



“Sanctuary Cities”: How Do Cities Care for Newcomers? An Overview of Inclusive Local Responses to Migration

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In particular, the present paper has contributed to Chapter 5 on 'Caring', which focuses on the multiple actions that promote the care of diverse groups within society through safety nets and solidarity bonds, and the ways in which local and regional governments can promote caring practices that support vulnerable groups, as well as those that have historically 'taken care' of others.

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Abstract

In a world that is increasingly urban, and where more and more people are on the move, many of them end up or transit through cities. But as the right to grant asylum and migration policy as a whole rest with national authorities, and cities are often left with skewed mandates to work with newcomers. Besides, while urban migration presents opportunities for cities and newcomers alike, the migratory experience tends to reinforce existing inequalities and vulnerabilities among newcomers in the city – in relation to race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and/or disability. Within the contours of their restrained mandates, cities – understood as both the urban space and its stakeholders – develop innovative policies to care for

newcomers. These initiatives include local policies targeting newcomers' access to essential rights and basic services, collaborations with local partners such as the civil society and migrants themselves, changes within local administrations, and actions taken by cities at national and global levels to shape the future of migration policies. In doing so, cities create not only practices of care, but also processes of care, which place people at their centre and contribute to defining new, localized forms of (urban) citizenship and narratives of migration.

Introduction

Cities have always been spaces of refuge and protection. In Ancient Greece, cities could grant *asylum* to the persecuted – etymologically, protection from harm – a tradition that can be traced back to the six cities of refuge mentioned in the Old Testament.¹

Today, as national authorities have captured the right to grant asylum and migration policy as a whole, cities reclaim their role as refuges.

In the 1980s, self-proclaimed **sanctuary cities** in the United States deliberately resisted cooperation with federal authorities to prevent the deportation of undocumented residents from Central America, and enacted new policies to facilitate their local integration. They inspired a group of intellectuals in the 1990s (among which Jacques Derrida) who called for the creation of a network of contemporary cities of refuge for persecuted artists and the preservation of freedom of speech.² Across Europe, cities and coalitions of cities began exchanging and experimenting with local solutions to welcome and integrate newcomers, including Barcelona, Rotterdam, and Birmingham.³ Their efforts became especially visible in the wake of Europe's 2015 refugee crisis: while national governments reached for the emergency brake at their borders, cities took concrete and symbolic

actions to welcome and host asylum seekers hailing mostly from Syria and Iraq.

Cities' quest to reclaim power over the policies related to asylum and migration also aligns with the realities of migrants' journeys. In a world that is increasingly urban, and where more and more people are on the move, many of them end up or transit through cities. An estimated 20 per cent of all migrants live in just 20 of the world's largest cities.⁴ Likewise, about 60 percent of refugees and 80 per cent of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are displaced to urban areas.⁵ Cities are both anonymous spaces, key to preserving migrants' need for privacy and protection (especially for the most vulnerable) and connected hubs that offer resources and opportunities to newcomers. Intersectional and feminist scholars also argue that cities are spaces where class, gender and culture can precede national distinctions, therefore offering an opportunity to bind host and newcomer communities closer together. At the same time, migrants, like other residents, actively contribute to city-making processes, by defining and redefining the city, its spaces, and its usages through their daily life activities.⁶

1. Costas Douzinas, 'Cities of refuge'

2. This network became the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN). See: <https://www.icorn.org/about-icorn>

3. Barcelona, Rotterdam, and Birmingham went on to found with three other cities the European network EUROCITIES in 1986.

4. IOM, 'Urbanization and Migration'

5. UNHCR, 'The Power of Cities'

6. Çağlar and Glick Schiller, *Migrants and City-Making. Dispossession, Displacement, and Urban Regeneration*

But the 'local turn' of migration policymaking, whereby cities invest in solutions to cater to newcomer communities, is still in its infancy and faces resistance. Despite the advances of decentralization, migration-related policies often rest with national governments. Cities not only struggle with restricted mandates, resources and knowledge that curtail their capacity to care for newcomers, but they must also contend with the local repercussions of decisions taken by central authorities, such as budget allocations or the creation of camps to host displaced populations. Pragmatic responses from local officials are also met with distrust by national authorities and local host communities alike. The progress toward cities' greater involvement in migration-related policies remains also largely uneven at a global level, for reasons of local capacities and political resistance. At times, local authorities themselves refuse to be a haven for migrant communities such as undocumented immigrants.⁷

Human mobility is a diverse and complex phenomenon that covers a wide range of realities, including labour and student migration, irregular immigration, emigration and diasporas, internal and international forced displacement, and rural-urban migration. Confronted with these movements, governments (mostly national but also local) respond with policies on the conditions of, for instance, immigration, detention, integration, asylum and protection, and return. Throughout this contribution, the term *migration* is used to cover both human mobility as a human and social phenomenon and the government policy responses to it. The people undertaking these journeys are referred to as *newcomers*, unless pointing more specifically to other communities such as undocumented immigrants or asylum seekers. In this sense, newcomers to the city can be nationals, foreigners (with various legal statuses), or stateless – men, women, children.

Migration occurs in contexts marked by inequalities based on gender, race, class, age, disability, and sexual orientation, among others. These inequalities create in turn situations of precarity and vulnerability at the social, economic, and political levels. This contribution therefore sheds light on the ways cities are confronted with,

and respond to, these situations of inequality. This contribution reviews practices and policies initiated by local authorities as well as efforts by other local stakeholders including civil society and migrant-led organizations – in cities along the migratory pathway (cities of origin, transit and destination of migration). Besides, this contribution does not solely see newcomers as vulnerable subjects in need of protection, but also acknowledges their agency and role in shaping local policy responses. In doing so, this contribution understands the city as a space where multiple layers of governance, political and social participation interlock, and asks the following set of questions:

How do cities care for their newcomers?

- What are the realities of migration in cities? Why do newcomers require particular attention from local authorities?
- How do local coalitions of actors contribute to the creation of caring cities for newcomers? What actions do cities and their partners undertake to cater to newcomers?
- What should cities and their partners do to build caring cities for all?

The first section details the ways migration unfolds in cities, and the specific challenges it poses to local authorities. The second section reviews the panel of actions cities undertake to cater to newcomer communities, including both local authorities and other local stakeholders. The third section outlines recommendations to cities, city networks and international organisations on how to strengthen the role of cities as caretakers for migrants.

This contribution brings in concrete illustrations of local initiatives of care. While the European cities' initiatives are well documented, the same cannot be said about cities in the Global South that are often hosts to larger populations of migrants. As such, this contribution makes a conscious effort to include cases from cities in the Global South. Besides, the contribution favours an intersectional approach and pays particular attention to the questions of gender, race, age, and sexual orientation – in newcomers' experiences and in the policies that target them.

⁷ Tanvi Misra, 'The Rapid Rise of the 'Anti-Sanctuary' City'

1. Migration in cities: local realities, opportunities and challenges

Cities are magnets for migrants (including migrant workers, displaced populations, and rural migrants). Just like the rest of the population, they tend to converge to cities which are hubs for employment, services, networks, information, and more. In fact, in many cities the share of foreign-born exceeds national and sometimes global figures: Dubai (83 per cent), Brussels (62 per cent), Toronto (46 per cent) and New York (37 per cent) all surpass the global average of 3,5 per cent of migrants as part of the population. Meanwhile, the size of urban populations and migration levels in Asia and Africa are growing at unprecedented rates.⁸

Urban economies have historically relied on “low-income gendered and racialized labour migration” therefore producing and reproducing global inequalities in the city.⁹ **For newcomers, these inequalities translate into layered spatial, gender, age, class and race-specific discriminations and vulnerabilities – which are further accentuated by the migratory process.** This section looks at the specific experiences of urban migration in relation to racist discrimination, urban informality, gender and sexual orientation, age, and health.

1.1 Racism and discrimination

Foreigners face structural forms of discrimination that impact and restrain their experiences of the city. Anti-migrant discrimination and xenophobia are a defining feature of newcomers’ daily lives, impacting their employment opportunities, their housing, educational, leisure and health choices, as well as their experience with local administrations and law enforcement. Negative perceptions and discourses are commonplace, often fuelled by fears of competition on the labour markets, as well as the lack of information and awareness about newcomers. They can easily be manipulated by local and national politicians,¹⁰ and can at times amount to anti-migrant violence.

Immigration and refugee policies, which are decided at national level, can create additional difficulties for newcomers and for cities. Undocumented migrants, for instance, are often hard to reach for authorities and the civil society and face increased vulnerabilities due to their precarious legal situations. Asylum seekers are another example: national laws often deny them the right to work for the duration of the asylum procedure and thus can put at risk their financial situation and negatively impact their housing and health choices. Residents of informal settlements (often rural or seasonal migrants) are often outside the administrative

boundaries of cities and out of reach to city services, or at risk of eviction. Exclusionary policies that tend to push immigrants into more irregularity and precarity can also accentuate their negative perception by host communities.

The Global Compact for Migration of 2018 calls for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and the promotion of evidence-based public discourses on migration (Objective 17).¹¹ In this context, and as part of the LAC coalition (*Coalición Latinoamericana y Caribeña contra la Discriminación, Racismo y Xenofobia*), local authorities of Quito, Mexico City, Medellín and Montevideo launched a collective reflection around the structural dynamics of racism and discrimination against vulnerable groups in their respective cities, with a particular emphasis on migrant groups. The process has led all four cities to adopt local plans for social inclusion, which include a diagnosis of the state of discrimination in the city, with the objective to introduce changes in local administration and enact new anti-racist policies.¹²

8. IOM, ‘Migration Report 2015’, 17

9. Silvey, James-Wilson, Arviv, ‘Migration, Gender, Cities’

10. MC2CM, ‘Communication on Migration: An Issue of Local Governance’

11. UN, ‘Global Compact for Migration’

12. El Comercio, ‘En Quito se analiza el fenómeno de la discriminación, racismo y xenofobia’

1.2 Urban informality and slums

Upon arrival, newcomers to the city tend to settle in slums, or what are called 'poverty pockets', in the most marginal and peripheral areas. Slums provide affordable housing options and an opportunity for newcomers to save up in view of their future urban installation.¹³ As a result, newcomers are disproportionately represented among the poor and vulnerable urban populations, both in developed and developing countries.¹⁴ According to UN-HABITAT estimates, **rural migrants, displaced persons, refugees, and foreign workers together constitute the majority of slum dwellers and live in especially precarious conditions.**¹⁵

Newcomers' presence can put a strain on public infrastructure, such as housing, and services such as health care, education, or waste management, especially when these are already stretched by overcrowding and the lack of resources as is often the case in poorer urban areas. This was the case in Amman, Jordan, where the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) took notice of the growth of their resident communities through

the increasing needs for solid waste collection. Following the outbreak of violence and repression in Syria in 2011, many Syrians found refuge in Amman, which concentrates close to 30 per cent of Jordan's registered refugees.¹⁶ However many settled in the city without formally registering as refugees – hoping to return swiftly or fearing interaction with the authorities – which meant that the Municipality only had a skewed perception of the number of Syrians present on its territory. It was the sharp increase in the volume of solid waste collected by municipal services in 2013, which grew by 16 per cent compared to the previous year, double the average yearly growth,¹⁷ that first alerted the Municipality to the increased presence of Syrian residents and prompted it to act to respond to their needs.

13. UN-Habitat, 'The Challenge of Slums'

14. IOM, 'Migration Report 2015', 79

15. UN-Habitat, 'The Challenge of Slums', xxix

16. UNHCR, 'Operational Portal'

17. Younes and Al-Dulairi, 'Refugee Impacts in Hosting Countries- Solid waste Management in Amman city as a Case Study'



Graffiti with country flags
Source: Alex Lee, via Unsplash.

1.3 Women and LGBTI+ migrants

Gender influences “the reasons for migration, migrants and their destinations, the pathways and networks they use to migrate, as well as the opportunities and resources available to them in the places of destination, and relations with the country of origin”.¹⁸ In their regions of origin, women tend to be excluded from land ownership and socio-economic opportunities. When migrating, women encounter gender-specific difficulties that affect their rights and access to material and social resources that make up livelihoods. They are vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence, especially when they find themselves in conflict situations. The risk of domestic violence also increases during and after migration.¹⁹

At destination in cities, they tend to fill gendered low-income labour needs often related house- and care-work. **While the sexual division of labour favours women’s access to income-generating activities in the service sector and care industry,**²⁰ **these take place in particularly precarious and unstable working conditions, marked by informality, sporadic employment, part-time or hourly work and self-employment.** As a result, women and their households make up a large portion of the urban poor: for instance, women-headed households constitute at least 30 per cent of households in urban low-income settlements in parts of Africa.²¹ This is compounded by the fact that women bear the responsibility of primary caretaker for the dependants within the household (i.e., children, elderly, disabled), a situation that only increases for displaced women isolated from traditional support systems in urban areas.

Similarly, LGBTI+ migrants and refugees face specific threats and violence throughout their migratory experience. For instance, facilities in collective housing, shelters, and camps tend to be gender-specific, which can lead to perilous situations for transgender people. Administrative processes at borders and with local authorities, as well as status determination interviewees for asylum seekers, are especially complex as LGBTI+ people are often reluctant to

reveal their sexual orientation. **In cities, with limited access to public services, social networks, and information, LGBTI+ newcomers may resort to invisibilization strategies and are therefore at greater risk of isolation.**²²

To address some of these challenges, the Municipality of São Paulo developed Brazil’s first Municipal Plan of Public Policies for Refugees and Migrants (2021-2024) which has among its objectives to foster the inclusion and participation of women and LGBTI+ members of migrant communities. As part of this initiative, the municipal council decided on a 50 per cent quota for women of all nationalities to ensure their participation in local decision-making – especially as foreigners are not granted political rights.²³

The Municipality also launched the first protocol for public equipment to provide adequate and humanized care to transgender refugees and migrant residents.²⁴ Following up on its commitments, the Municipality launched the Connect the Dots Project (*Projeto Ligue os Pontos*) in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁵ The initiative sought to solve the problems of both local farmers struggling with their surplus and families in need. Refugee and migrant chefs and kitchen workers, as well as marginalized women and transgender people, were trained and involved in the preparation of meals for the other residents.

18. IOM, ‘Gender Equality Policy 2015–2019’

19. Giles, ‘Women forced to flee: Refugees and internally displaced persons’

20. Buscher, ‘Formidable Intersections: Forced Migration, Gender and Livelihoods’

21. UN-Habitat, ‘The Challenge of Slums’, 29

22. The New Humanitarian, ‘The plight of LGBTI asylum seekers, refugees’

23. MC2CM, ‘Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Migrant Women in Cities’

24. UNHCR, ‘How the city of Sao Paulo is placing refugee perspectives at the heart of its policy’

25. UNHCR, ‘Cities and Municipalities’ inclusive responses in the face of COVID-19’

1.4 Children on the move

Children make up close to 10 per cent of the world's migrants, and yet their experiences of displacement and migration remain little documented.²⁶ Along their migratory journey, restrictive policies and circumstances can lead to family separation and children detention.²⁷ Besides, cities are not designed for children. Their safety and specific needs are often not accounted for in urban planning, which is especially true in informal settlements and slums. Many children newcomers, both unaccompanied and accompanied, work to support themselves and their families, and can be subjected to abusive and exploitative situations.²⁸

In Beirut, in the Municipality of Chiyah, a pilot project sought to empower

young residents to become vectors of social cohesion. The neighbourhood is home to diverse local and newcomer communities, including both Christian and Muslim Lebanese, displaced and rural migrants from South Lebanon, long-standing Palestinian refugees, and recently arrived Syrian refugees. Activities brought together youths from diverse religious, political, and national backgrounds to promote inter-community exchanges, mutual understanding, and peacebuilding at the local level. The project shows the potential of community-level exchanges, but also the active role children, and migrant children, can play to address the issues that affect their lives, and their communities as a whole.²⁹

1.5 Health: lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic crystallized existing vulnerabilities among newcomer communities in cities. Overcrowding, and at times insalubrity, are some of the negative features of newcomers' living conditions in cities especially in informal settings and collective shelters. In these contexts where social distancing and hygiene precautions are hardly applicable, communities suffered from local outbreaks. Newcomers must already count with many hurdles to access healthcare, including discriminations, language barriers, limited mobility, and the lack of financial resources.

Border closures left many migrant workers, seasonal workers, and migrant students stranded abroad, with the threat of visa expiration and overstay, or kept others away from their seasonal employment opportunities. Confinement measures cut people from their livelihoods and support systems. Those working in the informal economy and the service sector, where women and youth are overly represented, were particularly hit. As a result, for the first time since 1998, poverty rates as well as the number of people in situations of extreme poverty will increase, according to World Bank estimates.³⁰

The poverty rate for women is likely to increase by more than 9 percent, while it was expected to decrease by close to 3 per cent between 2019 and 2021.³¹ And as competition precarity on the job market increased, so did hostility toward newcomers and migrant scapegoating.

With social isolation, risks of abuse and violence within the household also increased for women, youth and LGBTI+ people. For many, especially those struggling with documentation, leaving a violent household is extremely complicated. This is why the Municipality of Bogotá in Colombia guaranteed access to cash transfers to survivors of domestic violence during the period of the COVID-19 crisis.³²

26. IOM, 'Fatal Journeys Missing Migrant Children'

27. UNICEF, 'Children Uprooted. What Local Governments Can Do'

28. UN-Habitat, 'The Challenge of Slums', 99

29. UNICEF, 'Children Uprooted. What Local Governments Can Do'

30. MC2CM, 'Going The (Social) Distance: How migrant and refugee-sensitive urban COVID-19'. Responses contribute to the realization of the Global Compacts for Migration and Refugees.

31. MC2CM, 'Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Migrant Women in Cities'

32. UNDP, 'Gender Based Violence and COVID-19'

2. How do cities care for migrants?

The modes of action for cities on migration

Migration brings about opportunities and potential challenges for both newcomers and cities. Cities, on their end, face changing, at times unregulated, population movements with very few tools at their disposal to effectively manage these flows. High levels of informality and the lack of reliable data further complicate municipal action. For the most part, cities do not define, nor implement, policies that regulate international migration (i.e., border controls, status determination, document issuance). As a result, their mandate to act on migration is often very restricted, especially in highly centralized contexts. In contrast to national authorities, however, cities have the advantage of proximity. Local officials and administrations are well-informed about the dynamics at play on their territory – although they may lack the resources to produce research and data.³³

Depending on the political, migration and institutional profile of cities, several factors concur to prompt municipal

action.³⁴ Local action can stem from the need to maintain public order and security in contexts where anti-migrant sentiments or clashes with local communities arise. In the face of increased arrivals and pressure on public services and infrastructure, cities may develop initiatives to preserve the efficiency of public action by upgrading their service provision. Local authorities are also keen on leveraging the potential benefits of migrants' presence for local development through socio-economic insertion, attractiveness, and funding opportunities. This section details the panel of actions cities undertake to cater to their newcomers in all their diversity. It reviews initiatives related to the different spheres of local action (delivery, civic, institutional, and policy) to understand how cities become both the actors and stages of new processes of care and how these can lead to the creation of new forms of urban citizenship.

³³ MC2CM, 'City Migration Profiles Synthesis Report'

³⁴ Spencer and Delvino, 'Municipal Activism on Irregular Migrants: The Framing of Inclusive Approaches at the Local Level'



"Refugees Welcome" Flag in Madrid, Spain
Source: Maria Teneva, via Unsplash

2.1 Delivery sphere: localist access policies

Local authorities, often are the primary provider of the basic services that residents, including newcomers, use on a daily basis. These include

social housing, kindergartens, primary education, public transport, arts and culture, water and sanitation systems, waste collection, security and policing, as well as the delivery of construction permits and business licences.³⁵

Thanks to this large panel of actions, cities are effectively the main contact point for newcomers. In emerging economies, the effective provision of services to all residents also bears potential for urban development as a whole.³⁶ Through these localist access policies, cities also anchor the concept of non-discriminatory access in their practice.³⁷

Local authorities can decide to open services offered to the rest of the urban population to newcomers (mainstream or universal access) or to develop services that are specific to newcomer's needs (targeted).

Ensuring newcomers' universal access to services does not limit itself to removing entry restrictions. Newcomers' access to services is often complicated by discrimination (on the part of the administration, private service providers and host communities), language barriers, and the lack of information. As such, several municipalities, including São Paulo, Vienna and Madrid have developed welcome kits or courses that compile all information necessary for newcomers about the city, its services and culture available in several languages.³⁸ Similarly, as part of Portugal's Municipal Plan for Migrant Integration, the Municipality of Lisbon operates a Local Centre for Migrants' Integration Support (CLAIM). The Centre functions as a "one-stop-shop" that articulates newcomers' arrival with their long-term integration needs. Newcomers, regardless of their status, can receive information and advice about for instance legal matters, access to services, employment, and education.³⁹

Developing targeted solutions for newcomers is often complicated by the lack of resources (such as budget and expert staff), as well as the lack of reliable and up-to-date data and

information on migration dynamics at their level.⁴⁰ In some countries, the differentiated treatment of certain groups, for instance the provision of specific services to foreign nationals, is unconstitutional. While many may not be able to develop migrant-specific solutions, cities can undertake initiatives that target a larger subgroup within their residents, for instance financially vulnerable households or low-income neighbourhoods among which migrants tend to be overly represented.

In this sense, the Municipality of Tunis in Tunisia initiated a housing rehabilitation project in response to the large influx of migrants from the rural South to the capital following the country's independence in 1956. Many invested abandoned houses in the *Medina* (city centre) which well-off families had vacated for suburban areas. But the already poor state of the housing infrastructure, combined with the overcrowding and the new dwellers' inability to finance renovation works, represented a threat to the dwellers and the Municipality alike. In 1991, the authorities launched the *Oukalas* (pensions) rehabilitation project to renovate and safeguard historical buildings of the *Medina*. The project helped identify populations in need of specific support among the *Oukalas* dwellers which were relocated for the duration of the works (e.g., people with disabilities or in need of financial support).⁴¹

35. LSE Cities, UN Habitat and UCLG, 'How Cities are Governed'

36. IOM, 'Migration Report 2015', 165

37. Thouez, 'Cities as Emergent International Actors in the Field of Migration'

38. MC2CM, 'City Migration Profiles Synthesis Report'

39. MC2CM, 'City Migration Profiles Synthesis Report'

40. MC2CM, 'How to build knowledge on urban migration: Innovative tools and practices to face data challenges'

41. MC2CM, 'The Revitalisation of Tunis' Medina and Integration of Internal Migrants'

2.2 Civic sphere: co-production of care

While ‘good practices’ and innovative policy examples abound, the range and the reach of municipal action on migration remains limited. **Local stakeholders, including civil society organizations, the private sector, newcomer and host communities are key actors that complement or at times take the place of local authorities thanks to their experience, knowledge, and community access. The city becomes the space where individual, overlapping and complementary practices from a diversity of actors fuel a broader process of care.**

Civil society organizations can notably complement local action. For instance, in South Africa, cities do not have a mandate to provide targeted services to newcomers. In 2011, 3 years after a wave of violent attacks targeted foreigners in the country’s major cities, the Municipality of Johannesburg in South Africa launched its Policy on Integration of Migrants in which it recognizes the crucial role played by civil society and migrant-led organizations for newcomer communities. The creation of a Migrant Helpdesk was identified as a way to connect the administration with the actors closest to newcomers and to create strong partnerships to cater to their needs.⁴² The Migrant Helpdesk is present in seven locations across the city. Its work consists of two main branches, which are on the one hand to provide information to newcomers and raise awareness about issues of legal compliance, marriages of conveniences or the risks of trafficking and labour exploitation, and on the other hand to refer newcomers to civil society organizations, legal counsel, social workers, or authorities for relevant services. Partner organizations are also part of the Johannesburg Migration Advisory Panel that regularly discuss the situation of newcomers in the city and make recommendations to the Municipality.

In other cases, for instance in centralist settings where legislation prevents local authorities from providing targeted services to newcomers, cities have forged alliances with the civil society to cope with their restrained action frame. This is the case in

Sfax, in southern Tunisia, where the Municipality supports coordination among local civil society organizations. Following the 2011 revolution and democratisation of the country, non-government organizations (NGOs) mushroomed to the extent that the number of NGOs in Sfax jumped from 4 to 40 in a few years. At the same time, new legislation allowed for the first ever election of municipal councils in 2018. The new administration was keen on cooperating with the burgeoning civil society. As such, local NGOs and service providers created a secure referral system to safely share newcomers’ private information and facilitate better coordination of service provision. The end result is a smoother user experience for newcomers.⁴³

People on the move and their families are not mere recipients but also the actors of caring practices and processes that unfold in the city. The Philippines is a country of origin of many migrant workers, many of them women working in the care industry across the globe. Through remittances, that amount to more than 9 per cent of the national GDP, migrant workers contribute to national, local, and family economies. Regional officials in the island province of Bicol recognize this contribution and have committed to further involving Filipinos overseas in local development planning in the Bicol Regional Development Plan 2017-2022.⁴⁴ As such, the region created local migration and development councils with regional committees to consolidate the support to workers overseas and their families at home. Local authorities pay particular attention to services related to pre-departure and reintegration of migrant workers and work with families in a holistic way.⁴⁵

42. ‘City Of Johannesburg’s Policy on Integration of Migrants’

43. MC2CM, ‘Urban Migration: Strengthening Cooperation with Civil Society’

44. Yorobe Alfelor, ‘Speech at the Opening Plenary, Global Forum on Migration and Development, Regional Consultation: Abu Dhabi Dialogue’

45. Republic of the Philippines, ‘Bicol RDC creates Committee on Migration and Development’

2.3 Institutional sphere: caring from within

Local administrations can be the source of discriminations and further the structural and circumstantial difficulties that newcomers face in the city.

Authorities in numerous cities have taken steps to recognize their role to prevent discrimination within the administration and toward residents, regardless of their status. This involves monitoring municipal action through human rights reviews or the creation of non-discrimination strategies and ombudsperson positions. This is the case in Bogotá for instance, where the ombudsperson operates social control over the work of the local administration and carries residents' concerns before their representatives.⁴⁶ Other municipalities develop strategic visions for human rights in their cities with long term plans that guide and inspire public action. For instance, in Ecuador, in Quito, it is the Municipal Rights Protection Council that identified the need to expand human rights strategies to include inclusion and access to rights for newcomers.⁴⁷

Newcomers, especially those in fragile legal situations, are often reluctant

to interact with authorities and tend to remain off the radar of the local administration. As a result, their access to essential rights and basic services is restrained, their interaction with host communities limited, and their sense of local belonging decreases. Some municipalities have found ways to circumvent this by establishing a local residency card. One such case is the Spanish 'padrón' system for local registration: for cities, it is a crucial source of administrative data, for newcomers, it unlocks access to social rights and municipal services, and can serve to facilitate immigration procedures (i.e., family reunification). Since 2019, the Municipality of Barcelona delivers a Neighbourhood Document (*Document de veïnatge*) which serves as a local ID for residents in an irregular situation and can be used as evidence against detention and deportation by national authorities.⁴⁸ These policies can be seen as pragmatic responses to broader and complex problematics. **But by taking an innovative local stance on migration, cities create new definitions of urban citizenship – or citizenship.**⁴⁹

2.4 Policy sphere: from the local to global coalitions

As the question of migration ignores cities' and national borders, cities have started to look for solutions beyond their administrative boundaries. City networks abound: there are more than 300 city networks worldwide,⁵⁰ among which more than 60 are migration-related.⁵¹ For cities, they provide a space to exchange and discuss experiences, a platform to lobby and advocate for local leadership on migration at the national and global levels, and an opportunity to showcase and promote certain practices and policies.⁵² **Through their activities, notably lobbying and advocacy, networks amplify the voices of cities and their residents and reiterate the necessary role they can play for newcomers and migration.** This is recalled in the UCLG Manifesto on the Future of Migration, adopted at the 2019 Durban Congress, which stresses the role of cities as "first responders" to population flows and therefore the need to encourage whole of government approaches to migration.⁵³

Cities' growing activism on migration at the global stage also led to the establishment of the Mayors Mechanism of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) in 2018. The GFMD is a government-led and informal venue for governments to discuss issues to migration and development. With the inclusion of the Mayors Mechanism, cities are now recognized as key stakeholders, along with the private sector and the civil society, in these discussions.

As such, cities anchor the concept of non-discriminatory access to rights and services⁵⁴ as well as new definitions of citizenship⁵⁵ in global discussions. For instance, in parallel to the 2018 Marrakesh Conference, over 150 mayors gathered to adopt the Marrakesh Mayors' Declaration in which they commit to advancing the principles of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact

46. UCLG, 'In Bogotá, the "social control" mechanism promotes transparency and citizen participation in the government of the city'

47. UCLG, 'Migration - Leveraging migrants' contribution to the emergency and addressing vulnerabilities'

48. Ajuntament de Barcelona, 'Document de veïnatge'

49. See the Marrakesh Mayors' Declaration

50. Thouez, 'Cities as Emergent International Actors in the Field of Migration'

51. Lacroix, 'Networking dynamics among welcoming cities: Europe and North America in a comparative perspective'

52. Caponio, 'City Networks and the Multilevel Governance of Migration. Policy Discourses and Actions'

53. UCLG, 'Manifesto on the Future of Migration'

54. Thouez, 'Cities as Emergent International Actors in the Field of Migration'

55. Oomen, 'Cities of refuge: rights, culture and the creation of cosmopolitan citizenship'

on Refugees (GCR). **Among other priorities, mayors recognized the need to reduce migrants' vulnerabilities, to provide migrants with essential rights and services, empower migrants and societies to achieve social cohesion, and to eliminate all forms of discriminations.**⁵⁶ Specifically, during the GCM negotiations, cities provided impetus to consecrate the "non-discriminatory" access to health and education (Objective 15) in the final text.⁵⁷ In the same vein, in 2019 other 30 mayors signed the Gaziantep Declaration calling for local solutions to migration and displacement, stressing that cities should be at the centre of global efforts to provide safe and inclusive spaces for the displaced.⁵⁸

Another example is the initiative of the Lampedusa Charter on Human Mobility and Diversity, launched by the city of Lampedusa and UCLG in 2021. Beyond the commitment to values, the project Charter proposes to **rethink human mobility through a human rights-based and people-centred approach, with an emphasis on the concept of care.** The narrative follows cities' daily experiences with migration: newcomers are first and foremost residents with needs and aspirations that, despite being shaped by their migratory

experience, relate to those of the broader urban community.

While migration is a global phenomenon, its local realities are not homogenous. Owing to the geography of displacement, cities across the globe face highly disparate flows and do not have the same capacity to address migration. In fact, the cities that host the most displaced are often the ones with the least resources. As such, regional platforms are also crucial to recall the diversity of local contexts. This is precisely the objective of the Charter of Local and Subnational Governments of Africa on the protection of migrants including refugees adopted at the 2018 Africities Summit in Marrakesh.⁵⁹ With the Charter, signatories commit to creating the conditions for orderly migration and local inclusion and oppose restrictive and exclusionary policies and programmes, at national and local levels. Importantly, they also commit to mobilizing national authorities to facilitate free movement and circular migration. In doing so, **cities effectively create not only local, but also bottom-up (national and global) processes of care.**

⁵⁶. See the Marrakech Mayors' Declaration

⁵⁷. Thouez, 'Cities as Emergent International Actors in the Field of Migration'

⁵⁸. UNDP, 'The Gaziantep Declaration Calls for Transition From Emergency to Resilience Approach in Migration and Displacement Responses'

⁵⁹. UCLG Africa, Charter of local and subnational governments of Africa on Migration



Graffiti in Mexico City, Mexico
Source: Alejandro Cartagena, via Unsplash.

3. Recommendations

This section draws recommendations to cities, city networks and international organizations on how to push forward local processes of care for newcomers.

3.1 Recommendations to cities

Further and encourage people-centred approaches to migration

Viewing newcomers as social subjects, as opposed to national subjects, can help unpack layers of commonalities with local communities.⁶⁰ Although migration plays a fundamental role in shaping newcomers' experience of the city, they are first and foremost men, women, children that evolve in the same gendered, racialized, ageist and classist societies as their fellow residents. As such, placing people at the centre of local migration-related policies can help bind local and newcomer communities closer together – while the notion of 'integration' may create more differentiation. To foster a local sense of belonging among newcomers, cities should therefore articulate their work around the concepts of **solidarity, dignity, collective memory, interculturality and participatory democracy, hospitality, and unconditionality.**⁶¹

Through these efforts, cities should not only seek to foster change at their level, but also to inspire and encourage other local authorities to drive positive change on their territory, and lobby for policy change at national and global levels. In this sense, **cities should translate practices of care into multidimensional processes of care.**

Create coalitions of care in your city

While cooperation with civil society and migrant organizations can at times be source of tensions and divergences, cities should recognize that they have a clear interest in creating local coalitions of care. **Civil society organizations can not only work as gatekeepers and help connect local authorities with hard-to-reach communities, but also as partners for better service provision and increased respect of newcomers' rights. Migrants, on their end, should be involved through participatory approaches in decision-making, policy design and implementation,** not only for matters of representation and diversity, but also because more participation leads to greater autonomy and empowerment. Research shows that efficient service provision and the respect of rights of all residents bear potential for urban development more largely.⁶² As such, local coalitions of care bring together local actors for the collective good.

Practice made perfect: institutionalize practices of care

'Good practice' examples abound: cities have found ways to circumvent their restricted mandates on migration with innovative policy initiatives. However, most of these rely on political will on the part of local leadership. This means that elections and changes within the local administration can unravel progress made for newcomers in terms of their access to essential rights and basic services, participation, social inclusion and more – which all have a direct impact on newcomers' daily lives and experiences. Politicians can be indeed tempted to promise or make changes to migration-related practices in an effort to capitalize on anti-migrant sentiments and local economic frustrations. Cities should decide now that they want to continue care in the future: to the extent possible, local authorities should institutionalize 'tested and approved' practices, as a way to give 'sanctuary' to newcomers' rights in the city.

⁶⁰ Çağlar and Glick Schiller, *Migrants and City-Making. Dispossession, Displacement, and Urban Regeneration*

⁶¹ MC2CM, 'Towards Inclusive Local Citizenship and Universal Right to the City'

⁶² IOM, 'Migration Report 2015', 165

3.2 Recommendations to city networks and international organizations

Give cities the means to act: create funding opportunities for local authorities

With budget support, cities can experiment new policy initiatives, test partnerships and learn from the experience. Funding by external actors can also allow cities, through their partners, to intervene in areas that are outside of the scope of their mandate – such as migration policy. Flexible and swift funding opportunities are also crucial in times of crises where new emergencies arise, as was the case with the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to external funding, cities were able to secure support to migrant communities in need, such as women, LGBTI+ groups, migrant workers or stranded migrants.⁶³

Just like cities, expand your definition of ‘migration’

Migration to cities is a product of international, but also internal flows. All too often, international organizations and city networks supporting local action on migration narrowly focus on international migration and asylum. While they represent an important lobby for cities to access national and international migration platforms and decision-making processes, they also exclude a number of cities for which internal migration remains the most pressing challenge. This is especially true in cities in developing regions which tend to be under-represented in international processes.

International organizations and city networks should incorporate internal migration to their work on migration, bridging issues of migration displacement, and urbanization, and use their platforms to raise the voices of cities beyond the Global North . **Internal migration is likely to increase in coming years as more people will continue to escape violence, natural disasters, and environmental changes – and will largely weigh on cities in the Global South.**

⁶³ GFMD, 'How can municipal access to international funding and financing mechanisms enable inclusive response and recovery?'

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