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Urban Migrant Inclusion and Refugee Protection - Volume 2

Global Perspectives of Sanctuary, Solidarity, and Hospitality

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Global Perspectives of Sanctuary, Solidarity, and Hospitality

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SOLI*CITY

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ISSN 2364-4087 ISSN 2364-4095 (electronic)
IMISCOE Research Series
ISBN 978-3-031-95150-3 ISBN 978-3-031-95151-0 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-95151-0

This work was supported by IMISCOE

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Preface

The publication of this book is connected to the international *Soli*City* partnership (formally titled 'Urban Sanctuary, Migrant Solidarity and Hospitality in Global Perspective'). In the context of this international project, research teams located in Africa, Europe, Latin America, and North America have conducted a series of literature reviews that form the basis of several chapters. In addition, we asked project affiliates and scholars in our extended network to contribute chapters.

The result is a diverse team of contributing authors consisting of seasoned academics who are leading scholars on the topic of urban solidarity, sanctuary, and hospitality as well as up-and-coming early-career researchers. We strove to include authors from the Global South and Global North. Despite our efforts to create a diverse team of authors, the chapters were written mainly by academics and researchers affiliated with universities who tend to have the privilege and societal role to engage in research. While practitioners have valuable experiences and important insights to contribute to the debate, our experience has been that their time and capacities tend to be constrained by the lack of resources and—well—practical matters that have a real-world impact on the lives and well-being of migrants and refugees. While many chapter authors work closely with practitioners and draw on these practitioners' expertise in asking the right research questions, the research was conducted and written up mainly by academics, which explains the underrepresentation of practitioners among the authors. We intended that this edited collection nevertheless contributes not only to scholarship but also assists such practitioners in their important work of improving the lives of migrants, refugees, and urban communities as a whole.

As we finalise the revisions of this edited collection, Donald Trump has made a comeback to the White House. We expect that the themes of urban sanctuary, solidarity, and hospitality will attract further attention during his second presidency while American cities resist his administration's anticipated anti-immigrant politics and policies. We hope, however, that the renewed attention to the United States will not distract from urban innovations of migrant integration and refugee protection elsewhere in the world. While recognising the importance of political developments

in the United States, this edited collection also serves to highlight the perspectives and experiences of urban migrant integration and refugee protection in the Global South.

Toronto and Accra
November 2024

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Acknowledgments

We thank Omar Lujan and Bridget Collrin who have worked tirelessly as the *Soli*City* Project Manager and Project Coordinator and thus contributed enormously to laying the foundation for this book. *Soli*City* team members Vida Carranza Capote, Charlene Smith, and Leo Ayala Mejia helped with important editorial work. We thank the series editor Anna Triandafyllidou and her colleague Irina Isaakyan at the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration and IMISCOE, as well as the Springer team consisting of Evelien Bakker, Bernadette Deelen-Mans, Prasad Gurunadham and Keertika Arul. Thanks to Diane Shugart for copyediting both volumes.

Resources from the *Urban Sanctuary, Migrant Solidarity and Hospitality in Global Perspective* project have been made available to help publish the two volumes in open-access formats. We thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for funding this project.

Introduction

All cities are the product of migration, either international or internal. Correspondingly, urban communities tend to have an inclusive approach towards membership that is reflected in the statements and actions of urban leaders around the world. In the United States, Tom Cochran, the CEO and Executive Director of The United States Conference of Mayors, remarked in response to the Biden administration's announcement of extending the Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelans: 'Mayors recognise the invaluable contributions immigrants have made to our cities and our nation. They continue to be an integral part of our communities and play a critical role in the strength of our economy' (Durr, 2023). In South Africa, the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, whose mission is to 'welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate, people on the move into local communities', stepped up in support of unlawfully detained asylum seekers by taking legal action with the help of Lawyers for Human Rights against South African's Department of Home Affairs in May 2024 (Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, 2024). Meanwhile, the Mayor of Bogota, Columbia, Carlos Fernando Galán, proclaimed: 'Cities are often the first point of contact for migrants and require more support both nationally and internationally. It is crucial that cities have a voice in migration policies to provide the best possible care to those seeking a new home' (Bogota, 2024).

These are just three of countless examples of urban leaders, administrations, and civic-society organisations treating international migration as a normal human activity. In contrast, nation-states (and state-like configurations such as the European Union) treat migration as a problem. They seek to control cross-border mobility and, through migration policy, select who is permitted to traverse the border and under what circumstances, and who is denied entry. In fact, controlling human migration and keeping displaced people out of the country has become one of the most prominent global policy issues and goals in recent years.

Every year, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) releases their latest estimates on the brutality and deadly nature of states' and state assemblages' efforts to control human migration at their external borders. In 2023 alone, 3041 people died or went missing trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea in their attempt to reach Europe; 1200 died or went missing in the Americas; 1844 in Africa; and

1180 in Asia (International Organization for Migration, 2024). Although these estimates are based on diverse yet credible sources, many instances may never be recorded or known; the actual numbers of fatalities and people gone missing are therefore likely to be much higher. Those migrants and refugees who survive the journey often see their rights being taken away and face incarceration, social and political exclusion, dehumanisation, and the exploitation of their labour. Migration regimes have become increasingly repressive and nation-states—especially those of the Global North—are failing to uphold their own self-proclaimed human rights standards and principles of human security and dignity.

Recently, the United Nations' Global Compact for Migration and Refugees sought to coordinate international efforts and meet standards of human and other universal rights and responsibility-sharing while not challenging the sovereignty of nation-states to control cross-border movements. Many problems related to the denial of rights and the social, economic, and political marginalisation of migrants and refugees have their root cause in the insistence of states to exercise their sovereignty when it comes to controlling migration and refugee mobility (Bauder, 2022).

Urban Migrant Inclusion and Refugee Protection shifts the focus of attention onto cities. It addresses especially how municipalities and urban communities deal with inhabitants who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances because they are migrants or refugees. In Canada and the United States, the so-called sanctuary cities have focused on protecting and supporting people living without or with precarious national status (Atienza, 2023; Bauder, 2017; Casellas & Wallace, 2020). In the United Kingdom, there is a 'cities of sanctuary' movement. In Europe, cities that support disenfranchised migrants and refugees have called themselves city of refuge, safe harbours, solidarity cities, and other names (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019a; Christoph & Kron, 2019; SEEBRÜCKE, 2019). Cities in Latin America collaborate with the United Nations on a programme called *Ciudades Solidarias*, or solidarity cities (Godoy & Bauder, 2021; Thayer Correa et al., 2014). Formal municipal policies may be less common (or less known in the English-language literature) in Africa and Asia but initiatives and practices exist at the urban community and civil-society levels to support migrants and refugees in vulnerable situations (Bauder, 2019; Kassa, 2019; Missbach et al., 2018). These urban initiatives and practices have in common that they seek to include all inhabitants irrespective of their legal status and migration circumstances and facilitate migrants' and refugees' participation in urban life and politics.

Urban initiatives and practices of migrant inclusion and refugee protection are obviously affected by regional and national circumstances. For example, the flight of people from political crises, disasters, and conflicts in Haiti, Lebanon, Sudan, or Venezuela disproportionately affects transit and destination cities in the corresponding world region or hemisphere. National legal and governance systems also shape cities' capacities to offer protection. In countries like Germany, where a central population registry exists, remaining undetected by state authorities is much harder than in, say, the United States, where non-status populations may easier remain hidden from authorities. A population registry also exists in Spain, but municipalities can use it as proof of residency to provide services to non-status populations

(Bauder & Gonzalez, 2018). In some African countries, where state bureaucracies are less developed, national legal status or citizenship may not matter much to gaining access to employment, housing, and basic services. In different national settings, cities are also given different powers vis-à-vis regional and national governments. Larger cities in the United States control their own police forces that can be included in municipal policies of non-cooperation with national immigration enforcement authorities. In Canada, municipal police forces are guided not by municipal but by provincial legislation. In other countries, such as Chile, municipalities do not possess their own police forces (Bauder & Gonzalez, 2018; Hershkowitz et al., 2021).

Despite these different circumstances, cities around the world are stepping up and tackling the problem of migrant and refugee exclusion. On the one hand, they approach this matter with problem-solving pragmatism (Barber, 2013); on the other, they take a more principled social justice lens (Purcell, 2006), focus on democracy (Frick, 2023), and revolutionary spirit (Harvey, 2012). The two volumes of this collection assume a global perspective and examine empirical contexts in both the Global North and the Global South. The chapters show that urban migrant inclusion and refugee protection are a global phenomenon.

The current literature on urban migrant inclusion and refugee protection, however, focuses disproportionately on the Global North. In the Global South, this topic has received less attention. The relatively few studies of the Global South that do address the subject matter tend to apply concepts and ideas that were developed in the Global North (Bauder, 2019; Godoy & Bauder, 2021; Kassa, 2019; Missbach et al., 2018). An opportunity exists not only for research from the Global South to contribute to the debate of urban migrant inclusion and refugee protection but especially to develop an integrative perspective that connects urban policies and practices in different parts of the world and throughout historical periods.

An overarching idea framing this book is that there is a distinctly urban approach that differs from that generally assumed by nation-states towards migration and refugees. This urban approach revolves around the concepts of sanctuary, solidarity, and hospitality. The term *sanctuary* often refers to a range of local policies and practices related to migrants and refugees in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. In Canada and the United States, 'sanctuary cities' seek to offer migrants and refugees without or with precarious legal status protection and access to municipal services. Not all 'sanctuary cities' are embracing the term. Critics argue that local policies cannot provide full protection, i.e., sanctuary, from national migration enforcement authorities; some municipal administrations and policymakers seek to avoid the political fallout of using the term (Bauder, 2017). In the United Kingdom, the City of Sanctuary movement 'promotes a culture of hospitality towards those taking sanctuary' (Squire & Bagelman, 2012, p. 155) but does not have the same focus on legal protection as sanctuary cities in Canada and the United States. Several chapters of this collection apply the term 'sanctuary' to urban policies and practices beyond Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom (e.g. Bambach, Chap. 2, this volume; Stefoni, Bravo, and Stang, Chap. 1, this volume; Drejer-Jensen and Jørgensen, Chap. 9, this volume).

The concept of *solidarity* has been widely applied in research, activism, and politics related to migrants and refugees (Agustín, 2020; Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019b; Bauder, 2022). While it generally refers to social connections fostering unity among people with similar interests or goals, the use and application of the concept in migration and refugee research are complex and variable. Migration and refugee scholars have uncovered various 'sources' (Oosterlynck et al., 2016) and philosophical underpinnings of solidarity (Bauder & Juffs, 2020), distinguishing between autonomous, civic, and institutional solidarity (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2016). Furthermore, solidarity is not only relational but can also be transformative and creative (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012). Cities and urban initiatives in different regions of the world have adopted the label of solidarity to describe their transformative political goals (Christoph & Kron, 2019; Godoy & Bauder, 2021; Jørgensen & Agustín, 2019; Özdemir, 2022).

While the state and municipal administrations promote solidarity in a top-down manner, migrants and refugees often initiate solidarity practices themselves. Africa, for example, is known for its associational lifestyles, with associations typically forming along the lines of ethnic, religious, professional, and national communities that support the integration of new entrants and their members (Quartey et al., 2020). Some of these associations have frequent meetings to discuss the well-being of their members and serve as networks that link migrants and refugees to jobs and accommodation, provide them with access to information, and organise programmes that help them maintain their culture in the urban areas (Setrana et al., Chap. 9, volume 1; Setrana & Okyerefo, 2024). These associations not only provide solidarity spaces for migrants and refugees, but their leaders also promote the interests of their members at local and national levels.

Hospitality is a social practice that is widely used throughout the world. Nevertheless, it has been theorised mostly from a Eurocentric scholarly perspective. The European geographer and philosopher Immanuel Kant posited that strangers have a right to hospitality on foreign lands but that this hospitality is restricted and does not entitle to permanent settlement (Kant, 1795). Jacques Derrida (2001) has critiqued the state-centric logic of Kant's ideas of hospitality and instead frames this concept in reference to cities and the arrival of refugees. Framing hospitality at the urban scale makes the concept applicable to this edited collection (e.g. Bauder, Chap. 1, volume 1). Derrida also reminds us, however, that the concept of hospitality must be viewed critically as it implies uneven relations and access to resources between host and guest, and that it connects to hostility (Derrida, 2000, 2001). The tension and conflict between host population and migrants cannot be underestimated within the concept of hospitality. Beyond access to resources, conflicts sometimes originate from regional protocols and national laws. For example, there is ongoing friction between Ghanaian and Nigerian retail traders because the laws of Ghana prevent foreigners from investing in the retail sector. Although Ghanaians are generally hospitable, the concept of hospitality as critically reflected in this book has its limits and must be interrogated from a multi-level perspective.

The possibility of a distinct urban approach towards migrant inclusion and refugee protection involving the concepts of sanctuary, solidarity, and hospitality does

not mean that there is a uniform experience among cities and urban communities. Apart from national and regional differences, there is an enormous variety of policies and practices among different urban actors in support of migrants and refugees. The chapters in this collection highlight the range and importance of such actors. They include national, regional, and local governments (Colbern, Chap. 4, volume 1; Kuge and Anders, Chap. 10, volume 1; Pekşen and Kurtarır, Chap. 10, this volume); supra-national organisations like the United Nations (Stefoni et al., Chap. 1, this volume; Bambach, Chap. 2, this volume, Janina Stürner-Siovitz and Morthorst, Chap. 3, this volume); ethnic and neighbourhood communities (Lujan, Chap. 6, volume 1; Baro, Chap. 7, volume 1); faith-based and civic-society movements and organisations (Arnold, Chap. 12, volume 1; Koskimaki and Mazani, Chap. 4, this volume; Salifu and Jørgensen, Chap. 5, this volume; Drejer-Jensen and Jørgensen, Chap. 9, this volume); businesses and entrepreneurs (Lemke, Chap. 13, this volume), informal migrant networks (Setrana et al., Chap. 9, volume 1); global urban networks (Agustín and Jørgensen, Chap. 11, this volume); and activists and street protesters (Steinhilper and Sommer, Chap. 7, this volume).

While many cities and urban actors are supportive of migrant inclusion and refugee protection, xenophobia and migrant and refugee exclusion and scapegoating for societal problems such as unemployment, poverty, crime, and overcrowding are also rampant in many metropolitan areas. Cities are complex assemblages where diverging interests and positions are negotiated; they are 'battlegrounds' of refuge and migration policy (Ambrosini, 2021). Correspondingly, neither all cities nor all voices within cities are supportive of migrant inclusion and refugee protection. A universal urban approach, therefore, has been difficult to theorise.

An additional difficulty of theorising such an urban approach is that urban and migration theories are often developed in the Global North and then treated as universal and inappropriately applied to contexts of the Global South (Landau, 2010; Landau & Bakewell, 2018). For example, the primacy of the Westphalian state framing migration politics in the Global North (Torpey, 1999) cannot always be taken for granted in contexts like Africa, where statehood may 'not represent liberal democratic contracts between "citizens" and the political establishment' (Kassa, 2019, p. 68). Many African states have not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, and both national state and local municipal government structures may be legally and politically weak as well as under-resourced (Haysom, 2013). Loren Landau (2010, p. 176) suggests that 'an effective, centralised authority has rarely governed the continent's urban centres.' In addition, the established relations between labour and capital that form the bedrock of urban theory developed in the Global North, such as the Lefebvrean idea of the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1996), do not always apply in the cities of the Global South (Landau, 2019). Furthermore, the assumption embedded in migration and urban theories that migrants and refugees are here to stay and make a city their permanent home is based on the experience of settler-colonial countries of the Global North and may not hold in the Global South where migrant populations are often transient and less committed to 'integrate' into presumably pre-existing urban and national communities (Kassa, 2019; Kihato, 2010).

To develop an understanding of urban migrant inclusion and refugee protection from decentred and local geographical perspectives resonates with recent calls to decolonise migration studies (Collins, 2022). Such calls connect with a literature that draws attention to the legacies of European imperialism (Humphris, 2022; Mongia, 2018; Walia, 2021) and increasingly includes studies on the situation of migrants and refugees in cities of the Global South (Cohen et al., 2022; Kassa, 2019; Kihato, 2007; Missbach et al., 2018). The chapters in this collection contribute to these efforts by highlighting the role of both the urban and locally situated knowledges in structuring the experiences of migrants and refugees.

The focus on urban communities, however, should not be interpreted as a romanticisation of these experiences (Purcell, 2006). In many ways, urban communities may not be different from hegemonic and oppressive national communities. How migration and refugee mobility are governed in a global system of supposedly sovereign states is steeped in neocolonial and racist practice, codified into international law and agreements, and effectively perpetuates a system of 'global apartheid' (Jørgensen & Schierup, n.d.; Sharma, 2005; van Houtum, 2010) and global 'fortress capitalism' (Georgi, 2019). Cities are important participants in this repressive global system (Sassen, 1996).

However, cities also differ from nation-states in that nation-states are entirely political constructs; they are 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991) because the vast majority of members never personally or physically interact with each other. Furthermore, there is typically no tangible pre-existing community that defines national belonging, membership, or territory. Conversely, cities (as well as towns and villages) define concrete physical communities and places where people interact as neighbours, sit next to each other on the bus on their way to work, attend school council meetings, pray together at their local mosque, temple, church, or other places of worship, participate in community events, and share the stands at their local soccer, cricket, or baseball games. These personal connections lay the foundation for solidarity and for offering hospitality and sanctuary (Bauder, 2022). Cities are the places where migrants and refugees participate in economic and social life, and where they develop a sense of belonging. In turn, many urban municipalities and communities protect and include newcomers and inhabitants who are denied legal status or rendered vulnerable in other ways by nation-states and global migration regimes (Boudou, 2019).

This book's main objective is to examine urban and local policies and practices that have existed in different parts of the world and which foster inclusion and participation of migrants and refugees in vulnerable legal, political, and social situations. The book also challenges Eurocentric universal ideas and conceptions of terms such as solidarity, sanctuary, or hospitality and emphasises local contexts that give voice to migrants and refugees in vulnerable situations. We are, however, still a far way from being able to leverage local and regional knowledge systems from the Global South as well as Indigenous epistemologies to decolonise scholarly perspectives of urban solidarity and inform hands-on local practices and policies towards refugees and vulnerable migrants. Nevertheless, we hope that this book contributes to steering debate and practice in this direction.

Contributions

Urban Migrant Inclusion and Refugee Protection provides the most comprehensive and original resource yet available on this topic. There have been outstanding books on this topic that offer points of connection (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019b; Bagelman, 2016; Christoph & Kron, 2019; Darling & Bauder, 2019; Stürner-Siovitz, 2022). However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no other book available at present that involves the geographical range, methodological diversity, and interdisciplinary variability of work included in this edited collection.

There are several key aspects that make this edited collection stand out. The first relates to the comprehensiveness of *Urban Migrant Inclusion and Refugee Protection* that makes it an important resource and guide for a wide-ranging audience of scholars and practitioners worldwide. This aspect illustrates the complexity of urban policies and practices towards migrant inclusion and refugee protection. These policies and practices are embedded in diverse national, regional, historical, and geopolitical contexts and are the product of continuously changing political interests, negotiations of identities and frames of belonging, and claiming of rights.

Second, the book offers theoretical advances, generally assuming critical and postcolonial perspectives in relation to rights, urban policies, politics, and practices; understandings of scale and space; and the exploration of emerging thematic frontiers. Theory continues to be disproportionately developed in the Global North and applied in the Global South (Bauder, 2019; Collins, 2022; Landau, 2010; Landau & Bakewell, 2018; Squire, 2022). While our book cannot single-handedly reverse the direction of knowledge flows, the chapters reflect critically on the centralisation of theoretical knowledge production by the West. Generally, the book pursues anti-colonial aims by critiquing neocolonial politics in migration governance and tendencies in migration and refugee scholarship. The book decentres knowledge production by including local strategies and perspectives on solidarity, sanctuary, and hospitality.

Third, a particular strength of this book is the empirical advances it offers. These draw on a wide variety of methodological approaches ranging from archival research and policy analyses of government data to comprehensive literature reviews in regions that have been neglected in the study of urban migrant inclusion and refugee protection. The chapters not only examine urban policies and practices by focusing on the local scale but also on how these policies and practices connect to national and regional politics and international city networks. In this way, the book offers a multi-layered global perspective of urban migrant solidarity and refugee protection.

Audience

The book assumes an international and interdisciplinary approach to sanctuary, solidarity, and hospitality towards migrants and refugees. The combination of the Global North and Global South perspectives makes it of interest to a global

audience. It appeals to readers in the immigrant-receiving countries of both the Global North and the Global South, which have been underserved in respect of scholarly research on this topic. The open-access format ensures that the book is available to audiences who may not be able to afford the print version. The free availability of the material is important to us especially since readers and institutions in the Global South are often unable to buy the book; it would be hypocritical if our book supported the flow of capital from readers in the Global South to the publisher located in the Global North. In addition, we believe that knowledge should be free, independently of the location and circumstances of the audience. A print version is still available for purchase from the publisher for readers who prefer holding a physical copy in their hands. To add to the book's accessibility the authors of the chapters have made every effort to write in accessible language to include readers whose native tongue is not English or who may not be familiar with academic jargon.

With these efforts, we seek to appeal to policymakers at international and municipal institutions, urban planners, migration and refugee practitioners, human rights activists, and social justice advocates. Despite these efforts, however, we realise that the book's main audience will likely consist of academics, researchers, graduate students, and advanced undergraduate students in diverse disciplines such as Anthropology, Geography, Sociology, Political Science, and fields such as citizenship studies, critical borders studies, legal studies, migration studies, political movement studies, social justice studies, refugee studies, and urban studies.

Each chapter has its own list of references so that it can be assigned separately as reading in upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses at institutions of higher education around the world. To serve as a stand-alone course reading, we recognise that some repetition and overlapping material—for example with respect to explaining common concepts and ideas—may exist between chapters.

Structure of the Book

Urban Migrant Inclusion and Refugee Protection is organised into two volumes. There are simply too many chapters to fit into a single volume. We grouped the chapters into seven parts that each address a particular thematic issue, arranging these parts in a way that each volume offers a different perspective on the overall topic of urban migrant inclusion and refugee protection.

Despite the thematic organisation into two volumes, we intend for this work to be read as one coherent collection addressing issues with urban migrant inclusion and refugee protection. Therefore, we wrote one general Introduction covering both volumes. For each volume, however, we wrote two separate 'outlines' in which we discuss and introduce the different parts in each volume. Thus, following this introduction, we provide an Outline of Volume 1; Volume 2 begins with its own outline.

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Outline of Volume 2

Volume 1 critiques the Eurocentrism entrenched in research on urban migrant inclusion and refugee protection and shows that urban sanctuary, solidarity, and hospitality policies and practices exist throughout the world. From the previous literature, however, readers might gain the impression that such initiatives are mostly a phenomenon of the Global North. Sanctuary cities such as New York, San Francisco, and Toronto, and prominent migrant- and refugee-supporting European cities such as Barcelona, Berlin, and Palermo have received disproportionate attention among scholars and commentators.

Volume 2 seeks to correct this distorted picture and offer global perspectives of urban sanctuary, solidarity, and hospitality. This second volume therefore begins with Part I, 'Regional Perspectives', which presents research that introduces urban solidarity policies and practices mostly as a phenomenon that exists across Africa and Latin America. An important purpose of the chapters in Part I is to fill a gap of knowledge of policies and practices in the Global South. In the opening chapter, Carolina Stefoni, Aline Bravo, and Maria Fernanda Stang present the results of a documentary review on urban sanctuary and solidarity in Latin America's Southern Cone and highlight the differences to corresponding policies and practices in the Global North. In the next chapter, Matías Fouillioux Bambach conducted a similar review of urban practices towards refugees in Central America, a region characterised, on the one hand, by large-scale displacement, and, on the other, by the dominance of the United States as a political force of migrant and refugee attraction. In Chap. 3, Janina Stürner-Siovitz and Lasse Juhl Morthorst shift the focus of attention to medium-size African cities and examine multi-stakeholder partnerships that bring together policy actors at local, national, and international levels. In Chap. 4, Leah Koskimaki and Perfect Mazani review the literature on urban migrant and refugee solidarity in South Africa and find that local grassroots actors and religious communities offer solidarity in an effort to compensate for the absence of government protections and supports. In the final chapter of Part I, Mashudu Salifu and Martin Bak Jørgensen connect the perspective focused on the Global South with the Global North by comparing solidarity initiatives in Copenhagen, Denmark, and Accra, Ghana. Their research reveals structural communalities regarding the role of

civil society and municipal actors despite rather different geographical and geopolitical contexts.

That urban initiatives of migrant inclusion and refugee protection exist in the Global North and the Global South does not mean that these initiatives take place under similar circumstances. In fact, economic, demographic, geopolitical, political, and social conditions differ substantially in different countries and world regions. And yet, despite these geographical differences, there are common patterns among urban communities in how they seek to include and envision migrants and refugees to belong, and how they enact policies and rights of urban sanctuary, solidarity, and hospitality.

Part II contains chapters that discuss the tension between the urban inclusion and exclusion of migrants and refugees in various national contexts. City autonomy can go both ways: it can enable urban communities and governments to be inclusive and welcoming to newcomers; or it can give cities the authority to put in place policies and measures to marginalise, exclude, and reject migrants and refugees. Using Berlin and Hamburg in Germany as case studies, Mouna Maaroufi and Helge Schwiertz examine in Chap. 6 how local regimes of migration control and pro-migrant solidarity are highly ambivalent and fragmented. Also in Germany, Elias Steinhilper and Moriz Sommer examine two mid-size cities that have taken different paths: one embracing migrants and meeting them with solidarity, the other staging anti-migrant protests. In Chap. 8, Benjamin Bruce and Line Crettex investigate how in the Greater Los Angeles region in the United States irregular migrants gain access to healthcare and public services and how this access varies with jurisdictions' different attitudes, ranging from hospitable to hostile towards irregular migrants. In the final chapter of Part II, Maria Genet Drejer-Jensen and Martin Bak Jørgensen offer a gender perspective of sanctuary related to the differential treatment of migrant women in the context of Mexico City.

The final part of this collection focuses on policies, politics, and rights of urban sanctuary, solidarity, and hospitality. In Chap. 10, Mert Pekşen and Erhan Kurtarır examine the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in Turkey and the strategic invisibility of migrant and refugee support and solidarity infrastructure in light of Turkey's hierarchical refugee governance structure. Chapter 11 by Sofia Ntaliou focuses on Athens, Greece, to demonstrate how this city's unique circumstances have shaped its guest-resident approach towards migrant and refugee inclusion. In Chap. 12, Judith K. Bernhard, Julie E.E. Young, and Luin Goldring examine precarious-status families with children in Toronto, Canada, and observe that urban sanctuary policies often fail to protect and offer basic rights to children who suffer from the illegalisation of their parents. The final chapter by Tara Carr-Lemke connects the literatures of immigrant entrepreneurship and urban sanctuary in the United States and highlights the politics of cultural liaison work for migrant-owned enterprises.

Harald Bauder
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Contents

Part I Regional Perspectives

1 Urban Solidarity and Mobilities in the Latin American Southern Cone: Local Experiences in Global Debates 3
Carolina Stefoni, Aline Bravo, and Maria Fernanda Stang

2 Refuging Practices for Migrant and Asylum-Seeking Populations in Central America: Mexico and Costa Rica 21
Matías Fouillioux Bambach

3 'Without Partners Our Hands Are Tied!' Exploring Multi-stakeholder Partnerships on Migration and Displacement in African Intermediary Cities 37
Janina Stürner-Siovitz and Lasse Juhl Morthorst

4 Migrant and Refugee Solidarity in Urban South Africa 57
Leah Koskimaki and Perfect Mazani

5 Formal and Informal Solidarity Infrastructures in Copenhagen and Accra 75
Mashudu Salifu and Martin Bak Jørgensen

Part II Between Inclusion and Exclusion

6 Between Solidarity Cities and Local Migration Controls: Ambivalence and Fragmentation in the Field of Migrant Rights . . . 95
Mouna Maaroufi and Helge Schwiertz

7 Contested Solidarity: Exploring Local Variation in Migration-Related Protest in Germany 113
Elias Steinhilper and Moritz Sommer

8 The Invisible Boundaries of Sanctuary Cities: Local Policies Towards Undocumented Migrants in Los Angeles During Covid-19 127
Benjamin Bruce and Line Crettex

9 Mexico City as a Sanctuary City: Gender Perspectives in Sanctuary Policies 149
Maria Genet Drejer-Jensen and Martin Bak Jørgensen

Part III Policies, Politics, and Rights of Urban Solidarity

10 Istanbul, a Solidarity City? Solidarity Practices and Policies of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality 167
Mert Pekşen and Erhan Kurtarır

11 Politics of Governance or Governance of Politics? Exploring Migrant Policies in the City of Athens 185
Sofia Ntaliou

12 Precarious Status Families' Access to Early Childhood Services in a Sanctuary City: The Case of Toronto, Canada 205
Judith K. Bernhard, Julie E. E. Young, and Luin Goldring

13 'The Second You Trust Somebody, You Pass That Information On': Cultural Liaison Work with Mexican and Central American Immigrant Entrepreneurs 223
Tara Carr-Lemke

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List of Figures

Fig. 1.1 Cities, regions and provinces members of the 'Cities of Solidarity' programme in South America by 2023 7

Fig. 2.1 Number of initiatives to welcome and integrate migrant and refugee populations in Central America 27

Fig. 7.1 Number of protest events per quarter, Plauen and Neuruppin 116

Fig. 7.2 Protest participants per quarter, Plauen and Neuruppin. Note: To avoid distortions, signature lists and petitions were not taken into account for the evaluation of the number of participants. 116

Fig. 7.3 (**a**) Migration-related protest events per quarter, Plauen (top). (**b**) Migration-related protest events per quarter, Neuruppin (bottom) 117

Fig. 7.4 (**a**) Number of pro- and anti-migrant protest events, Plauen (top). (**b**) Number of pro- and anti-migrant protest events, Neuruppin (bottom) 119

Fig. 8.1 Making invisible boundaries visible: the patchwork geography of local migratory politics in Orange County. This figure shows the different incorporated cities of Orange County and which ones supported SB 54 (blue, only Santa Ana), opposed SB 54 (red), or remained neutral on SB 54 (green). Unincorporated areas fall under the jurisdiction of the county and are shown in grey. . . . 132

Fig. 11.1 Immigration, emigration and net migration, 1991–2020 191

List of Tables

Table 5.1 Profile of the study participants 80
Table 10.1 IMM's migration unit development process 173
Table 11.1 List of interviewees 186
Table 13.1 Key characteristics of cases 227

Chapter 10
Istanbul, a Solidarity City? Solidarity Practices and Policies of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

Mert Pekşen and Erhan Kurtarır

10.1 Introduction

Istanbul is a migrant city. Officially an estimated 529,000 migrants with residence permits (PMM, 2025a) and some 470,000 Syrian refugees under temporary protection (PMM, 2025b) live in the city. They make up about 7% of the city's official population. In addition to the officially registered refugee population, according to research conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), at least 430,000 Syrian refugees live in Istanbul without a registration (IOM, 2019). Moreover, Turkey's refugee reception policies impose stringent restrictions to registration options for international protection recipients. The registration system for Syrian refugees under temporary protection and conditional protection for non-Syrian refugees allows them to access public services only in the provinces where they are registered (Pekşen, 2023). According to the instructions of the Ministry of Interior, the province of Istanbul no longer accepts new registrations of Syrian refugees. Non-Syrian refugees who are under conditional protection, due to the mandatory dispersal policy (the so-called satellite city system), are not permitted to register and reside in Istanbul. Regardless of these restrictions, a high number of non-Syrian refugees, who are legally obliged to reside in other provinces, move to Istanbul for better living conditions and access to the labour market thereby giving up their international protection status in the province of registration (Karadağ, 2021). Istanbul remains an attractive option for migrants and refugees, and they continue to move to the city.

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H. Bauder, M. B. Setrana (eds.), *Urban Migrant Inclusion and Refugee Protection - Volume 2*, IMISCOE Research Series,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-95151-0_10

To address the needs of such a large and diverse migrant and refugee population, Istanbul has developed a dynamic urban solidarity structure involving many formal and informal actors with staggeringly different political agendas. These actors include the UNHCR, the IOM, district municipalities, local and national NGOs, and solidarity networks that contribute to the urban migration governance and aim to improve migrant inclusion and refugee reception. Among these actors, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) plays a key role in shaping the city's capacity for solidarity practices and structures.

In this chapter, we analyse how the IMM, the primary local authority tasked with providing municipal services to city residents, negotiates the limits of inclusion and exclusion of migrants and refugees to public services and how its policies influence the solidarity landscape in the city. We focus on the IMM's Migration Unit, which became the Directorate for Migration and Social Cohesion in 2021 and oversaw the coordination and implementation of the IMM's migration policies. Our chapter illustrates how Turkey's centralised administrative system and top-down refugee governance policies create a considerable limitation to the alternative legal constructions of urban inclusion mechanisms by the IMM. Exclusion of migrants and refugees from local services due to political polarisation, however, coexists with their invisible inclusion into support and solidarity structures at the urban scale. Furthermore, due to legal and administrative limitations, the notion of solidarity city remains mainly at the discursive level as a vision for an inclusive city. The IMM does not show any explicit commitment to sanctuary policies and carefully avoids the questions of legal and formal forms of inclusion. Relatedly, while the municipality shows interest in establishing a more inclusive agenda, Turkey's highly polarised political atmosphere and the hierarchical refugee governance structure shape the abilities of the IMM and force it to establish a strategic invisibility. To avoid potential political conflicts and to protect the municipality from political criticism, the IMM avoids labels and refrains from publicising its work.

Especially after the arrival of Syrian refugees in 2011, the scholarship on Turkey's migration governance and refugee reception policies has covered a wide range. Scholars examined the temporariness and legal aspects of reception (Ilcan et al., 2018; Rygiel et al., 2016), living conditions of urban refugees (Yıldız & Uzgören, 2016), civil society organisations' engagement in refugee reception (Boşnak, 2021; Dimitrova & Ozdora Aksak, 2021; Sunata & Tosun, 2019), and activist groups and refugee self-organisations that create structures of solidarity at the urban scale (Genç, 2017; Sahin Mencutek, 2021). Many studies on refugee reception and migrant inclusion focus on national scale processes. Still, municipalities in Turkey—among key actors in the urban infrastructure of refugee reception and migration governance—have also received attention after the arrival of Syrian refugees. Most of the studies on district and city municipalities in Turkey have focused almost exclusively on refugee reception and hospitality (Alvanoğlu & Ateş, 2020; Balcıoğlu, 2020; Betts et al., 2021; Çevik, 2021; Coşkun & Uçar, 2019; Danış & Nazlı, 2019; Polat & Lowndes, 2022; Yavçan & Memişoğlu, 2023). This narrow focus was perhaps understandable in the context of ongoing Syrian refugee arrivals. Over the years, however, the situation has changed significantly as Turkey's urban

refugee population settled long-term and non-citizen groups in cities diversified even more. Increasing numbers created pressure on metropolitan and district municipalities lacking capacity. Not all municipalities approached the migrant inclusion and refugee reception from an inclusive perspective, but the necessity of establishing a local migration policy has become an item in the political agenda of many municipalities (Koca et al., 2017; Erdoğan, 2017). Municipalities established their own ad hoc local responses, policies, methods and tools which did not follow a unified script, even contradicting one another. Building on such scholarly analysis of the municipal policies and practices in Turkey, this chapter contributes to the literature by analysing the IMM's policies and practices for all migrants and refugees, whether registered refugees, residence permit holders, or illegalised migrants. The chapter also aims to move the analysis away from the narrow focus on refugee reception that is present in the current literature on Istanbul—and Turkey in general.

Empirical data analysed in this chapter is drawn from three main sources. The first is desk research of the academic and grey literature of the IMM's policies on migration inclusion and refugee support. We examined policy statements, strategy, and action plans published by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality with a specific focus on two themes: the process of developing solidarity practices and policies in the city that address the needs of all migrant and refugee groups; and the IMM's perceptions and representations of its own engagement with migrant and refugee groups. Such an analysis not only provided us with an overview of the main institutional landscape of solidarity established by the IMM but allowed us to contrast it with the interviews that provided more detail about the everyday negotiation and implementation of the IMM's vision and policies on the ground. Second, in July and August 2023, we conducted two in-depth expert interviews with the former (2021–2023) (Interview #1) and then the current (2023-) (Interview #2) coordinators of the Directorate for Migration and Integration Policy (formerly the Migration Unit) to gain better insight into the IMM's response to refugees and migrants, its vision for the future, and its limitations. We coded the interviews thematically and identified the overlaps and changes over time, particularly regarding the IMM's efforts to establish structures within the highly polarised political context and how the municipality understands its limits and potential in implementing more inclusive frameworks. Both interviews were conducted in Turkish. All excerpts from the texts and interviews were translated into English by us. Third, Erhan Kurtarır has served as an advisory board member to the Migration Unit since its foundation in 2019 thereby closely following the establishment process. His insights into the particularities of this process and the internal workings of the Unit complemented the data we collected through document analysis and interviews.

In the next section, we briefly situate the case of Istanbul within the literature on solidarity cities. We then provide a brief background on Turkey's local administration system, highlighting the limitations that municipalities face in implementing migration policies and practices at the urban scale. Next, we focus on the institutionalisation of the IMM's Migration Directorate and its inclusive urban politics, analysing how the IMM envisions an inclusive future for the city, navigates the polarised and hierarchical political context, and negotiates the boundaries of

inclusion and exclusion at the urban scale. We conclude with a discussion on the factors shaping the IMM's abilities for structuring more inclusive city politics and briefly reflect on the applicability of the concept of solidarity city in this case.

10.2 Literature Review

The literature on local and urban regimes of migrant inclusion and refugee reception and on solidarity and sanctuary cities highlights a productive tension between local authorities such as municipalities or counties, and the national/federal governments that often (claim to) have a plenary power over immigration issues. Urban policies of solidarity and sanctuary challenge national level practices and policies on migration, refugee reception, and the nature of political and social membership categories (Bauder, 2017). Legal and social belongings and memberships are configured at the urban scale. Local authorities such as municipalities or city governments find creative and inclusive solutions within, and sometimes beyond, their legislative and administrative competence to legalise the presence of unauthorised migrants and asylum seekers, to protect them from deportation and detention practices of national governments, or to implement other policies creating a more inclusive and safer urban environment (Darling & Bauder, 2019; Bauder, 2017; de Graauw, 2014; Varsanyi, 2006).

The most studied cases of solidarity and sanctuary constructions at the local scale have been the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Further theorisation attempts were made focusing on other geographical contexts (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019a, b; Bauder & Gonzalez, 2018, Stefoni et al., Chap. 1, this volume; Jerena-Montiel et al., 2025, Chap. 8, volume 1; Koskimaki & Pazani, Chap. 4, this volume; Setrana et al., 2025, Chap. 9, volume 1). In contrast to geographical contexts where municipal authorities possess a degree of autonomy in migration issues like in federal countries such as the United States or Canada, municipal authorities in Turkey do not have any legislative and administrative competence to create their own migration policy or to design their own formal inclusive frameworks.

In one of the very few studies directly discussing the concept of sanctuary city in the Turkish case, Gülçin Balamir Coşkun and Aslı Yılmaz Uçar 2019) scrutinise whether district municipalities in Istanbul use sanctuary city policies and practices and highlight certain peculiarities of the Turkish case. This chapter builds on their analysis, extending it and broadening the focus from district municipalities to the IMM and highlighting the contingency of these concepts on geographical and political contexts.

Due to its hierarchical administrative structure, polarised political context, underdeveloped institutional capacity, and an unprecedented number of arrivals in a short period of time, Istanbul provides a significant case to question the limits of (institutional) solidarity regimes at the urban scale, in which the scale of the city plays a significant role in shaping formalised solidarity relations (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2021). By focusing explicitly on Istanbul, together with other

contributions in this edited book, we discuss the applicability of the solidarity city and related concepts such as sanctuary city and urban citizenship regimes (Bauböck, 2003, 2019; Varsanyi, 2006) in a novel geographic context.

10.3 The Case of Turkey

Turkey is a highly centralised state with a two-tier administration system at the local scale. The country is divided into 81 provinces, which are the main administrative units headed by governors who are appointed by the central authority. Provincial governorships, under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior, act as the main regulatory authority at the local level and do not possess any legislative competence to introduce new policies without the direct supervision of the central government. Parallel to this administrative structure, city municipalities are governed by elected mayors. Municipalities are the key local public administration institutions that provide services such as water, sanitation, and transportation but not police, education, or healthcare which are provided by the provincial governments under the supervision of the central government.

In terms of the organisation of migration governance at the provincial level, the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) is the responsible body operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior. Provincial branches of the PMM evaluate asylum applications, issue resident permits, operate removal centres, and implement and enforce migration policies at the provincial scale. The current migration and asylum legislation does not give municipalities any legislative authority to introduce their own policies and does not even impose a formal institutional responsibility to include non-citizens in their public services (Demiroglu, 2021, p. 973). Article 96 of Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) includes only a minor mention on the role of municipalities, indicating that they can only contribute to the work carried out under the coordination of the PMM (Bostancı & Durmaz, 2021; Çevik, 2021).

As other studies have highlighted (e.g. Çevik, 2021; Erdoğan, 2017), some municipalities try to eliminate the legal ambiguity of their activities for refugees and migrants by framing their activities in relation to the Article No. 13 of Law No. 5393 on Municipalities which states that ‘every person is a fellow citizen of the town where he/she resides, has the right to participate in decision making processes, and has rights to access services provided by local municipalities’. Similarly, some activist groups in Istanbul established their networks exactly on this principle and formulated their social inclusion framework as an urban one. For instance, *Mülteciyim Hemşerim!* (Refugee, We are, Neighbours!), a local solidarity network in Istanbul (active until around 2018) established long-lasting relations with two neighbourhood organisations on the outskirts of Istanbul. While trying to build a neighbourhood-based membership among residents and refugees, it also pushed the local municipalities and other authorities to take part. They based their legal argument on a document regulating municipal-level relations instead of national-level

immigration legislation and framed their efforts to include refugees, regardless of their registration status, as an example of a politics of presence (Darling, 2014, 2017). In the case of municipalities, while an argumentation based on Article 13 allows municipalities to include non-citizens in their service infrastructures, it has strong limitations in practice because Article No. 14 of the same law explicitly states that municipal services shall be provided to *citizens*.

In addition, municipalities in Turkey lack the financial means to design and provide services for non-residents of the city (Coşkun & Uçar, 2019; Demiroglu, 2021; Memişoğlu & Yavçan, 2022; Koca et al., 2017). Law No. 5779 specifies that 'allocations from the central administration to local governments are calculated on the basis of the population (referring only to citizens) and the scale of the municipal territories' (Coşkun & Uçar, 2019, p. 112). This way of allocating the budget significantly limits the scope of municipalities' activities, even if they are willing to create a more inclusive urban agenda for migrants and refugees. As a way to finance their activities, many municipalities 'seek external funding either through setting up their own NGOs or establishing partnerships with NGOs and international actors, thereby overcoming legal obscurities' (Memişoğlu & Yavçan, 2022, p. 513; see Danış & Nazlı 2019 for the case of Sultanbeyli District Municipality which excelled in this practice). Additionally, expenditures for non-citizens become a potential concern for municipalities when their budgets undergo annual audits by the Court of Accounts (*Sayıştay*, in Turkish), which deters municipalities to a certain extent from engaging in more inclusive migration politics. But as shown in the next section, municipalities also push their activities into a more invisible area to blend with existing services that are already offered to all residents of the city.

10.4 Institutionalisation of Solidarity by the IMM

The 2019 local elections in Istanbul marked the beginning of major changes. Since 1994, the ruling party AKP and its predecessors had governed the IMM. Until the election of the new mayor from the main opposition party CHP in 2019, the IMM had no institutionally defined migration policy and did not take a proactive approach on migrant and refugee inclusion (Memişoğlu & Yavçan, 2022, p. 513). Since the IMM and the central government were led by the same party, the previous IMM administrations did not go beyond the municipal jurisdiction of LFIP.

Institutionally the IMM set a new vision after 2019 and committed to a more inclusive, transparent, and democratic administration. This approach was also reflected in the area of migration, with the municipality's new vision emphasising that there is a place for migrants and refugees within an inclusive municipality approach. One of the key figures of the new administration, Şengül Altan Arslan who is the former Deputy Secretary General of the IMM (2019–2022), makes a direct connection between the IMM's changing migration policy and the establishment of the Migration Unit, which has an inclusive and human-centred service provision policy. The 'Just City' and 'Human Rights City for All' perspectives, which

are explicitly mentioned in the Strategy Plan 2020–2024, have supported the migration policy and services:

> Our work for migrants is based on the premise that Istanbul is a just city of human rights. We believe in the right of everyone who live in this city, especially vulnerable groups, to benefit from city services. (Altay, 2021)

Reflecting the change in IMM's stance regarding urban migration politics, the municipality decided to have a unit for migration and social cohesion. Its brief history of around 5 years shows clearly how the IMM's position, abilities, and strategies shifted. IMM's Migration Unit started its journey under the Directorate of Social Services in 2019, then became independent as the Directorate for Migration and Social Cohesion in 2021, but could not complete the formal establishment process due to political reasons and in mid-2013 was downgraded to a unit of the Office of Migration and Social Cohesion, again under the Directorate of Social Services.

Table 10.1 summarises roughly the phases of the migration unit's establishment and the triggering support mechanisms for these processes. In the inclusive policy development phase, after the 2019 local elections, the IMM set up its Migration Unit and started to outline its own migration and cohesion policy with the help of the new vision defined by the IMM's 2020–2024 Strategic Plan, which was the first support basis for inclusive policies and services. The topic of migration and refugees has been identified as one of the three critical problems of Istanbul by the

Table 10.1 IMM's migration unit development process

Time Period	Phases	Institutional Unit Name and Status	Main responsibility	Main Supporting Mechanisms and Documents
Before 2019	Lack of inclusive policy	No unit	No direct responsibility. Only supports the work of the Directorate of Migration Management.	Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP)
2019–2021	Inclusive policy development	Migration unit	Development of IMM's Migration Policy Framework; Preparation of IMM Migration and Social Cohesion Action Plan (2020–2024)	IMM 2020–2024 Strategic Plan. UNHCR support for the establishment of the migration unit
2021–2023	Inclusive policy implementation	Directorate for Migration and Social Cohesion	Implementation of the Action Plan on Migration and Social Cohesion (2020–2024)	IMM 2020–2024 Strategic Plan, IMM 2021–2024 Local Equality Action Plan (LEAP)
Since 2023	Strategic invisibility	Office of Migration and Social Cohesion Policy	Provides invisible support for ongoing project and services	National and local election agendas and shifting discourses created a policy of invisibility in immigrant support services.

participants of the Strategic Plan survey and workshops. Thereafter, the IMM began preparations for establishing a migration unit and held several local coordination meetings in 2020 to draft a local action plan. The municipality recognised its own limited capacity and initiated infrastructure development, fundraising, and capacity-building activities (Interview #2).

The Migration Unit first forged relationships with local, national, and international organisations to understand migration in Istanbul and to learn from the experience of peer institutions (Bostancı & Durmaz, 2021). UNHCR has been an essential partner in the process. During the second phase, the IMM developed its own action plans for migration, social cohesion, and local equality. The official establishment of the Directorate for Migration and Social Cohesion Policy was approved by the City Council in September 2021. However, in 2022 and 2023 migration policies and practices have been heavily affected by the exclusionary discourses that became the subject of both local and national politics in the context of the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections. Since then, as discussed below, the IMM administration has chosen to be strategically invisible to protect itself from political criticism and not to risk re-election in the March 2024 local elections, in which the incumbent mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu, remained in office with 51% of the vote. Comparing the situation before the election, we have not observed any major changes in the policies and the stance of the municipality.

10.4.1 Vision for an Inclusive City

With the outlining of the 2020–2024 Strategy Plan (IMM, 2020) and the Local Equality Action Plan (IMM, 2021) by the new municipal administration, the principles of a just city and inclusiveness have become central pillars of the municipality's vision. Both in the Strategy Plan and in the Migration and Social Cohesion Strategy Document and Action Plan (2020–2024), the IMM initiated a proactive stance towards migrant inclusion and refugee reception in the city. The Strategy Document and Action Plan was drafted but never published officially by the municipality (we obtained a copy from the Migration Unit; for a brief summary, see Bostancı, n.d.). The municipality had never been sufficiently involved in the field of migration in the past and lacked the institutional capacity and vision for an inclusive city. With the change in administration, it shifted from no policy to proactive solidarity and inclusive city practices. According to the new inclusive discourse, the IMM strived to fulfil the goal of seeing all residents of the city as equal and providing services to all in need regardless of their legal status:

> In line with 'Sharing Istanbul', one of the core values of the IMM Strategic Plan, we have taken action to produce data-driven policies on migration, which we see as one of the most important urban issues of the city…We ensure that local people benefit equally from all our work including migrants. Through vocational training, language training, daycare support, protection services, entrepreneurship consultancy, cooperatives and employment support,

> we strive to create self-sufficient individuals who contribute positively to the city's society. (Interview #2)

To create a more inclusive city politics, the Directorate has aimed to increase coordination among the district municipalities and establish inter-municipal cooperation for good governance; support the service capacity of all municipalities in the city; ensure data flow in the area of migration to enable data-driven policymaking and inclusive service delivery; and ensure human rights and gender equality to promote social cohesion in the city. This inclusive vision resulted in multiple new services and existing municipal services being made accessible to migrants and refugees:

> The aim is not to provide services for migrants and refugees from a single point, but to improve the capacity of services already provided within the municipality to include migrants and refugees in the city. (Interview #2)

As the first institutional attempt to establish the local migration service management model for Istanbul, the Directorate has positively influenced other actors. In addition to having direct influence on the vision of the IMM and on its strategic plan documents and activity reports, the Directorate provided trainings in inclusive municipalities and had an overarching impact on other departments of the municipality (Interview #1). As the current coordinator evaluates the achievements of the Directorate:

> The Directorate has been involved in the migration governance process within the IMM, has influenced the strategy plans, regulations, contracts, agreements and inter-institutional consensus texts prepared as much as possible since its establishment, and has ensured that these texts are prepared in an inclusive language that does not exclude migrants. (Interview #2)

More specifically, the Unit—and later, Directorate—has mobilised different departments of the IMM to offer multilingual services, especially in the Municipal 153 Call Centre and interpreter support in relevant service areas; establish a hotline with simultaneous language translation for migrants and refugees for the use of IMM and district municipalities; create mobile service teams increasing migrants' access to municipal services; make health counselling centre services for migrants more accessible; support migrant entrepreneurship; and create new places and events of encounter between migrants and host community of the city such as the Neighbourhood Houses (Interview #2).

While the IMM's policy papers and the strategic plans had an inclusive vision for the future, these documents framed asylum seekers and refugees as a challenge for the city that needs to be resolved. These documents never mention the rising numbers of illegalised migrants and refugees who are also current residents of the city. The city's 2050 Vision document (IMM, 2022a), which was announced in July 2022, surprisingly almost completely avoided the issue of migrant inclusion and refugee support (Interview #1). In the 2050 Vision, migration and asylum are thematised only very briefly in relation to labour market integration (p. 28), cultural diversity (pp. 243–244), and climate justice (p. 102). This mismatch between discourse and practice requires a closer look. The lack of inclusive policies regarding migrants and refugees in more recent documents does not automatically mean that

the IMM, particularly the Directorate for Migration and Cohesion Policy, has been completely absent or has given up on inclusive expansion of services. Rather, we argue, inclusive politics on the urban scale, within the highly polarised political atmosphere of Turkey, require significant negotiations and local actors continuing (or trying to continue) their inclusive activities without labelling them as such.

10.4.2 Navigating the Political Context

Turkey's administrative regime and polarised political context influences the IMM's abilities to create inclusive policies for migrants and refugees. The IMM and the Directorate have primarily navigated three tensions: the rivalry between central and local administrations; the polarised political context of 2024 local elections; and shrinking public support for inclusive politics at the national level.

First, the political rivalry between the IMM and the central government after the 2019 local elections. This rivalry, together with the hierarchical administration system favouring the central over the local level, shape the IMM's abilities. Municipalities and other local authorities constantly negotiate with the national level to be able to include all residents of the city in the urban solidarity structures. While some municipalities in Turkey (e.g. Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, Sultanbeyli District Municipality) have access to political power to establish hospitality infrastructures through their political affiliations with the governing party, many others clash with the central authority. As both former and current coordinators of the Directorate emphasised, the central government and its local branches like the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management refuse to cooperate with the municipality:

> While carrying out its work in the field of migration, IMM makes constant efforts to establish communication and coordination, especially with the Provincial Migration Management…we have requested communication with the central government at every stage…their reluctance to do so makes this communication impossible. (Interview #2)

The municipality's different political party affiliation is a direct exclusionary factor, which prevents the establishment of a holistic migrant inclusion and refugee reception policy for the city. For instance, the IMM has not been invited to the Istanbul migration coordination meetings organised by the Provincial Governorship (Interview #1). Furthermore, the central government does not share data on city's migrant and refugee populations with the municipality, hindering the IMM's planning and implementation of inclusive migration services. As highlighted by the former coordinator of the Directorate, the IMM does not exactly know the number or socio-economic profile of the city's non-citizen residents as all registrations are going through the central government (Interview #1). The lack of a municipal population register is a central issue limiting the IMM's planning abilities. Also, as Harald Bauder and Dayana Gonzalez (2018, p. 130), argued, the absence of

municipal registries significantly impacts the nature of local policies designed for the needs of (illegalised) migrants and refugees.

To have a more comprehensive picture, the IMM commissioned a study focusing on the Istanbul-wide migration survey (Doğan et al., 2021). This study was complemented with other research (on capacity analysis of district municipalities, interviews with urban refugees, focus group meetings with NGOs and other stakeholders, advisory board meetings) conducted directly by the Directorate to understand the current situation in Istanbul. The results were not publicised but were used for the Directorate's own capacity-building.

Secondly, the national and local election timeline correlates with the IMM's stance towards migrant inclusion. In the optimistic and progressive context of the post-2019 local elections, the IMM did not shy from establishing a department specifically for migration, creating policy and strategy plans and positioning this work in the framework of inclusiveness. This changed in the period preceding the presidential and parliamentary elections of May 2023. The discourse of some political parties openly shifted to opposing refugees and migrants. Most of the mayors omitted pro-refugee references from their speeches; municipalities replaced the terms 'refugee' or 'person under international protection' with 'migrant' in their publications or completely omitted them. The IMM's policy on migrants and refugees has been likewise affected by concerns about securing re-election in the March 2024 local elections. In the context of electoral politics, the municipal administration no longer put a strong emphasis publicly on migrant inclusion. This shift in the discourse had a significant impact on the visibility of the Directorate:

> Our visibility as a Directorate decreased, especially as the date of local elections is [was] getting closer, and we have [had] to try to carry out many activities without publicizing them. (Interview #2)

Lastly, and related to the previous point, changing the national discourse towards a strong anti-immigrant and anti-refugee environment affected the municipality's activities in the field of migration. Municipal services for migrants and refugees have moved towards using less visible methods. The Directorate's formal establishment has not been completed, and it was downgraded to the Office for Migration and Social Cohesion Policy operating under the Directorate of Social Services. This reluctance and the shifting political environment affected trust relations with donor organisations and undermined the reliability and image of the municipality's migration policy. For these reasons, some internationally funded migrant support projects could not be continued or new funding for municipal work could not be secured. External stakeholders' confidence in the organisation has suffered due to the negative changes in the country's politics that have also affected IMM's senior management.

Despite the rivalry between the central and local levels, polarised political context, and decreasing public support for inclusive politics, the Directorate continued to implement capacity-building and social cohesion activities in a more invisible way. It established Neighbourhood Houses and Istanbul Family Counselling and Training Centres (ISADEM) in line with the objectives of the Migration and Social

Cohesion Action Plan, began accepting migrant children into the municipal daycare centres, plans to publish an Inclusive City Map (*MahalliMap*) that compiles the urban public services of the IMM and ten district municipalities in Istanbul, and aims to announce the services and activities for migrants in the city to facilitate their access to services (IMM, 2022b).

10.4.3 Negotiating the Boundaries of Inclusion/Exclusion

While the national government may define the major parameters of the normative environment of migrant inclusion and refugee reception in Turkey, the city is the key scale where migration is governed in practice and where the boundaries and nature of (urban) membership are being negotiated and drawn. The mere presence in Istanbul of illegalised migrants, unregistered refugee populations, and refugees who lack a residency permit complicates the boundaries of membership and opens a field for negotiation. The city itself becomes one of the key locations where distinctions between inclusion and exclusion and legality and illegality are defined and negotiated.

Drawing on the literature on the city as a place of inclusion and exclusion, (e.g. Bauder, 2012, 2016, 2022; Darling, 2017; Lebuhn, 2022; Varsanyi, 2006), we argue that the IMM's policies have a double nature. On one hand, they draw the boundaries of legal presence by formally providing services only to registered non-citizen residents of the city. As a general rule, if a person has a valid legal residency status in Turkey, they have access to the IMM's services. In most cases, a national ID number for foreigners suffices to register for events and activities provided by the IMM. On the other hand, they negotiate illegalisation and exclusion practices of the central authority and create a more inclusive atmosphere for migrants and refugees in the city. In contrast to a more exclusive and province-dependent construction of the refugee status in Turkey, the IMM bends the boundaries of membership and includes refugees who are not registered in Istanbul to some of their social service provisions. While the central government's residency policy for refugees obliges refugees to reside in the province of registration and ties access to services to their continuing residency in the province (e.g. refugees have access to healthcare and education services only in the province of registration), the IMM disregards this principle in providing some services and expands the boundaries of the valid migrant and refugee status. It provides services to all who have a registration in Turkey:

> Without identification, it is not possible to provide assistance (except in extreme cases). Migrants without identity documents cannot be assisted through the IMM system. In order for refugees in Istanbul to be included in the IMM social services system, an identity registration number issued by the Turkish state is required. Exceptions have been made for registered persons living outside Istanbul, such as those who arrived in Istanbul after the earthquake [in southeast Turkey on February 20, 2023]…Urban refugees who wish to benefit from IMM's urban services other than material and cash assistance, but who are registered outside Istanbul, can benefit from these services if they reside in Istanbul. (Interview #2)

Regarding illegalised migrants, however, the IMM has no formal inclusion policy. Migrants gain access to certain services through face-to-face interactions with the front-line municipal staff who do not ask legal status. For example, as the non-registered migrants and refugees are residents of Istanbul, they are referred to other service points established under the leadership of the Migration Unit and can benefit from opportunities such as education, social support, and employment. The IMM uses the municipality's authority to provide services to urban residents to overcome the restrictions in the national legislation and offers self-developed service practices in line with the possibilities provided by the Municipality Law. Additionally, the IMM finds a way to circumvent national legislation and opens up the possibility of including illegalised migrants in social services. In particular, the newly established Neighbourhood Houses (*Mahalle Evleri*) have a policy of not asking the legal status of the person benefiting from the services (Interview #1). Some activities in the Neighbourhood Houses are designed specifically for migrants, indicatively, the Language Courses for Foreigners and Conversation Club for Migrants. Similarly, the IMM's local units, which provide services to disadvantaged families, do not ask for any official registration when an urban refugee family needs support.

10.5 Conclusion

Based on our analysis of the forces that shape the quality and the nature of inclusive city practices of the IMM, we argue that the inclusivity attempts of municipalities need to be strengthened through four axes: (1) institutional infrastructure and capacity, (2) legislative framework, (3) social and community support, and (4) political support.

First, institutional infrastructure and municipal capacity are key factors influencing the degree and the success of migrant inclusion and refugee reception at the urban scale. The IMM, until 2019, had very limited experience and knowledge about the coordination of services for international migrants and undocumented migrants. The municipality had no significant strategic plan regarding migrant inclusion and refugee reception. While the municipality possessed a strong service-providing capacity, resources were not utilised in an inclusive way. The municipality began engaging with the issues of international migrants and improving its coordination capacity to overcome city-specific migration-related issues after the local elections in June 2019 and the immediate establishment of the Migration Unit. Between 2019 and 2023, the IMM was able to mobilise different municipal departments and establish cooperations with other urban actors.

Second, the lack of a comprehensive legal infrastructure that guarantees and authorises municipalities to produce inclusive services for migrants limits the IMM's abilities. While the municipality has no legal competence to govern migration and refugee support at the scale of the city, legal ambiguities and the urgency of the situation provide an opportunity for the municipality to include refugees and migrants in its existing social support and solidarity structures.

Third, public support strongly influences the IMM's stance towards migrant inclusion and refugee reception in the city. In the polarised political context, the IMM's willingness to invest in inclusive migration politics becomes fragile as community support for such policies at the urban scale significantly decreases. Dwindling public support for more inclusive urban migration politics causes the IMM to reduce visible inclusive services, while the municipality maintains services without making the information public. And, finally, the rivalry between the governing party (AKP) and the party of the current mayor (CHP) influences the abilities of the municipality. To protect the opposition party from criticism during the May 2023 national elections and in the March 2024 local elections, the IMM pushed municipal activities in this field into a grey area and made them a relatively invisible sphere of service production. The central government, by choosing not to cooperate with the municipality, limits the IMM's planning and implementation abilities.

Regarding the applicability of solidarity city conceptualisation to the case of Istanbul, we share the observation of scholars who pointed out the distinctness of the Turkish case (Coşkun & Uçar, 2019). As we have argued above, the Turkish migration regime and administrative system do not allow local municipal authorities to create their own migration policy. Municipalities are not allowed to keep city population registries; nor may they allocate budget for activities for migrants or innovate in inclusive categories of urban membership, for instance by establishing local ID cards (de Graauw, 2014). Certainly, the Turkish case cannot be considered equal to cases from North America, where local authorities, despite challenges in practice, possess a certain amount of autonomy to create their own inclusive (or exclusionary) migration policy. The case of Istanbul, and Turkey more broadly, on the other hand, shows us that the central government's provincial branches executing migration policy have more power and resources than the elected municipal authorities. The lack of clearly defined tasks of municipal authorities in the field of migrant inclusion and refugee reception and executive power to implement urban and local migration policy distinguishes the case of Istanbul from other cases from the Global North, whose analysis has largely shaped the literature on solidarity and sanctuary cities.

While civil society organisations and solidarity initiatives find less space for their activities in the current political context, our research shows that the municipality has capacity to provide services in an inclusive way, while protecting itself from the central government. The IMM has pushed an inclusive agenda through strategies such as advertising and implementing an inclusive vision, navigating innovatively the restrictive administrative regime, and stretching the boundaries of inclusion at the urban scale. Whether IMM's solidarity practices can be labelled as solidarity city politics or not, we value the position of the IMM in the broader landscape of solidarity and inclusive city as it is a public institution that negotiates its position within a constrained, fragile, and polarised political context. Including such a perspective in the solidarity city literature that accounts for cities like Istanbul that strive to act in solidarity under circumstances that are severely constrained advances the ongoing debates regarding the meanings and practices of (institutional) solidarity in the contexts outside of the Global North.

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