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Through the European City-Regions**

(11th September 2017, Brussels)



Citizenship in a changing multi-scalar post-Brexit European context

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The third workshop from the series ‘Bridging European Urban Transformations’ took place in the neighbourhood of Molenbeek in Brussels on 11th September 2017. It was entitled ‘Scaling Migration through the European City-Regions’ (#ScalingMigration) and blended very diverse perspectives and techniques. The macro scale examined the nation-state’s role in the global crisis of migration and the emergence of city-networks. On the meso scale, the workshop examined newcomers’ and refugees’ integration programmes, and at the micro level analysed grounded projects set up in neighbourhoods and districts.

In 2017, according to Franck Düvell (Allen et al., 2017, p. 11), the number of globally displaced persons reached a record 65 million. Over a third, around 22 million, were from the wider neighbourhood of the European Union. Of the 21.3 million who fled to other countries and were categorised as refugees, around 3 million resided in Turkey, 1.1 million in Lebanon, 980,000 in Iran and 660,000 in Jordan.

As a backdrop to this phenomenon, solely in the European Union (Burridge, Gill, Kocher, & Martin, 2017, p. 3), migration and border policies have produced complex spatial dynamics: the bounding of Europe’s Schengen Area; simultaneous freeing of internal mobility for EU citizens and ‘hardening’ of external boundaries; the harmonization of border and immigration controls as a condition of EU admission; Good Neighbor Agreements with non-EU members tying aid to immigration and border policing requirements; and the expansion of long-term detention as a mobility control practice.

Hence, in the workshop, considering that the post-Brexit era is still characterised by doubt over what Brexit entirely means for British and European citizens—amidst mass migration, a refugee crisis, rescaling nation-states, state-city relations, transnational networks, ethnic and non-metropolitanised right-wing populist nationalism, politics of austerity and division, spatial segregation and inequalities, and diversity integration policies in neighbourhoods and districts—we asked how migration can be scaled throughout European city-regions (Bürkner, 2017; Burridge et al., 2017; Calzada, 2015; Hoekstra, 2017).

In response to this general concern, according to Keith (2013), the city has historically been seen as an ‘integration machine’, the site where most people can describe themselves not only as ‘citizens of the city’ but also increasingly—as we have recently observed—as ‘citizens of the non-city’: invisible citizens of the visible city. Thus, migration is a changing multi-scalar and multi-territorial phenomenon that has become a constitutive principle in the public’s understanding of *the city*.

However, no less importantly, in the United Kingdom (Keith, 2013, p. 3), even after the 2008–09 global financial crisis, migration remains a top political concern, and in mainland Europe, antimigrant sentiment has driven both the rise of extremist parties and at times mainstream debates.

In Europe, cities and regions represent the closest level of government to citizens. This is the case with EURO CITIES, which represents the leaders of 137 of Europe's largest cities, encouraging them to stand together to deliver real solutions for their citizens. The impact of the British public's decision to leave the EU is a wake-up call for international, national, regional and city leaders in Europe and beyond. Surprisingly, neither the New Urban Agenda released by the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador last October 2016, nor the White Paper released by the European Commission recently in March 2017 entitled 'Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2015' mention the possible impact of external effects such as Brexit. Thus, in these urgent circumstances, cities and regions must be equipped with the tools to connect people and places to growth, wealth, and equality (Cohen, 2016). The Urban Agenda for the EU and Eurocities foresees a future for UK cities in this process too, as demonstrated by many UK city leaders from the UK Core Cities initiative. As such, in the midst of re-scaling the UK nation-state, cities, regions and their devolutionary claims have become active drivers in their own rights—increasingly independent of the confines of *their* respective nation-states (Calzada, 2015).

Furthermore, some interpretations (Johnson, 2017, p. 1) are considering the rescaling and relocation of border enforcement in the European Union in relation to state sovereignty by arguing that existing “soft” conceptualisations of the EU's relationship to sovereignty and bordering—“shared”, “joint”, “multi-level”, “consociational”—are inadequate for understanding the transformations of exercises of sovereign power in European borderlands.

Hence, in this messy and complex migration context, Europe is at a crossroads, and its cities and regions are bearing the brunt of multiple challenges from macro, meso, and micro scale perspectives. This workshop was an invitation to rethink how migration can still assure that the cities and regions of Europe are international conduits for the passage of trade, commerce, and most importantly, citizens.

This workshop considered how a broad scope of participants such as activists, policy-makers, academics, companies, social entrepreneurs, and citizens reacted to the challenges migration is posing to European cities and regions by not only overcoming the side effects of the lack of vision and humanitarian aid regarding migrants but also empowering city-to-city learning in order to remodel Europe through its cities and regions.

Despite the burdens for citizens in Europe, cities and regions should continue to work cooperatively across borders to secure the economic, social, and environmental future that citizens deserve. Cities are also central:

- 1) At the macro scale, guaranteeing the right to live and work for EU nationals and British citizens in the post-Brexit era.

- 2) At the meso scale, facilitating the integration process of refugees and newcomers in reinforcing and enhancing social cohesion.
- 3) At the micro scale, setting up intervention projects and exchange programmes in neighbourhoods and districts.

Building on the emerging body of ongoing initiatives, the workshop *'Scaling Migration Through the European City-Regions'* brought together a group of European academics and policy-makers to reflect on and debate the current potential for scaling migration throughout European cities and regions.



The workshop began with questions about the *macro* interpretations of this changing context. Macro migration issues such as Brexit are not only re-scaling nation-states but also altering the whole understanding of migration at the supranational scale, insofar as there is a growing disconnect between citizens and EU institutions. Citizens are asking politicians: What does the EU really do for us? Why does it matter?

Richard Tuffs, director of the European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN), a platform that connects academics and practitioners in a wide diverse of research fields within the European regions, introduced the workshop by presenting the migration policy framework of the EU. In particular, he presented the Future of Europe White Paper by underlining the migration section, which argues that the EU must protect 'our borders while preserving the right to free movement within Europe'. In the same direction, he said that more than 8 in 10 Europeans consider unemployment, social inequalities, and migration as the top three challenges for the Union. Nonetheless, he also argued that legal immigration has generally boosted the economies of receiving countries and can provide the EU with the skills needed to address labour market shortages. By contrast, where local infrastructure and integration efforts have not kept pace with the increased scale of migration, migration can lead to social tensions in communities.

After this presentation, Professor Sarah Spencer from COMPAS, University of Oxford, kicked off the workshop discussing cities as incubators of inclusion by reflecting on European city responses to migrants with legal and irregular status and on evolving implications for multi-level governance. In her presentation, Professor Spencer stated that many migrants flourish while others experience disadvantages across the EU, which can lead to their social exclusion. She focused on integration processes and the knowledge that we have gathered so far: integration as a process, not an end-state, and integration processes across domains (social, structural, cultural, civic, political and identarian). According to Professor Spencer, cities have a key role in facilitating integration insofar as they have direct impact as convenors. Likewise, she pointed out that development of local strategies has created an appetite for research and knowledge exchange. However, the divergence of local approaches can lead to tensions in multi-level governance mechanisms, leaving one open question open for the discussion: can city-regions use voice more effectively to shift the terms and tone of national public and policy debates?

Thereafter, Dr Ilke Adam from the VUB presented the 'State-city relations in migration governance from the state-of-the-art perspective'. In her presentation, Dr Adam asked 'how state-city relations and multi-level governance in global migration issues could alter the current urban shape of Europe'. Dr Adam bridges the gap between the political party literature and the literature on immigration and integration policies in cities. In her research on subnational nationalisms, she relies on a more nuanced categorisation of policy positions proposed by the immigration policy literature, which is absent in research on subnational political party literature. In this way, she

presented the importance of devolution and multi-level governance mechanisms to inclusive policy frameworks on the city-regional level of Europe.

The second part of the workshop, the debate among academics and policymakers focused on the gap between citizens and institutions by suggesting the substantial role of cities and region leaders in advocating transnational networks, integration of migrants and refugees, and meso initiatives, projects, and policies (Agier, 2016; Betts & Collier, 2017). In this section, transnational networks, integration of migrants and newcomers, and the refugee crisis throughout European city-regions were discussed. Professor Yasemin Soysal from the University of Essex, presented her research 'Transnational bright futures between China, Germany, and the UK', funded by the ESRC. Using this comparative study of the internal and international mobility of Chinese higher education students, she presented results from the main data collected via large-scale surveys of a representative sample of student groups, complemented by exploratory interviews with students and parents.

The next speaker was Dr Sophie Withaecx from the VUB, presenting on 'transnational migration networks in Europe'. She particularly focused on transmigration, and the rise of flexible migration strategies as part of superdiversity. She attempted to respond to how transnational migration networks are the driving forces for these changes in European cities and regions. She presented 'superdiversity', which implies increasing diversity within diversity, including the rise of flexible migration strategies: complex migration trajectories implying serial cross-border mobility between two or more countries. She explored 'transmigration' in the two main superdiverse Belgian cities of Brussels and Antwerp, based upon in-depth interviews with Brazilian, Ghanaian, and Moroccan transmigrants. She analysed the social problems related to transmigration, and how these problems transcend borders and challenge urban social work and social policies at different levels. Ultimately, she explored why transmigration requires forms of multilevel governance to deal with people living beyond borders in the EU.



In the final part of the workshop, the discussion involved several policy interventions that require tailored neighbourhood and district-level micro interventions in order to enable real diversity by tackling segregation and social inequality. The vitality and connections in super-diverse streets in London, for instance, ‘demonstrates how important migration has been to the UK’s development in the last few decades’ (Hall, 2015; West, 2015).

In the final thematic strand of the workshop, the discussion centred around spatial segregation and neighbourhood integration in European city-regions. Professor Gwilym Pryce, from the University of Sheffield, provided a remarkable presentation on the implications of migration and spatial persistence by presenting the implications for urban segregation and inequality. Professor Pryce described four major concerns regarding immigration: (i) segregation and social fragmentation, (ii) employment and wages, (iii) housing prices at local and national levels, and (iv) inequality.

He explained that research has tended to concentrate on the total number of migrants rather than on where in the country migrants choose to live. Regarding some data on London, he focused on the path-dependency of migrants from poor countries, who are attracted to areas with low housing costs and a high proportion of the same nationality. As such, he showed that in London, there has been a large increase in places with more than 30% of residents being born outside the UK. He asked whether immigration leads to a local net reduction or increase in available jobs. Regarding the UK, he summarised that all migrants except EU migrants have zero or negligible impact on local employment. EU migrants, have a significant positive effect on local

employment, according to the provisional and ongoing findings of his research funded by the ESRC. In another strand of the debate, he argued that a large influx of poor migrants may be more likely to result in social tensions in areas that are already poor. A clear example was Rotherham in England.

He concluded that migration is likely to have different impacts on levels of segregation, employment creation and housing prices, depending on the affluence of country of origin and local employment types in destination areas. Likewise, he warned that path dependencies in location of particular migration may increase divergence between areas over the time.



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