have with other regions of the world and with neocolonial policies. To achieve this, we should also support collaborations, collective works, and dialogue to enhance joint research projects and to learn from non-European/American scholarship.

References

Alexander, Michael. 2003. Local Policies toward Migrants as an Expression of Host-Stranger Relations: A Proposed Typology. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 29 (3): 411–430.

Alioua, Mehdi. 2020. Africains subsahariens au Maroc, de la clandestinité à la reconnaissance ou le renouveau du cosmopolitisme. *Hesperis Tamuda* 55 (3): 255–274.

Allen, John, and Allan Cochrane. 2010. Assemblages of State Power: Topological Shifts in the Organization of Government and Politics. *Antipode* 42 (5): 1071–1089.

Ambrosini, Maurizio. 2013. ›We are against a multi-ethnic society‹: Policies of Exclusion at the Urban Level in Italy. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36 (1): 136–155.

Balbo, Marcello. 2005. *International Migrants and the City: Bangkok, Berlin, Dakar, Karachi, Johannesburg, Naples, São Paulo, Tijuana, Vancouver, Vladivostok*. UN-habitat.

Berry-Chikhaoui, Isabelle, Agnès Deboulet, and Laurence Roulleau-Berger. 2007. *Villes internationals. Entre tensions et réactions des habitants*. Paris: La Découverte.

Bloemraad, Irene. 2013. The Promise and Pitfalls of Comparative Research Design in the Study of Migration. *Migration Studies* 1 (1): 27–46.

Bonizzoni, Paula, and Roberta Marzorati. 2015. Local Immigrant Incorporation Pathways in Small-Scale Cities. Pakistani Immigrants in a Province of Northern Italy. *Sociologica* 9 (2): 0–0.

Bredeloup, Sylvie, and Olivier Pliez. 2005. Migrations entre les deux rives du Sahara. *Autrepart* (4): 3–20.

Çağlar, Ayşe, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2021. Relational Multiscalar Analysis: A Comparative Approach to Migrants within City-making Processes. *Geographical Review* 111 (2): 206–232.

Caponio, Tiziana. 2019. City Networks and the Multilevel Governance of Migration. Policy Discourses and Actions. *Policy Discourses and Actions (January 2019). Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Research Paper No. RSCAS, 8*.

Caponio, Tiziana, and Maren Borkert. 2010. Introduction. In *The Local Dimension of Migration Policymaking*, eds. Tiziana Caponio and Maren Borkert, 9–32. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Caponio, Tiziana, and Michael Jones-Correa. 2017. Theorising Migration Policy in Multilevel States: the Multilevel Governance Perspective. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44 (12): 1995–2010.

Caponio, Tiziana, and Andrea Pettrachin. 2021. *A Whole-of-Community Approach to Study Post-2014 Migrants' Integration in Small and Medium Sized Towns and Rural Areas. State of the Art, Concepts, Theory and Methodology*. https://whole-comm.eu/working-papers/working-paper-1-2/

Caponio, Tiziana, Peter Scholten, and Ricard Zapata-Barrero, eds. 2019. *The Routledge Handbook of the Governance of Migration and Diversity in Cities*. Abington: Routledge.

Collins, Francis Leo. 2011. Transnational Mobilities and Urban Spatialities: Notes from the Asia-Pacific. *Progress in Human Geography* 36 (3): 316–335.

Darling, Jonathan. 2020. *Systems of Suffering: Dispersal and the Denial of Asylum*. London: Pluto Press.

De Graauw, Els, and Frans Vermeulen. 2016. Cities and the Politics of Immigrant Integration: A Comparison of Berlin, Amsterdam, New York City, and San Francisco. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42 (6): 989–1012.

Depraz, Samuel. 2017. *La France des marges: Géographie des espaces «autres»*. Paris: Armand Colin.

Desille, Amandine. 2018. From National to Municipal? Local Perspectives on Integration Policies in Israel. *Espaces et sociétés* (1–2): 93–108.

Desille, Amandine. 2022. Local Immigrant Policies in Israel: The Paradox of Autonomy, *Territory, Politics, Governance*, DOI:10.1080/21622671.2022.2114535

Desille, Amandine, and Y. Sa'di-Ibraheem. 2021. ›It's a Matter of Life or Death‹: Jewish Migration and Dispossession of Palestinians in Acre. *Urban Planning* 6 (2): 32–42.

Dines, Nick. 2021. How Far Can We Compare? Migration Studies, Comparative Urbanism and the Potential of a Trans-Mediterranean Perspective. *International Migration* 60 (1): 205–218.

Dubucs, Hadrien, and Christophe Imbert. 2014. La caractérisation spatio-temporelle des circulations. In *D'une métropole à l'autre. Pratiques urbaines et circulations dans l'espace européen*, eds. Christophe Imbert et al., 229–264. Paris: Armand Colin / Recherches.

Filomeno, Felipe Amin. 2017. *Theories of Local Immigration Policy*. Cham: Springer.

Flamant, Anouk, Aude-Claire Fourot, and Aisling Healy. 2020. Out of the Big Cities! The Reception of Exiles in Small Immigration Localities. *Revue europeenne des migrations internationales* 36 (2/3). https://journals.openedition.org/remi/16908

Friedmann, John, and Ute Angelika Lehrer. 1997. Urban Policy Responses to Foreign In-migration: the Case of Frankfurt-am-Main. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 63 (1): 61-78.

Glick Schiller, Nina, and Ayşe Çağlar. 2009. Towards a Comparative Theory of Locality in Migration Studies: Migrant Incorporation and City Scale. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35 (2): 177–202.

Glick Schiller, Nina, and Ayşe Çağlar. eds. 2011. *Locating Migration: Rescaling Cities and Migrants.* Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.

Glorius, Birgit. 2017. The Challenge of Diversity in Rural Regions: Refugee Reception in the German Federal State of Saxony. *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin* 66 (2): 113–128.

Glorius, Birgit. 2022. Multilevel Governance of the »Refugee Crisis« in Germany: A Chronological Analysis of Governance Approaches and Implementation Outcomes. In *Coping with Migrants and Refugees. Multilevel Governance across the EU*. eds. Tiziana Caponio and Irene Ponzo, 201–218. Milton Park/New York: Routledge.

Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Encarnación. 2018. The Coloniality of Migration and the »Refugee Crisis«: On the Asylum-migration Nexus, the Transatlantic White European Settler Colonialism-migration and Racial Capitalism. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees/Refuge: revue canadienne sur les réfugiés* 34 (1): 16–28.

Hillmann, Felicitas, and Michael Samers. 2021. Transatlantic Perspectives on Urban Transformation and the Governance of Migration: Introduction to the Special Issue. *Geographical Review* 111 (2): 173–186.

Hinger, Sophie. 2020. Integration Through Disintegration? The Distinction Between Deserving and Undeserving Refugees in National and Local Integration Policies in Germany. In *Politics of (Dis)Integration*, eds. Sophie Hinger and Reinhard Schweitzer, 19–39. Cham: Springer.

Jorgensen, Martin Bak. 2012. The Diverging Logics of Integration Policy Making at National and City Level. *International Migration Review* 46 (1): 244–278.

Kosnick, Kira. 2021. Decolonizing Migration Studies? Thinking About Migration Studies from the Margins. *Zeitschrift für Migrationsforschung* 1 (2): 73–95.
Kreichauf, René. 2015. Ghettos in Small Towns? The Research on Ethnic Segregation and Stigmatisation Processes in Small Town Germany. *Sociologica* 9 (2), 0–0.
Kreichauf, René, and Birgit Glorius. 2021. Introduction: Displacement, Asylum and the City–Theoretical Approaches and Empirical Findings. *Urban Geography* 42 (7), 869–893.
Lacroix, Thomas. 2015. Hometown Transnationalism: *Long Distance Villageness among Indian Punjabis and North African Berbers*. UK: Springer.
Lacroix, Thomas. 2021. Migration-related City Networks: A Global Overview. *Local Government Studies* 48 (6): 1027–1047.
Lacroix, Thomas, and Amandine Desille. eds. 2018. *International Migrations and Local Governance: A Global Perspective*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
Landau, Loren. 2018. Conclusion: Archipelagos and Estuaries: Mobility, Local Authorities and the Governance of Multiple Elsewheres. In *International Migrations and Local Governance: A Global Perspective*, eds. Thomas Lacroix and Amandine Desille, 215–232. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
Leitner, Helga. 2004. The Politics of Scale and Networks of Spatial Connectivity: Transnational Interurban Networks and the Rescaling of Political Governance in Europe. In *Scale and Geographic Inquiry: Nature, Society, and Method*, eds. Eric Sheppard and Robert McMaster, 236–255. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
López-Gay, Antonio, Agustin Cocola-Gant, and Antonio Paolo Russo. 2021. Urban Tourism and Population Change: Gentrification in the Age of Mobilities. *Population, Space and Place* 27 (1) : e2380.
Marchal, Hervé, and Jean-Marc Stébé. 2012. *Lieux des banlieues: De Paris à Nancy, de Mumbaï à Los Angeles*. Paris: Le Cavalier Bleu.
Martiniello, Marco. 2013. Comparisons in Migration Studies. *Comparative Migration Studies* 1 (1): 7–22.
McCann, Allan, and Kevin Ward. 2013. Policy Assemblages, Mobilities and Mutations: Toward a Multidisciplinary Conversation. *Political Studies Review* 10 (3): 325–332.
Mignolo, Walter. 2002. The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101 (1): 57–96.
Natter, Katharina. 2018. Rethinking Immigration Policy Theory Beyond ›Western Liberal Democracies‹. *Comparative Migration Studies* 6 (4): 1–21.
Olsen, Sara Høier, and Henrik Gutson Larsen. 2022. State-led Stigmatisation of Place and the Politics of the Exception. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544221119387
Oomen, Barbara. 2019. Decoupling and Teaming Up: The Rise and Proliferation of Transnational Municipal Networks in the Field of Migration. *International Migration Review* 54 (3): 913–939.
Payre, Renaud, and Mili Spahic. 2012. Le tout petit monde des politiques urbaines européennes. Réseaux de villes et métiers urbains de l'Europe: le cas du CCRE et d'Eurocities. *Pôle Sud* (2): 117–137.
Penninx, Rinus, Karen Kraal, Marco Martiniello, and Stephen Vertovec. 2004. Introduction: European Cities and Their New Residents. In *Citizenship in European Cities. Immigrants, Local Politics and Integration Policies*, eds. Rinus Penninx, Karen Kraal, Marco Martiniello, and Stephen Vertovec, 3–17. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

Pettrachin, Andrea. 2020. Opening the ›Black Box‹ of Asylum Governance: Decision-Making and the Politics of Asylum Policy-Making. *Italian Political Science Review/Rivista Italiana Di Scienza Politica* 50 (2): 191–212.

Phillips, Deborah. 2015. Segregation, Mixing and Encounter. In *Routledge International Handbook of Diversity Studies,* ed. Stephen Vertovec, 337–343. London/New York, NY: Routledge.

Pisarevskaya, Asya, Peter Scholten, and Zeynep Kaşlı. 2021. Classifying the Diversity of Urban Diversities: An Inductive Analysis of European Cities. *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 23, 655–677.

Pisarevskaya, Asya, and Peter Scholten. 2022. Cities of Migration. In *Introduction to Migration Studies,* ed. Peter Scholten, 249–262. Cham: Springer.

Porter, Libby, and Oren Yiftachel. 2019. Urbanizing Settler-Colonial Studies: Introduction to the Special Issue. *Settler Colonial Studies* 9 (2): 177–186.

Pott, Andreas. 2015. Die Veränderung des räumlichen Blicks der Migrationsforschung. In *Movements of Migration*, eds. Sabine Hess and Torsten Näser, 188–203. Berlin: Panama-Verlag.

Quijano, Anibal. 2000. Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America. *International Sociology* 15 (2): 215–232.

Räuchle, Charlotte, and Antonie Schmiz. 2019. Migrant Economies: Opportunity Structures and Potential in Different City Types. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2018.1506143

Räuchle, Charlotte, and Antonie Schmiz. 2020. Wissen Macht Stadt: Wie in Reallaboren Stadt verhandelt und Wissen produziert wird. *sub\urban. Zeitschrift für Kritische Stadtforschung* 8 (3): 31–52, https://doi.org/10.36900/suburban.v8i3.541

Reboratti, Carlos E. ed. 1986. *Se fue a volver. Seminario sobre las migraciones temporales en América Latina*, Mexico: PISPAL/CIUDAD/CENEP.

Robinson, Jennifer. 2005. Urban Geography: World Cities, or a World of Cities. *Progress in Human Geography* 29 (6): 757–765.

Robinson, Jennifer. 2006. *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*. London/New York: Routledge.

Robinson, Jennifer. 2013. The Urban Now: Theorising Cities Beyond the New. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16 (6) : 659–677.

Römhild, Regina. 2021. Postmigrant Europe: Discoveries Beyond Ethnic, National and Colonial Boundaries. *Postmigration Studies* (4): 45–56.

Russeil, Sarah, and Aisling Healy. 2015. Ouelles expertises urbaines pour une Europe des villes? *Politique européenne* (3): 54–83.

Sassen, Saskia 1991. *The Global City. New York, London, Paris*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Schiller, Maria, Julia Martínez-Ariño, and Mireia Bolíbar. 2020. A Relational Approach to Local Immigrant Policy-making: Collaboration with Immigrant Advocacy Bodies in French and German Cities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 43 (11): 2041–2061.

Schmiz, Antonie, Carsten Felgentreff, Martin Franz, Marcel Paul, Andreas Pott, Charlotte Räuchle, and Sebastian Schrader. 2020. Cities and Migration. Bibliometric Evidence from a Spatially Biased Field of Knowledge Production. *Geographical Review* 112 (2), 267–285.

Schnur, Olaf. 2014. *Quartiersforschung – zwischen Theorie und Praxis.* 2. Auflage Wiesbaden: Springer.

Scholten, Peter. 2013. Agenda Dynamics and the Multi-Level Governance of Migrant Integration: The Case of Dutch Migrant Integration Policies. *Policy Sciences* 46: 217–36.

Scholten, Peter, and Rinus Penninx. 2016. The Multilevel Governance of Migration and Integration. In *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe: Contexts, Levels and Actors*, eds. Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas and Rinus Penninx, 91–108. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Semelin, Jacques. 2018. *La survie des Juifs en France 1940–1944*. CNRS.

Seto, Karen. C. 2011. Exploring the Dynamics of Migration to Mega-Delta Cities in Asia and Africa: Contemporary Drivers and Future Scenarios. *Global Environmental Change* (21): S94–S107.

Shaev, Brian, and Sarah Hackett. 2021. Cities, Migration and the Historiography of Post-war Europe. *Journal of Migration History* 7 (3): 191–219.

Swyngedouw, Eric. 2000. Authoritarian Governance, Power, and the Politics of Rescaling. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18 (1): 63–76.

Triviño-Salazar, Juan-Carlos. 2018. The Politics of Immigration Locally: Alliances Between Political Parties and Immigrant Organizations. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41 (9): 1728–1746.

Van Breugel, Ilona. 2020. Towards a Typology of Local Migration Diversity Policies. *Comparative Migration Studies* 8 (1): 1–16.

Walker, Kyle E., and Helga Leitner. 2011. The Variegated Landscape of Local Immigration Policies in the United States. *Urban Geography* 32 (2): 156–178.

Ward, Kevin. 2010. Towards a Relational Comparative Approach to the Study of Cities. *Progress in Human Geography* 34 (4): 471–487.

Wimmer, Andreas, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2002. Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-state Building, Migration and the Social Sciences. *Global Networks* 2 (4): 301–334.

Zapata Barrero, Ricard, Tiziana Caponio, and Peter Scholten. 2017. Symposium on Theorizing ›the Local Turn‹ in the Governance of Immigrant Policies: A Multi-level Approach, *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 83 (2), https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852316688426

Zhang, Yadi, and Martin Geiger. 2021. Migration Research and Policy Consultancy in the People's Republic of China. *Zeitschrift für Migrationsforschung* 1 (2): 183–202.

Zhuang, Zhixi Cecilia. 2021. The Impact of Immigrant Entrepreneurship on City Building: Learning from Toronto. In *Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Cities*, ed. Cathy Yang Liu, 195–211. Cham: Springer.

Zincone, Giovanna. 2011. Conclusion: Comparing the Making of Migration Policies. *Migration Policymaking in Europe: The Dynamics of Actors and Contexts in Past and Present*, ed. Giovanna Zincone et al., 377–442. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.