BROAD-ER

Preliminary Report Synthesizing the Literature and the Fieldwork on Urban Politics and Autonomy-Building Processes of the Cities

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List of Abbreviations

ERA: European Research Area
IOM: International Organization for Migration
IMM: Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality
KU: Koç University
LFIP: Law on Foreigners and International Protection
PMM: Presidency of Migration Management
UCLG: United Cities and Local Governments
UPF: Universitat Pompeu Fabra
UvA: University of Amsterdam

Executive Summary

BROAD-ER (Bridging the Migration and Urban Studies) aims to establish a Research Excellence Network that promotes interdisciplinary research and training at the intersection of migration and urban studies. This project is a collaborative effort involving Koç University (KU) in Turkey, Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF) in Spain, and the University of Amsterdam (UvA) in the Netherlands. Its primary objective is to address the research deficit in the European Research Area (ERA) by introducing innovative and interdisciplinary methods while enhancing research and innovation capabilities in Turkey in emerging areas of migration and urban studies.

BROAD-ER's research activities are centred on three primary processes associated with cities' efforts to develop autonomy and decouple from national governments. Each partner is responsible for a specific theme: The KU team is tasked with the theme of City Diplomacy (Internationalisation of Cities), the UPF team is responsible for the theme of Establishing New Relations between the National and the Local and Increasing Autonomy from National Government, and the UvA team is assigned to the theme of Detachment from Formal Governance by Independent Actors.

In terms of research, we have previously submitted D. 5.1 Conceptual Papers Prepared by Each Partner on Different Themes, D. 5.2 State-of-the-art Report on Urban Politics and Autonomy-building Processes of the Cities, and D. 5.3 Reports of the Fieldwork. Additionally, we, as BROAD-ER postdoctoral researchers, organised a panel titled "Towards Urban Autonomy in Migration Governance? City Diplomacy, Municipalism, and DIY" during the BROAD-ER International Summer School, which took place at KU from July 17 to July 28, 2023. Furthermore, BROAD-ER postdoctoral and doctoral researchers, with Principal Investigators (PI) serving as chairs and discussants, submitted another panel for the 21st IMISCOE Conference scheduled for July 2-5, 2024, in Lisbon.

As a further step in our research, this document (D5.4 Preliminary Report Synthesizing the Literature and the Fieldwork on Urban Politics and Autonomy-building Processes of the Cities) entails our theoretical framework and findings from our fieldwork in three cities (Istanbul, Barcelona, Amsterdam), along with a discussion aimed at integrating the fieldwork findings with our theoretical framework.

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Introduction

This report combines our theoretical discussions on autonomy-building processes of cities with the empirical data we have gathered from fieldwork findings in three cities: Istanbul, Barcelona, and Amsterdam.

Our main questions are as follows:

- How and why do cities seek autonomy from formal or central governments regarding urban migration governance?

- What factors contribute to and diversify the role of cities in migration governance across various levels such as, local, national, and international?

- What contradictions and challenges are inherent in these processes?

Exploring these questions, the report is divided into three parts. Part I sets the foundation by presenting the theoretical framework and relevant literature. Part II delves into empirical evidence through the exploration of our individual fieldwork reports centred on Istanbul, Barcelona, and Amsterdam. These case studies offer nuanced insights, highlighting diverse practices, challenges, and nuances in urban migration governance within these distinct contexts. Part III consolidates our preliminary results and conclusions drawn from the fieldwork. It involves a discussion that aligns the findings from the state-of-the-art analysis with those derived from the fieldwork. Additionally, this section acknowledges the limitations encountered during the research process and offers an outlook on potential avenues for future research in the field.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

Cities have long been major destinations for immigration, and their importance will continue to increase, with currently more than half of the world's population living in urban areas—a number projected to reach 70% by 2050 (UNHCR, 2023). However, what is relatively new in academic discourse is the need to move beyond discussions solely centred on migration patterns in cities, which often reduce cities to mere locations, and instead, acknowledge the active role of cities in urban migration, recognising their agency not only at local or national but also at international and global levels. As a result, a body of research has emerged analysing attempts by cities to build autonomy in the context of urban migration governance (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019; Collingwood & O'Brien, 2019; Desille, 2022; Flamant & Lacroix, 2021; Furri, 2017; Kaufmann et al., 2022; Paquet, 2017; Ridgley, 2008). In particular, while migration is increasingly viewed as a multilevel policy issue involving diverse actors and government levels, authors who put forward the

argument of a "local turn" in migration studies emphasise that cities are "collective actors shaping the local governance of integration and diversity" (Zapata-Barrero et al., p. 17, see also Caponio & Borkert, 2010; Çağlar & Schiller, 2018; Schammann et al., 2021; Scholten & Penninx, 2016).

Accompanying this scholarly work, policy discourses have increasingly addressed the necessity to transcend nation-state-centred approaches that regard local authorities solely as policy followers or implementers (Bendel et al., 2019; Stürner et al., 2020). These discourses focus more on exploring "how ongoing mobility shapes the nature of political community, participation, and the bases of inclusion and marginalization" (Local Inclusion for Migrants and Refugees, 2020, p. 1). This shift has been notably sustained by international acknowledgment of cities' roles in migration governance and their contributions to global goals, especially in domains where intergovernmental cooperation encounters challenges (Stürner et al., 2020).

In our analysis of autonomy-building processes of cities concerning urban migration governance, we are informed by Pécoud's (2021) understanding of **migration governance**, which extends beyond nation-states, involving non-state actors across multiple scales and interacting with diverse global dynamics, including "global capitalism, multilateral regimes, or international norms" (p. 104). In doing so, we broaden the understanding of autonomy-building processes by and in cities, with a focus on **urban migration governance.** Our definition of urban migration governance encompasses the governance of migration and migration-related diversity at the city level, involving diverse actors from municipal governments to non-governmental organisations and private individuals. This includes the development and enforcement of migration-related regulations, as well as their contestation, given that autonomy-building processes can both align with and contradict national immigration policies. Furthermore, our definition acknowledges that cities comprise not only their local governments but also residents and local non-state actors, who are increasingly engaged in the local governance of migration in cooperation with, on behalf of, or in opposition to municipal governments.

1.2.1. Three Pathways to City Autonomy: Multiple, yet Interconnected

We have identified three pathways to the autonomy-building processes of cities in the context of urban migration governance (see Deliverables 5.1 and 5.2):

1) City diplomacy (internationalisation of cities);
2) Cities' autonomy from central government;
3) The detachment from formal governance by independent actors.

City diplomacy refers to "the institutions and processes by which cities, or local governments in general, engage in relations with actors on an international political stage

with the aim of representing themselves and their interests to one another" (van der Pluijm & Melissen, 2007, p. 6). **Cities' autonomy from central government** describes processes through which municipalities strive to act independently from national governments, for example by presenting themselves as either welcoming, or by implementing more exclusionary policies. **The detachment of local actors from municipal and national governments**, then, includes practices and processes implemented by local non-state actors ranging from residents organising themselves, to faith-based, labour or other non-state organisations.

We have argued that exploring these three processes has the potential to broaden perspectives by consolidating previous literature and introducing complexity to what is commonly understood as "local" in urban migration governance. In doing so, we have emphasised that these processes, while not uniquely distinct from one another, are novel and span multiple scales, and they may or may not be welcomed by central or municipal governments. In our analysis of the three pathways to city autonomy, therefore, we encourage a holistic understanding of their interconnections and the challenges they encounter or pose, rather than isolating them. In this regard, several key points underlie the three forms in question:

First, all three forms acknowledge the agency of cities in urban migration governance, involving not only local governments but also residents and non-state actors.

The phenomenon of "cities as agents" is increasingly recognised in migration and urban studies, as well as in the field of international relations. This emphasis on agency is not confined to the city's territory; it has expanded to the global level. For example, challenging the prevailing state-centrism of international relations scholarship, current work on city diplomacy focuses on cities as global actors with multiscalar agency (Acuto, 2013; Curtis, 2016; Davidson et al., 2019; Kosovac & Pejic, 2021). Scholars underline the importance of cities as agents rather than passive units in international affairs or subnational entities with limited reach (Acuto, 2010), actively engaging in the "architecture of world politics," and offering potential solutions to "international deadlocks" (Acuto and Rayner, 2016, p. 1148, 1150). Today, nation states are increasingly inadequate in addressing global challenges and diverse community needs while cities, operating beyond national interests, possess the capacity to establish networks that competing states cannot (Surmacz, 2018, p. 11). City governments, as the closest institutions to residents and key providers of essential services, can identify and address inequalities faced by newcomer populations, making them well-suited to develop and implement tailored policies for their needs (Kihlgren Grandi, 2020a, p. 138). Hence, cities are now involved in a broader spectrum of migration-related activities beyond local integration. These encompass global activities fostering cross-border connections between communities at different migration stages, including refugee resettlement, child protection, return and reintegration

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preparation, and diaspora contributions to development (Thouez, 2020, p. 655-656). Furthermore, cities' active involvement in global governance is both reflected in and bolstered by multilateral processes such as the Sustainable Development Goals, which target cities (Acuto et al., 2017, p. 15). Similarly, the recognition of cities within the United Nations system means that cities are seen "not just as places for action but as actors and partners in their own right" (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 16).

While recognizing the agency of cities in their pursuit of autonomy, it is equally important to perceive cities not as fixed, singular categories but as involving a variety of actors. Specifically, there is a tendency to narrow down the autonomy-building processes of cities to municipal governments and their action in relation to national or supra-national levels of governance. However, this approach creates significant knowledge gaps, overlooking the political reality where numerous non-governmental actors shape migration governance: associations, landlords and housing corporations, schools, faith-based organisations, actors in public/private transport, unions and other interest groups, and residents. These actors possess diverse—sometimes divergent—strategies, (social, cultural, symbolic) capital, tools, motives, and goals. Yet, they often react to national policies such as dispersal, leading to local and occasionally detached forms of governing migration in cities and smaller urban spaces (Kreichauf 2023, p. 350).

Second, there are broader underlying dynamics driving the emergence of these forms of autonomy building, such as economic and political decentralisation in the neoliberal era.

The rising emphasis on cities as policy agents is intertwined with the changing role of cities at the local level within neoliberal governance frameworks. As argued by Lacroix (2022), the growing autonomy of cities since the 1980s has emerged within a paradoxical setting. Despite the increased powers granted to local authorities, they often encounter financial constraints that impede their complete exercise of this authority at the local level. This phenomenon is not confined solely to Global North countries but also extends to Global South nations, where political decentralisation has not been accompanied by an equal degree of fiscal decentralisation (Lacroix, 2022, p. 1038).

This reconfiguration of the role and capacity of cities at the local level has resulted in a paradoxical trend where the weakening of cities' ability to intervene at the local level has been accompanied by their growing presence on the international scene (Lacroix, 2022; Lacroix & Spencer, 2022). In recent years, international and diplomatic bodies have recognised and underlined the growing role of cities in migration governance at national and global levels (Acuto et al., 2021, p. 5). Most particularly, European institutions have actively supported the development of local integration policies by fostering direct interaction between EU-level bodies and city-level authorities, as well as promoting collaboration among cities. The European Commission has played a key role in this regard

by advocating for city networks such as Cities for Local Integration Policies, Integrating Cities, and Intercultural Cities. These networks facilitate horizontal cooperation between cities, enabling the exchange of knowledge and best practices on local integration policies (Scholten & Penninx, 2016, p. 104; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017, p. 3). Additionally, recent action plans such as the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, and global initiatives such as the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR, 2018) and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM, 2018), point out the importance of multilevel governance that includes the local level in migration and integration processes. To support implementation efforts, a guidance report has been published to share best practices and outline steps for adopting the GCM and GCR in diverse contexts (Local Inclusion for Migrants and Refugees, 2020). Municipalities have also leveraged transnational networks such as Eurocities and Solidarity Cities to advocate for enhanced competences and resources, not only in integration but also in migration policies (Heimann et al., 2019). With these developments, from the early 2000s onwards, the relationship between cities and international organisations has evolved significantly, elevating cities to the status of "strategic partners," particularly in domains where intergovernmental cooperation encounters difficulties (Lacroix, 2022, p. 1039).

In this context, tied to the pressure to compete for capital and foster urban prosperity to stay competitive (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018, p. 6), municipal autonomy building becomes a critical pursuit. Municipal governments strive to autonomously navigate the challenges and opportunities of global transformative processes. However, they remain constrained by their inability to independently collect taxes, set budgets, or deviate from state-level legal frameworks. Consequently, they must strike a balance between collaborative, networked efforts and addressing immediate local needs to uphold economic vitality and global appeal (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 14).

This links back to the neoliberalisation of governance in which state responsibilities are increasingly delegated to local and private actors. As Kaya (2023, p. 12) argues in the case of migration governance in Turkey - and equally true for other geographical contexts -, "there is a "local turn" in terms of increasing responsibilities of local municipalities to integrate refugees … while the central state actors have gradually opted for withdrawing themselves from being engaged in integration of refugees at the local level" (Kaya, 2023, p. 12). We hence find concepts such as "co-construction" and "co-production" (Hombert, 2021) to explain how cities rely on non-governmental actors and/or outsource responsibilities to associations and residents' groups to set up and/or reshape their reception policies, in accordance with the increasingly implication of public actors in the field of neoliberal migration governance (Darling, 2016), "neoliberal bureaucracy" (Alberti, 2019) and "migration industry" (Gammeltoft-Hansen, Sorensen, 2013).

These processes pave the way for the detachment of local actors from formal governments. In the context of the devolution of (social) services and increasingly deregulated markets (Peck & Tickell 2007, p. 27), various forms of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) practices in urban settings emerge as "institutions are incapable or unwilling to address" a host of issues (del Pozo 2017, p. 432). In such settings, residents with and without migration backgrounds and local organisations develop strategies to cope, identify problems, and organise to find solutions (Cremaschi et al., 2020; Kinder, 2016; del Pozo, 2017).

Third, migration governance operates within a multilevel framework, blurring the boundaries between local and national levels and challenging the notion of a clear-cut dichotomy.

Recent work has explored how cities act simultaneously at the local, national and global levels, with empirical evidence on city networks such as Metropolis and the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (Bouteligier, 2012), United Cities and Local Governments (Gutierrez-Camps, 2013), global and regional sustainability-oriented networks (Keiner & Kim, 2007), institutional capacities of city networks engaging in international activities (Kosovac et al., 2021), and networking strategies of mayors as global actors (Beal & Pinson, 2014; Miyazaki, 2021; Stren & Friendly, 2019). In the field of migration, cities engage in multilevel governance through various forms, *horizontally* involving local authorities, civil society organisations, and immigrant networks, and *vertically* spanning different government levels (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017, p. 3). According to Lacroix (2020), the current landscape of migration city networks is characterised by two intersecting dynamics: a bottom-up dynamic involving relatively spontaneous city groupings and a top-down dynamic propelled by networks linked to international organisations and their representative bodies, operating at both national and transnational scales.

Recognising the multilevel structure of migration governance, however, it is important to avoid simplistic dichotomies of nation-state versus local levels and not replace methodological nationalism with methodological localism, as warned by Stürner-Siovitz (2023a, p. 18). Scholars engaging in governance analysis in migration and urban studies point out the existence of various modes of governance between different government levels in multilevel settings (Scholten, 2013; Scholten & Penninx, 2016; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). These modes may include cases where the local level is primarily implementing policies at the national level, as well as situations in which the national and local levels, or even the local levels among themselves, are disconnected in policy making (Ambrosini & Boccagni, 2015; Jørgensen, 2012; Scholten, 2013).

At the local scale, the engagement of municipal governments is shaped by various factors, including the evolution of migration flows, decision-making structures, and

governance systems (Zincone & Caponio, 2006, pp. 272-274). While some local governments adopt pragmatic approaches to address emerging integration challenges, others go beyond mere problem-solving, leveraging opportunities for policy innovation. This involves redefining integration and inclusion concepts (Jørgensen, 2012) and ultimately reshaping the practices of local citizenship regimes (Bousetta, 2001). Consequently, this may lead to governance decoupling, where policymaking strategies diverge significantly between national and local levels, as well as among cities within the same country (Ambrosini & Boccagni, 2015; Jørgensen, 2012; Scholten, 2013).

Furthermore, scholars such as Çağlar and Glick Schiller advocate for a shift from multilevel to multiscalar perspective that views cities "not as units of analysis or as bounded territorial units but as institutional political, economic, and cultural actors positioned within multiple institutionally structured scales of differentiated but connected domains of power" (2018, p. 9). As Sassen (2004, p. 660) argues, "an important feature of this type of multiscalar politics of the local is that it is not confined to moving through a set of nested scales from the local to the national to the international, but can directly access other such local actors whether in the same country or across borders."

Thus, both the multilevel perspective that considers the complex interrelationships between different levels of government, and the multiscalar perspective that goes beyond fixed notions of levels and analyses their mutual constitution in a context of power inequalities across multiple dimensions highlight the limitations of simplistic dichotomies between the nation-state and local government in understanding governance. In this regard, we understand the relationship between migrants and cities is mutually constitutive (Çağlar, 2016; Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2015, 2018, 2021; Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2009, 2011), with migrants actively involved in shaping urban life, inviting a close look at local processes, including autonomy building.

Finally, it is essential to acknowledge not only opportunities but also constraints faced by actors at the city level within multilevel governance arrangements.

While avoiding dualistic understandings of local versus national, it is important to recognise that autonomy building processes of cities take place "in a particular historical configuration in which states still possess huge legal, economic, social, and political power over localities" (Blank, 2006, p. 882). The tension between global capital and the territorial state system however has generated economic and political possibilities for local actors and spaces to take part in processes that were once exclusive to the formal authority of nation-states (Sassen, 2004). As Curtis and Acuto (2018, p. 9) point out, it is "the contingent interplay of political, economic, technological and demographic trends" that has created "new roles and capabilities for major cities," and it is in this context that cities have started

to "translate their new status and changing governance capabilities into political objectives". These processes are not without obstacles and risks.

In their international engagement, cities often face challenges such as limited funding, the need for participation in multilateral forums, and nationalist resistance from central governments (Davidson et al., 2019, p. 3546). In addition to these obstacles, Stürner-Siovitz's research also shows the potential risks associated with city diplomacy, such as a progressive city bias, inadequate municipal representation and accountability, and the proliferation of city networks and subsequent fragmentation of the city diplomacy landscape (2023a, p. 191). Furthermore, institutional limitations on city autonomy can be exacerbated by different government systems across countries. A case in point is Turkey, which follows a highly centralised unitary government system, where research reveals that district municipalities experience restricted administrative and financial capacities to address the requirements of immigrants and shape migration policies due to the heavy regulation imposed by the central government (Karakaya Polat & Lowndes, 2022; Lowndes & Karakaya Polat, 2022). Equally important, but less mentioned, is the internal political dynamics within specific institutional contexts of city diplomacy. As Caponio (2022, p. 399) suggests, city networks are "political arenas" where various actors, including mayors, councillors, city officers, urban policy experts, activists, and network officers, interact. Therefore, Caponio's (2022a) interviews with city network leaders caution against overemphasising the positive impacts of cities exerting global influence, as this may overlook power dynamics within city networks. These interviews reveal that the policy agendas of network leaders play a significant role in hindering or facilitating the scaling up of migration network governance and the development of multilevel migration policymaking.

Complexities also emerge in the processes of municipal autonomy building. Concepts such as "municipalism" (Agustin & Jorgensen, 2019; Flamant, 2022) and "policy entrepreneurship" (Garcés-Mascareñas & Gebhardt, 2020) are used to emphasise the increasing relevance of municipalities as both a scale and an actor in urban migration governance. However, scholarship also warns against the widespread idealisation of cities as "rebel cities" or "spaces of hope" (Harvey, 2000), which often centralises "urban resistance" against central governments in the realm migration governance (Furri, 2017; Mayer, 2018).

The governance of migration retains central regulation, affecting local actors who operate within regulations across various scales. While domains such as housing and labour experience extensive deregulation and liberalisation, migration remains entrenched in a multi-scalar governance framework. Here, integration and migration effects are governed locally, while immigration falls under (supra-)national jurisdiction (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). The enduring importance of national governments and their

often-national perspective on migration concerning social cohesion and national identity is criticised in scholarly literature as "methodological nationalism," as highlighted by Glick Schiller and Wimmer (2002). As Sassen (1996, p. 59) suggests,

> There is a growing consensus in the community of states to lift border controls for the flow of capital, information, and services and, more broadly, to further globalisation. But when it comes to immigrants and refugees [...] the national state claims all its old splendour in asserting its sovereign right to control its borders.

While much of the focus on urban migration governance revolves around migration governance *in* cities, it is important to note that the city is *produced* (Lefebvre, 1974) by neoliberal economic systems and "technocrats," as well as by how inhabitants perceive and shape both public and private spaces. This viewpoint prompts inquiries into the detachment of local actors from formal governance, encompassing local forms of collective organisation around migration-related issues, which may also involve the deliberate non-enforcement of regulations (Ferris, 2011). These practices involve diverse non-governmental perspectives, including local, national, and international activists, faith-based groups, migrant organisations, or unorganised residents, with or without migration backgrounds – all actively engaging in governing urban migration from grassroots levels

PART II: CASE STUDIES

2.1. City Diplomacy: The Case of Istanbul

2.1.1. The Context: Urban Migration Dynamics and Governance in Istanbul and Turkey

2.1.1.1. Migration Trends in Turkey

Based on the latest official data from the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM, 2023), Turkey currently hosts over 4.7 million foreign nationals (Figure 1). As of October 2023, 1,143,157 of them possess residence permits, while 3.5 million are seeking international protection. The majority of those seeking protection are Syrians under temporary protection status, with a population of 3,268,680, of which only 75,294 reside in camps. In 2022, there were also 33,246 international protection applicants in Turkey, primarily from Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Iraq. In addition to Syrians, according to UNHCR data, in 2022, there were 304,697 refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey, mostly from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Ukraine (IOM, 2023). Therefore, as Figure 1 also illustrates, Turkey hosts a diverse composition of international migrants, each entitled to different legal statuses.

Figure 1. Current distribution of the migrant population in Turkey
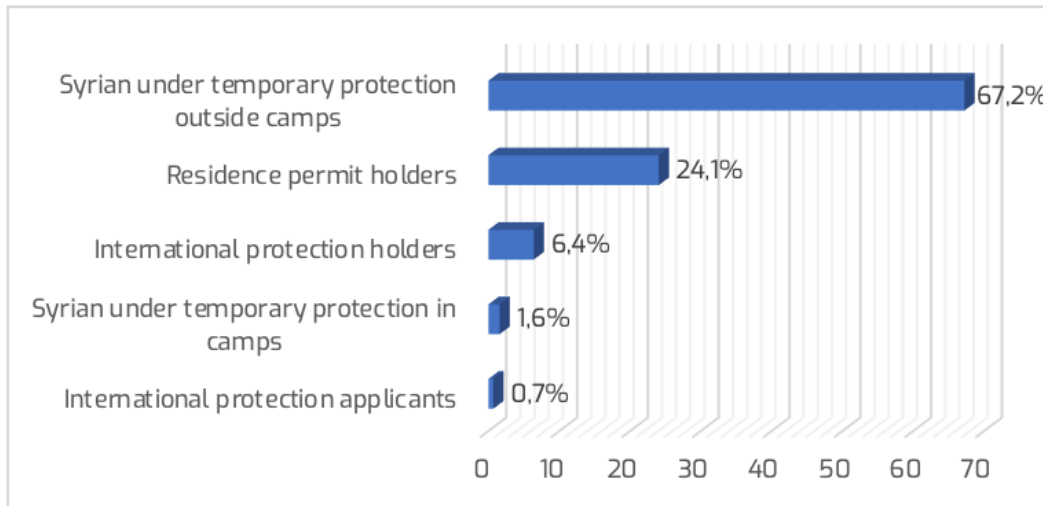
Source: PMM, 2023; IOM, 2023

Following the increasingly massive flows of Syrian refugees to Turkey after the onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011, a new temporary protection regulation came into force in Turkey in 2014. This regulation arranges conditions for lawful stay, social benefits and services, as well as work permits (İçduygu, 2015, p. 9). Currently, Syrian refugees under temporary protection constitute the largest migrant population in Turkey, making the country the host of the largest refugee population in the world. The figure below illustrates the patterns of this population from 2011 to the present day.

Figure 2. Number of Syrian refugees under temporary protection status, 2011-2023
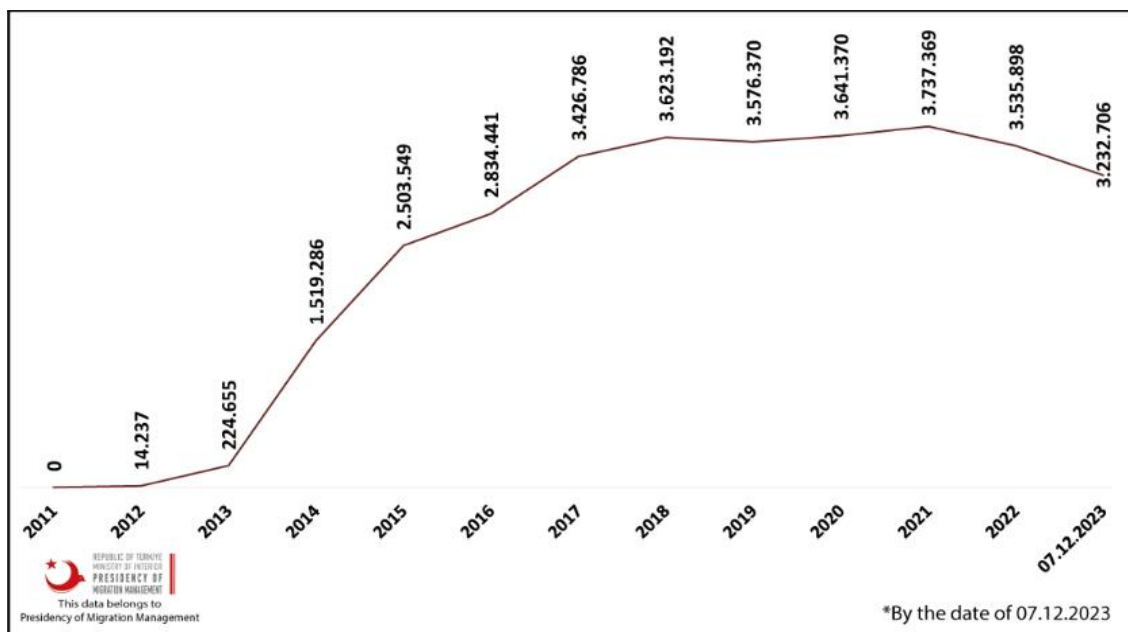
Source: Presidency of Migration Management, Statistics, https://en.goc.gov.tr/

2.1.1.2. Governance Structure in Turkey

It is worth noting that Turkey operates under a highly centralised unitary government system. In comparison to the central government, municipalities face constraints in terms of their administrative and financial capabilities for addressing immigrant needs and influencing migration policies. This is primarily due to the extensive regulation imposed by the central government. Figure 3 provides an overview of Turkey's administrative structure, which is divided into central and local administrations. In urban areas, both local authorities within the local administration (i.e., metropolitan, provincial, or district municipalities) and local government bodies authorised by the central government share responsibilities, albeit with varying levels of administrative power and authority, with the latter generally holding greater authority.

Figure 3. Administrative structure of Turkey
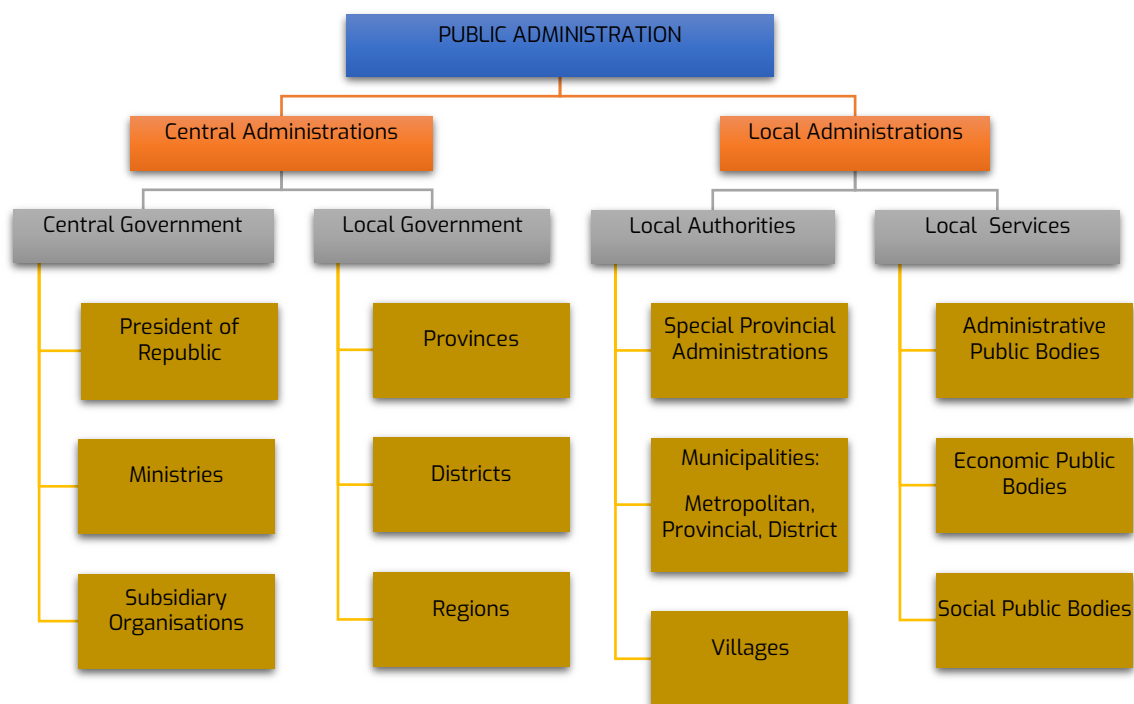
Source: Karabulut, 2022

In Turkey, under Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection, the Ministry of Interior Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), in collaboration with its provincial directorates across cities, operates the institutional processes for all migrant groups. This Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), which established the PMM, was enacted in 2013. In the context of Turkey's history marked by exclusionary and fragmented migration policies, the LFIP was regarded as a significant development (İçduygu, 2015). According to İçduygu and Aksel (2013, pp. 181-182), "this law introduces some landmark reforms that provide Turkey with a modern, efficient and fair

management system in line with core international and European standards. With the new law, Turkey commits itself to taking necessary steps towards integrating immigrants into the country and treating asylum seekers and irregular migrants according to international norms." Yet, the increasingly massive flows of Syrian refugees to Turkey's urban areas in the aftermath of the Syrian civil war in 2011 have resulted in an inconsistent, highly politicised migration policy path between international and domestic concerns. The government response to Syrian refugee flows, which began as an "open door policy" followed by regulations on temporary protection and work permits, has in recent years shifted towards intensified "return and safe zone discussions" (İçduygu & Aksel, 2022, p. 144).

Although migration legislation and policy are formulated by the national government, their implementation is largely carried out at the local level (Yükseker, 2021). This includes both local government authorities under central administration (Figure 5), such as provincial directories of migration management, provincial governorates, and district governorates, and local authorities under local administration (Figure 4), such as municipalities, as well as various civil society organisations and immigrant networks.

Figure 4. Key institutions and stakeholders in migration governance in Turkey
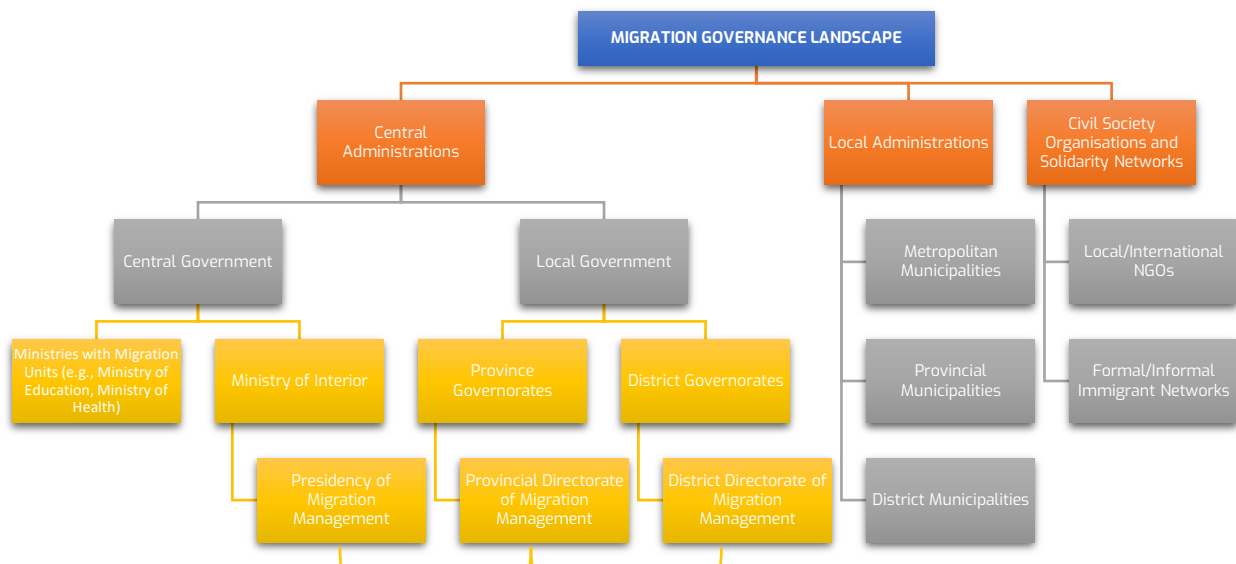
Turkey, currently hosting the world's largest refugee population, primarily in urban areas, has recently become a focal point for discussions on local refugee integration and the role of local actors and authorities in migration and integration governance (Erdoğan, 2017; Erdoğan et al., 2021; Kale & Erdoğan, 2019; Karakaya Polat & Lowndes, 2022;

Kılıçaslan, 2016; Kurtuluş et al., 2022; Lowndes & Karakaya Polat, 2022; Sunata & Tosun, 2019; Üstübici, 2022; Yükseker, 2021). This existing research reveals that the ambiguity surrounding national policies and legal competences, along with an increasing public hostility to refugees, have constrained the development of urban migration governance in a systematic manner, resulting in varying responses from local governments.

2.1.1.3. Legal Framework for Local Governance of Migration

There is no unified and clearly defined legal framework for local government responsibilities and duties concerning migrants of any status. However, there are legal or official documents that imply the role of local migration governance, particularly within municipalities.

- Municipal Law No. 5393, Article 13

"Everyone is a fellow citizen of the municipality in which they reside. Fellow citizens have the right to participate in municipal decisions and services, to be informed about municipal activities, and to benefit from municipal support... The Municipality undertakes all necessary efforts to improve the social and cultural relations among fellow citizens and protect cultural values" (Erdoğan et al., 2021, p. 78).

Though not explicitly clarified, municipalities can, based on this article, provide services for all residents within their administrative area in cities, regardless of native or migrant populations.

- Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection, Article 96

Although not specifically targeting local governments, this law mentions them under Article 96 (Harmonization):

"The Directorate General may, to the extent that Turkey's economic and financial capacity deems possible, plan for harmonization activities in order to facilitate mutual harmonization between foreigners, applicants and international protection beneficiaries and the society as well as to equip them with the knowledge and skills to be independently active in all areas of social life without the assistance of third persons in Turkey or in the country to which they are resettled or in their own country. For these purposes, the Directorate General may seek the suggestions and contributions of public institutions and agencies, local governments, non-governmental organisations, universities and international organisations" (LFIP, 2013).

Additionally, there are strategy and action plans highlighting the necessity of a greater role for local governments, especially concerning integration and harmonisation.

- 11th Development Plan of the Republic of Turkey (2019-2023)

Under the Rule of Law, Democratization, and Good Governance section, the Development Plan emphasises "Local Administration," stating that:

"The participation mechanisms of disadvantaged groups in the representation and decision-making processes of the local administrations will be strengthened, a certain amount of participation will be ensured in the city councils, and the needs of these groups will be taken into consideration more in the provision of local services such as public voting in important decisions to be taken" (PSB, 2019, p. 201).

- Harmonization Strategy and National Action Plan (2018-2023)

One of the aims of the Action Plan is to "adopt legal, administrative, and institutional regulations to strengthen the role of municipalities regarding social cohesion" (GDMM, 2018, p. 21).

- Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Migration and Social Cohesion Action Plan (2020-2024)

The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, as the first-tier local administration over second-tier (district) municipalities, has adopted a Migration and Social Cohesion Action Plan collaboratively prepared by district municipalities, national and international NGOs, international donor institutions, and academics. To implement the strategy effectively, a Migration Unit was established under the Directorate of Social Services, supported by UNHCR. The Unit works toward enhancing service quality and inclusiveness of municipal services within the strategy's framework (MSCAP, 2019).

2.1.1.4. Migration Trends and Governance in Istanbul

Istanbul, Turkey's largest city, comprises 39 districts and is home to a population of 15,907,951 people as of October 2023 (PMM, 2023). In addition, Istanbul is the residence of 532,018 out of the 3.2 million Syrian refugees under temporary protection, and 576,437 out of the 1.1 million foreign nationals holding residence permits in Turkey (PMM, 2023). While these figures represent official data, it is important to note that the official statistics are still limited, considering the presence of a significant number of irregular or unregistered migrants. According to IOM's baseline data (Figure 5), which is derived from fieldwork estimates of Istanbul's migration population, in 2019, there were 1,660,395 migrants in Istanbul (IOM, 2019, p. 4). Among them, the largest nationality groups were comprised of Syrian, Afghan, Uzbek, Turkmen, and Pakistani nationals (IOM, 2019, p. 4).

Figure 5. Distribution of migrant population by nationality in Istanbul
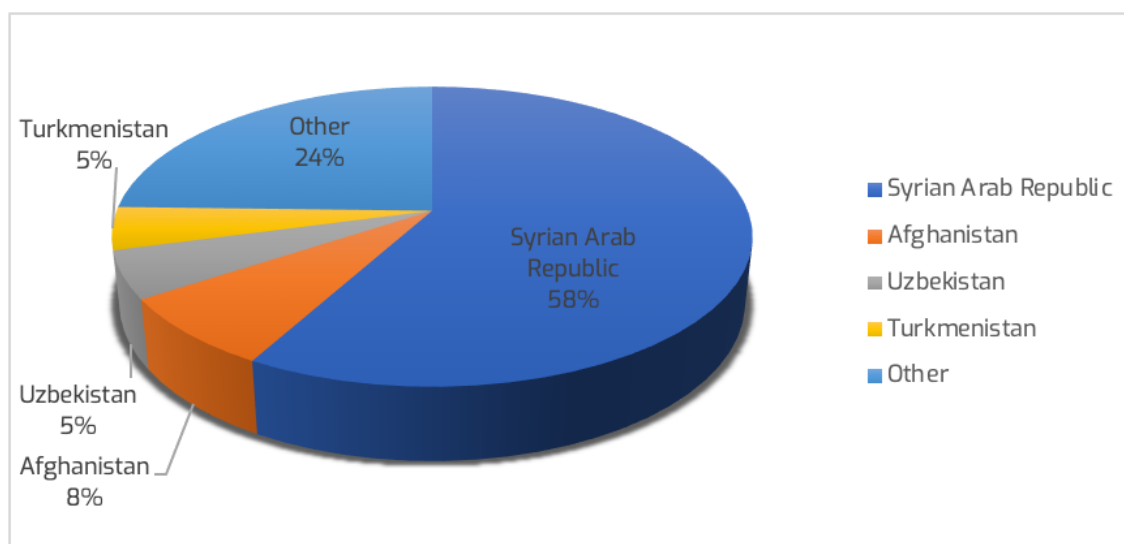
Source: IOM, 2019, p. 11

The table below (Table 1) further illustrates the distribution of the international migrant population across Istanbul's districts, based on IOM's fieldwork data in 2019. Among Istanbul's districts, Esenyurt, Fatih, Başakşehir, Bağcılar, Sultangazi, and Esenler harbour the largest international migrant population. Notably, districts with lower socioeconomic development host the highest number of refugees, while developed districts house very few refugees (Erdoğan et al., 2021, p. 141). While Syrian refugees constitute the largest group of international migrants in Istanbul's districts, other districts host the largest international migrant groups from various nationalities. Out of the total 39 districts, in 8 districts, Afghans are prominent in Adalar, Ataşehir, Üsküdar, and Beykoz; Uzbeks in Kadıköy and Maltepe; and Turkmens in Bakırköy and Beşiktaş, forming the most significant population groups within those districts (Erdoğan et al., 2021, p. 133).

Table 1. Districts in Istanbul by total population and international migrant population

District	Total population*	Migrant population**
Adalar	16.690	941
Arnavutköy	326.452	52.748
Ataşehir	423.127	17.189
Avcılar	452.132	48.323
Bağcılar	740.069	107.055
Bahçelievler	594.350	45.603
Bakırköy	226.685	8.130
Başakşehir	514.900	107.203
Bayrampaşa	275.314	34.840
Beşiktaş	175.190	5.571
Beykoz	247.875	15.338

Beylikdüzü	412.835	22.305
Beyoğlu	225.920	67.363
Büyükçekmece	277.181	11.710
Çatalca	77.468	974
Çekmeköy	296.066	5.257
Esenler	445.421	76.228
Esenyurt	983.571	214.205
Eyüpsultan	422.913	29.274
Fatih	368.227	182.440
Gaziosmanpaşa	495.998	51.613
Güngören	282.692	31.633
Kadıköy	483.064	22.566
Kağıthane	455.943	62.705
Kartal	483.418	9.271
Küçükçekmece	808.957	66.801
Maltepe	528.544	15.655
Pendik	750.435	22.109
Sancaktepe	489.848	19.219
Sarıyer	350.454	11.307
Şile	43.464	863
Silivri	217.163	5.834
Şişli	276.528	19.500
Sultanbeyli	358.201	31.924
Sultangazi	542.531	83.521
Tuzla	288.878	8.638
Ümraniye	732.379	26.652
Üsküdar	524.452	16.469
Zeytinburnu	292.616	65.699

* TURKSTAT (2022)

** IOM (2019) Migrants' Presence Monitoring in Istanbul Province Baseline Assessment Round II, May- July 2019

A recent fieldwork study conducted in the Beyoğlu district (Kurtuluş et. al., 2022) highlights that immigrants' access to public services and institutions is predominantly contingent upon their legal status. Individuals lacking temporary protection status or residence permits are the least likely to access these facilities. Specifically, Syrian refugees under temporary protection are permitted to reside in cities where they are registered. Registration serves as a prerequisite for accessing most public services in Istanbul and other cities. The prospects are notably bleaker for unregistered irregular migrants, particularly when striving to remain inconspicuous to avoid deportation. In such instances, civil society organisations or informal immigrant networks partially bridge this accessibility gap concerning public services and broader facets of integration, such as the labour market and housing.

In fact, due to the significant concentration of immigrant groups in specific urban areas, the Ministry of Interior recently implemented regulations concerning city residence. In 2019, the city of Istanbul ceased accepting residence applications from Syrian refugees under temporary protection. Furthermore, certain districts of Istanbul—Fatih and Esenyurt in January 2021, and subsequently Avcılar, Bahçelievler, Başakşehir, Bağcılar, Esenler, Küçükçekmece, Sultangazi, and Zeytinburnu in October 2022—stopped accepting new residence applications from Syrian refugees under temporary protection (PMM, 2023).

Istanbul's hosting of diverse categories of migrant populations not only complicates socioeconomic and demographic patterns within the city but also underscores the urgent need for local governments and actors to address the diverse needs and motivations of these groups. Given the centralised administrative structure of Turkey, frequent political tensions exist at the local level, both among district municipalities governed by different political parties and between district municipalities and governorates.

Currently, the main political parties in parliament include the Justice and Development Party (AKP) with 264 seats, the Republican People's Party (CHP) with 129 seats, People's Equality and Democracy Party (DEM) with 57 seats, Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) with 49 seats, Good Party (IP) with 38 seats, and Felicity Party (SP) with 20 seats (TBMM, 2023). The AKP, known for its religiously oriented centre-right stance, has held the majority in parliament since 2002, while the CHP, recognized for its centre-left position, has been the main opposition party. Similarly, at the local level, the majority of municipalities are represented by the AKP, followed by the CHP.

The AKP controls the majority of Istanbul's district municipalities compared to the CHP. Istanbul consists of 39 (second-tier) municipalities, with a metropolitan municipality overseeing their coordination. As indicated in Figure 6, out of the 39 district municipalities in Istanbul, 23 are governed by the AKP, 15 by the CHP, and 1 by the MHP, a party in coalition with the AKP. However, the mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) represents the CHP. Ekrem İmamoğlu, the mayor, was elected in the latest local elections in 2019. This marked a significant shift in Turkey's political history, as it was the first time since Istanbul became a metropolitan municipality in 1984 that a mayor from the CHP was elected. This result has become a significant source of political tension, particularly concerning the governance of Istanbul—the country's most populous city and a key contributor to the national economy.

According to the local administrations law, municipal councils, chaired by the mayor, serve as the main decision-making bodies of municipalities. These councils are composed of members from political parties, proportionate to their representation in local elections. Currently, the IMM council comprises members from various parties: AKP (174),

CHP (189), IP (12), MHP (4), and 1 independent member (IMM Open Data Portal, 2023). This array of party representation therefore makes decision-making processes within the IMM notably difficult.

Consequently, political tensions between opposing parties within district municipalities, between the metropolitan municipality and district municipalities, and between these local governments and the central government have made collaborative efforts increasingly challenging (For information about the internal administrative structure of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, please see IMM, 2023).

Figure 6. District municipalities in Istanbul by ruling political party

AKP*	CHP**	MHP***
Arnavutköy	Adalar	Silivri
Bağcılar	Ataşehir	
Bahçelievler	Avcılar	
Başakşehir	Bakırköy	
Bayrampaşa	Beşiktaş	
Beykoz	Beylikdüzü	
Beyoğlu	Büyükçekmece	
Çekmeköy	Çatalca	
Esenler	Esenyurt	
Eyüpsultan	Kadıköy	
Fatih	Kartal	
Gaziosmanpaşa	Küçükçekmece	
Güngören	Maltepe	
Kağıthane	Sarıyer	
Pendik	Şişli	
Sancaktepe		
Şile		
Sultanbeyli		
Sultangazi		
Tuzla		
Ümraniye		
Üsküdar		
Zeytinburnu		

*AKP: Justice and Development Party
**CHP: Republican People's Party
*** MHP: Nationalist Movement Party

In conclusion, Istanbul presents a highly challenging yet vital context for analysing urban migration governance. The administrative and financial capacities of local authorities, coupled with a substantial international immigrant population under various statuses, as well as intensified political tensions between government levels, significantly shape the city's context in establishing networks on the international stage.

2.1.2. The Fieldwork in Istanbul

Ethical Committee Approval:

Before commencing our research, we submitted our study for ethical review to the Koç University Committee on Human Research. On September 26, 2023, we obtained ethical approval with the protocol number 2023.263.IRB3.117 from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Following the approval, we initiated the process of reaching out to potential interviewees and scheduling interviews. In October 2023, we began conducting interviews with Koç University's BROAD-ER research team, which comprises postdoctoral and doctoral researchers.

Interviewee Profile:

We have conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 local actors in Istanbul. These local actors include:

- Municipal representatives
- Experts and academics
- Members of civil society organisations

We followed the inclusion criteria below:

- *Expertise and Relevance:* Participants must possess substantial expertise and experience in fields related to migration policies, urban development, or both. Their professional background should be directly applicable to the study's focus.

- *Representative Roles:* Individuals who hold positions as policy makers, practitioners, representatives of international organisations, or NGOs are included. These roles ensure a diverse representation of stakeholders involved in migration and urban contexts.

- *Influence:* Participants should wield influence within their respective domains, demonstrating the ability to affect decision-making processes or contribute significantly to their field.

- *Variety of Perspectives:* The sample encompasses a range of perspectives, including those from different sectors, disciplines, and approaches related to migration and urban dynamics.

Our selection of 12 interviewees represents valuable stakeholders deeply involved in urban and migration issues within Istanbul:

- **Three interviewees** were representatives from a **civil society organisation** in partnership with the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. This organisation specialises in urban planning and addresses a wide array of city concerns, including

migration. Each representative has expertise in various aspects of urban and/or migration topics.

- **Another interviewee** represented an **international civil society organisation** that collaborates with international and national NGOs, local and central government authorities, and municipalities. This interviewee has extensive experience in dealing with migrant and refugee populations in cities, particularly in Istanbul.

- **Five interviews** were conducted with representatives from the **Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality**. These interviewees cover a spectrum of expertise: one specialises in international city relations, two focus on urban migration policy, two address emergency urban issues such as earthquakes. One interviewee also brings substantial experience from civil society organisations, providing diverse perspectives.

- Furthermore, we interviewed **three experts and academics** renowned for their experience in various policy areas related to urban and migration topics. They possess a deep understanding of local and central government dynamics in Istanbul and Turkey.

Overall, our interviewees bring a multifaceted wealth of experience, combining civil society expertise, extensive research knowledge, government involvement, and fieldwork experience in urban and migration domains.

Access to Interviewees:

We initially reached out to interviewees using MiReKoc's contacts and expanded our connections through the interviewees' references using a snowballing approach. Our communication with them was primarily through phone calls or emails.

Duration:

The interviews varied in duration, typically lasting between 1 to 2 hours.

Location:

The interviews occurred at the premises of the participants' affiliated institutions, such as municipality offices, located across various districts in Istanbul. This choice of location aimed to provide participants with a familiar setting, fostering a more relaxed environment conducive to candid discussions and sharing experiences. If an interviewee could not be physically present, we conducted interviews through online meetings.

Privacy, Anonymity, and Consent:

As we interviewed public figures, we obtained explicit consent from them regarding audio recording during the interviews, clarified our data security protocols, and assured them of anonymity concerning their identities. For interviewees who declined recording, we resorted to taking detailed written notes and used pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. Given that our interviewees did not include any vulnerable populations, we secured verbal consent in person before each interview. During this process, we ensured the interviewees comprehended the goals of our research project and reiterated their right to withdraw from the interview at any point.

We have transcribed and securely stored the interview data in accordance with the data management protocol submitted to the EC.

Interview Questions:

Our interview questions aimed to uncover the perspectives of local actors, including municipal representatives, civil society members, experts, and academics, focusing on urban migration dynamics, migration governance, experiences in city diplomacy, and the challenges and opportunities they faced in striving for autonomy in migration governance.

As depicted in the table below, the questions were categorised into six main thematic sets, divided into primary and secondary groups. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, certain questions were omitted, modified, or elaborated upon based on the interviewee's responses.

Interview questions

Theme	Primary Questions	Secondary Questions
Introduction and Focus of Work	Could you please introduce yourself and tell us about your current position and role within your institution/organisation?	What specific areas of migration does your work focus on? (e.g., refugee resettlement, integration programs, policy advocacy, etc.)
		Could you provide some details about the scale of migration challenges your organisation typically deals with? (e.g., the number of migrants, types of migration issues faced, etc.)

Cities and Collaboration in Migration Governance	How do you perceive the role of cities in migration governance? How does your city or organisation collaborate with other stakeholders, both at the local and international levels, to address migration-related challenges? What are some of the key partnerships your city or organisation has established to enhance its impact in migration governance? How does this collaboration contribute to your city's migration governance efforts?	In addressing migration issues, do you find it necessary to engage with other cities, NGOs, or international organisations? In what ways does your city leverage partnerships with NGOs, corporations, and other cities to enhance its influence in migration governance?
City Diplomacy and Migration Dialogue	What role do you believe international city diplomacy plays in shaping migration governance at the local level? How does your city address power disparities, both internally and externally, while participating in international city diplomacy on migration issues? How does your city incorporate the perspectives and needs of migrants and refugees in its migration policies when negotiating these policies at the international level with other cities?	Can you share specific examples of how your city has engaged in international dialogue with other cities worldwide on migration-related issues? How does your city balance the pursuit of its interests in migration governance with the broader goals of international cooperation and solidarity? How do you measure the effectiveness of your city's engagement in international city diplomacy on migration?
Innovative Approaches and Best Practices	What are some of the innovative approaches your city or organisation has taken to address urban migration dynamics and foster positive outcomes for migrants and host communities? What impact have these innovative approaches had at the international level? How do these approaches influence the perspectives and practices of international stakeholders with whom you engage?	Could you share any success stories or best practices from other cities that have effectively managed urban migration dynamics through city diplomacy? How have these best practices influenced your migration policies at the national or local level?

City Autonomy Challenges in Migration Governance	In your opinion, how does the local context of your city influence its approach to migration governance, and what unique factors contribute to the city's success or challenges in this area?	What are the major funding sources or financial challenges your city or organisation encounters in its migration-related initiatives?
	How does your city coordinate its efforts with national governments in addressing migration-related challenges while striving for autonomy in migration governance?	Can you share any challenges your city has encountered in its engagement with other cities in migration diplomacy, and how have these challenges been addressed to enhance collaborative outcomes?
	What are the main challenges your city faces in engaging in diplomatic actions concerning migration?	Can you provide specific examples of strategies that have been implemented?
	What strategies has your city employed to mitigate the tensions and barriers that arise during city diplomacy activities on migration issues?	
Lessons Learned and Future Perspectives	What lessons have you learned from your city's engagement in international city diplomacy, and how have these lessons influenced your approach?	What do you perceive as the most pressing issues or gaps in current migration governance policies or practices, and how do you see them being addressed in the future?
	To play a more effective role in migration governance, what administrative or financial capabilities would your city require based on your experience so far?	Looking ahead, what areas do you believe require further research and exploration to better understand the role of cities in migration city diplomacy in this context?
	In your view, how do you envision the future role of cities in migration governance?	

2.1.3. Challenges Faced during Fieldwork

Our interviewees included public figures from municipalities, local and international non-governmental organisations, and research centres and universities. Reaching these interviewees was relatively easy due to MiReKoc's prestige and extensive networks among various stakeholders in the migration field in Istanbul. While most agreed to voice recording, some declined permission for recording interviews due to their institutional positions. In these instances, we relied on written notes for documentation.

Although interviewees were open to sharing experiences and ideas, they were cautious about aligning with a specific political view. This caution stems from the highly politicised nature of migration in Turkey, prevalent in public discourse and among political parties. Participants seemed to fear that expressing strong criticism or unwavering support for migration policy could align them with either the opposition or the ruling party, whether in government or municipalities. Therefore, they aimed to avoid representing a particular political view.

In line with this, interviewees were also careful when criticising specific political figures in parliament. To mitigate potential political risks, most avoided directly mentioning certain names. One interviewee even requested a pause in the recording when spelling out a name. Instead, they used phrases implying the political figures they discussed, avoiding direct naming.

While they were cautious, these reflexes, however, did not significantly prevent the interviewees from sharing their opinions and experiences in migration governance and city diplomacy. They remained open and expressed a willingness for us to contact them again if we had any further questions.

2.1.4. The Next Steps in Fieldwork

The KU research team, comprising three postdoctoral researchers and one doctoral researcher, is nearing completion of interviews in Istanbul. Based on the emerging trends and themes observed in our collected data, we have one specific concern remaining: ensuring equal representation of representatives from district municipalities governed by mayors from different political parties. To address this, we aimed to schedule interviews with district municipalities governed by the ruling party in the central government. However, due to the upcoming local elections scheduled for March, the district municipalities governed by the ruling party, which we contacted, were unavailable at that time. Nevertheless, they expressed willingness to participate in the interviews. We are currently in the process of finalising our interview schedule for the remaining few interviews.

2.1.5. Recap of Initial Fieldwork Observations in Istanbul

Our previous Deliverable (D5.3) "Reports of the Fieldwork" outlined our initial observations from Istanbul based on the emerging themes in the interviews, summarised below:

- Istanbul's practices of city diplomacy
  - Increasing international engagement
  - Participation in city networks

- o Influence of Istanbul's best practices
- o Influence of best practices from other cities
- o Role of the mayor
- Challenges faced by local actors
  - o Expertise
  - o Bureaucracy
  - o Political tensions
  - o Financial constraints
  - o Administrative limitations
  - o Legal framework inconsistencies
  - o Fragmented administrative structure of migration bodies
  - o Data unavailability
- Challenges in the international engagement of cities
  - o Need for action over rhetoric
  - o Need for direct funding mechanisms
  - o Lack of strategy
- Increasing complexity of migration in Istanbul
  - o Need for a comprehensive approach
  - o Need for a shift from project-based to long-term policies

In Part III, we further explore our findings, discussing and expanding upon the emerging themes discovered in the interviews.

2.2. Cities' Autonomy from Central Government: The Case of Barcelona

The growing recognition of the role cities play at the international level emerges from, and at the same time reinforces, cities' autonomy process in the field of urban governance of international migration. On the one hand, these local dynamics are taking place in a context of restrictive national migration policies. On the other, they take place in a context in which local actors and municipalities are increasingly willing - or feel obliged - to fill gaps left by central governments. The emergence of this gap has been caused by a lack of housing and accommodation, emergency-based migration governance and a lack of political will at national level (Vallois, 2019). Nation-states are perceived as failing in their reception obligations (in terms of accommodation, for example). In this double context, a relatively recent and rich body of research emerged to analyse the attempts to build autonomy of cities in terms of urban migration governance (Ridgley, 2008; Paquet, 2017; Furri, 2017; Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019; Collingwood, O'Brien, 2019; Flamant & Lacroix,

2021; Desille, 2022; Kaufmann et al., 2022). According to Oscar Garcia Agustin and Martin Bak Jorgensen (2019), cities are not necessarily inclusive or progressive. Between the hopes tied to, and the risk of idealising the city, the municipal autonomy-building process faced two main challenges.

First, the urban governance of migration by municipalities is constrained by their capacity to be resilient (Zapata-Barrero, 2023). Second, the autonomy-building process of cities is fragile. This fragility is linked to the pressure on housing, particularly in large-sized cities (Flamant, 2021), the excessive personalization of some local actors (Furri, 2017), ministerial reshuffles, partisan opposition at the local level, the dependence on available budgetary resources (Flamant, Lacroix, 2021) and, more generally, the variations in political orientations (Paquet, 2017). Barcelona, presented in many research papers as a 'city of refuge', is facing a great challenge: the low part of public housing (1,5-2% of the total housing market) constrains the municipality and local actors to accommodate refugees and asylum seekers when the central State doesn't fulfil its responsibility in this field.

The research aims to investigate local responses, negotiations and contradictions related to the accommodation of refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants in Barcelona, under the pressure on the housing market. This part of the report is dedicated to the analysis of autonomy-building processes in Barcelona, more specifically on the municipal autonomy-building process. The report draws out preliminary findings from the qualitative survey, started in 2023 with main local stakeholders working on the migration governance and the public housing topic. One of the main objectives is to bridge both of these fields, and to answer the following question: How could Barcelona (or couldn't) build an autonomous urban governance of international migration in the context of a lack of public and/or affordable housing? This question invites thinking beyond the municipality as an actor and to investigate the role of other local actors, such as housing landlords, architects, urban planners, and associations who are collaborating with or struggling against the municipal actions and discourses.

2.2.1. Contextual Background: Immigration and Asylum in Spain and Barcelona

Since the late 1980s, Spain has become a "country of immigration". This situation is linked to the country's entry into the EEC (European Economic Community) in 1986, then the free population movement within the European Union from 1993, and economic development. The number of foreigners rose from less than 200,000 in 1981 to 5.4 million forty years later, in 2021.

The areas along the Mediterranean coast concentrate the highest rates of foreign presence (Figure 7). Real estate, tourism and related sectors (catering, construction and

public works), as well as agriculture in the south of Spain, explain this strong foreign presence.

Figure 7. Map % of foreigners in Spain in 2021
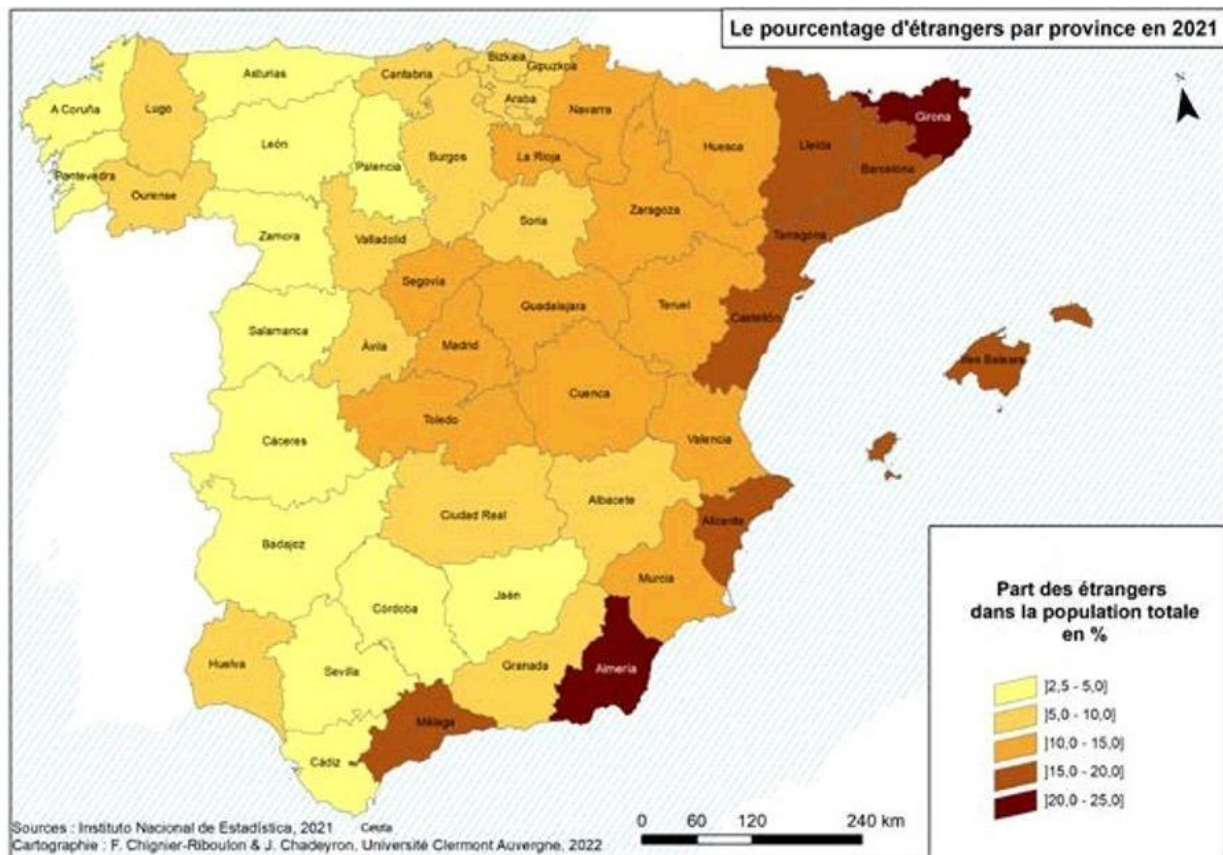
Source: Chignier-Riboulon, Chadeyron, 2022; INE data 2021.

In Catalonia, the four provinces record higher rates (Table 2) of foreign presence (an average of almost 17%) than the national average (12.67%). While the province of Barcelona has the largest number of foreigners (almost 900,000), the provinces of Girona and Lleida have the highest rates of foreign presence (over 21%).

Table 2. The distribution of foreigners within the 4 provinces of the Catalan region.

Territory	Barcelona	Girona	Lleida	Tarragona	Catalonia	Spain
Total population	5714730	786596	439727	822309	7763362	47428198
Foreigners	895770	169304	96517	157616	1319207	6008151
%foreigners	15,67	21,52	21,95	19,17	16,99	12,67

Source: Idescat, 2023

More than two-thirds of the Catalan region's foreign residents live in the province of Barcelona (Figure 8). It follows the general distribution of the regional population, with three-quarters of the population living in the province of Barcelona. 41% of foreigners in Catalonia come from European Union member states. Foreigners from African or South America take a smaller proportion, with 25% and 19% respectively of the region's foreign population. These proportions need to be moderated because of naturalisation campaigns. In 2019, more than 160,000 foreign nationals were naturalised in Spain, a third of them in Catalonia. People from Central and Latin America are the most affected, accounting for half in Catalonia (Figure 9).

Figure 8. Distribution of foreigners among Catalonia's four provinces

Figure 1. Distribution of foreigners among Catalonia's four provinces

- Barcelona 68%
- Girona 13%
- Lleida 7%
- Tarragona 12%
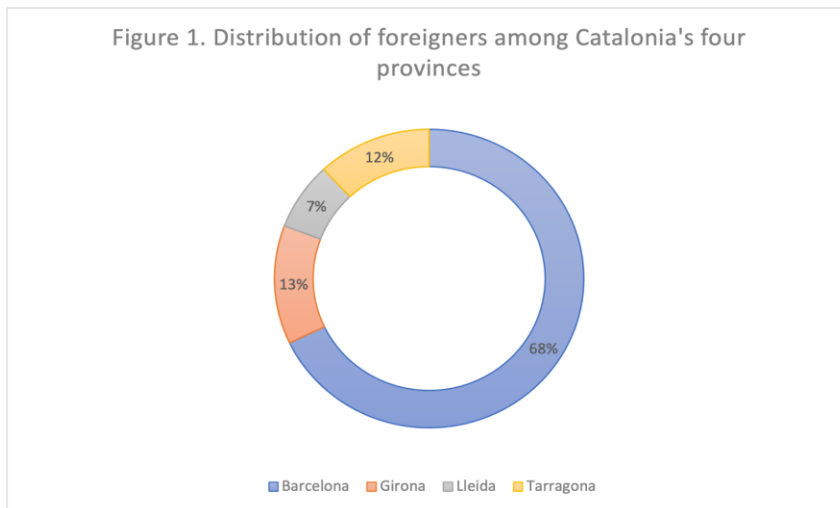
Source: Idescat, 2023

Figure 9. Spanish nationality grants in 2019 in Catalonia by the continent of previous nationality

Figure 2. Spanish nationality grants in 2019 in Catalonia. By the continent of previous nationality

- European Union 50%
- Rest of Europe 3%
- Africa 31%
- North America 2%
- South and Central America 4%
- Asia and Oceania 10%
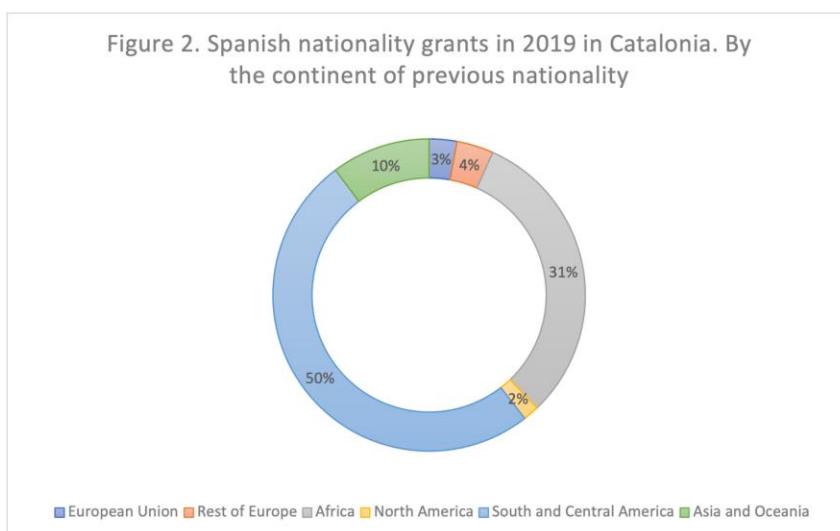
Source: Idescat 2023

The issue of asylum is not new to this southern European country, which is one of the gate countries to the EU. In 2015, during the so-called 'long summer of migration', asylum applications have increased in Spain, as in many European countries - +163% between 2014 and 2015 -, but these were initially very low: 5,615 people in 2014 for a country of over 46 million inhabitants. Since 2017 the application number changed: around 8,000 arrivals by land - through the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla - and a further 54,800 people by the western Mediterranean (UNHCR, 2019). According to the UNHCR, the new arrivals were mainly Moroccans, but also Guineans, Malians, Gambians, and Ivorians. However, asylum seekers in Spain in 2019 came mainly from Venezuela, Colombia, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The humanitarian situation in Venezuela is therefore the main driver of the sharp increase in asylum applications in Spain since 2018 (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Changes in the number of asylum applications in Spain between 2010 and 2019 (Eurostats data)
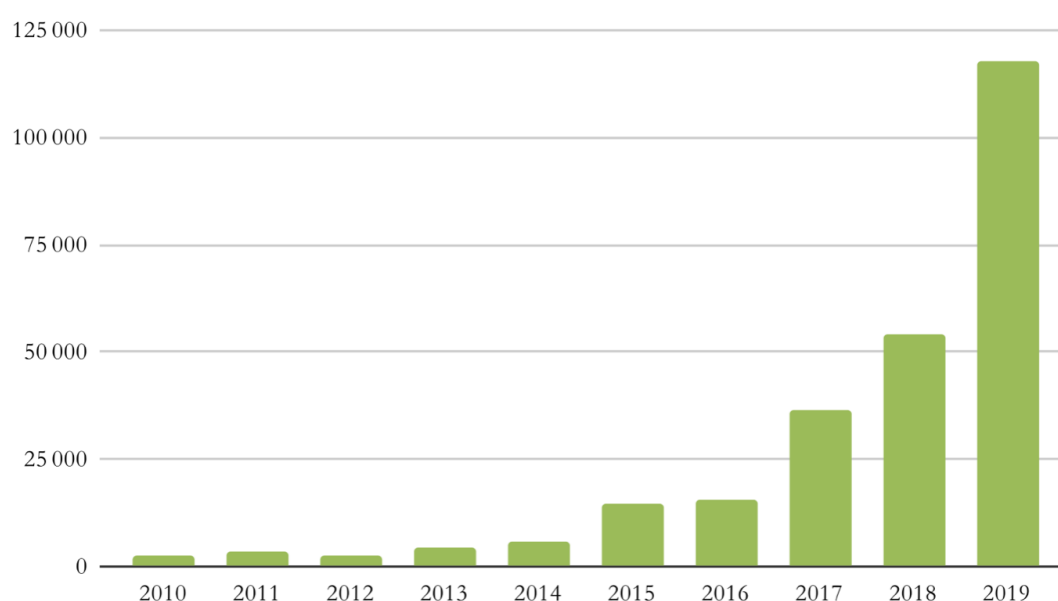
Source: Louise Hombert, 2022, p. 61

"As for asylum, the main national bodies responsible are **the Office for Asylum and Refuge** (Oficina de Asilo y Refugio, OAR), which directly depends on the Ministry of Home Affairs and is responsible for the evaluation of asylum applications, and the **General Directorate for the Reception System of International and Temporary Protection**, again under the State Secretary for Migrations and in charge of the international protection programmes and the reception centres. Another crucial characteristic of the Spanish asylum system (…) is **the central role that is played by third sector organisations**, which in this case are funded directly by the state (up to 2022 on an annual basis). Over time, the number of third-sector organisations working in this field has increased progressively, from just three NGOs that were involved in the 1990s, to ten in 2017 and then (very quickly)

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to 22 in 2019. The three major players within this system are Accem, CEAR and Spanish Red Cross (NIEM, 2018, 2020)." (Schweitzer et al., 2022, pp. 10-11)

The migration situation regarding asylum in Barcelona is following the same trend as in the rest of the country. Asylum applications have increased from 2016, and Barcelona became the second province to receive the most asylum applications in 2019, after Madrid (CEAR, 2020). The first step in applying for asylum in Barcelona is to go to the *Servicio de Atención a Inmigrantes, Emigrantes y Refugiados (SAIER)*, which officially registers the asylum application and enrols the applicant in the *Sistema Nacional de Acogida y Integración (SNAI)*. The national governmental program for asylum seekers and refuges. In five years, the number of asylum applications in Barcelona has risen from 811 in 2014 to 9,429 in 2019 (Figure 11).

Figure 11. The evolution of asylum applications in Barcelona between 2012 and 2019
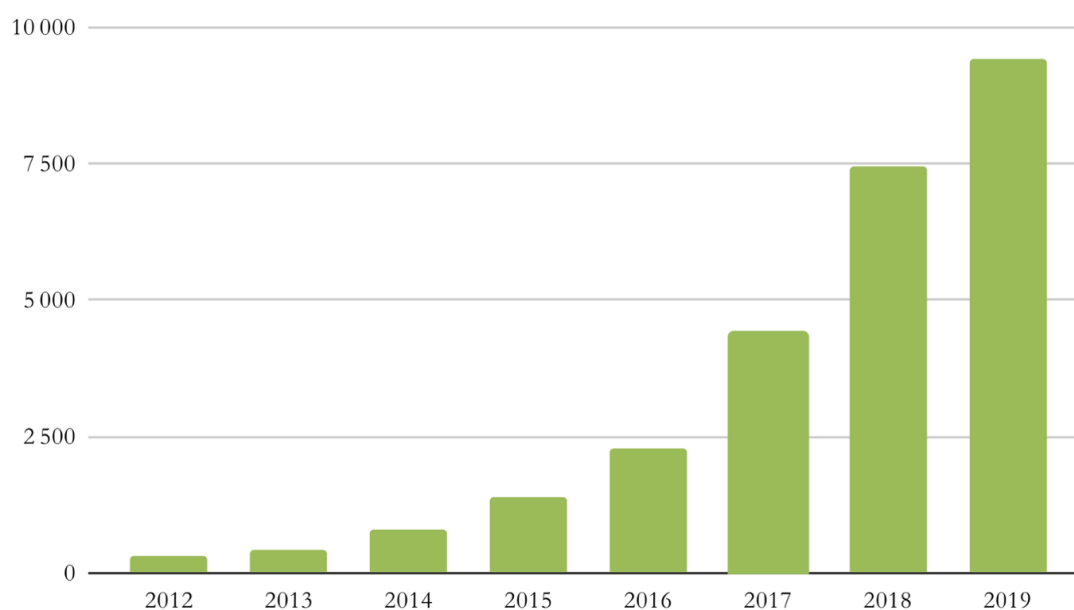
Source: Louise Hombert, 2022, p. 62

The local reception system is saturated and reception conditions are deteriorated. To get a place in a "municipal hostel" - *albergues municipales* - or emergency accommodation, applicants wait between 3 and 6 months. One of the notable consequences is the emergence - or rather the resurgence - of squats occupied by a predominantly migrant population, located right in the centre of Barcelona, such as the *Tancada Migrant* located close to the touristic place *Ramblas*. The administrative status of the inhabitants are heterogeneous: undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, rejected asylum seekers, or those who simply do not have the resources to live elsewhere.

These squats are part of the *Okupas* movement in Barcelona: many different types of building occupation, with a presence of immigrants. The situations of these occupations

change very quickly, as people are evicted from their homes. Based on her field surveys, Louise Hombert (2022) has mapped the *Okupas* movement in Barcelona (Figure 12). The election of a new mayor in Barcelona since 2023, consists of a risk for the existence of some squats, such as *Tancada Migrant*.

Figure 12. Map, Okupas movement in Barcelona from 2018 to 2021

Légende

◆ *Okupas* actives à l'été 2021
- Welcome Sense Sostre - Okupa Casa de Cadiz (Sagrada)
- Tancada Migrants (Escola Massana)
- Casa Africa n°4 (Gòtic)

● *Okupas* délogées/fermées
- Nova Usurpada (Gràcia)
- Casa Africa n°1 (Poblenou)
- Casa Africa n°2 (Glories)
- Okupa La Llotja (Gòtic)
- Casa Africa n°3 (Can Batlló)

▲ *Encierros*
- Parròquia del Sagrat Cor (Sant Martí)
- Casa de la Reconciliació de Can Serra (L'Hospitalet)
- Badalona

Source: Louise Hombert, 2022, p. 278

2.2.2. The Fieldwork

Ethical Committee Approval

- The research project is undergoing ethical approval from the CIREP at Pompeu Fabra University - Barcelona.

Research Design Details

Access to Interviewees: Public policies and Places

To carry out the fieldwork in Barcelona, we are focusing on two approaches: the analysis of public policies and the analysis of places.

As far as public policy is concerned, the two programs launched by the city of Barcelona - *Barcelona Ciutat Refugi* and *Nausica* - are central to analyse the concrete deployment of the political perspective of a 'city of refuge'. In particular, the Nausica program aims to provide accommodation for people in the asylum process (refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented migrants). We are focusing on the way in which municipal actors, and those involved in the production of public and private housing in Barcelona, negotiate the increase or the reduction of accommodation for newcomers. Two municipal departments - Department of Migration Affairs and Department of Housing - are the central actors in these urban negotiations. However, as highlighted in our state of the art, municipal actors in Barcelona faced a big challenge to ensure sustainable access of accommodation for migrants. The program *Opportunitat 500* was set up by the Catalan association *Micropobles*, in a partnership with the *Generalitat* (the Regional council of Catalonia), to relocate migrants from Catalonia's major cities, particularly Barcelona, to small municipalities in the Catalan countryside. Thus, 28 small municipalities have provided accommodation for 90 migrants, either alone or with their families.

Other actors, who are involved in the *Okupas* movement, are proposing alternative solutions. What negotiations are taking place between these local associative and militant actors and municipal authorities? To answer these questions, it is important to analyse the transformation of urban places.

Duration:

The interviews are scheduled to be conducted face-to-face, one-on-one, with an expected duration of approximately 1-2 hours.

Location:

The interviews are conducted in person. It occurred at the premises of the participants' affiliated institutions, such as municipality offices, urban planning offices, or

in some public spaces such as cafés and libraries. If an interviewee could not be physically present, we conducted interviews through online meetings.

<u>Interviewee Profile:</u>

To conduct our fieldwork, our approach is mainly qualitative. Nevertheless, we do a statistical and cartographic analysis. The aim is to analyse the socio-demographic and economic dynamics of the areas we choose. This enables us to grasp the diversity of our fieldwork and to understand how contemporary migration dynamics are reshaping the city of Barcelona and the small municipalities of the Catalan countryside.

Four types of actors have been identified: municipal actors, public and private housing landlords, associations and activists who are directly or indirectly linked to municipal actions, and migrants themselves. Three main methodological tools are used in our fieldwork.

Around 40 semi-structured interviews, lasting 1-2 hours, are planned with municipal actors in Barcelona and in small municipalities in the Catalan countryside. The aim of these interviews is to collect data on local institutional actions and discourses concerning the opportunities, challenges, conflicts, alliances, and negotiations surrounding the reception of newcomers.

Direct observations are planned with the associative and militant actors. The aim of these observations is to understand how places are created or transformed, as well as the role of negotiation with municipal actors.

Participatory and sensitive cartography workshops are planned with migrants. The aim of these workshops is to understand how newcomers are practising the arrival space. This enables us to understand how migrants can be fully-fledged actors in (or are rejected from) the autonomous urban governance of migration. Participatory and sensitive cartography gives the possibility to break away from the discursive face-to-face approach, inherent to narrative methods - and to understand the migrants' social and political aspirations.

These three tools are combined with the use of photography and urban walking to create a familiar space with visual reference points. More than just walking, the aim is to observe and interpret the elements that structure the space we cover. Walking, observing, and interpreting are the characteristics of the urban "*flaneur*"'s movement. (Nuvolati, Rivière, 2009).

<u>Privacy, Anonymity, and Consent:</u>

The researcher seeks active consent for the participation in the interview, the recording of it, and the transcription of the recording. As the interview participants include

vulnerable people, this consent is sought for verbally. This approach was chosen consciously and in line with ethical advisors at the CIREP, based on the potential risks written consent and paper traces can pose to vulnerable groups like immigrants.

To grant anonymity, all real names will be changed into pseudonyms unless participants actively wish to be named. Following the CIREP rules, names of localities will not be mentioned. Nevertheless, we will highlight the socio-demographic, economic and political characteristics.

Semi-structured Interview Questions:

The semi-structured interviews conducted with municipal and local associative actors, as well with housing landlords, follow four thematic blocks: the first block consists of an introductory section in which actors are asked to present themselves and their relation to Barcelona and to the public policies implemented at the local level. A second section dives deeper into Barcelona as a "city of refuge", including questions about the challenges the city is dealing with (housing access, for instance), how the socio-demographic, economic and political characteristics shape local solidarities, and how local actions and discourses attempt to reshape the city, by negotiating places. Block three includes questions that aim to bring forward a better understanding of the municipal autonomy-building processes taking place. Thus, we ask which role the local actors play in Barcelona and/or other municipalities, what challenges they are faced, and what other forms of local cooperation appeared to strengthen the urban resilience in terms of municipal autonomous governance of migration. The final closing part is interrogating the political issue of independence in the Catalan region and its relation to the urban autonomy of migration governance, issues they would be willing to introduce us to further interview participants, and to describe where they see Barcelona and their work in future, to obtain insights into the aspirational dimension of municipal action.

I. Introduction
1. Could you please introduce yourself and tell me about your relationship to Barcelona and to the program?
2. Could you present your organisation/program to me? What is your current position/role within your organisation? When?
3. How would you describe Barcelona as a "city of refuge"? What are your thoughts on that?
II. Barcelona as a "city of refuge": facts, challenges, opportunities, constraints.

1. Is your program/initiative open for migrants with a specific administrative status? Is it also open for non-migrants?

2. What kind of accommodation and other support did you provide for the newcomers? In which areas of the city? What role have the partner actors played in getting involved in the housing issue?

3. What urban opportunities have you considered to implement your program/initiative?

4. Chat are the main challenges you faced these last years, related to your program/initiative? How the urban characteristics could be opportunities or constraints for your work?

III. Municipal autonomy in the migration governance: Production of the city and Urban resilience

1. Many newcomers remain on the streets. What are your thoughts on that? What are the solutions?

2. Is there any discussion, within the mayor's office and/or with your associates and other partners, about the connection between the municipal housing policy and the tension over real estate in Barcelona, gentrification, segregation? If so, what are the main points highlighted in this discussion? When was it? with what material resources would you think to ensure your objectives? What are the results today?

3. Barcelona is part of several welcoming city networks. What potential models have attracted your attention in other cities?

4. There is also a coordination/network at the regional level. Are you familiar with the *Opportunitat 500* program? If so, what are your thoughts on this program? Have there been any discussions with the partners of this project? How can metropolises and small municipalities be linked?

IV. Concluding questions

1. How do you see the independence movement in Catalonia as a factor in the construction of urban autonomy in Barcelona?

2. How do you see the autonomy-building process in Barcelona? What are the impacts of the political change and local elections?

3. Would you like to add any other question, suggestion for our discussion?

2.2.3. Research Progress

Public Policy Analysis Progress

One of both ways to prepare and conduct our fieldwork is to analyse the public policy related to the topics of housing and migration governance. If the local migration policies, such as "Barcelona Ciutat Refugi" and "Nausica" received a great attention in several research papers, they were not linked to the housing strategy implemented at the metropolitan area of Barcelona. The main document we first analysed is the strategic plan of the right of housing in Barcelona 2016-2025. This strategic plan aims "to guarantee the social function of housing and advance the construction of a public housing service according to the best practices of other European cities." Other documents are also concerned by our analysis, such as the "Annual monitoring and evaluation report on the Barcelona 2030 Agenda (Voluntary Local Review 2021)", the "Public-private and public-community partnerships to increase affordable housing. How to achieve it through sustainable renovation and construction", and the document on "*Polítiques comparades d'habitatge*" (translation from Catalan to English: Comparative Housing policies).

The document analysis is still on-going. These documents are analysed by focusing on two points: how the public housing policy is integrating (or not) the immigration presence in Barcelona, the identification of the data on public housing as well as the prospective and the actual projects developed in Barcelona.

In parallel, local newspapers are analysed in relation to both topics of urban challenges (specifically related to housing) and immigration governance. This allowed us to identify the local debate on the urban autonomy on migration governance regarding the municipal policies (such as the eviction of urban squats and other local solidarity movements).

Interviewing progress

Three types of actors were identified, when we prepared our fieldwork regarding to our desk research: actors working on the urban governance of migration and/or the public housing (municipality, housing landlords, urban planners, architect; solidarity movements working in relation with the previous actors; immigrants who are considered as full-fledged actors who can act on seeking and achieving autonomy in urban migration governance in Barcelona. During the first stage, we are conducting semi-structured interviews with the two first types of actors. Six interviews were conducted, each lasting between 30 minutes and 2 hours. The previous director of the Immigration department at the municipality of Barcelona, the coordinator of the programme *Opportunitat 500* funded by the Catalan government, the Metropolitan Observatory on Housing in Barcelona, the previous advisor of the mayor of Barcelona working on the issue of gentrification, the

coordinator of the migration governance at the organisation UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments), and an activist working at *Emergencia Frontera*.

The snowball sampling applied during these six interviews resulted in additional potential interview participants. These were contacted immediately via email. Some interviews are already planned for January 2024.

2.2.4. The Next Steps in Fieldwork

The next steps in the fieldwork consist of the continuing active recruitment of interview participants, by extending the outreach methods via calls and visits at the offices of the several actors when possible. Furthermore, additional research participants proposed by our first interviewees will be contacted.

Besides interviewing, three different works will be conducted. First, we will extend our interviews outside the metropolis of Barcelona and understand the specific role and dynamics related to the autonomous migration governance in small municipalities located in the countryside of the Catalan region. Then, ethnographic observations will be conducted, especially in urban squats and during some public meetings on migration governance and Exiled people's accommodation in Barcelona. Finally, participatory, and sensitive cartography workshops will be organised by associating migrants to better understand how they practise the city, especially related to the issue of housing.

Possibilities for an additional case study were evaluated and exploratory research has been undertaken in France in order to introduce a perspective between Barcelona and Lyon, two cities claiming themselves as city of refuge, involving in welcoming city networks and representing an important urban area, outside the capitals, in their respective countries, but with the difference that Lyon has a higher public housing rate (26,1% in Lyon; around 2% in Barcelona).

2.3. The Detachment of Local Actors from Formal Governance: The Case of Amsterdam

Cities host increasingly 'superdiverse' (Vertovec, 2007) populations regarding race, class, sexual orientation, abilities, and lifestyles, and migration forms an important driver of this superdiversity (Scholten, 2018). As a result, governing urban life has become increasingly complex and we find what Phillimore et al. (2015) describe as blurred boundaries between formal and informal governance as well as the emergence of new actors in service provision (see Phillimore et al., 2015). So-called 'street-level bureaucrats' (Lipsky, 1980) composed of actors in the domain of public services including educators, social workers, but also planners, play an important role in the urban governance of migration-related issues, but they find themselves stuck between nation-state regulations and the expectations of residents.

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In the Netherlands, national migration policies have been increasingly assimilationist. At the municipal level, Amsterdam presents itself as a welcoming city while promoting high-skilled labour migration, as can be seen on the I Amsterdam Website: "The Amsterdam Area is a great place to live, work and study. With over 160 nationalities living here, […] the region has a lot to offer talent and businesses looking to help create a better world for all." (I Amsterdam, 2023)

The research aims to investigate arrival under such conditions and looks at the non-governmental actor landscape in Amsterdam, and how non-state actors (e.g., associations, unions, faith-based organisations, residents, newcomers, etc.) (co-)organise and shape and negotiate migration-related diversity in Amsterdam. A special focus will lie on the interrelated fields of **employment**, **civic participation**, and **housing** for migrant populations, notably refugees.

Local autonomy-building processes pave the way for the detachment of local actors from formal governments. In the context of the devolution of (social) services and increasingly deregulated markets (Peck & Tickell 2007, p. 27), various forms of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) practices in urban settings emerge as "institutions are incapable or unwilling to address" a host of issues (del Pozo 2017, p. 432). In such settings residents with and without migration backgrounds and local organisations develop strategies to cope, identify problems, and organise to find solutions (Kinder, 2016; del Pozo, 2017; Cremaschi et al., 2020).

The project aims at laying bare the arrival conditions and local actor constellations in the Dutch capital to investigate how non-governmental actors and migrants negotiate emplacement and belonging under local conditions strongly shaped by neoliberal urbanism. It critically illuminates the conditionalities of emplacement experiences in 'growth machines' (Molotch, 1976) such as Amsterdam, in which the effects of neoliberal restructuring (housing crisis, gentrification, displacement) play out with immediate effects.

This part of the report is dedicated to the analysis of autonomy-building processes in Amsterdam (NL), more specifically on the detachment from formal governance by local actors. Under the working title "Arrival Cities from Below: How Informal Practices and DIY Shape Arrival in Times of Neoliberal Urbanism," the report draws out preliminary findings from the analysis and the avenues for further research that emerged from them.

2.3.1. Contextual Background: Immigration and Asylum in the Netherlands

This first part provides the contextual background for studying local autonomy-building processes in Amsterdam. It will provide insights into immigration to the Netherlands over time, the country's main migrant groups, and where the country stands

with regards to the welcoming of refugees. A second part will look into the governance structure in the Netherlands with a focus on migration-related issues, to establish the specific role of the local level in Dutch migration governance.

A third part looks at the city of Amsterdam, its immigration history, and how the developments presented in part one and two play out locally there.

2.3.1.1. Immigration to the Netherlands: Increasing Diversity

The Netherlands has a long history of migration during which different processes have shaped immigration, including postcolonial migration, labour migration, and migration strongly shaped by globalisation. In terms of the demographic development of the country, immigration to the Netherlands has over the past years been the major driver for population growth. More than 150,000 immigrants have arrived each year since 2015, with more than 200,000 newcomers arriving annually since then.

While immigration in the 20th century was shaped strongly by newcomers from a small group of countries such as Turkey, Morocco, Suriname and the Dutch Caribbean, migrants increasingly come from various countries, leading to a sharp rise of diversity (Jennissen et al., 2023). According to Statistics Netherlands, 403,108 persons immigrated to the Netherlands in 2022. In January 2022, 15% of the population living in the Netherlands was born abroad, and another 12% had a migration background, meaning that they were born in the Netherlands but had either one or two parents who were born abroad (CBSa, 2023). The Dutch bureau of statistics, since February 2022, avoids the term migration background and places a stronger emphasis on 'origin' as category (CBSa, 2023).

Table 3. Immigration by migration background in 2022 (left)

Figure 13. Population of non-Dutch origin, 1 January 2022 (right)

Migration background	Immigration
Europe (excl. Netherlands)	257.522
Asia	69.642
Americas	30.709
Africa	24.993
Netherlands	18.692
Oceania	1.550
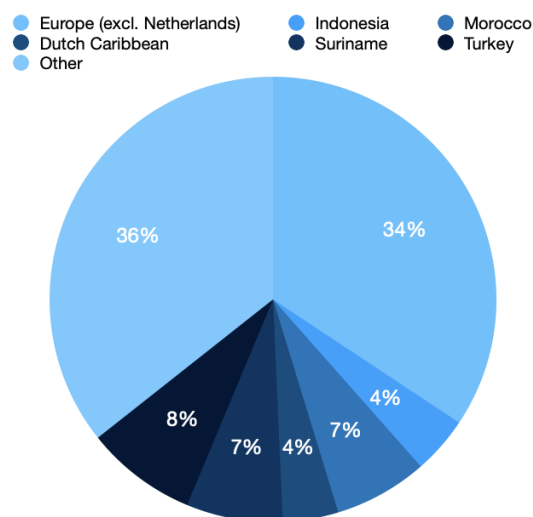
Source: CBS Netherlands (2023a), own representation

There are 17.6 million people residing in the Netherlands of which 2.5 million are migrants, representing 15% of the population in January 2022 (CBS, 2023a). Two thirds of the migrant population were of non-European background. Overall, people of Turkish descent build the largest group of migrants (205,000), followed by Surinamese (178,000) and Moroccan (173,000) migrants.

The most common motive for immigrants from the EU/EFTA to the Netherlands is labour with 38,860 immigrants moving to the Netherlands for work in 2021. For immigration from non-EU/EFTA countries, the most common motive for immigration to the Netherlands are family, with 29,615 individuals arriving in 2021, followed by asylum with 21,505 individuals from non-EU/EFTA countries.

Refugees in the Netherlands

Asylum seeker numbers have been evolving similar to other European countries since the early 1990s, with a rise in numbers in the early 1990s and 2000s, as well as following the Syrian revolution in 2014 (see fig. 14).

Figure 14. Asylum applications in the Netherlands (1990-2022)

Asylum applications in the Netherlands by type and year (1990-2022)
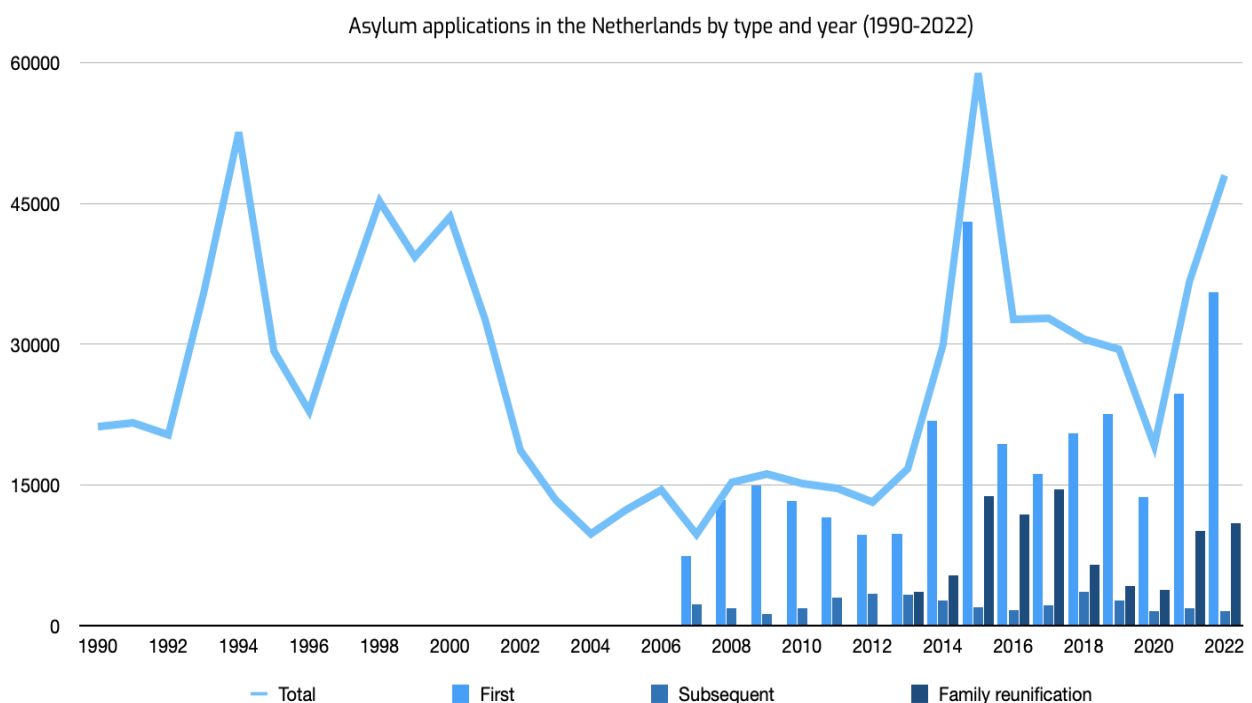
Source: Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland, online: https://shorturl.at/wyO78; own representation

A look into the recent years shows that numbers of asylum applications remained lower from 2015 to 2020, with only 13,720 first time applications in 2020, but a new rise in 2022 (see Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland, 2023).

Figure 15. Asylum applications in the Netherlands (2018-2023*)

Asylum seekers and following family members

First-time asylum applications
Following family members

Source: CBS, 2023; own representation; *estimates for the months January to August
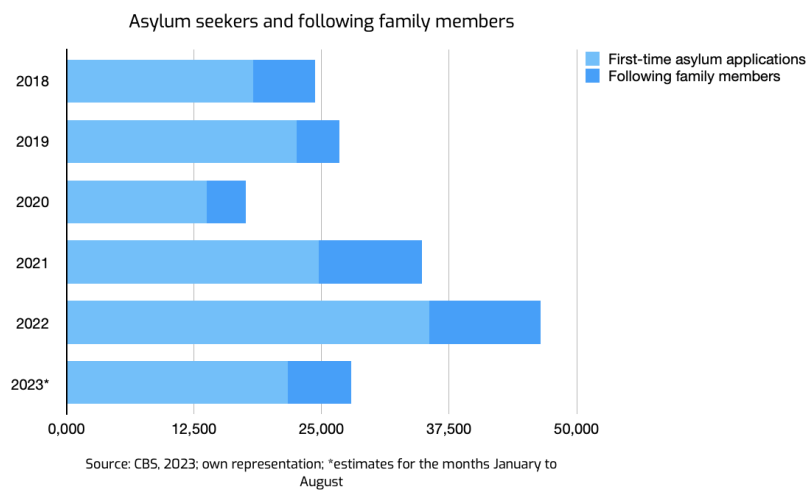
Source: CBS, 2023a

In August 2023, asylum seekers in the Netherlands were of mainly Syrian (46.7%) nationality, followed by Turkish (9.1%), Eritrean (5.7%), Yemeni (5.4%), and Somali (3.5%) nationalities. 26.7% of asylum seekers came from other countries (CBS, 2023b).

Figure 16. Refugees in the Netherlands, main nationalities, estimates for August 2023

Nationalities of asylum seekers and following family members, August 2023 (estimates)

- Syrian
- Turkish
- Eritrean
- Yemeni
- Somali
- Unknown
- Other

Source: CBS, 2023; own representation
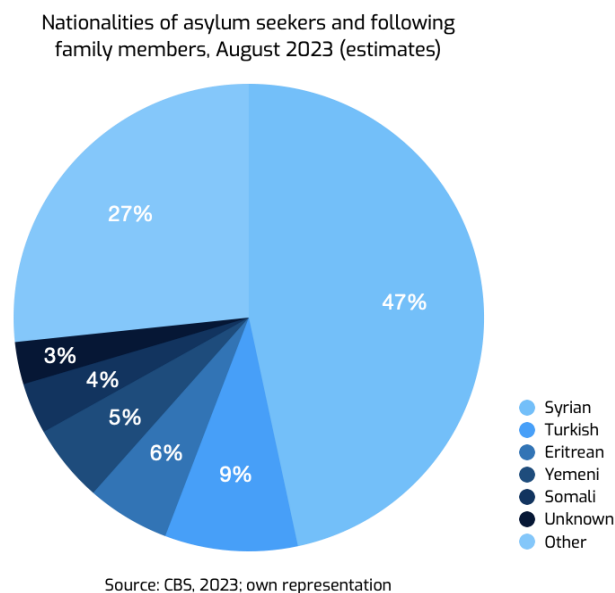
Source: CBS (2023b); own representation

Since March 2016, seeking asylum in the Netherlands follows a five-track system implemented by the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service IND (*Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst*), upon which refugees seeking asylum in the Netherlands are directed towards five possible procedures depending on their case. Individuals coming to the Netherlands from another EU Member State are directed towards Track 1, the Dublin

procedure. Track 2 is the procedure for individuals receiving protection in another Member State or coming from a so-called 'safe country of origin.' Track 3 and 5 are procedures for individuals who are deemed to constitute "manifestly well-founded cases" (Asylum Information Database, 2023) while Track 4 forms the regular asylum-seeking procedure.

Figure 17. Flow chart asylum seeking procedure in the Netherlands
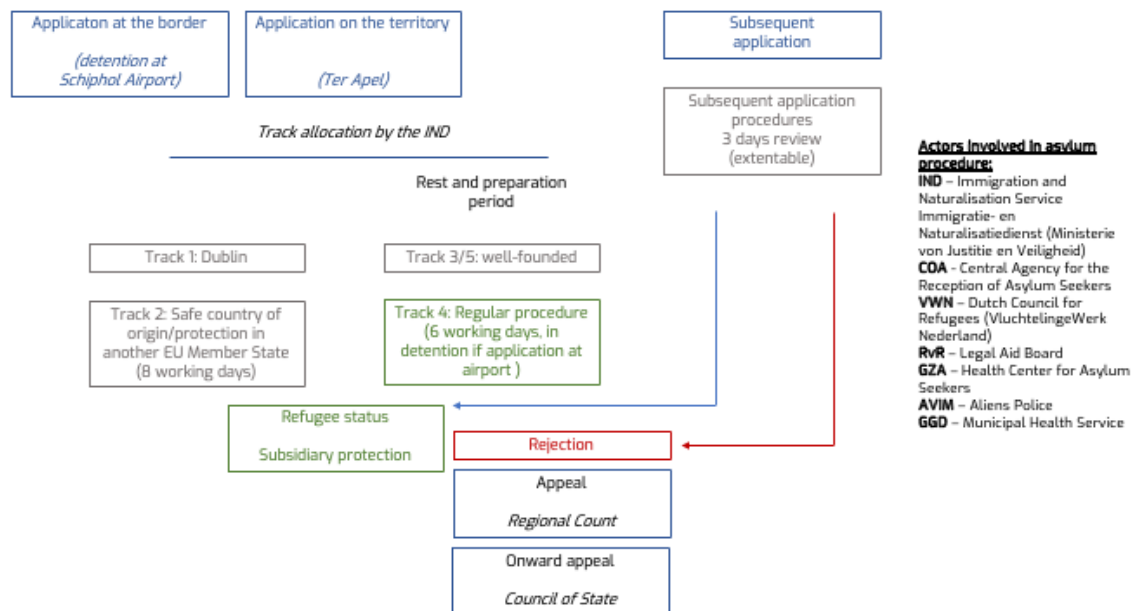
Source: VWN (2023), own representation

Important actors involved in the reception of asylum seekers are the IND, and the CAO, an independent administrative body that is supervised by the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security, and in charge of reception and accommodation.

2.3.1.2. Migration Governance in the Netherlands

As a decentralised state, the provinces (*provincies*) and municipalities (*gemeenten*) comprise two tiers of government with each their own responsibilities and competencies. The central and local governance levels are the strongest in the Netherlands.

Ongoing decentralisation processes have given lower levels of governance increasing responsibilities and competencies in the Netherlands. While the central government is responsible for themes concerning the Dutch society as a whole, provides guidance and cooperates with the regional and the local through a variety of government agencies. A number of work agreements (*bestuursakkoorden*) build the centrepiece of inter-level cooperation in the Netherlands, in which associations from regional and local levels are involved, including for example the Association of Netherlands Municipalities

(Vereinigung van Nederlandse Gemeenten, VNG). The latter is involved in every decision concerning municipalities, including "housing, employment, health, civic integration, participation." (OECD, 2018: n.p.)

These associations and their influence in negotiations concerning municipal matters provide the local level in the Netherlands with relatively large autonomy, despite having no legislative power. The ability to formulate regulation helps in autonomous action. Most importantly for our study, the municipal governments are responsible for the provision of public services, including social assistance which includes the reception of newcomers, urban planning, and housing.

Figure 18. Institutional landscape of the multi-level governance of integration-related policy sectors in the Netherlands
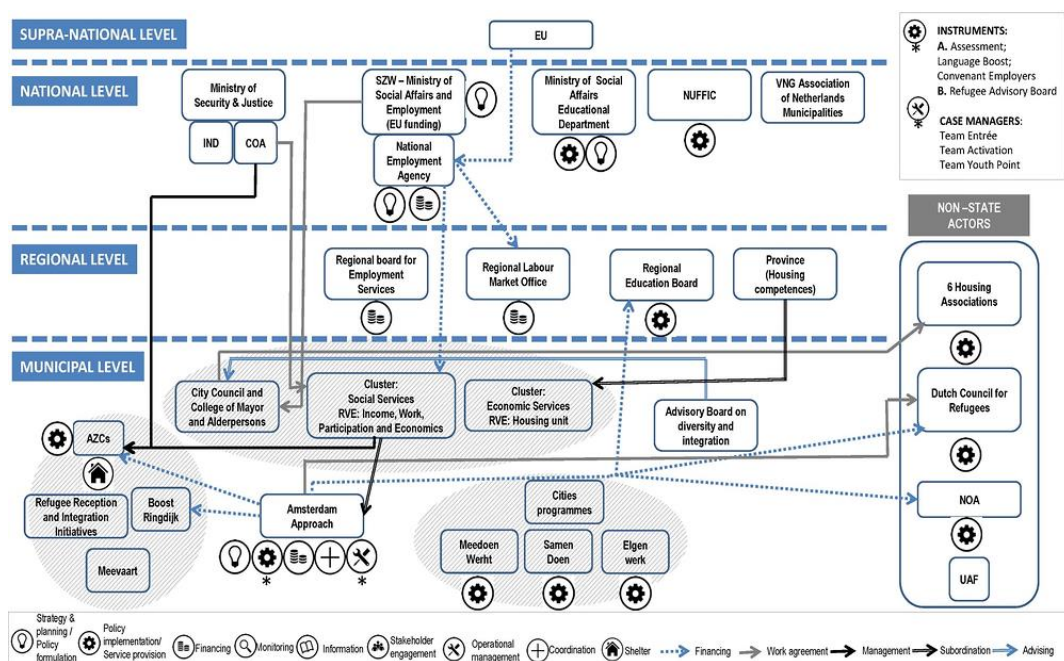
Source: OECD (2018)

Shift towards stricter citizenship criteria and an assimilationist model

Research has shown that both globalisation and increasing migration have led to the reformulation of citizenship criteria (Benhabib, 2004; Bloemraad et al., 2008; Jacobson, 1996; Sassen, 2006; Schinkel, 2009; Yuval Davis, 1999), which is also the case in the Netherlands. Like in other European countries, Dutch public discourse on migration is increasingly exclusionary. From a country which was said to have "institutionalized the acceptance of difference" (Etzinger, 2006, p. 1) to a largely assimilationist approach since the 1990s, newcomers who manage to arrive in the Netherlands are expected to "assimilate into Dutch culture and society" (Siebers & Dennissen, 2015, p. 474). The so-called civic-integration-contract forms an important basis for this assimilationist shift, via

which newcomers are expected not only to learn Dutch, but also to familiarise and adapt to Dutch values (van Houdt et al., 2011, p. 414).

However, these expectations do not apply to all migrants equally. A notable exception form so-called highly skilled migrants generally referred to as 'expats,' who benefit from national and local legislation favouring highly skilled immigration such as the 30%-ruling, allowing highly skilled immigrants to profit from tax benefits during their first five years in the Netherlands (Government of the Netherlands, 2023).

Recent literature has emphasised the institutional discrimination this two-tier system implies (see for example van Houdt et al., 2011; Bonjour & Duyvendak, 2018), as highly-skilled migrants not only benefit from above-mentioned benefits, but also from the urban transformations taking place in the city as on-going gentrification caters increasingly to high-income populations (Savini et al., 2016, p. 107).

2.3.1.3. Amsterdam as Arrival City: Immigration and Local Governance

The municipality of Amsterdam is located in the province of North Holland and is divided into seven city districts which carry out the tasks delegated to them by the municipal council. Concretely for our case, they carry out tasks related to the well-being of immigrants, housing and labour. (OECD, 2018) Amsterdam is well-represented in the VNG (OECD, 2018) and is member of the G4, a union formed with Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht. The union achieved the so-called Large Cities Policy (GSB) which permits these cities to decide how policy outcomes are achieved. For several years (2005-2009), the improvement of citizenship and integration was a main theme for the GSB. (OECD, 2018)

In Amsterdam, just like in Rotterdam and The Hague, more than 50% of the local population have a migration background resulting in the city being considered a majority-minority city in which no particular group forms the majority. As such, "[t]hese cities are faced with the task of facilitating the conviviality of very many different origin groups and of mitigating potential incompatibilities between them" (Jennissen et al. 2023, p. 53)

Arrivals in Amsterdam have increased over time with immigrants forming an important share of arrivals since the 1960s (CBS, 2023d).

Figure 19. Arrivals in Amsterdam, 1960-2022
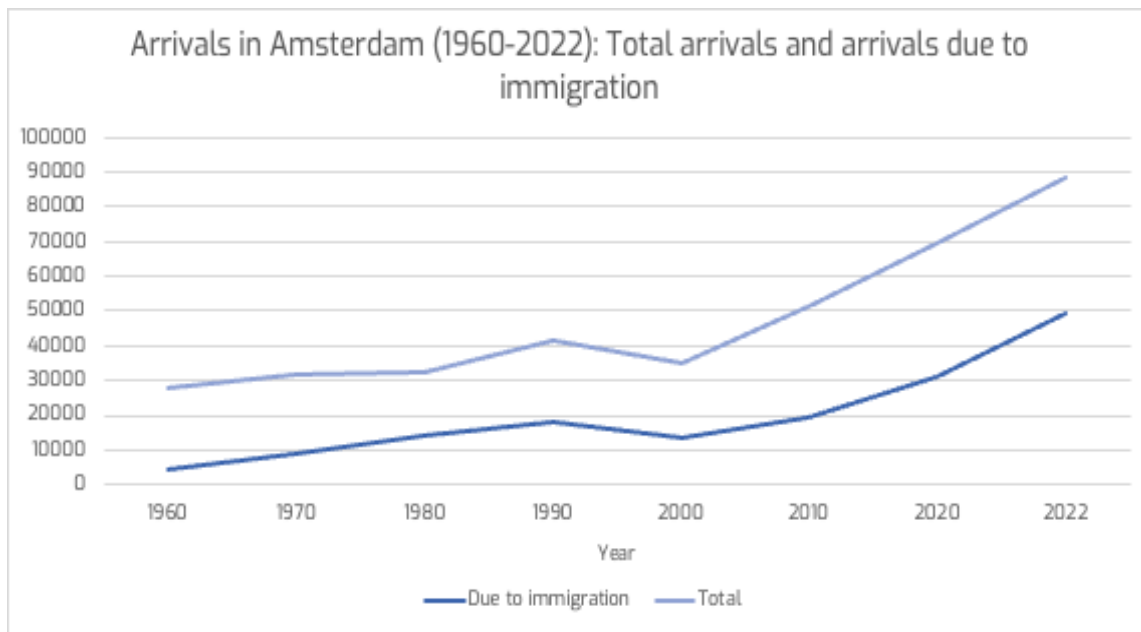
Source: CBS (2023d); own representation

The Dutch capital of Amsterdam is an important hub for the Dutch knowledge economy and hence well-embedded in global flows of migration, information, and knowledge. As such, it is also "well embedded in global networks" (Savini et al., 2016, p. 107).

It is thus not surprising that Amsterdam is particularly attractive for migrants seeking labour in said knowledge economy, rendering so-called 'Expats' an important group of migrants in the city, who according to Savini et al. form part of the socio-economic profile of Amsterdam with its growing numbers in young and highly educated households (2016, p. 107)

There were about 308,000 first generation immigrants living in Amsterdam in the year 2022, representing a rise of roughly 13,000 individuals in comparison to 2021. While the immigrant population in Amsterdam grew only slightly in the years between 1996 and 2007 with occasional drops like in 1997 or 2007, Figure 20 shows that numbers increased gradually from 2007 onwards.

Figure 20. First generation immigrants living in Amsterdam (1996-2022)
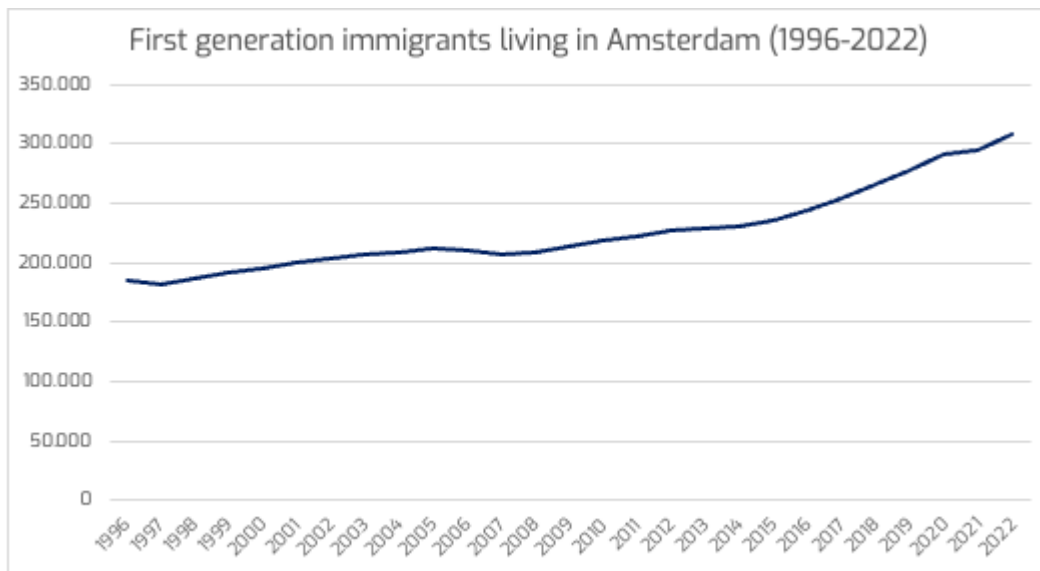
Source: Statista (2023) based on CBS, 2022; own representation

The most common migration backgrounds in Amsterdam are Moroccan, Surinamese, Turkish, Indonesian and German.

Figure 21. The most common migration backgrounds in Amsterdam
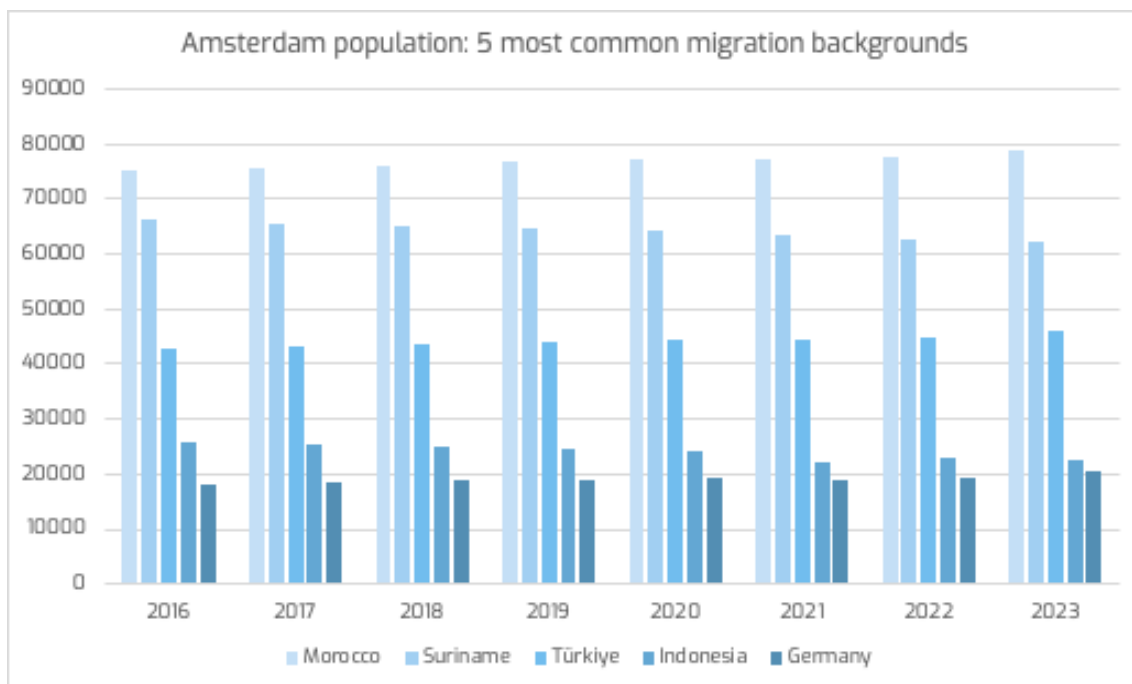
Source: Gemeente Amsterdam (2022), own representation

Local Governance: Urban and Diversity Policies in Amsterdam

Amsterdam is currently governed by a coalition of GreenLeft (*GroenLinks*), the Labour Party (*PvdA*) and liberals (*D66*), with Femke Halsema from GroenLinks as Mayor since 2018.

City council, the College of Mayors and Alderpersons, district committees and the administrative committee for Weesp form the local city government with the city council being composed of elected representatives and forming the highest government body. It decides over local policies and oversees whether the College of Mayor and Alderpersons correctly implement them. The latter carry responsibility for policy implementation, with Alderpersons being chosen by city council to handle their respective topics. The College of Mayors and Alderepersons elects three managing directors forming district committees for the seven city districts of Amsterdam (Centre, Nieuw-West, Noord, Oost, West, Zuid, Zuidoost). Each of these committees is supported by an advisory committee of a size dependent on the population size of the district. District committees form the link between districts and Amsterdam City Hall, dealing with various neighbourhood issues.

The coalition agreement for Amsterdam agreed on in 2022 by the governing parties is the Amsterdams Akkoord (Amsterdams Akkoord, 2022) and focuses on solidarity, sustainability, responsible growth with regards to housing, and safety (Amsterdams Akkoord, 2022). Further, the city has a diversity policy that puts forward the important role immigration and cultural diversity have played over the city's history (City of Amsterdam, Diversity Policy, 2023)[1].

As the contextualisation showed, the city's neighbourhoods were differently shaped by immigration over time with socio-spatial effects today. As a result, the city has proposed Masterplans for three districts that face particular challenges and that are home to high shares of ethnic minorities in their population: Masterplan Oost, Nationaal Programma Samen Nieuw West, and Anpaak Noord.[2] These participatory planning efforts will be analysed critically.

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[1] City of Amsterdam (2023): Diversity, online: https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/policy/policy-diversity/, accessed 20/12/2023.

[2] Information on the Masterplans via the Open Research platform online: https://openresearch.amsterdam/en/page/102411/masterplan-aanpakken-zuidoost-nieuw-west-en-noord, last accessed 20/12/2023.

2.3.2. The Fieldwork

Ethical Committee Approval

The research project was approved by the AISSR Ethics Advisory Board. In the course of the approval process, valuable suggestions from the Advisory Board were implemented, including changing the wording in the interview outlines to be more inclusive and accessible for non-academic audiences.

Research Design

The data analysed consist of interview data, policy documents of the city of Amsterdam and documents disseminated by the non-governmental actors active at the urban and migration nexus.

<u>Interviewee Profile:</u>

We plan to conduct semi-structured interviews with at least 10-15 local actors in Amsterdam representing mainly non-governmental organisations involved in urban migration issues. Further interviews will be conducted with actors involved in municipal governance, in order to best contrast the varying positions of local actors, as well as to understand the wider actor landscape around autonomy-building processes.

We are following the inclusion criteria as outlined below:

- *Expertise by experience:* Participants from the pool of non-governmental actors are selected by their substantial expertise by experience in shaping, influencing or countering urban migration governance and being active in connected fields.
- *Variety of Perspectives:* The sample encompasses a range of perspectives, including those from different sectors, disciplines, and approaches related to migration and urban dynamics.

<u>Access to Interviewees:</u>

Interview participants are identified on a rolling basis through purposive sampling through researching the relevant actor landscape in Amsterdam. Upon identification of participants and successful interviewing, additional snowball sampling is applied by asking participants for further contacts.

<u>Duration:</u>

The interviews are scheduled to be conducted face-to-face, one-on-one, with an expected duration of approximately 1-2 hours.

Location:

The interviews are conducted in person or via Teams. For in-person interviews, public spaces such as cafés or libraries are chosen when interviewing residents and individuals who do not belong to associations or NGOs with offices. This is hoped to provide a sense of comfort for the participants, facilitating more open sharing of their perspectives and experiences. In case that the interviewee is part of and represents an NGO, association or company, interviews are proposed to take place in their offices. .

Privacy, Anonymity, and Consent:

The researcher seeks active consent for the participation in the interview, the recording of it, and the transcription of the recording. As the interview participants include vulnerable people, this consent is sought for verbally. This approach was chosen consciously and in line with ethical advisors at the AISSR, based on the potential risks written consent and paper traces can pose to vulnerable groups like refugees, especially when undocumented, or those advocating for their rights. To grant anonymity, all real names will be changed into pseudonyms unless participants actively wish to be named.

Interview Questions:

The interviews conducted with actors are semi-structured and follow four thematic blocks: the first block consists of an introductory section in which actors are asked to present themselves and their relation to Amsterdam, and to share their thoughts on how migration-related diversity is governed locally in Amsterdam. A second section dives deeper into Amsterdam as an arrival city, including questions about the challenges the city is dealing with, how the urban environment shapes arrival and how migration-related issues are organised, the role of the local political context, and what the main drivers for the actors' engagement are. Block three includes questions that aim to bring forward a better understanding of the autonomy-building processes taking place, by asking which role the actors/their organisation play in the wider Amsterdam landscape, what legal and political constraints they are confronted with, whether or not they cooperate with the municipality or other governmental actors (if not, why), and what other forms of local cooperation exist. The final closing part is interrogating whether the authors deem other, thus far not discussed, themes important and which ones they are, whether they would be willing to introduce us to further interview participants, and whether they were accepting to be contacted in case of further questions. This part also asks participants to describe where they see Amsterdam and their work in ten years, to obtain insights into the aspirational dimension of local action.

Introduction and Focus of Work: Local governance of migration-related diversity in Amsterdam

1. Could you please introduce yourself and tell me about your relationship to Amsterdam?
2. Could you present your organisation/project to me? What is your current position/role within your organisation?
3. What are your thoughts on how migration-related issues are organised and governed in Amsterdam?
4. How would you describe the local and regional acceptance of newcomers?

Amsterdam as arrival city: local autonomy in migration governance?

5. Could you provide some details about what migration challenges Amsterdam deals with? (e.g., the number of newcomers, types of issues confronted with, etc.)
6. In your opinion, how does the local context of Amsterdam influence how migration-related issues are organised
7. What factors contribute to the city's success/challenges in this area?
8. In which ways has the political context in the past years influenced your work and the lives of newcomers?
9. What are the main drivers/motivators of your engagement?

Striving for local autonomy? Your organisation/project/experiences

10. What specific areas of migration does your organisation focus on? (e.g., refugee resettlement, integration, policy advocacy, economic development, etc.)
11. How do you see the role of the local level and non-governmental actors in migration governance?
12. Where do you see yourself and your organisation in the wider landscape?
13. What are the major funding sources or financial challenges your organisation encounters in its migration-related initiatives?
14. What impact do national and local legislation have on your day-to-day work? Could you provide some examples?
15. Do you work with the municipality? If so, how do you coordinate your efforts with the municipality in addressing migration-related challenges?
16. What are the main challenges your organisation/project faces in engaging in local actions concerning migration?
17. When addressing migration-related challenges or discussing opportunities, do you engage with other actors? (e.g., NGOs, the municipality, businesses)

18. If your organisation collaborates with other stakeholders at various levels, what does this cooperation look like?
19. What role do partnerships with other local actors play to enhance the influence of local actors in migration governance? What are some of the key partnerships you have established?

Concluding questions

20. Is there any issue/theme/topic we have not discussed that would be important to you?
21. If you imagined Amsterdam and its newcomers in 10 years, what would you see?
22. Who do you think would be important for me to talk to and to interview next?
23. May I contact you again for clarifications of answers and eventual further questions?

2.3.3. Research Progress

Interviewing progress

During the first stage of fieldwork based primarily on desk research, we were able to obtain an overview of the institutional actor landscape in Amsterdam and identified 17 organisations likely operating detached from formal governance. These organisations operate primarily in the fields of housing, employment and advocacy for refugee rights and migration-related matters.

So far, six organisations have been contacted, of which three responded agreeing to an interview. Two interviews were conducted at this stage, each lasting between 1.5 and 2 hours. Both interviews conducted were with former refugees who had founded organisations that aim at advocating for refugees via educational services, events, public speaking and consulting.

The snowball sampling applied in the course of these first two interviews resulted in five additional potential interview participants. These were contacted immediately via email. So far, no further interviews could be conducted due to a low response rate. We will discuss the implications in the remainder of this report.

Document and Policy Analysis Progress

The document analysis is still on-going. In a first step, the institutional communication of the city of Amsterdam was analysed with a special focus on external communication on the issues of employment, civic participation, housing, diversity and immigration via the website of the *Gemeente* and the website *I Amsterdam*. These

websites were identified as important means for the city to communicate with the public. *I Amsterdam* in particular provides interesting insights into how the municipality communicates with its international community.

Further, the current coalition agreement of the city government, the Amsterdams Akkoord 2022-2026, was analysed for a better understanding of the local governance of the urban-migration-nexus. Major planning documents are equally analysed, notably the Masterplan Zuidoost, Samen Nieuw West and Anpaak Noord, development plans for Amsterdam's most ethnically diverse neighbourhoods. The analysis of the *Masterplan Zuidoost* had ended with analyses of the *Samen Nieuw West* and *Anpaak Noord* still ongoing.

Next steps will include the consultation of the municipality's social media accounts and local newspapers.

2.3.4. Challenges Faced during Fieldwork

The fieldwork for the case of Amsterdam has been confronted with significant challenges due to very low response rates to interview requests. As a result, only three interviews were scheduled of which two could be conducted and one got cancelled by the participant.

Upon realising that access to local actors working detached from formal governance would be more challenging than anticipated, it was decided to update the research design by adding document and policy analysis. It is hoped that findings from this analytical step will open avenues for accessing local actors so as to finalise the interviewing process in the upcoming month and reach the anticipated goal of 10 to 15 interviews with local actors.

2.3.5. The Next Steps in Fieldwork

The next steps in the fieldwork consist of the continuing active recruitment of interview participants, by extending the outreach methods via calls and visits at the offices of associations when possible. Furthermore, additional research participants proposed by our first interviewees will be contacted.

Besides interviewing, we hope to apply ethnographic tools such as observations and urban walking, especially in spaces less accessible via online research, including squats and other spaces of informality.

Possibilities for an additional case study were evaluated and exploratory research has been undertaken for this which resulted in five interviews, numerous observations in the course of press conferences and public events (e.g. film screenings or

demonstrations), extensive urban walks, and informal conversations. As such, the remainder of the research is open to an expansion of the comparative perspective.

PART III: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND OUTLOOK

3.1. Discussion of Fieldwork Findings

3.1.1. Istanbul's City Diplomacy

This section first focuses on the emerging themes uncovered in the interviews, elaborating on four primary aspects. Subsequently, it dedicates a specific subsection to explore earthquake disaster governance in Istanbul from a city diplomacy perspective based on the interviews. Finally, it concludes by summarising the findings in relation to existing scholarship.

3.1.1.1. City Diplomacy Practices: "Istanbul is a fantastic laboratory"

Istanbul's international engagement with other cities and organisations has significantly expanded, especially since 2019. Interviewees particularly highlighted the year 2019, marked by a change in the mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) from the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), known for its centre-right stance, to the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), known for its centre-left position. This marks a significant change, as for the first time since Istanbul became a metropolitan municipality in 1984, a mayor from the CHP was elected in 2019.

The table below shows IMM's ongoing city diplomacy activities. These encompass participation in international networks and organisations, sister city agreements, partnership agreements, memoranda of understanding, and projects funded by international programs. IMM operates a dedicated department for foreign relations, responsible for orchestrating diplomatic engagements with international entities. Notably, this department's website prominently features IMM's international activities. This includes the mayor's meetings with city representatives worldwide, interactions with representatives from international organisations, and the mayor's speeches at international gatherings. To highlight these activities, the department's website includes a distinct section titled "City Diplomacy."

Table 4. Current City Diplomacy Initiatives by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

City Networks & International Organisations	Sister Cities	Partnership Agreement	Memorandum of Understanding	Internationally Funded Projects
B40 - Balkan Cities Network	Shimonoseki, Japan	Florence, Italy	Paris, France	AI4Life (EIT - European Institute of Innovation and Technology)
Eurocities	Lahore, Pakistan	Toronto, Canada	Milan, Italy	Street Forum (ERA-NET)
Metropolis	Johor Bahru, Malaysia	Stockholm, Sweden	Berlin, Germany	Game Street (Bloomberg Philanthropies)
UCLG - United Cities and Local Governments	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	Strasbourg, France	Tbilisi, Georgia	Safe School Zones - Policy Accelerating Activities (Bloomberg Philanthropies & WHO)
ECAD - European Cities against Drugs	Cairo, Egypt	Warsaw, Poland	Pécs, Hungary	SMART DATA FOR BERLISTANBUL (Engagement Global)
OICC - Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities	Houston, USA	Budapest, Hungary	Isfahan, Iran	Build4GreenIST (Green and Carbon Neutral Building Transition Guide- Istanbul Model) (Horizon Europe)
OWHC - Organization of World Heritage Cities	Berlin, Germany	Prague, Czech Republic	Tabriz, Iran	ACCTRA – The Yalı Neighborhood Tactical Urbanism Project (Horizon Europe)
LHC - The League of Historical Cities	St. Petersburg, Russian Federation	Havana, Cuba	Gyeongsangbuk-do, South Korea	EcoMobility (Horizon Europe)
EMI - Earthquakes and Megacities Initiative, Inc.	Rabat, Morocco	Kabul, Afghanistan	Punjab, Pakistan	RAPID 3D (EIT - European Institute of Innovation and Technology)
WUWM - World Union of Wholesale Markets	Merv, Turkmenistan	Xi'an, People's Republic of China	Rabat, Morocco	AMIGOS (Horizon Europe)
WHO - World Health Organisation	Barcelona, Spain	Athens, Greece	Bogota, Colombia	BICIFICATION (EIT - European Institute of Innovation and Technology)
AMF - Asian Mayors Forum	Dubai, UAE	Naples, Italy	Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, Pakistan	Cleanergy 4 Micromobility (EIT - European Institute of Innovation and Technology)
ESN - European Social Network	Cologne, Germany	Seoul, South Korea	City of Frankfurt am Main, Germany	UP2030 (Horizon Europe)
TDBB - Union of Turkish World Municipalities	Shanghai, People's Republic of China	Bucharest, Romania	Aden, Yemen	Sport4C (Erasmus +)
DEMHIST - International Committee for Historic House Museums	Odessa, Ukraine	Moscow, Russian Federation	Mecca, Saudi Arabia	Paratus (Horizon Europe)
C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group	Amman, Jordan	Paris, France	Juba, South Sudan	NEUTRALPATH (Horizon Europe)

CIVITAS Forum Network	Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Casablanca, Morocco	Dakar, Senegal	ISKI Smart Meter Management System Pilot Project (French Development Agency)
LUCI - Lighting Urban Community International	Durres, Albania	Vienna, Austria	Monrovia, Liberia	Istanbul Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan - Implementation Plan (IPA II)
MUFPP - Milan Urban Food Policy Pact	Almaty, Kazakhstan	Lahore, Pakistan	Accra, Ghana	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Cybersecurity Pilot Project (USA Trade and Development Agency)
EIT - European Institute of Innovation and Technology	Osh, Kyrgyzstan	Kyoto, Japan	Djibouti City, Djibouti	GREEN ICT (Horizon Europe)
	Plovdiv, Bulgaria		Guangzhou, China	GREEN DEAL-TURKLIT (GEH) (The Embassy of Lithuania in Ankara, Green and Smart Solutions Program)
	Constanta, Romania		Mogadishu, Somalia	CircularPSP (Horizon Europe)
	Khartoum, Sudan		Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia	Sustainable City Logistics (EIT - European Institute of Innovation and Technology)
	Kazan, Tatarstan/Russian Federation		Hangzhou, China	Inclusive Mobility: Safe Spaces through Public Collaboration (EIT - European Institute of Innovation and Technology)
	Skopje, North Macedonia		Conakry, Guinea	DECARBOMILE (Horizon Europe)
	Damascus, Syria		Tripoli, Libya	AI-TraWELL (EIT - European Institute of Innovation and Technology)
	Jakarta, Indonesia		Yakutsk, Sakha Republic (Yakutia), Russia	TOPUK (KAVŞAK – Turkey Sustainable Urban Mobility Network)
	Venice, Italy		Jakarta, Indonesia	Alibeyköy Multimodal Transfer Center Project (French Development Agency)
	Busan, South Korea		Brussels, Belgium	RAPTOR (EIT - European Institute of Innovation and Technology)
	Bangkok, Thailand		Athens, Greece	AI4CITIES (Horizon 2020)
	Beirut, Lebanon			PEACOC (Horizon Europe)
	Tabriz, Iran			Youth Employment Project (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development)

	Mexico City, Mexico			Talents4Bakery Exchange of Best Practices in Promoting Apprenticeship and Training in Bakery Across Europe (Erasmus+)
	Tunis, Tunisia			BLAST! - Promoting Youth Social Engagement through Blockchain for Sustainable Development (Erasmus+)
	Guangzhou, People's Republic of China			Glass Democratising the Relationship between Citizens and Governments (Horizon 2020)
	Giza, Egypt			ERASMUS + Sports Runway (Erasmus+)
	Benghazi, Libya			Pop-Machina (Horizon 2020)
	Djibouti City, Djibouti			
	Tbilisi, Georgia			
	Nicosia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus			

Source: Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Department Foreign Relations, "City Diplomacy," https://frd.ibb.istanbul/

The new mayor also facilitated the establishment of a civil society organisation in partnership with the municipality. This organisation has played a pivotal role in developing long-term strategies and action plans for local governance in Istanbul, maintaining connections with numerous stakeholders, both national and international. Istanbul's current international engagement encompasses bilateral and multilateral relationships with cities in Europe and the Global South, as well as various international organisations, international civil social organisations and universities.

One representative from a civil society organisation partnered with the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, working in the migration department, provides some examples of their current international engagement with other cities and organisations:

We have developed a distinct field of activity for Istanbul's needs by implementing international best practices in our municipality and blending the good examples from our municipality and Turkey. We have developed an action plan. Here, we specifically collaborate with international organisations. Particularly, we have very close relations with the Berlin Municipality. Since 2020, we have been holding monthly meetings with Berlin Municipality's Department for Migration and Integration, and they will even visit us within this month. Besides that, we also

collaborate with Swedish municipalities in the fields of migration and integration. Due to the strong presence of civil society and migration initiatives in Sweden, we work jointly with their municipalities, aiming to amalgamate examples from community centres there with our own examples here. In these international partnerships, of course, we work alongside organisations such as UNHCR and ILO on project-based initiatives. (PB)

In its international engagements with other cities worldwide, IMM also considers geographical and population size affinities, perceiving that these similarities may potentially create similar challenges in those cities. Examples of such collaborations include the following:

One of the recent examples is the B-40 Balkan Cities network. Now, the issue here stems from this: Istanbul has a role among the world's cities. Its goals include being a pioneer, sharing experiences, and establishing a more city-oriented improvement world, particularly concerning matters within its own geography. What does this mean? The Balkans are one of our target geographies. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality states that we are already a geography that knows and resembles each other, having economic and social relationships. We intend to convert this into a collaboration focused on urbanisation and the welfare of citizens. Istanbul held the presidency during 2022. Currently, Athens holds the presidency and will hand it over to Tirana in January. One of the working groups focuses on migration and local democracy. Here, they share experiences on how cities handle migration, how they integrate migration through policies or harmonious integration. For instance, we collaborate on research with the London School of Economics (LSE). They sent a group here, and work was conducted for a period on Istanbul's issues, which was then documented in a report. As another example, the Mega Cities Summit took place recently. The Mayor of Bogota attended, along with representatives from other major cities. These are the kinds of collaborations we have. (SBİ)

The B-40 Balkan Cities network was particularly highlighted in the interviews for the following reason: As shown in the narrative above, the IMM sets a goal for itself—representing Istanbul as a "pioneer" in establishing collaborations and initiating discussions to share experiences within the Balkans, which is perceived to have regional affinities.

A second prominently highlighted multilateral collaboration, perceived to share another affinity with Istanbul, was the Mega Cities Summit. As demonstrated in the previous narrative, Istanbul recently hosted the Mega Cities Summit. The following narrative further explains why this summit held particular importance in terms of fostering international collaborations.

Mega cities, as you know, are cities with populations exceeding 10 million, including many cities from the Far East, such as Tokyo. We often compare Istanbul with European cities, but unfortunately, the realities sometimes become associated with mega cities. This is because the systems and order in densely populated areas can be entirely different, creating a world where theories may not be as realistic. When you go to Switzerland now, you might remark on how well rules are followed, but at the end of the day, the reality of population remains. (OK)

During discussions about IMM's international engagements, interviewees often underlined Istanbul's unique significance due to its distinct migration dynamics. They believed that these dynamics could serve as a guiding example for other cities worldwide through IMM's international initiatives. One interviewee working with the IMM explains this as follows:

The reason behind this (city diplomacy) is that Istanbul is a fantastic laboratory. In other words, Istanbul's experience is highly valuable for the problems that all cities are currently grappling with and striving to overcome. When we look at the issue of migration, Turkey hosts the largest refugee population in the world. Turkey has the highest number globally, and Istanbul has the highest number in Turkey. So, at the moment, our official figures, of course, are not realistic, but we're talking about a migrant and refugee population of over 2 million in this city, without accounting for irregularities. Therefore, there is a much more complex search for a solution and a need for consensus here. Istanbul is striving to advocate for this on international platforms as much as possible. (SBİ)

This phrase "Istanbul as a laboratory" came up frequently in the interviews, suggesting that Istanbul, particularly through the IMM, is increasingly emphasising its role as a learning and guidance hub for migration governance issues globally.

In this regard, representatives of the IMM expressed their interest in developing innovative strategies for urban issues. One notable program is the "Pay it Forward" initiative by the IMM, contributing to IMM's success in winning the $1 million USD prize from the Bloomberg Global Mayors Challenge, selected among 631 cities. One IMM representative explains this as in the following:

Each city has its own needs, priorities, and realities, but our desire is for the good examples we initiate here to spread to suitable cities worldwide. Achieving this vision, winning the major prize in Bloomberg's competition with the "Pay it Forward" project, was a first in this respect. You're doing wonderful things here, but the next step is for it to spread globally. Our biggest step towards ensuring this was taken here. Our goal is to increase city diplomacy traffic through "Pay it Forward" by facilitating its replication. (AY)

The "Pay it Forward" project has established a platform enabling donors to aid city residents in need of financial support, covering expenses such as utility bills, family assistance, aid for mothers with children, student support, and public transportation pass cards. The mayor himself describes the project as "an urban solidarity movement of an unprecedented scale internationally" (Pay it Forward, 2023).

> Thanks to hundreds of thousands of kind strangers like yourself, the Istanbul-born Pay It Forward platform has left its mark internationally as an urban solidarity movement of an unprecedented scale. Launched initially as a mutual aid platform to tackle the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pay It Forward has helped countless individuals and households pay for their outstanding water and gas bills. Our platform quickly grew to feature additional support modules for students, families, mothers and commuters. Since April 2020, Pay It Forward has been steadily expanding the volume of this solidarity by introducing new ways to reach more people in Istanbul. I invite you all to join this powerful solidarity movement, and I would like to express my gratitude to all of you.

As demonstrated, international grants hold particular significance for municipalities, serving as both a means to supplement the limited financial resources allocated from the central government and as an avenue for participation in city diplomacy. This holds true for NGOs as well, leveraging international grants for their projects. Moreover, in most instances, these grants serve as a catalyst, fostering increased engagement among national, local, and international bodies, as articulated by a member of an NGO:

> IOM, GIZ, UNHCR, and similar donors insist on our active engagement and attendance in meetings with public institutions. You know, governorates and district governorships hold various meetings related to migration. They explicitly tell us to attend these meetings, and if we don't, they inquire why we weren't present. After attending, they ask for meeting notes from us, which we share. They want to see which NGOs are working in the field and how we establish relationships with municipalities or public institutions, wanting to understand the strength of our connections. Of course, being involved is advantageous for us as well. (MK)

3.1.1.2. Local Actors' Challenges amid Central-Local Government Tensions

Despite the interviewees' view on Istanbul as a significant player in migration city diplomacy, with the city's unique migration patterns and local representatives intensifying their involvement, in the field of local migration governance the interviewees expressed concerns about the challenges they faced from various dimensions.

The most significant challenge lies in the inconsistencies within the legal framework concerning the municipality's obligations toward migrant and refugee groups. As explained in Part II, Turkey's Municipal Law No. 5393, Article 13, affirms that "everyone is a fellow citizen of the municipality in which they reside." However, Article 14 restricts municipal responsibilities solely to Turkish citizens. This legal ambiguity serves as both an opportunity for the municipality to address migrants within the city's administrative area and an obstacle if the law is interpreted differently.

This also relates to the financial resources allocated by the central government to municipalities. Since these resources are calculated based on the population registered in official records, the significant presence of irregular migrants is often not considered when allocating financial resources. As a prominent example of such cities, Istanbul's municipalities are facing financial difficulties in delivering services and developing strategies for migrants within their territories.

In addition to administrative and financial challenges, there is a lack of data and limited data sharing between local and central governments. One interviewee explains these challenges as follows:

> We have very serious issues regarding legislation. There is only Article 13 of the municipal law. When advocating for cities, it's necessary to have legislation, budget, and data. Budgets need to come from the central government. The budgets received are only based on the ratio of Turkish citizens registered in the population, and this is a significant problem. As you already know, in Istanbul, we can only estimate the number of unregistered individuals. Additionally, nationals from 91 countries already arrive without visas. Therefore, this budget issue is very challenging. There's no data sharing either. For instance, we don't know what kind of data the central government collects specifically for Istanbul and its districts. Similarly, while municipalities develop their annual programs, they can have certain information that the central government doesn't possess. Therefore, I believe that data and information sharing is very valuable. Moreover, we have a local strategy and integration document, a five-year plan ending in 2023. More than 50 clauses are related to municipalities, but I haven't seen this plan being jointly evaluated, or municipalities sharing their work related to this plan and its monitoring. This, in my opinion, is a significant loss for the central government. (ME)

The limited coordination between local and central governments stems largely from the current political context of the country, leading to limited dialogue:

> Migration is one of the challenging topics, especially for local administrations, because matters like migration, education, health, and security fall within the realm of central governance. This prevents the realisation of the elements you want to

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implement. There's a different bureaucracy at play there, and unfortunately, Turkey's political landscape makes cooperation between rival parties very difficult. While challenges exist in areas falling under the primary responsibilities of the central government, an atmosphere emerges where, even in matters like earthquakes where the local government also has a say, the local and central governments do not convene at the same table. (OK)

The political tensions among government levels have created a more competitive environment, wherein representatives from these levels frequently prioritise vote gathering over addressing public needs. As the same interviewee continues:

Opposition municipalities are seen as rivals, and their services are seen as scores. There's a truly absurd mentality of not acknowledging, "Citizens benefit from this service thanks to the IMM," but rather, "They're providing services to increase votes in a particular area." Regarding migration, due to security concerns, they expressed that no data could be shared for security reasons, and doors were often closed. (OK)

It is worth noting that despite the political tensions between the central and local governments, the interviewees from municipalities were careful to ensure that they behaved within the confines of their administrative and legal limits. They particularly underlined that "IMM never does anything in its international relations that contradicts Turkey's general foreign policy; this is a priority." (AY)

Yet, as the following section shows, the challenges between the local and central governments are clearly reflected in the city diplomacy efforts. Furthermore, these challenges have also further increased the need for city diplomacy to overcome national obstacles.

3.1.1.3. Drivers of City Diplomacy: "City diplomacy is now the cornerstone of governance"

All interviewees, already engaged in city diplomacy, unanimously supported the necessity for cities to establish international networks involving stakeholders at various levels. This need was notably linked to the nature of migration, a primary example of a cross-border phenomenon. However, this imperative was also tied to the international impasses created by higher levels of government, such as nation-states and even supranational bodies, whereas local actors may have better prospects for handling such situations, as explained below:

If you ask whether city diplomacy is necessary, yes, it is necessary. Because diplomacy among cities is now the cornerstone of this matter (governance). Relationships in international arenas shaped differently than we desired. That is, the European Union, supranational regulations, etc., they all collapsed. With the rise of

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grassroots movements and more field-oriented policies, many avenues there closed off. Therefore, we are compelled to establish relationships between cities and supranational or international actors at this point. We need what we call "multilevel governance." It seems like there is no alternative to collaboration among multilevel stakeholders because struggles and collaborations at the national level can only take us to a certain point. (SBİ)

Yet, on the other hand, there are also internal dynamics acting as push factors, specifically for municipalities, toward international engagement. A representative elucidates how the municipality seeks support from international organisations to address their financial, technical and political challenges with the central government:

One of the greatest barriers for our municipalities in conducting work on migration is legislation. The funds transferred from the central government are targeted towards Turkish citizens, so we are unable to provide services for migrants from this budget. Therefore, we have to secure our budget through external sources, meaning international organisations. This involves a continuous search for funding, writing projects, and carrying out our work through annual projects... To directly deliver services to migrants, we constantly have to write projects... Another core issue for us is data. Due to the lack of transparent communication between the central government and local governments, data sharing is not possible... What are we doing about this? We've designed our own data system. Again, with funds obtained from external sources. In the data system we've designed, we can add the data of both district municipalities and the individuals we reach to this pool. (PB)

Therefore, a significant driver for engaging with international organisations has been the need for financial resources. Simultaneously, the quest for these resources compels municipalities to become more competitive in crafting projects to secure funding. This is also applicable to nongovernmental organisations in the field, as explained by a member of an NGO:

We are unable to provide funding at the national level, and frankly, we don't have such an intention. Because it's both challenging and a process that isn't easily sustainable... There can be very small projects, of course, but I can say that the majority, 90%, 95%, are funded internationally. (MK)

3.1.1.4. Challenges to City Diplomacy: "There must be an inclusive policy in some way"

The challenges faced by local actors stem from three main dimensions: (1) tensions between the central and local governments, (2) inadequacies within the local governments themselves, and (3) issues within city diplomacy itself.

As previously mentioned, the first dimension serves as both a catalyst for city diplomacy to navigate national obstacles and a hindrance, primarily due to bureaucratic reluctance. However, local actors often devise strategies to circumvent this bureaucratic reluctance in their city diplomacy activities. One interviewee explained this with an example:

> The IMM applied to the ministry for the permanent secretariat of the B-40 Balkan Cities Network, but the permission was not granted. The official structure of B-40 could not be established. However, it is possible to bypass these political interventions while adhering to the law. For instance, we can participate in the B-40 network even without having an official secretariat established. (AY)

This kind of manoeuvring was also evident in the delivery of municipal services to all groups in the city, ensuring an inclusive city policy while navigating around Article 13 of the Municipality Law. Another interviewee explains this:

> Everyone is a member of this city. Therefore, there must be an inclusive policy in some way. Whether the state provides a budget or not, whether it's in the legislation or not. If there are services, we try to at least make them openly available to everyone. This includes applications for social support programs, their evaluations, providing support to those accepted, vocational training courses, employment, and other activities. We have our psychosocial support centres with activities there. But municipalities are doing this secretly. For instance, we could spread it more widely for more people's assistance with announcements and notice boards, but we couldn't. It's as if it's being done underground. (ME)

While playing around with legislation is a strategy for municipalities, manoeuvring among various governmental actors becomes the strategy for NGOs. NGOs often prefer collaborating with municipalities due to their positions at the local level. However, they remain flexible in establishing relationships with different government levels, as explained by one NGO member:

> Our priority is municipalities because they have various departments. Some municipalities have migration units, while others have project units; for instance, they work on European Union projects. That's why it's easier to communicate with municipalities than it is with the district governorships, the provincial governorship, or the Ministry of National Education. They understand projects and maintain close contact with civil society, either through their own established organisations or the ones they support. Therefore, our priority is municipalities, but occasionally, when municipalities are not cooperative, we're compelled to engage with district governorships, provincial governorships, or other public institutions. (MK)

To provide this flexibility, the NGO has a dedicated department in Ankara, the capital city, focused on introducing their activities and nurturing relationships with central government bodies. As their priority is municipalities, they were also tactically providing some benefits to the municipalities that seemed at first reluctant or demanding. Therefore the NGO member continues: "There isn't just one path we can follow. The dynamics in the field change, as do those of the donor, country, and the needs and expectations of the project, all constantly in flux. Hence, at times, we provide various initiatives to public institutions based on necessity. This also makes our job easier." These initiatives primarily involved the NGO allowing municipalities to use their stamps, for example, on support programs which were actually provided by the NGO.

The second dimension of the challenges lies within the local governments themselves. This encompasses their limited expertise in city diplomacy, along with the electoral concerns of municipal actors, which may not align with universal goals. Most interviewees highlighted the limited expertise of municipal staff in city diplomacy as one of the pressing challenges, as explained below:

> Alongside financial issues, there is also the problem of the international competence of the staff. There are, albeit few, international relations and external affairs units in municipalities. However, these units tend to see themselves mostly as ceremonial representatives. You know, "I went, visited the consul general, had a meal with them, took them abroad, toured around, and came back." The relationship between diplomacy and the city's development generally doesn't often feature prominently on their agenda. So, there is a need here for comprehensive empowerment (in staff training). Projects have been the main driver for this until now. Those who haven't engaged in projects remained a bit more limited to ceremonial representation. (SBİ)

This narrative indicates that international projects were influential not only in terms of financial resources but also in acquiring experience. Furthermore, given that municipalities are elected bodies, the global objectives of city diplomacy—while significant on a broader scale—might not align with the immediate electoral interests of local governments, potentially deprioritizing these objectives. This presents an additional challenge, as explained below:

> The essence of what we call city diplomacy is a bit challenging because the line between global goals, the way municipalities operate, and ultimately their ability to communicate with voters is very blurry. What do I mean? Let's say you do something fantastic about climate change, creating a ground-breaking project that could be an example for the whole world, and you might spend a lot of money on it, bring in

substantial external financing. But if it doesn't resonate with the citizens, it remains a "maybe" situation for municipalities. (SBİ)

The third dimension of the challenges concerns the practice of city diplomacy itself and encompasses various aspects: the diversity in migration policies, the continued dominance of central governments over local authorities, international discussions often lacking tangible actions, the necessity to transition from short-term projects to sustainable, long-term strategies, and the tendency of local actors to prioritise pursuing project grants rather than developing policies that effectively address the complexities of migration.

Regarding the diversity in migration policies and the persistent dominance of central governments over local authorities, an interviewee working in the migration department elaborated on the following:

Firstly, migration is a sensitive issue, and each country has different policies. For instance, some Balkan countries are EU members, having the European Union's policy umbrella over them. Some countries are candidate countries, while others are not EU members. Therefore, there's a diversity stemming from this aspect. Secondly, in many countries, in my observation, the normative framework is established by central governments. It's as if migration is more of an active area for them, more aligned with their duties. However, when you look at municipalities, yes, there are very effective and excellent centres and initiatives, but their participation as an effective actor is lacking in many countries. (ME)

Additionally, this interviewee, involved with both municipalities and civil society organisations in the field, shared similar criticisms to other interviewees, regarding the international discourses lacking concrete actions and the prevalence of short-term projects over sustainable, long-term strategies:

Discourses are great but they must be backed by action. For instance, when it comes to migration governance, municipalities' opinions aren't even being sought after… Yes, the European Union supports it, which is great, but they don't provide funds to municipalities directly. Municipalities can only receive funds through international organisations, and only on an activity basis. You know, United Nations agencies or various international entities can collaborate with municipalities, run projects, or open direct grant programs. However, there isn't a comprehensive policy here. In a given year, progress might be made in one specific area, and everyone focuses on that topic, writes projects or programs based on it, without a holistic approach. What's the policy? Do we have an action plan in front of us? What are we supporting? After this project, what will we say we've supported in terms of that action plan or the state's strategic document? (ME)

The prevalence of short-term, project-based activities reinforces the tendency of local actors to prioritise seeking project grants over formulating policies that effectively address the complexities of migration. This inclination is commonly observed across cities involved with international organisations, but it becomes a more significant challenge in contexts where migration patterns are increasingly complex. This is evident in the case of Istanbul, as explained below:

> Having numerous projects from UN agencies and international organisations is valuable, but it should be guided by a specific strategy and policy. It shouldn't be influenced by the direction where the wind blows or where progress seems easier. It might be a challenging issue, but it's essential to work with different strategies over a longer period. From my own experience in Istanbul, what I've observed is this: everyone focuses on the direction where the funds are going. However, in Istanbul, there are highly skilled migrants, less skilled migrants, international students— various categories of migrants. We often concentrate solely on Syrians under temporary protection, but there are different categories of refugees too, such as irregular migration from Afghanistan and Pakistan. There are specific needs, especially for undocumented individuals, children, and women. I don't see a comprehensive plan that encompasses everything. Funds are allocated to specific areas, but in terms of sustainability, I find it risky. If international organisations withdraw their support, IMM and district municipalities might not face issues with their regular services, but they might lack resources for projects. (ME)

Hence, for Istanbul, focusing primarily on pursuing grants from international programs not only contributes to the fragmentation and underdevelopment of migration policies but also intensifies reliance on external financial resources. The absence of these resources might even disrupt local actors' engagement with migration issues. However, this does not mean that international grants inevitably lead to these challenges. Rather, the interviewees emphasise the necessity for these projects to be conceived within a comprehensive, long-term policy framework, both locally and internationally.

3.1.1.5. Earthquake Disaster Governance in Istanbul: A City Diplomacy Perspective

During our interviews, we collected insights on earthquake disaster governance and migration as a specific policy area within city diplomacy. This issue has gained urgency in Istanbul, particularly due to the emerging patterns connecting the residential segregation of migrant groups with earthquake risk and construction quality.

Earthquake disaster governance is an important policy area in city diplomacy and contributes to increasing city agency. By leveraging their authority and agency, cities can effectively address earthquake disasters and implement disaster governance policies

(Lecavalier & Gordon, 2020). The impact of earthquake disasters and migration on city diplomacy can lead to the formation of international coalitions of mayors advocating for a greater role for cities in global governance (Lecavalier & Gordon, 2020). In general, cities have claimed a role in global migration governance by linking the local and global levels and advocating for rights-based migration policies, access to international funding and cooperation partners, and a seat at intergovernmental negotiation tables (Stürner-Siovitz, 2023b). City diplomacy in migration governance empowers cities to play an active role in addressing migration challenges and promoting integration (Kihlgren Grandi, 2020b). In the case of earthquake and tsunami disaster risk reduction policy, collaborative governance is also crucial for effective and equitable implementation and management (Indarti & Juim, 2019). Collaboration involves identifying obstacles and opportunities, debating strategies for influence, and planning collaborative actions (Kurz, 2022). Overall, city diplomacy provides tools and networks for cities to engage in global governance and address migration and disaster governance challenges. This engagement of cities in migration and disaster governance reflects the growing recognition of their role and expertise in addressing these complex challenges.

Therefore, we engaged in interviews with scholars who specialise in the field of disaster and migration management and have established communication with the local government through consultation mechanisms. These interviews reveal that city representatives lack expertise in establishing diplomatic relations with international organisations, but instead rely on academic knowledge to foster connections with such entities, whether for securing funding in these domains or developing policies and governance frameworks. Due to the limited authority of municipalities in Turkey, they also expressed the necessity of discussing these matters with representatives of the central government. It is also evident that migration in both pre- and post-disaster circumstances is not strategically planned, despite city representatives acknowledging that migrants reside in highly disadvantaged socio-economic conditions. Furthermore, it is anticipated that there will be movement of individuals following the occurrence of disasters. However, the focus remains on the need for action in discourse rather than the formulation of sustainable and well-defined policy planning. Lastly, the interviews highlight the impact of successful strategies implemented by the Gaziantep municipality. Nonetheless, even in this scenario, the issue of short-term policy formulation takes precedence over the creation of rights-based sustainable policies.

3.1.1.6. Interim Conclusion

The case of Istanbul, based on interviews with local actors including those from municipalities, NGOs, and academic circles, has revealed three main points.

First, since the election of the current mayor in 2019, there has been an increasing focus on Istanbul's participation in city diplomacy. This includes the mayor's increased involvement in city networks, the establishment of specialised bodies for city diplomacy within the metropolitan municipality, and intensified efforts to position the city as an international player, particularly regarding Istanbul's role as a hub for learning and guidance on global migration governance issues.

Second, driving these efforts are internal factors stemming from the increasingly complex migration patterns in Istanbul that transcend borders and as well as challenges between central and local bodies, including financial, administrative, political, and legal constraints.

Third, local actors encounter additional challenges in their engagement with city diplomacy initiatives. These challenges include the limited role of municipalities on the international scene, international discourses that lack effective translation into actions, and the emergence of fragmented, incomplete focuses. This fragmentation is due to the proliferation of project-based activities and the absence of a comprehensive, long-term strategy.

Within these three primary points in the context of Istanbul, three more patterns are shaping the city's diplomatic practice.

First, the emerging relationship between cities and international bodies presents both advantages and disadvantages. Positives include local actors gaining experience through projects and securing financial resources for services aimed at migrant populations. On the flip side, the focus on project-based efforts fosters competition among cities for grants on trending topics in application calls, consequently hindering the development of a coherent long-term strategy for migration governance.

Second, local actors discover and implement their own strategies to overcome constraints at the national level. For municipalities, these strategies involve navigating within the legal framework that defines their responsibilities and duties. Non-governmental organisations employ tactics such as strategically offering benefits to initially hesitant or demanding municipalities and nurturing relationships with central government bodies to avoid positioning themselves amid political tensions.

Third, city diplomacy emerges as a dynamic process involving multiple stakeholders at local, national, and international levels. Local actors, including municipalities, NGOs, and academic circles, frequently collaborate, especially through international projects and gatherings. Moreover, international organisations funding projects encourage collaboration at the national level between municipalities, NGOs, and central government institutions. Finally, despite tensions between central and local

governments, a certain degree of communication remains essential for managing bureaucratic procedures related to cities' international engagement.

The case of Istanbul, therefore, presents an insightful response to the emerging interdisciplinary need across international relations studies, urban studies, and migration studies (Acuto, 2013; Acuto et al., 2021; Barber, 2013; Curtis & Acuto, 2018; Kihlgren Grandi, 2020; Kosovac & Pejic, 2021; Marchetti, 2021; Stürner-Siovitz, 2023; van der Pluijm & Melissen, 2007). City networks often face constraints such as "limited funding, the need for participation in multilateral fora and nationalist backlashes by central governments" (Davidson et al., 2019, p. 3546). Additionally, city networks engage in competition for members and partners, focusing on narrow or crosscutting themes such as sustainability and resilience, leading to the multiplication and fragmentation of the city diplomacy landscape (Stürner-Siovitz, 2023, p. 193). The multiplication and fragmentation of city networks, in turn, can lead to competition and improved quality and merging of similar networks, as well as the success of one network causing others to lose resources agency, resources, and membership (Kihlgren Grandi, 2020, pp. 14-15).

We have conducted extensive empirical research to shed light on how power resources play a pivotal role in cities' strategic mapping and how this varies depending on the issues they tackle while negotiating, challenging, or aligning within the multi-layered context of urban governance. Through this research, one of our aims is to contribute to a limited body of empirical studies that have explored the challenges and potential pitfalls faced by city representatives in city diplomacy (Kosovac et al., 2020; Stürner-Siovitz, 2023).

Furthermore, our exploration delves into a context characterised by a highly centralised unitary government system. Within this framework, district municipalities face constraints in both administrative and financial capacities, limiting their ability to address immigrant needs and shape migration policies. They therefore develop specific strategies in response to the heavy regulations imposed by the central government (Karakaya Polat & Lowndes, 2022; Lowndes & Karakaya Polat, 2022). As Caponio (2022, p. 399) suggests, city networks are "political arenas" where various actors, including mayors, councillors, city officers, urban policy experts, activists, and network officers, interact. Our findings have further revealed that the processes preceding participation in city networks also constitute significant political arenas. Exploring these processes are essential as they play a pivotal role in impeding or enabling the expansion of migration network governance and the advancement of multilevel migration policymaking.

As Çağlar and Glick Schiller suggest, cities need to be understood "not as units of analysis or as bounded territorial units but as institutional political, economic, and cultural actors positioned within multiple institutionally structured scales of differentiated but

connected domains of power" (2018, p. 9). One main characteristic of this "multiscalar politics of the local," as our case has also confirmed, and as Sassen (2004, p. 660) further argues, is that "it is not confined to moving through a set of nested scales from the local to the national to the international, but can directly access other such local actors whether in the same country or across borders."

3.1.2. Barcelona and Urban Autonomy of Migration Governance: Preliminary Results

This section discusses the first findings from our investigation into the urban autonomy of migration governance in Barcelona, based on first interviews conducted with several local actors (see section 2.2.2) and the analysis of strategic documents and newspapers.

3.1.2.1 Accommodation: The Main Challenge of Migration Governance in Barcelona

For the several actors, working at the municipality or in other structures, the accommodation is one of the main challenges to achieve the autonomy in terms of urban migration governance in Barcelona.

The literature on the municipal autonomy-building process highlights two main challenges: First, the autonomous-governance of migration by municipalities is constrained by their capacity to be resilient (Zapata-Barrero, 2023). Second, the autonomy-building process of cities in urban migration governance is fragile. If many papers described how this fragility is linked to the excessive personalization of some local actors (Furri, 2017), ministerial reshuffles, partisan opposition at the local level, the dependence on available budgetary resources (Flamant, Lacroix, 2021) and, more generally, the variations in political orientations (Paquet, 2017), few studies have took into account in their analysis the pressure on housing, particularly in large-sized cities (Flamant, 2021).

The various stakeholders interviewed in Barcelona highlighted the question of accommodation as the main challenge. For the previous Director of Immigration and Interculturality, Barcelona City Council, from 2015 to 2020 : despite the efforts made by the municipality to create accommodation places - by increasing the budget of SAIER from 1.685.436 € in 2015 to 3.728.849 € in 2018 (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019; Hombert, 2022) - this (spatial) dimension of the local reception policy remains insufficient in a context of the structural lack of investment from the State. Therefore, we can already note that autonomy from the central State is not the only challenge municipalities are facing. As we pointed out in our hypothesis, autonomy in urban governance of international migration should be analysed under the production of the city characterised by a strong tourist pressure, urban gentrification, and a lack of public housing.

3.1.2.2. Is the Battle Already Lost?

If the image of Barcelona as a "city of refuge" is today internationally recognized, due to an active urban diplomacy, the reception of refugees and immigrants without (material) resources is facing an urban dilemma, how to achieve a material solidarity (municipal accommodation), in an attractive city characterised by a tension on housing? This question has been raised by all of the actors we have interviewed. In that sense, the local governance of migration and the local solidarity are facing a lack of autonomy, due to the urban development of Barcelona.

Weakness of the social rental housing

The right to housing is guaranteed by the Spanish Constitution. The entire home-ownership sector represents 85% of the total housing stock in Spain, while the rental sector is the smallest in Europe, corresponding to 11% of the total housing stock. Just about 2% of the stock is social rental housing. Social housing in Spain consists of the so-called *Vivienda de Proteccion Publica* (publicly protected housing).

In Barcelona, the social rental housing (*L'habitatge amb protecció oficial*) follows the general situation of Spain, and represents less than 2% of the housing stock (see, *Pla pel Dret a l'Habitatge de Barcelona* 2016-2025, p.79). This rate, lower than the European average of 15% of social housing, is the same in the Catalan region, with a total of 60,000 affordable rental houses, For the "Fundació Hàbitat3"[3], this stock is "insufficient". To reach the European average, 230,000 social rented homes have to be created. The Catalan foundation considers that "there are 450,000 empty homes (100,000 in the hands of financial institutions, 80,000 newly built homes and 270,000 private homes)."

For the migrants' accommodation in Barcelona, there is the emergency accommodation managed by the red cross. These are places in hotels, located in several municipalities in the Barcelona metropolitan area. If this solution is funded by the Spanish State, the municipality financially contributed to the emergency accommodation, to fill the gap of the red cross resources and to accommodate more persons. The second way is the program Nausica. It is entirely funded by the municipality and it aims to help refugees, asylum seekers or rejected asylum seekers to find accommodation when they are rejected

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[3] Habitat3 was created in 2014 to respond to the rise of the housing crisis in the Catalan region. It is a private foundation directed by the Board Council of the *Taula d'Entitats del Tercer Sector Social de Catalunya,* which represents more than 3,000 non-profit social organisations in the region. <https://www.habitat3.cat/presentacio>

from the State program or constrained to go to an area, where they don't want to stay, due to the dispersal policy of asylum seekers' reception in Spain).

> We have emergency accommodation for people who have recently arrived in Barcelona (…) We have a small budget to put people in some hostels or hotels for a few days. Suddenly, there were a lot of people who were asking for refugee status. The gate to ask for that is the NGO Red Cross, but the budget they had from the State was not enough. So, we used the money from the city. During few months, the program of the State was not founded. We cannot have people sleeping in the street with children. So we paid to shelter them until the State suddenly provided funding again. It was a complementary shelter. We were not supposed to do it because it is the State obligation. We invested quite a few millions euros, because we had more than 2.000 people sleeping in hotels, all around the metropolitan area which is crazy, and we didn't have shelters (…) There are many dropouts from the State program or people who are finishing this program (after receiving refugee status) without autonomy, here Nausica comes in. It is a bridge program between the State program and the real autonomy of the person. (The previous Director of the department of Immigration at the City Council of Barcelona, 2023)

To achieve the program Nausica, the municipality tries to find jobs and shelter (autonomy houses) for more than one year. These places, located in rental public houses owned by the municipality, are notably coming from the "Zombie banks". Directly related to the crisis of 2008, these are empty flats that formerly belonged to banks. The municipality has recovered around 300 apartments and converted them into social housing. Some of these flats have been used for refugees' accommodation.

> There are houses (between 20 and 30 flats in Barcelona). Half of them are provided by the ownership of the city, half are provided by NGO's. Unfortunately, the public housing stock in Barcelona is very low, compared to the other parts of Europe. We have a small impact. Due to the crisis of 2008, Zombie Banks raised in Barcelona, we had an agreement to take around 300 houses and we have to arrange them. Some of them were dedicated to the program Nausica. (The previous Director of the department of Immigration at the City Council of Barcelona, 2023)

Despite these efforts, the municipality's ability to accommodate exiles is limited. Behind this lack of urban resilience in the autonomous governance of migration (Zapata-Barrero, 2023), the stakeholders point to the urban conflict between, on the one hand, an urban model that aims to attract highly skilled migrants with high incomes, or to maintain and strengthen international tourist mobility and, on the other hand, a model that makes little political and financial commitment to build a sanctuary city that is able to autonomously accommodate vulnerable exiles.

"Expats welcome versus refugees welcome"?

The election of Ada Colao to the Barcelona City Council was seen by many local actors as a hope for renewal towards a new urban model. In order to strengthen the municipality's capacity to act against gentrification and to provide accommodation for vulnerable people, concrete projects were proposed between 2015 and 2019. Two of these projects are particularly important, as they involve the creation of hundreds of public social housings, a way of strengthening the municipality's capacity to provide accommodation for refugees.

The first is the project at 10 Via Laietana. This involves transforming a vacant building into 160 public housing units. The collectives and associations of the Ciutat Vella district where the building is located state that: "According to the plans and documentation we have been able to study, the property, with a floor area of over 18,000 square metres and designed at the beginning of the 20th century as a residential building, has a regular, diaphanous morphology that allows it to comfortably accommodate over 160 dwellings and a considerable number of small shops."
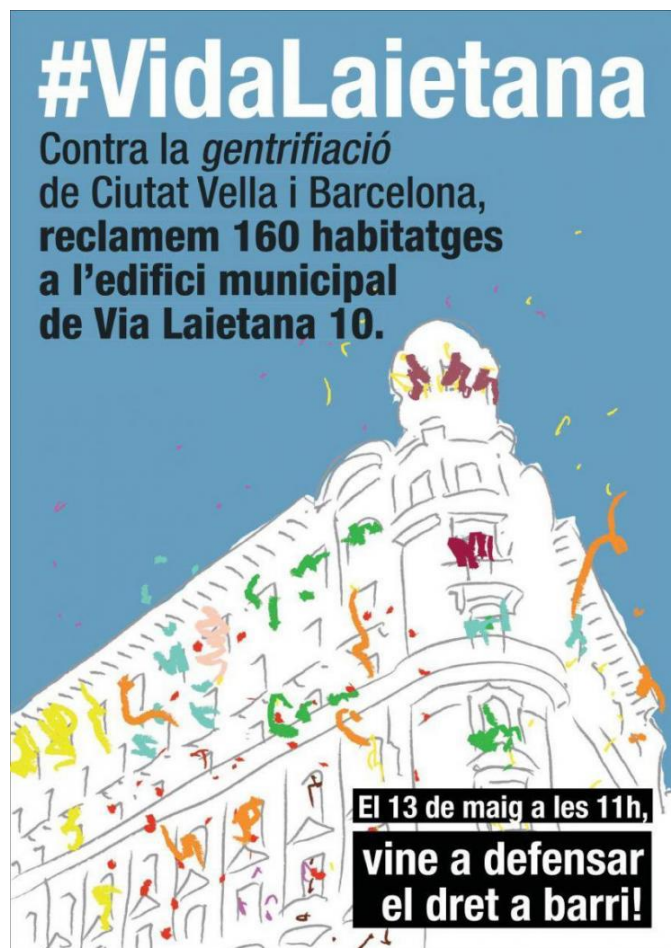
Poster calling for a demonstration to defend the public housing project in Via Laietana 10, Source: FAVB, 2017

Situated in the centre of Barcelona, between the El Born and El Gotico districts, the building is located on a major street serving the port of Barcelona and the Barcelonetta district.

There were two opposing views within the city council: one held by some of the elected representatives, who wanted to create a hub for start-ups, and the other held by Ada Colao's anti-gentrification councillors, who supported the creation of public housing. In the end, the project to create a digital hub was abandoned in favour of the creation of public housing. However, so far the building has not been rehabilitated and the housing has not been created. According to one of Ada Colao's former advisers whom we interviewed, there is a tension between a political will for social justice through public social housing and a liberal political approach promoted and defended by Richard Florida (2002)[4] on the "Creative Class".

The second project is to replace the Montjuïc Exhibition Centre with a new district (see Figure n°22) in which public housing would play a major role - between 5,000 and 10,000 units, according to the architect David Bravo, a former adviser to Ada Colao, whom we interviewed:

> The Montjuïc Exhibition Centre could be a Mediterranean neighbourhood equivalent in size to La Barceloneta. A compact district, made up of small plots of land, with squares on a human scale and cross streets linking Poble-sec to the Font de la Guatlla. A neighbourhood with a linear park - not the urban highway that Avenida Maria Cristina has become, even though it is classified as a green space. A mixed-use district, where local shops and production facilities for the local economy would coexist, with the Magic Fountain and the National Palace as a backdrop to the heritage. But above all, an affordable neighbourhood where thousands of social housing units could be built - 5,000 with the density of Vila Olímpica and 10,000 with that of the Sagrada Família - which would help to combat gentrification in Poble-sec, Sant.

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[4] He developed his vision in the book "*The Rise of the Creative Class*" (2002).

Figure 22. Illustration of the proposal to replace the Montjuïc exhibition centre with a residential neighbourhood
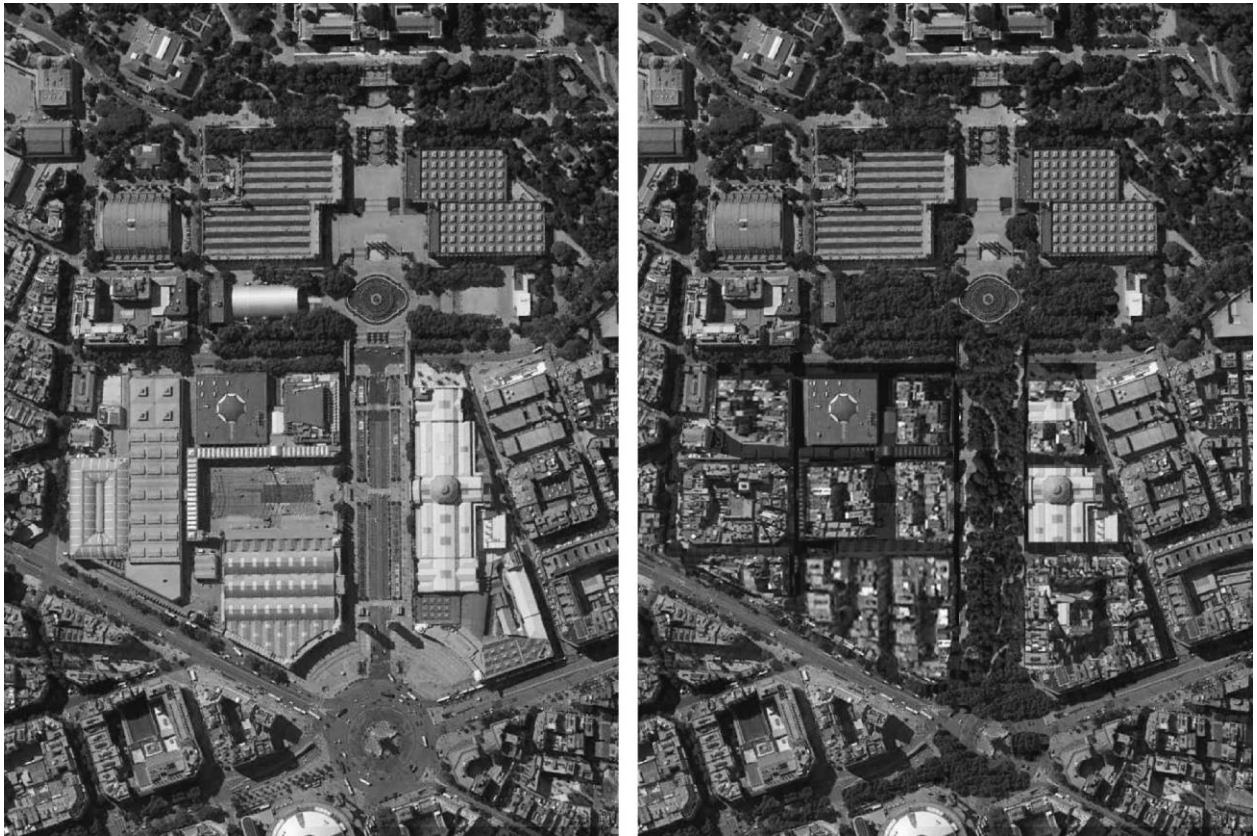
Source: David Bravo, 2019.

This project will not see the light of day today, as the city council has agreed to extend the lease on the Exhibition Centre until 2050 under Ada Colao's term of office."

This case illustrates the contradiction and tension involved in the production of the city: the desire to create a city of refuge that needs to strengthen its capacity to attract public housing, and the choice to miss the opportunity to create thousands of public housing units.

These two projects highlight an urban conflictuality: the denunciation by local anti-gentrification actors of the "voracity of the tourism industry and the private housing market" on the one hand, and the desire to strengthen the place of public social rental housing in the city on the other. "Refugees welcome versus expats welcome", summed up by one of Ada Colao's former advisors we interviewed.

Among several stakeholders, they denounce a form of prioritisation of the city's production priorities, with a desire to further strengthen tourist attractiveness and attract "digital nomads", while the question of the reception of refugees remains a question of emergency support, a question which is therefore not addressed in a lasting manner.

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Taken to its paroxysm, this conflict leads one of the actors interviewed and who is responsible for coordinating the relocation of refugees outside the big cities towards the Catalan countryside to declare that "Barcelona is a city for tourists". The actors interviewed feel that the battle is lost in advance. This comes in a context of political change, perceived as unfavourable to strengthen the "city of refuge" policy, promoted as radical by the former municipal team.

3.1.2.3. Beyond the Myth of "City of Refuge," Local Dynamics of Solidarity And Rejection

Far from the "refuge city" presented and defended in several works on the reception of exiles in Barcelona, we note that municipal action which aims at the autonomy of the city is strongly constrained by the urban development model, in particular by the low presence of public social rental housing. Thus, the process of Barcelona's autonomy in the governance of migration appears limited by the contradictions and conflicts of urban actors. In this context of conflict, municipal actors, in conjunction with other local actors, exercise local policies which aim to co-produce a policy of solidarity with exiled people or, on the contrary, of rejection.

Relocating the accommodation outside the metropolis. Self-defeating or renewed solidarity?

The project *Opportunitat 500* constitutes a local initiative for the relocation of "vulnerable refugees" (according to family composition, gender, social and medical situation, etc.) from the four major cities of Catalonia (Barcelona, Girona, Lleida, Tarragona) towards small towns in the Catalan countryside (see section 2.2.2).

For the project coordinator, *Opportunitat 500* constitutes a model for the future refugees arrival, considering (large-sized) cities as social and spatial structures where it is difficult, if not impossible, to develop solidarity actions in an autonomous way. The project coordinator we interviewed was born in Barcelona and has lived since Covid-19 in a small town, 1 hour from Barcelona. The lifestyle of this actor is based on autonomy (he lives in a cooperative house with two other families, using photovoltaic panels to have energy independence, small livestock breeding and small agriculture to achieve food independence). The promotion of the reception of refugees beyond the metropolis corresponds to his spatial practice and his way of perceiving urban/rural social relations. Questioned about the project *Opportunitat 500*, the former director of the department of immigration at the City council of Barcelona declared that he is not aware of the project. Furthermore, he considers that this type of project cannot provide a resilient response to the refugees' arrival, as it does not make it possible to accommodate a significant number of people (around a hundred under *Opportunitat 500*). Furthermore, he considers that refugees would like to live in the city (Barcelona) and that it is a wrong idea to

accommodate them in isolated localities. Therefore, initiating a policy of refugees' relocation would be an admission of failure, when it can be perceived by other actors as renewing solidarity.

These two political approaches to the reception of refugees reflect a tension that runs through the process of autonomous urban governance of migration. Beyond this tension, there is competition between several local actors over the autonomy of migration governance. Thus, the project *Opportunitat* was funded by the regional government (*Generalitat*) of Catalonia. The scale of autonomy in migration governance would no longer be limited to Barcelona but to the entire region.

A monopolised autonomy? Divergent interests between local actors of migration governance

On October 22, 2023, the newspaper El Nacio headlined "Barcelona City Council sentences Migrant Closure: imminent eviction", declaring this: "Around forty people without alternative housing complain of being "in the street" if the will of the Collboni government is not stopped, after having played for five years a symbolic role for the rights of immigrants". The new municipal team in Barcelona, led by Jaume Collboni (PSC), is trying to recover the previous school of arts "Escola Massana", which is located in the centre of Barcelona, in the neighbourhood of El Raval.

The occupants of one of the buildings of the former Escola Massana in Barcelona - a space transformed into a shelter for homeless people and in many cases also undocumented - were informed of the municipal intention to recover the property. The political spark that ignited the confinement of migrants has been extinguished, but the fundamental function of refuge for people without alternatives has been maintained. Many also come from the street. There are now around forty of them sharing the same roof. This urban squat is part of the refugee's accommodation solutions in Barcelona, and at the same time a project to build a resistance against gentrification.

The creation of the new school of art, the *Escola Massana*, (See Photos n°1 & 2) justifies squatting of the old school or arts and using it to help migrants in vulnerable situations. Accommodation is integrated with other activities, such as food assistance, education, sport and art (see Photos n°3 & 4).

Photo 1. The new school of arts. Source: Rafik Arfaoui

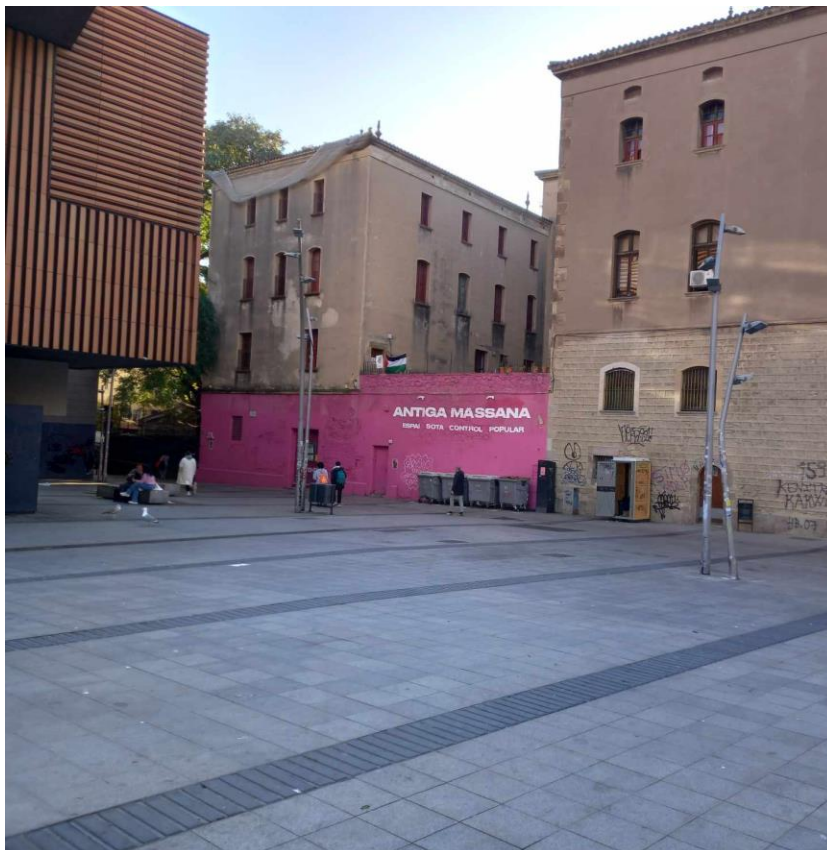Photo 2. On the right, the "Antiga Massana" (which means the previous Massana) and on the left, the (new) Escola Massana. Source: Rafik Arfaoui

Photo 3. The School has a network of mutual support in education. Source: La Directa newspaper; Joanna Chichelnitzky

Photo 4. The Matilde Landa Popular Gym was born from the need to "recover contact sport in the anti-fascist movement". Source: La Directa newspaper; Joanna Chichelnitzky

This project, which aims to build an autonomous way to help vulnerable migrants, and other vulnerable persons who are non-migrants but facing a vulnerable situation, is in competition with the process of an autonomous urban governance of migration advocated by the City Council of Barcelona. Here, the interests and the political agendas between both actors are different.

If the urban squat is sometimes tolerated, even encouraged, by municipalities wishing to build urban autonomy to manage the arrival of refugees, it can be in contradiction with the interests of the municipalities. In Barcelona's case, the current political agenda does not seem to favour cooperation with this type of actors and will strengthen the detachment of informal actors from municipal actors in the urban governance of migrations (see section 3.1.3)

3.1.3. Interim Conclusion

As we have hypothesised, the preliminary results show that the autonomous governance of migration by municipalities is a process which is in direct tension with the urban development model of the city. In other words, the achievement of a 'city of refuge' model is directly confronted with the city's production model.

In Barcelona, the housing crisis and the structural weakness of public social rented housing are having an impact on local action. The city council, noting the failure of the State to fulfil its duty to protect and accommodate refugees and asylum seekers and to provide adequate funding for the associations managing these actions of solidarity, decided to fill the gap and implement the "Barcelona City of Refuge" programme. Beyond the discourse of a city that resists State and European policies and actions that are hostile to migrants, the municipality has encountered difficulties in responding to the main challenge raised by the stakeholders we interviewed: accommodation.

For example, the municipality is having difficulty finding accommodation for refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants. While the state of the art among studies of public action in urban governance of migration was almost unanimous on the lack of urban resilience of local action, we opted bridge between, on the one hand, local public action in migration governance and, on the other hand, local policies and discourse in relation to housing issues, in particular public social rental housing and urban gentrification.

The initial results show that there is a contradiction between, on the one hand, the urban development model defended by some Barcelona's municipal authorities, which advocate making the city more attractive economically and for tourism, and on the other hand, local actions to defend the rights of vulnerable migrants to have access to housing and to live in dignity in the city. The issue of urban governance seems inextricably linked

to the ability of the municipal actors to build an ambitious policy to create public social rental housing.

Moreover, the process of urban autonomy of migration governance in Barcelona is in conflict with actors working on another scale, with other political and social interests and agendas. For example, the policy of resettling refugees in the Catalan countryside is seen as a way of renewing the governance of urban migration, which would not be possible from or in cities where the neo-liberal production of space prevents any possibility of autonomy. Moreover, certain actions, such as urban squatting, are in conflict with other interests defended by Barcelona city council.

Thus, the autonomous urban governance of migration puts several models of the governance and the production of the city in tension.

3.1.3. Amsterdam and the Detachment of Local Actors from Formal Governance: Preliminary Results

This section discusses the first findings from our investigation into the detachment of local actors from formal governance in Amsterdam based on the analysis of local policies on diversity and urban development, and first interviews conducted.

3.1.3.1. Amsterdam, "City of Solidarity with opportunities for all."[5] - Between Solidarity City and Growth Machine

The analysis of two municipal websites, that is the website of the city of Amsterdam and the website *I Amsterdam*, the current city government's coalition agreement, and a first planning document on the city's most culturally diverse neighbourhood, Zuidoost, allowed us to draw a first picture of local governance at the urban-migration nexus.

What emerged was a clear narrative of diversity as (economic) strength in a city that has (and continues to) profit from immigration, but also that Amsterdam is confronted with challenges with regards to ethnic diversity and urban space.

Clearly, the municipality pushes for **self-representation as a welcoming city**. Visiting the city's websites and browsing its policy documents, the user/reader is regularly reminded that diversity and tolerance are 'in the DNA' of the city, This can be seen amongst others on the city's website's rubric for the diversity policy, which reads: "Our diversity is

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[5] Amsterdams Akkoord 2022-2026, p. 10a

our greatest strength. We focus not on our differences, but on what unites us. When people of different backgrounds work together, they come up with new insights, which in turn fuels innovation and creativity."[6]

This image is also reflected in the *Amsterdams Akkoord*, the coalition agreement between PVAD, Groenlinks and D66 (Amsterdams *Coalitie Akkoord* 2022-2026). The introduction to the coalition agreement reads: "Characteristic Amsterdam traits - freedom, open-mindedness, solidarity - have formed through a long history of interconnectedness." (Amsterdams *Coalitie Akkoord* 2022-2026, p. 7) **Diversity**, according to the city's institutional communication, **is an economic asset**.

According to the agreement, the city is committed to green spaces and sustainability, to responsible growth with regards to housing, and - most importantly for our research - to becoming "[a]n inclusive city with a focus on solidarity and opportunities for everyone." (City of Amsterdam, 2023)[7] In line with this, the coalition aims in its agreement for "[a] future where all Amsterdammers can lead prosperous lives because Amsterdam becomes better when each of its residents thrives. Not governed by the law of the jungle, but by looking out for those who need more support." (Amsterdams Coalitie Akkoord 2022-2026, p. 7)

From the agreement emerges that **fighting segregation is a major policy issue tightly linked to the city's urban development and its ethnic diversity**. As a result, improving the financing of education, for example preschools, in parts of the city with the greatest need emerges as major objective from the agreement (Amsterdams Coalitie Akkoord 2022-2026, p. 12) The agreement refers regularly to the fact that a young person's background in Amsterdam impacts their future: "Educational segregation is a persistent problem that is not easily solved, but we do not accept it. Reducing quality differences between schools, so that it does not matter where you go to school, is the best remedy against segregation." (Amsterdams Coalitie Akkoord 2022-2026, p. 14) The fact that socio-economic (dis)advantage are concentrated in Amsterdam with central neighbourhoods being better off than many less centrally located districts, leads to pressure on social cohesion in the city. This is aggravated by **poorer districts being home to disproportionately higher proportions of ethnic minority populations.** This was also emphasised by an OECD report on well-being (OECD, 2016): "[...] there is a risk that the poorer districts overlap with areas largely populated by ethnic minorities, thus creating

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[6] City of Amsterdam (2023), Policy: Diversity, online: https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/policy/policy-diversity/
[7] See City of Amsterdam (2023), online: https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/policy/

disadvantaged neighbourhoods with high concentrations of low-income groups and high levels of social and ethnic inequalities (OECD, 2006)." (OECD, 2016: n.p.)

Figure 23. Share of inhabitants of non-western origin, Amsterdam, 2016
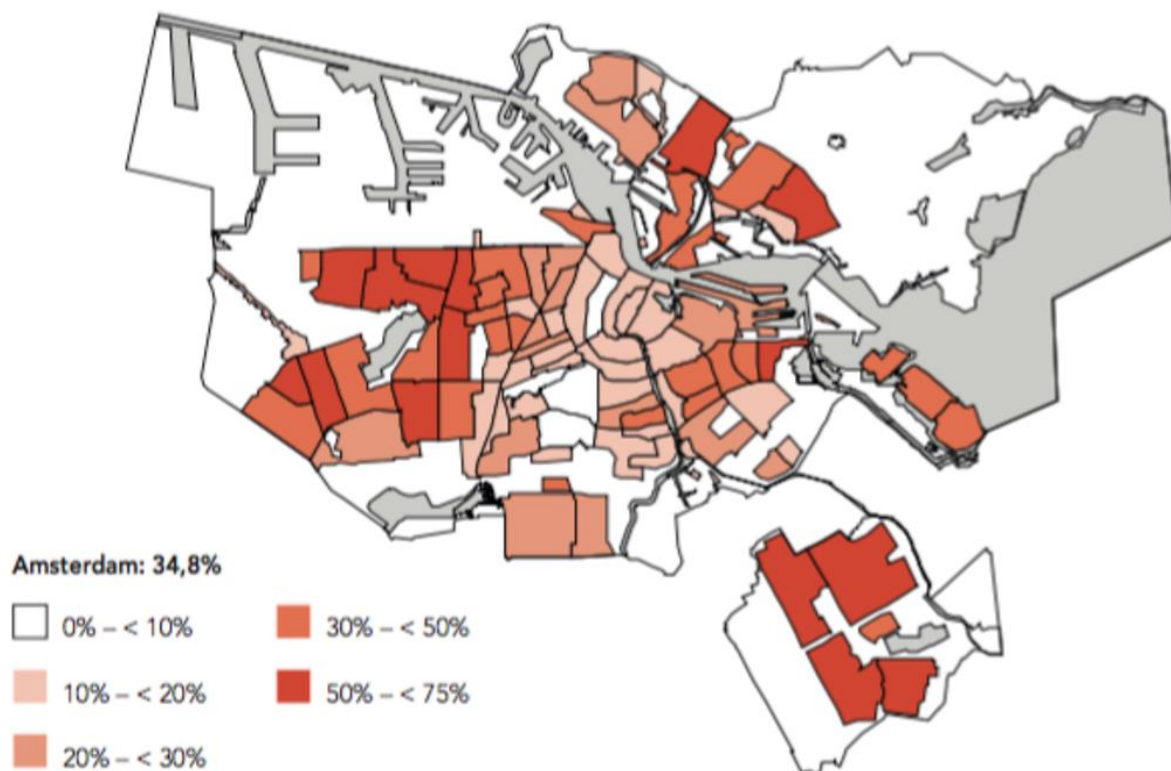
Source: OECD (2016, n.p.) based on OIS. Jaarboek Amsterdam (2016), *Amsterdam in cijfers 2016*.

As can be seen in Figure 23, the highest concentration of ethnic minority groups lies outside the city's central neighbourhoods, notably to the far east of its Zuidoost district as well in its Osdorp and upper Amsterdam-Noord neighbourhoods, each with ethnic minority shares between 50 and 70 percent.

Linked to these issues, a number of policies were implemented to improve the mutual understanding of Amsterdam's diverse population. One such example is *Shared History* project (Gedeelde Geschiedenis, 2016), which includes a four-page list of information sources Amsterdamers can consult if they wish to learn more about the migration history of the city and their neighbourhood, but also about the country's colonial

past.[8] However, on a larger scale, the city also promotes a total of three **urban renewal** programs: the Masterplans Zuidoost, Samen Nieuw West, and Anpaak Noord. According to the coalition agreement "face persistent and interconnected challenges." According to the administration, "[i]t is not acceptable that in a wealthy country and prosperous city, the differences are so enormous that children growing up in Nieuw-West, Zuidoost, and Noord do not have the same opportunities as others." (Amsterdams Coalitie Akkoord 2022-2026, p. 38)

As a result, the city puts forward a long-term, collaborative approach to "structurally improve the perspectives of residents" for which "[s]ustainable investments in time and money are needed," spanning various domains, including planning, education, health and safety. (Amsterdams Coalitie Akkoord 2022-2026, p. 38-39) To tackle segregation in these three neighbourhoods, the city is "commit[ted] to long-term investments [...] where historically there has been insufficient investment." We were able to analyse a first out of the three plans, the *Zuidoost Masterplan*.

Zuidoost is Amsterdam's most culturally diverse neighbourhood. To create a functional "town of the future" (Zahirovic & Sterk, 2019), the district was designed in the 1960s but faced stark criticism upon completion, when it could not attract the hoped for populations as middle-class families for its lack of attractivity and decentral location. As a result, the neighbourhood provided available housing for migrants from Suriname following the country's independence from Dutch colonial power in 1975. Over time, socio-economic disadvantage rose through exclusion from social life and rising unemployment – by 1980, Zuidoost had an unemployment rate of 50% (Zahirovic & Sterk, 2019). Despite efforts to change the district's peripheralization, Zuidoost continues to lag behind other Amsterdam districts in terms of quality of life (Zo=Zuidoost, 2021). The *Zuidoost Masterplan* aims to integrate multiculturalism, urban aesthetics, and digital participation, by proposing to residents of the Zuidoost neighbourhood to design their district collectively via a digital platform headed by Amsterdam's *Digital Urban Planning Lab* and municipal departments. The neighbourhood's changing demographics into one made up of over 170 nationalities (Zo=Zuidoost, 2021) has provoked the implementation of a digital tool to ensure inclusivity and reflect the districts' local cultures through urban space. The objective is to reduce the marginalisation of minority groups. However, from an urban planning perspective, such plans raise concerns over **state-led gentrification and displacement** in light of comments by the city leadership to turn Zuidoost into the

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[8] Gedeelde Geschiedenis (2016), online: https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/policy/policy-diversity/policy-shared/

"Brooklyn of the City" (van Bemmel, 2021) What is more, Amsterdam's strict regulations in terms of urban aesthetics and building raise questions about how much Zuidoost-residents get to define what a 'beautiful' Zuidoost could look like, and the digitial character of the participatory process raises the issue of digital capital, especially among marginalised groups.

While the coalition agreement puts forward the **goal of equal opportunities**, the city's external communication is strongly targeted at high-skilled internationals. Amsterdam presents itself as international and economically vibrant place that attracts highly-skilled individuals, which can be seen as a website entirely dedicated to internationals: from students to newcomers hoping to work or found businesses in the Netherlands, I *Amsterdam* provides information for this group and directs them to the dedicated former 'Expat Centre,' now called IN Amsterdam. This centre's activities target highly skilled workers and international students and provides them with support in the administrative process of arrival and settling. Such services come at a cost, however, these costs are at times covered by employers if employees fall under the highly-skilled labourer scheme. Connected to this is the aforementioned 30%-tax rule, which makes moving to the Netherlands even more attractive for skilled workers (see I Amsterdam, 2023).[9] Such an economic rationale underlies the aforementioned Amsterdam Akoords as well, as can be seen in the opening statement:

> Amsterdam is a city of solidarity with a free, open-minded character. A city in which we want to give talent free rein, where everyone can and may be themselves and where we care for each other when others need our support. Solidarity is not just something the city has to offer. It is also what the city needs from its people. Any talent that is not able to develop is a missed opportunity. And for talent to develop, it requires feeling protected and supported by one's environment. Security and progress cannot exist without solidarity. That is why we invest heavily in providing opportunities for all and especially for those who need it most (Amsterdams Coalitie Akkoord 2022-2026, p. 11).

The city also communicates to refugee populations via its online presence, as can be seen on the municipality's website where the topic 'refugees' guides the user to information on living allowances and what actors are responsible for helping them. Especially Ukrainian refugees profit from curated information, including how to find free

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[9] See I Amsterdam, information about the 'Expat Centre' In Amsterdam, online:
https://www.iamsterdam.com/en/live-work-study/in-amsterdam/about-in-amsterdam

parking (see City of Amsterdam, 2023).[10] The coalition agreement dedicates an entire section to the **reception of asylum seekers and refugees**, stating in the section's introduction that the city faces challenges tied to the housing crisis, but also that it works with formal and informal organisations to best support its refugee populations, stating: "Amsterdam zal altijd vluchtelingen opvangen, waar ze ook vandaan komen." (Amsterdams Coalitie Akkoord 2022-2026, p. 26) - Amsterdam will always welcome refugees, no matter where they are from. However, what the city government intends to do precisely remains rather vague. The goals of the city can be broadly defined as quick integration via language acquisition and the continuous fight against homelessness.

What emerged from the document analysis is the picture of a city that strives to be inclusive, but that struggles with socio-spatial segregation, and where the appreciation of **cultural diversity appears to be little more than an element in the city's branding**.

3.1.3.2. Amsterdam, a Place for Everyone? Local Detachment in a Centre of political action that comes at a cost

Based on the analysis of the local actor landscape, a total of 17 organisations were identified to likely act detached from local governance with freedom of municipal funding as main indicator. Among these, six work on a variety of issues, four act in the field of entrepreneurship, employment and labour, three specialise on support for vulnerable groups such as women, youth and the LGBTQ+ community, and at least two offer their orientation services to undocumented individuals.

All organisations were contacted, with a total of three responding positively to interview requests. Based on the two interviews conducted, we were able to formulate a number of preliminary observations which will serve as the basis for the continuing research.

Amsterdam is an important place for newcomers and refugees in their efforts to shape the local governance of migration-related diversity. According to both in-depth interviews, but also resulting from investigations into local institutional actor landscapes, the city emerged as an important focal point for organised action. This coming together of various international actors and important political institutions was described as unique for the Dutch contexts in both interviews, making Amsterdam an important node for political action and contestation.

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[10] See City of Amsterdam (2023), information for refugees. Online:
https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/refugees/

Despite the above-described efforts of the city to present itself as inclusive, tolerant and solidary, **recognition of newcomers and their role as agents in their own right emerged as an important theme.** Most strikingly for our research interest, detached action has emerged as a result of frustrations over unmet needs, aspirations and expectations, leading interview participants to 'take things into their own hands.' Two examples for this were found in our interviews with founders of initiatives and organisations who work on tackling the negative image of newcomers in the Netherlands. One of our research participants referred to such stereotypes as 'labels,' and explained their organisations' objectives as "really giv[ing] them the floor to share their own stories, to share their own narrative about who they are. From there, we try to give the audience actually the opportunity to see the human being that stands beyond this label." (Interview, 12/10/2023)[11] The organisation also proposes training for disadvantaged youth, an effort that is not unseen by local government which increasingly reaches out to their organisation or others in an effort to 'give voice' to newcomers themselves:

> the content of this training is personal development, group conflict management and social entrepreneurship, for youth to start a project. The project may be small but it will be their own, in their own surrounding - the neighbourhood, the school. We encourage them to really let them lead the change basically. And lastly, we also do advocacy and consultancy work for governmental institutions, companies, NGOs that want to work more on diversity and inclusion, or that want to include the voices of people with migrant and refugee backgrounds more (Interview, 12/10/2023).

This is in line with the coalition agreement in which building community wealth is one of the defined objectives of city government (Amsterdams Coalitie Akkoord 2022-2026, p. 39)

This type of advocacy work, according to both interview participants, was possible in the first place thanks to language skills. The fact that our participant spoke English fluently allowed him to "communicate from day one to almost everyone in the Netherlands." (Interview, 12/10/2023). To them, the English speakers in the reception facility understood themselves as a "bridge" between refugees and the Dutch society:

> Because it felt, and not only for me, but also the other English speakers within the camp, like we are the bridge, or the channel between the hosting society, the organisation that is taking care of us, but also the people and the community that

[11] All interview participants and their organisations are anonymised in this report.

lives inside the camp. So then, automatically, you take that job (Interview, 12/10/2023).

This form of intercultural mediation and facilitation of communication between groups is a complex job that is often taken for granted by social workers and other actors working in the reception system. With interpretation and translation support being often limited to administrative procedures, taking things into one's own hands starts early for many newcomers. For our research participant, such activities were also the starting point for their advocacy work:

It actually started within the camp itself. Like how can we communicate with the organisation? How can we really express our needs? But also, how can we help? How can we support? None of us came here to just sit, eat and sleep, you know? This is not the dream that we all were looking for. So, everyone started to look around to become active again, to reactivate themselves, and to be of support (Interview, 12/10/2023).

As such, efforts from refugee-led organisations like our participants are also a means to enact agency within a system that commonly erases it.

As an arrival space, the city of Amsterdam appears to be a **hostile environment for actors who cannot keep up with the rising costs of living.** Both social entrepreneurs interviewed so far left Amsterdam for challenges around affordable housing or tied to finding adequate locations for their activities. This is in line with findings from the document analysis which exposed Amsterdam as a dynamic node for political action, but as strongly hit by a housing crisis and struggling with socio-spatial segregation. One of our participants "would have loved to stay in Amsterdam," but "finding a place [there] is semi-impossible, especially with a small budget. [...] I could not stay in Amsterdam. I think this is really a problem for almost everyone, I would say." (interview, 12/10/2023) The tight housing market in the city was also mentioned by our second interview participant, who explained that they had to move their staff into remote work when the affordable lease in Amsterdam ran out (Interview, 13/10/2023). To our interview participants, such urban development geared towards high-income households swaps over from Amsterdam to other larger cities, and has negative effects on newcomers:

You see it now even coming to Rotterdam. In a lot of neighbourhoods they build fancier, big apartments. In a way, it's nice for the city because it will, you know, boost developments and all this kind of stuff. But on the social aspect and the societal aspect, you end up with having a homogeneous group of people: young professional, high-income people living together. And the rest? Elsewhere (Interview, 12/10/2023).

Nevertheless, both actors emphasised that they return regularly due to the rich network - social, ethnic, entrepreneurial - the city offers. However, decision-making, according to the interview participants, still lacks representation from minority groups:

> If you look at the photos or videos of a City Council (meeting), then you feel like, yeah, but I don't see that person or that person, you know? You don't feel yourself connected to it. So there is also a lack of a feeling of belonging to some part of the community, and this has a negative impact - not only on policy making (Interview, 12/10/2023).

With regards to representation and the gap between those who formulate policies and those affected by them is noteworthy and a problem that also affects the Zuidoost Masterplan. While 75% of residents in Zuidoost have a migration background, such shares shrink significantly among staff in spatial planning departments.[12] As a result, it becomes crucial to consider the knowledge of 'Experts by Experience,' as one of our participants put it. To them, policies must be evaluated in cooperation with members of the groups who are directly affected by them: "we need insight from the ground to check if programmes are working." (Interview, 12/10/2023) That being said, from interviews emerged the issue that the inclusion of 'Experts by experience' often depends on a single person within an organisation that drives such efforts, and that small progress made can easily the brought to a standstill or be reversed if said person leaves. A further issue emerging from both talks is that of funding: the work of the social entrepreneurs encountered is often seen free advocacy:

> we invite you, so you should be thankful that we invited you to the table. We will offer coffee, tea, maybe lunch. So, then you feel like: 'Wait a minute...'. And this is not only for the people with migration or refugee backgrounds, but for a lot of experts by experience: They are invited, and basically hired as consultants, but then you don't pay them because you feel like they should be grateful to be sitting at the table? This is really quite an issue (Interview, 12/10/2023).

Such practices harm true participation and co-creation of multicultural urban spaces, and raises concerns over the meaningfulness of inclusive rhetoric. Unsurprisingly, then Amsterdam is a site where actors increasingly act detached from formal governance.

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[12] See Dutch Bureau of Statistics (2022) on cultural diversity in Amsterdam. Online, https://www.cbs.nl/-/media/_excel/2023/40/culturele-diversiteit-gemeente-amsterdam-2022.xlsx

In the two cases investigated here, such action is largely comprised of advocacy work. Future interviews will look into other areas of action, including labour and housing.

3.1.3.3. Interim Conclusion

As hypothesised, preliminary findings show that the detachment of local action emerges from a mismatch of what municipal governments (claim to) provide and what local actors and migrant populations need and aspire for.

The socio-economic situation in Amsterdam, including the housing crisis and high costs of living, impact local action. The latter is further driven by national exclusionary politics and strong utilitarian narrative that prioritises highly skilled internationals. As a result of the latter, interview participants 'took matters into their own hands,' by founding organisations that promote not only a better understanding of the refugee experience but also a change in the dominant narrative that depicts newcomers as either 'victims' or 'threats.'

As such, the detachment of local actors from formal governance in Amsterdam is largely driven by a sense of disregard. While the document analysis has shown that the city prides itself to be a city for all, and interview participants put forward that the city is an important node for collaboration and creativity, both participants also emphasised the difficulties tied to living in Amsterdam with high costs of living and pressures created by a profound housing crisis.

Findings from our contrast case support that the detachment of local actors from formal governance emerges from political contestation on the one hand, and a disregard of local governments for the conditions on the ground on the other. Several interview participants there emphasised the gap between what the city claims to do for its exiled populations and what is actually done.

A first result from the investigations into Amsterdam and a second contrast case is, that much is to be learned from **cities that present themselves as welcoming** and that - based on their external communication - indeed promote inclusive policies. These places, too, **remain sites of political contestation and negotiations around the right to the city and inclusive urban spaces.** While welcoming cities are less in opposition to local action in favour of refugees, local actors are by no means free to do as they please. As put by one interview participant, the work of local actors continues to be 'a constant fight.'

3.2. Limitations and Outlook

It is to be noted that the amount of collected data for our three-case studies Istanbul, Barcelona and Amsterdam differs significantly. The reasons for that are twofold: on the one hand, it is to be noted that the research team in Istanbul is significantly larger

with a total of four researchers working on the topic of city diplomacy there, whereas research in Barcelona and Amsterdam is conducted by only one researcher each.

Further, the research topics themselves bring along varying degrees of challenges: it turned out that especially the research on the detachment of local actors from formal governance posed challenges, not only with regards to what precisely constituted a 'detachment' from formal governance, but also with regards to the very fact that action that takes place detached from formal procedures is not rarely considered to take place in legal grey zones. This may have contributed to low interview response rates, and will be taken into consideration in the remainder of the research. It is to be noted, therefore, that findings from our Amsterdam case study must be viewed with caution: The fact that findings are based primarily on the analysis of policy documents and a small number of interviews, further interviewing is needed to enrich the data base.

Conversely, the opposite holds for the research on city diplomacy. Stakeholders engaged in Istanbul's international activities are frequently linked to formal institutions such as municipalities, non-governmental organisations, research centres, and universities. Consequently, they are more visible actors and operate within a legal framework, which makes accessing them relatively easier. However, despite this accessibility, the research encountered distinct challenges due to Turkey's specific context, characterised by high political tensions between municipalities and central government bodies represented by selected or appointed officials from different political parties. This aspect has been previously discussed in section 2.1.3 - Challenges Faced during Fieldwork.

Moreover, the case of Barcelona presents a double challenge. On the one hand, our fieldwork began when the municipal team changed after the last elections in 2023. However, the fact that we focused mainly on the period from 2015 unlocked some interviews. The arrival of a new mayor and the change in the directors of various departments is an interesting opportunity to examine the impact of political change on the urban autonomous governance of migration. The second challenge of our fieldwork is to connect two thematic fields that are little linked both in the academic sphere, which has studied the governance of migration in Barcelona, and in the political sphere. For example, the migration and housing departments of the City Council of Barcelona have little connection.

In our immediate research agenda, we aim to focus on two key tasks: firstly, concluding our fieldwork research in three cities, and secondly, initiating the dissemination of our research findings through various platforms, including conference papers, journal articles, book chapters, and our project website blogs. Our initial priority involves drafting conference papers on our subtopics for the upcoming IMISCOE conference in Lisbon, for which we have submitted a panel proposal. Simultaneously, we will work on developing a

draft for a journal article publication, analysing and integrating the three pathways to city autonomy studied by the three research teams.

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