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The Two-way ‘Glocalisation’ of Human Rights or: How Cities Become International Agents in Migration Governance

Janina Stürner* and Petra Bendel**

Abstract

‘We need to be part of U.N. decision-making if international agreements are to be responsive to on-the-ground realities’ (McCarthy 2017). Following the US government decision to withdraw from negotiating a ‘Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration’, local authorities such as the New York City Mayor’s Office joined forces with cities worldwide to demand a voice in international migration governance. We claim that this case illustrates an emerging strategy in city diplomacy – the two-way ‘glocalisation’ of human rights. Adopting this approach, cities localise international and European human rights law through local implementation. However, in the absence of national engagement at the international level or in the face of a negotiation deadlock, as in the current European migration and asylum debate, a window of opportunity is opening up for cities to go a step further: Cities retranslate local practices into global human rights discourses thus developing international agency to achieve three goals. 1) Cities create soft law to ensure local reception and integration policies grounded in fundamental international and European rights. 2) Through networks such as ‘EUROCITIES’ or the ‘Global Mayoral Forum’ cities lend legitimacy to EU and UN strategies and advocate rights-based migration governance holding EU and UN institutions and member states accountable by their own laws and values. 3) Based on their expertise as implementers and policy innovators, cities push for a place at the international and European negotiation tables. In this article, we present initial findings of our research on the role and activities of transnational municipal networks in the development of migration governance. We outline and illustrate cities’ glocalisation strategies with examples from the international and European context. The article concludes with concrete recommendations to the international, European, national and local level on how to incorporate cities’ transnational engagement in intergovernmental processes for truly coherent and rights-based migration governance.

Keywords: *human rights, migration governance, city networks, city diplomacy, glocalisation*

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Introduction

‘The trend of people seeking asylum protection in Europe cannot solely be considered an emergency situation but needs to be addressed as a structural issue requiring structural and effective measures that take human rights into consideration’ (EUROCITIES 2015, 1).

In the context of rising numbers of asylum seekers and migrants arriving in Europe in 2015, ‘EUROCITIES’, the network of major European cities, called upon states and European institutions to respect the rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees¹. Furthermore, ‘EUROCITIES’ declared that ‘(c)ity authorities should be directly consulted by the European Commission and the UNHCR as frontline operators and places’ (EUROCITIES 2015, 3). European cities are not alone in their demands to respect human rights in migration governance and to include municipal expertise in global policy-making: Following the US government’s decision to withdraw from the negotiation table for the ‘Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration’, US-American local authorities joined forces with cities worldwide to demand a voice in international migration governance. The motivation for their action was clearly expressed by the Office of New York’s Mayor Bill de Blasio: ‘We need to be part of U.N. decision-making if international agreements are to be responsive to on-the-ground realities’ (McCarthy 2017).

These cases illustrate an emerging strategy in city diplomacy – the two-way ‘glocalisation’ in migration governance. As part of this approach, cities localise human rights conventions, and thus the rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, through implementation on the ground. At the same time, they often face a lack of national engagement at the international level. Furthermore, many cities are confronted with intergovernmental negotiation deadlocks, as in the current European migration and asylum

¹ When speaking about migration in the context of this paper we refer to cross-border migration between nation states. Following IOM we define a migrant as ‘any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, and his/her children, regardless of (1) a person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.’ (IOM 2015, 6). The UN Refugee Convention defines a refugee as any person who ‘owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.’ (UNHCR 2015, 14). The UNESCO defines asylum seekers as ‘people who move across borders in search of protection, but who may not fulfil the strict criteria laid down by the 1951 Convention. Asylum seeker describes someone who has applied for protection as a refugee and is awaiting the determination of his or her status.’ (UNESCO 2017).

debate. In this context, a window of opportunity is opening up for cities to go a step further: Cities increasingly engage at the European and international level to become actors in migration governance. Nevertheless, this municipal transnational agency in migration governance has so far not been researched in depth. This article aims to contribute towards a more systematic analysis of the field. Drawing on initial findings of our research on transnational municipal networks, we strive to present answers to the questions how cities became agents in transnational migration governance and what strategies they use. Through an analysis of municipal mechanisms of localisation and globalisation of human rights, we demonstrate cities' potential in contributing towards truly coherent and rights-based migration governance in multi-level systems.

In the framework of this article, we will follow the inclusive definition of cities provided by Acuto and Rayner who understand cities as 'local governments (without distinction between municipal and metropolitan for the purpose of this research)' (Acuto and Rayner 2016, 1150). In order to demonstrate how the glocalisation of the rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees enables cities to demand agency in intergovernmental migration governance, the first part of this article addresses the growing interest of International Relations scholars in city diplomacy over the last few years. Based on the recognition that diplomacy can no longer be considered a purely intergovernmental playing field, the second part illustrates cities' top-down localisation of human rights. However, in an increasingly difficult intergovernmental context some cities move beyond localization – cities' pragmatism and growing expertise empowers them to become global problem-solvers, which will be shown in part three by presenting an analysis of three municipal bottom-up strategies. Through these strategies, cities retranslate local practices into global human rights discourses, thus developing international agency to achieve three goals:

- 1) Cities create soft law in order to ensure local reception and integration policies grounded on fundamental international and European rights.

- 2) Cities form transnational networks to advocate rights-based migration governance, lend legitimacy to UN and EU strategies and hold EU and UN institutions and their member states accountable by their own norms and values.

- 3) Finally, based on their expertise as implementers and policy innovators, cities push for a place at international and European negotiation tables.

The article closes with concrete recommendations aimed at rendering migration governance in multi-level systems more rights-based, inclusive and coherent by strengthening the local dimension in intergovernmental frameworks.

1. Diplomacy – a Purely Intergovernmental Playing Field?

On the ground, more than ever many cities are on the front line when it comes to upholding migrants' and refugees' rights. This is particularly true when they lack funding or political support from the national level. Will cities henceforth be responsible for defending these rights also on the European and international stage? To find answers to this question and formulate clear recommendations on promoting the potential of transnational municipal agency for migration governance, we first turn to the study of city diplomacy in International Relations. We are living in an urban age whose social, political and economic dynamics and interconnections differ greatly from those at the beginning of the 20th century, when the study of International Relations (IR) was first established. Scholars of this discipline have therefore begun to examine cross-border activities of non-state actors such as international organisations, multinational corporations or NGOs (Curtis 2014, 2-3; Oosterlynck et al. 2018). However, the role cities play in international relations and their increasing empowerment in exercising city diplomacy has only recently drawn the attention of scholars (e.g. Aldecoa and Keating 1999; Lecours 2002; van der Pluijm and Melissen 2007; Alger 2011; Barber 2013; Acuto and Rayner 2016; Chan 2016; Marchetti 2016). This is all the more surprising given that city diplomacy when defined as 'the institutions and processes by which cities, or local governments in general, engage in relations with actors in an international political stage with the aim of representing themselves and their interests' (van der Pluijm and Melissen 2007, 6) challenges a state-centred vision of governance in the international system (Curtis 2014, 4).

The earlier lack of interest of IR scholars may be explained by the fact that for a long time cities' transnational activities were perceived to be mainly restricted to the economic sphere and addressed in the disciplines of urban studies and political geography (Acuto 2014, 70; Curtis 2014, 16-17). Opponents of city involvement in international relations argue that the international stage is best left to national and international actors, while municipalities are mere implementing actors. However, this discourse is countered by those who claim that 'the world does not stop at the municipal borders, that processes are interlinked and that local governments can fulfil a unique role in international cooperation' (van Ewijk 2013, 33-34).

The abovementioned statements by cities and their transnational networks show that cities have been very active for quite a while in a growing number of policy areas, among these environmental protection, climate change and energy, peacebuilding, human rights and migration (Acuto and Rayner 2016,

1153). In all these areas, to a greater or lesser extent, local governments take on new roles, engage actively in world politics and demand international political authority. Cities are thus no longer purely 'strategic sites within the globalized economy' (Ljungkvist 2014, 32), but they develop their own agency in global governance. In the following, we will explore how cities localise human rights, but also frame their local activities and challenges in an international human rights discourse to become active agents in European and international migration governance.

2. Human Rights Matter at (a New) Home – Cities' Localisation of Refugees' and Migrants' Rights

In her innovative research on 'Human Rights Cities' Barbara Oomen demonstrates how the concept of 'glocalisation', understood as 'the way in which globalisation involves the creation and incorporation of locality' bears significant relevance to the development and implementation of the human rights regime at the local and international level (Oomen 2016, 10). Glocalisation thereby incorporates both top-down (localisation) and bottom-up (globalisation) channels.

Regarding localisation, we would like to draw attention to the fact that cities' essential role as local implementers of international and European policies has recently been acknowledged in intergovernmental conventions and documents such as the 'Agenda 2030', the 'New Urban Agenda', the 'Urban Agenda for the EU' and even the 'Global Compact for Migration', signed in December 2018 (United Nations 2015; United Nations 2016; European Union 2016; United Nations 2019). During the development of the Sustainable Development Goals, the High-Panel Political Forum declared as early as 2013: 'Cities are where the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost' (quoted in Martens 2017, 91). Cities are thus objects, but they are equally agents of international norms and regulations. Actors such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund directly link strategies of decentralisation and subsidiarity with democratisation and good governance (Ljungkvist 2014, 38 – 40).

In the context of this article, we will follow Oomen's understanding of human rights as 'a discursive framework within which local governments and municipalities as well as NGOs and grassroots movements can address their objectives' (Oomen 2013, 12). Cities' localisation of human rights and more specifically human rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees can thus be described as clear manifestations of abstract international concepts in municipal activities. This form of localisation is essential to promote

the credibility and effectiveness of these rights (Oomen 2013, 11). On the ground, many cities safeguard political rights, but also social, cultural and economic rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in a multitude of ways: they offer access to housing, health services, to language learning and education. Cities open up local access to vocational training and to the job market. Cities create intercultural advisory committees or offer advice on family reunification, asylum claims and naturalization (Penninx et al. 2014). While nation states all too often consider human rights to be concepts that are violated and have to be upheld abroad, cities focus on the local domestic level (Darling 2016, 122; Oomen 2013, 12). In doing so, these cities give concrete meaning to the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, thus ensuring a top priority of municipal governance – social cohesion.

So at least in theory, there is a harmonious concept of nation states agreeing and adopting migrants' and refugees' rights at the international or European level and local authorities implementing these rights at the local level. However, in practice we are increasingly seeing a spanner thrown in the works of these top-down mechanisms. What can be done when individual EU member states or groups of member states prevent municipalities from receiving and providing services for refugees and migrants or even destroy working migrant communities on the local level? How can cities engage when the EU member states' negotiations about the future of migration and asylum governance are deadlocked due to a crisis of solidarity and shared responsibility? What role can be played by US-American cities faced with a presidential decision to retreat from global negotiations of international compacts on migration and refugees? An empirical overview of municipal engagement in dealing with the increasing number of arrivals of refugees and migrants in Europe in 2015 and 2016 shows that many cities can and have developed a wide portfolio of transnational activities.

3. 'Suddenly, All Politics is Municipal Politics' – City Agency at the Transnational Level

This is all the more surprising since local authorities do not have competencies in migration governance as such, a political sphere closely related to national sovereignty and identity. How did cities then manage to end up in a position where they are demanding agency in migration and integration policies?

An important role in the creation of this specific window of opportunity has to be attributed to international institutions, to the European Union and to cities themselves (Acuto 2014, 75). Both top-down and bottom-up

glocalisation of international norms can be observed. The top-down channel runs as follows: As international and EU institutions have recognized the importance of local implementation of their norms and regulations and cities have localised human rights protection of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, these international and European challenges are turned into urban issues. It is exactly this top-down process which empowers cities to demand political authority on these questions in a bottom-up approach and to demand that their expertise on the governance of migration and integration should be heard at the European and international level. In this regard, Ljungkvist elaborates that the 'way in which a political problem is defined and represented is critical for understanding political agenda settings, because once a problem representation becomes established, it also conditions who gets to deal with it as well as the possibilities for how policies can be pursued on the issue' (Ljungkvist 2014, 54).

Cities and in particular their mayors present urban spaces 'as central to global challenges, capable to address them, proactive in formulating responses while not waiting for others to call them up' (Acuto 2014, 74). Already in 2013, Dough Saunders, a British and Canadian journalist, wrote that 'suddenly, all politics is municipal politics' (Saunders 2013). This form of city agency has been exemplified by transnational city networks active in environmental protection such as the 'C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group' (Bulkeley and Schröder 2012, Kern and Bulkeley 2009). City networks engaging in the area of environmental protection and climate change demonstrated that transnationally cooperating cities are able to address global challenges faster and at greater scale than nation states or intergovernmental systems (Curtis 2014, 19). A similar rhetoric can also be found in the statements of European cities calling upon their nation states to provide safe haven to asylum seekers rescued in the Mediterranean. In the absence of European solidarity, they present concrete offers to host rescued asylum seekers, invoking the respect of the European idea 'based on humanism, enlightenment and human rights' (Geisel, Reker and Sridharan 2018, quoted from a public letter sent by the Mayors of Bonn, Düsseldorf and Cologne to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, own translation). Cities thus retranslate their local migration and integration policies and practices into global and European human rights discourses. This strategic political choice increases the legitimacy of their demands for transnational agency, offers them access to networks and coalitions and can even enable cities to bypass positions of their own nation state (Oomen 2013, 14; 2016, 8). In the following, we will focus on three strategies cities make use of to establish themselves as agents in transnational migration governance.

3.1 ‘Leading by Doing’ – Cities Shape Migration and Integration through Soft Law

While recognizing that nation states will remain relevant in the international system, Benjamin Barber, author of ‘If Mayors ruled the World’ (2013) draws our attention to the potential of transnational city-to-city cooperation in creating common responses to global challenges. ‘Cities are naturally inclined to soft power and soft governance’ (Barber 2013, 152). This leads them to focus on persuasion and dialogue rather than on laws and orders (ibid. 165). Drawing once more on the experience of transnational municipal cooperation in the field of environmental protection, we can see how a paradigm shift from urbanisation as the cause of global challenges to framing cities as pro-active problem-solvers has enabled local authorities to tackle global challenges through transnational municipal soft law (Bouteligier 2014, 59).

Member cities of the transnational city network ‘ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability’ for instance have committed themselves to taking measures to promote low emissions and nature-based, circular, resilient and equitable development (ICLEI 2018). Through self-governance many local authorities have set themselves far more ambitious goals for emission reduction than their national levels or have even created goals where the national level backed out. This was the case with the ‘U.S. Mayors’ Climate Protection Agreement’ striving to implement the ‘Kyoto Protocol’ targets never ratified by the US government (Ljungkvist 2014, 48). Through the creation of common positions and agreements implementable within their competencies, cities are thus ‘leading by doing’ (Acuto 2014, 79).

Even though the bottom-up adoption of soft law may be more complicated in the areas of migration and integration, where nation states control borders, rights of residence or education systems, cities have still adopted a number of important declarations and instruments focusing on the protection of the rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees as well as on social diversity. Basing their declarations, guidelines and indicators on documents such as the ‘Agenda 2030’, the ‘New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants’ or the ‘European Convention on Human Rights’, cities ensure that local practices of reception and integration are grounded in fundamental international and European rights.

In 2017, representatives of over 50 cities from Europe, North, Central and South America, Asia and Africa participated in the ‘Global Conference on Cities and Migration’ and adopted the ‘Mechelen Declaration on Cities and Migration’ (IOM 2017). In this declaration, cities state the urgency to proactively address migration governance and their willingness to cooperate

with the national and international level. However, the declaration also spells out local commitments that may be rather controversial at the national level. One of these is cities' commitment to 'providing access to health, education, and justice regardless of a migrants' documentation status, by creating firewalls between data collection and service providers' (UN-Habitat 2017, 5). In the absence of national legislation, local authorities thus guarantee that migrants even in irregular situations have access to basic services and rights. A similar commitment can be found in the 'Barcelona Declaration' adopted by the 'Global Mayoral Forum on Mobility, Migration and Development' on the occasion of the inaugural conference in 2014 (Delvino 2017; Global Mayoral Forum 2014, 16). The 'Global Mayoral Forum' was launched at the 'UN General Assembly's Second High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development (HLD)' in 2013. As a yearly city-led dialogue, the forum 'provides an incubating space where local leaders can share practical and inventive solutions for governing migration, protecting rights and promoting inclusive urban economic growth' (JMDI 2017).

These transnational municipal networks can play an important role in the development of municipal soft-law instruments such as good practice exchanges, guidelines or evaluation indicators. At the European level, cities have adopted the 'Charter on Integrating Cities' within the 'Integrating Cities' process, based on a partnership between the city network 'EUROCITIES' and the European Commission (Integrating Cities 2018a, EUROCITIES 2010).

'The Charter sets out duties and responsibilities of European cities to embrace the diversity of their population and to provide equal opportunities in their roles as policy-makers, service providers, employers and buyers of goods and services to provide equal opportunities' (Integrating Cities 2018a).

Launched in 2010, the Charter has been signed by 39 cities by 2018. Cities are supported in the implementation through concrete toolkits. Moreover, implementing reports based on cities' self-reporting to 'EUROCITIES' were published in 2013, 2015 and 2018 (Integrating Cities 2018b).

This second step is of particular importance for cities' ability to make effective use of soft self-governance instruments: Only if commitments are broken down into concrete and observable actions can cities identify which policies and practices work and should be shared as good practice and which should be changed. In the 'Mechelen Declaration' cities therefore support the inclusion of local dimensions in IOM's 'Migration Governance Indicators (MGI)'. These indicators assess migration governance in national frameworks in the context of the SDGs and the 'New Urban Agenda' (UN-Habitat 2017, 3; IOM 2018). In particular, with regard to vertical policy coherence, including local dimensions is of great benefit.

Another interesting example of municipal self-governance in the area of intercultural integration has been developed by the ‘Intercultural Cities’ network. This city network, organized by the Council of Europe, attaches great importance to expert and peer reviews of cities’ policies, governance and practice in the area of migrant and refugee inclusion and has developed the ‘Intercultural Cities Index’ as a municipal monitoring tool (Intercultural Cities 2018). The comparison between cities within such self-assessment instruments has the potential to ‘lead to a “race to the top” that strengthens the actual realisation of human rights globally’ (Oomen 2016, 12). However, cities are not only interested in the governance of migration and integration at the local level. In fact, cities increasingly reach out to the European and international level to draw attention to the need for rights-based migration governance and to hold states, UN and EU institutions accountable by their own values and commitments.

3.2 ‘Do as You Say’ – Cities Can Create Legitimacy and Hold States, EU and UN Institutions Accountable

The increasing recognition of cities’ important role on the global level by EU and UN institutions is supporting a change in the self-understanding and self-worth of local authorities in international affairs (Ljungkvist 2014, 53-54). Since most global problems ultimately have to be addressed at the local level, local authorities present their agency as ‘locally reflexive as much as globally relevant’ (Acuto 2014, 77). Linking global questions of international migration to local rights protection and to the inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees enables cities to demand authority on these questions. For actors such as the European Commission and the European Parliament, the cooperation with cities can strengthen the legitimacy of proposals and strategies emanating from these supranational institutions (Niederhafner 2007, 176, 183). However, human rights can also be used as tools to challenge national, European or international policies and practice (Oomen 2013, 21). Increasingly cities create networks, which catalyse these demands for authority to maximise influence and impact on the European and international level (Curtis 2014, 2). This may be illustrated by an open letter, which was published by ‘EUROCITIES’ on the occasion of World Refugee Day 2016, demanding that the EU and its member states respect their own values in migration governance:

‘We have been overwhelmed by the positive response from civil society, volunteer organisations and businesses in our local communities. Nevertheless, there remains a nationalistic, isolationist and at times xenophobic undertone to some debates at national and European level. [...]

The debates at European level should better reflect the principles we outline here. These are principles that are put into practice every day in our cities, in most cases without direct access to the necessary resources from the EU and national governments. Now is the time to put our shared European values of solidarity, humanity and dignity to the test' (EUROCITIES 2016).

Likewise, the outcome document of the 4th 'Global Mayoral Forum on Mobility, Migration and Development' in 2017 demonstrates that cities' framing of their local actions in an international human rights discourse empowers them to call for greater policy coherence on migration and sustainable development. In their final declaration cities present concrete 'requests from cities' to the national and international level (Global Mayoral Forum 2017).

However, local authorities not only hold nation states accountable by referring them publicly to fundamental rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. In some recent cases, local authorities have gone one step further and have invoked human rights obligations in strategic litigation to challenge national policies (Delvino 2017, 12). This was the case in Italy, where the regions of Puglia, Campania and Tuscany were challenged by the Italian government before the Constitutional Court for providing irregular migrants with access to basic services. However, the Court sided with the local authorities, agreeing that their practices were in line with the protection of fundamental rights. Another interesting case is presented by the City of Utrecht's strategy of deliberately seeking condemnation of its local practice (refusing basic services to a vulnerable individual) which were in line with national legislation. The European Committee of Social Rights declared that the Netherlands had failed to respect their international obligations originating from the European Social Charta and Utrecht had won legal ground to change the local practice (ibid.). On the other side of the Atlantic, the US Sanctuary Cities equally show how cities' recourse to a human rights discourse can be used to challenge central government legislation (Bither and Costello 2017). A structured analysis of the development of the US Sanctuary Cities and their relations with the national and federal level goes beyond the scope of this article, however, which focuses more specifically on the activities of European cities.

Finally, cities are becoming increasingly important partners for civil society actors in their national and international advocacy work for rights-based migration governance. In gaining the support of democratically elected local authorities, civil society actors can increase their legitimacy, ensuring that they actually represent local voices and have local backing for their advocacy (Minami 2018, 1). One such example would be the 'Dignity Not Destitution' campaign, which was founded in the United Kingdom in the context of an

increasingly restrictive national asylum policy. The campaign demanded a change in the governmental policy of withdrawing asylum support after a negative decision on status regardless of realistic opportunities of return. Asylum seekers should not be pushed into destitution and should be given the permission to work, if resolving their cases takes longer than six months. Campaign activists based their demands on the respect of fundamental human rights and 'focused on encouraging urban authorities to take an explicit stance in opposition to government policy on issues of asylum policy and destitution' (Darling 2016, 130). This active localisation of questions concerning asylum seekers' basic rights inspired municipal bottom-up activities. Local authorities in Bradford, Bristol, Coventry, Glasgow, Kirklees, Leicester, Leeds, Liverpool, Oxford, Sheffield and Swansea passed motions with the goal to oppose asylum destitution and called upon the government to adopt changes in asylum policy (ibid. 131-132).

Another very recent example is the international movement 'SEEBRÜCKE' founded by German civil society activists in summer 2018 in the context of an increasing number of national refusals to provide safe havens for migrants and asylum seekers rescued in the Mediterranean Sea. Similarly to the UK case, the campaign invokes human rights and calls upon the civil society to engage with municipal authorities in creating bottom-up advocacy and offering reception places (Seebrücke 2018). Cities thus become important agents who raise awareness for rights-based migration governance and hold national, European and international actors accountable by invoking internationally agreed norms and principles. However, in the context of increasingly restrictive and isolationist national policies in Europe and other parts of the world cities go even further.

3.3 'Get It Done Together' – Cities Push for a Place at the Negotiation Table

As the New York Mayors' Office puts it: 'Cities are pushing for a seat at the table at a time when many national leaders are increasingly isolationist – and even xenophobic – and disconnected from cities' values of inclusivity and growth' (Allen-Ebrahimian 2017). Based on their expertise and experience as frontline responders to migration and integration challenges, more and more cities insist that their voices need to be heard at the European and international level (Bither and Costello 2017; Brandt 2018, 3). No longer do cities comprehend their role as purely implementing; rather they have recognized their own potential to contribute to innovative migration governance connecting the local and the global to maximise impact.

Cities are not alone in their demands for better municipal participation. In his last report, Peter Sutherland, the former UN Special Representative for International Migration (2006 – 2017) claimed that '(r)epresentatives of local authorities should be systematically included in national delegations at international meetings on migration, including the Global Forum on Migration and Development, United Nations high-level dialogues and the 2018 intergovernmental conference on migration' (United Nations 2017, 76b).

At the international level, cities strove to contribute to and influence the negotiations of the 'Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)' and the 'Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)'. Cities have mainly provided input to the negotiations through declarations and statements of municipal transnational networks such as 'United Cities and Local Governments', the 'Global Mayoral Forum' and 'Metropolis' (UCLG 2018; UNITAR 2017; Metropolis 2017). Furthermore, the 'Mechelen Declaration on Cities and Migration' was submitted to the Special Representative of the Secretary General for International Migration (IOM 2017). These transnational municipal strategies can be considered successful, as the 'Global Compact for Migration', finalized and signed in 2018, does acknowledge the important role of cities in achieving global aims (Rosengaertner 2018, 2). The GCM's targeted whole-of-government approach should be followed closely as an instrument with great potential to enhance municipalities' participation in future migration governance.

A further important step towards whole-of-government approaches in international migration governance is the development of bottom-up structures which provide for a more systematic participation of cities. With the support of the current and future chairs of the 'Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)' Germany, Morocco and Ecuador, a proposal to formalise the relationship between the 'Global Mayoral Forum on Mobility, Migration and Development' and the GFMD through a so-called 'Mayors Mechanism' was introduced at the last GMFD in December 2018. The 'Mayors Mechanism' will turn the yearly meetings of the 'Global Mayoral Forum' into a more continuous engagement, making local authorities more consistent stakeholders which benefit from a more direct channel to intergovernmental discussions. Furthermore, this proposal opens up the possibility for local authorities to participate in the follow-up and review of the GCM (Rosengaertner 2018, 3-6; Brandt 2018, 6). As the 'Mayors Mechanism' will need a permanent support structure, the current proposal foresees a joint coordination through IOM and the recently established 'Mayors Migration Council (MMC)'. The 'Mayors Migration Council' will be a central instrument of international city diplomacy and will anchor and

focus local governments' engagement in intergovernmental discussions in the framework of the GFMD, IOM and the UNCHR (GFMD 2018).

At the European level, collaborative municipal action in the form of networks or alliances plays an equally important role in advancing cities' objective of more structured bottom-up participation in migration governance. Similar to the international level, cities can also count on supranational support, in this case from the European Union which has for a long time been 'one of the leading international actors in recognizing the potential of cities as agents of global governance' (Acuto 2014, 74). 2016 saw the launch of the 'Urban Agenda for the EU', which provides a framework for 12 thematic urban partnerships. Among the first pilots was the 'Urban Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees' coordinated by DG Home and the City of Amsterdam. The partnership focuses on central economic and social human rights of migrants and refugees in the areas of 'housing, community building & reception, education, work, and the cross-cutting theme of vulnerable groups' (European Commission 2018a). Major European city networks such as 'EUROCITIES' and the 'Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)' have made active use of the Partnership's Action Plan. 'EUROCITIES' has for instance taken the lead in developing a paper calling for better municipal access to EU integration funding (EU Urban Partnership 2017, 2018). According to members of the Partnership, recommendations of the paper have been taken up by the European Commission in its budget proposals for 2021 – 2027 (interview with Partnership members).

Going beyond access to existing European funds, 'EUROCITIES' and the 'Council of European Municipalities and Regions' also call for stronger municipal involvement in the development of EU funding opportunities to ensure that these correspond to the needs on the ground. Specifically, they are lobbying for a more binding and unified implementation of the Partnership Principle within the European Union's 'Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)' (CEMR in European Commission 2018b). The underlying idea of the Partnership Principle is to foster cooperation between the national and local level when developing national programs within the AMIF. The Principle itself is binding, however the concrete implementation is left to member states and research shows that for instance the concept of 'consultation' can be defined very differently in various member states (Westerby 2018, 37-38).

Finally, European cities also offer member states and the European Union collaboration on topics which technically exceed their municipal competencies. The municipal network 'Solidarity Cities', an initiative launched within the framework of 'EUROCITIES', provides an excellent example to demonstrate how cities use a human rights discourse and

concepts of solidarity to demand involvement in the transnational relocation of asylum seekers (Heimann, Müller, Schammann and Stürner 2019 forthcoming). ‘Solidarity Cities’ describes itself as an ‘initiative on the management of the refugee crisis’ aiming at ‘highlighting the political leadership of cities in addressing this challenge’ (Solidarity Cities 2018a). In his address to the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe, Gergios Kaminis, Mayor of Athens and founder of ‘Solidarity Cities’, declared that ‘Europe needed to provide answers and practical solutions to the migration challenges by protecting refugees’ fundamental human rights and their right to build a new life in Europe’ (Solidarity Cities 2018b). Therefore, one of the four goals of the initiative is to encourage European cities to pledge relocation places for asylum seekers – an idea supported through research on potential for relocation in the EU at the municipal level (Schwan 2017; Heuser 2018; Bendel, Schammann, Heimann and Stürner 2019).

4. Recommendations

Our field research focusing on activities of transnational municipal networks at the EU level shows that city networks perceive an increasing interest in collaboration on the part of the European Commission and Parliament in the fields of migration and integration within the last three years. This has considerably enhanced cities’ capacities to advocate rights-based migration governance. The perception of crisis and cities’ pragmatic experience as problem-solvers has almost certainly contributed to this trend for more coherence and whole-of-government approaches (interviews with representatives of transnational municipal networks).

In the context of rising anti-migration populist movements and national isolationist tendencies in the Western world in combination with on-going social, economic and political crises causing displacement, cities’ active engagement in international and European migration governance is more important than ever. We therefore conclude this article with concrete recommendations in the three strategic areas of transnational municipal engagement: 1. good practice exchange and soft law, 2. advocacy for legitimacy and accountability, and 3. municipal engagement in migration governance development. However, it cannot fall to cities alone to uphold migrants’ and refugees’ rights at the international and European level. Vertical and horizontal coherence are essential for sustainable and rights-based migration governance. The recommendations therefore address the EU/international level as well as the national and local level.

4.1 Transnational Municipal Exchange and Soft Law

Goal: Enhance the capacity of cities to identify, communicate, implement and evaluate good practice on local governance of migration and integration in a transnational environment.

To reach this goal the EU/international level should invest more in the capacity building of cities in respect of data gathering, needs assessments and evaluation strategies. Furthermore, international and European actors should include local dimensions in international indicators. A good example is the approach to include local dimensions in the ‘International Migration Indicators’ of IOM, which was supported in the ‘Mechelen Declaration’. To improve the transnational municipal exchange and cooperation of cities, city networks could benefit greatly from enhanced international and European support as regards know-how, contacts and funding.

Nation states should be aware of local agendas contributing to international and European migration policies and implement regular national-local dialogues. Exchanges to identify the underlying logics of national and local migration and integration governance as well as transnational municipal soft law could increase vertical policy coherence. Based on mutual understanding, states should provide more resources and capacity building for the local level to support local governments’ agendas.

Cities should step up their engagement in respect of data collection and needs assessments at the local level as well as exchange and collaboration at the transnational level through city networks and initiatives. In order to do so in a coherent way, cities should identify and agree on local priorities within European and international agreements such as the ‘Global Compact for Migration’. To achieve progress in local priority areas, cities should develop concrete action plans on implementation and evaluation. In doing so, cities should go beyond sharing good practice and commit to developing and respecting measurable guidelines and indicators for good migration and integration governance.

4.2 Advocacy for Legitimacy and Accountability

Goal: Ensure that all levels of government work together coherently to respect human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers when developing and implementing migration and integration policies.

To reach this goal the EU/international level should acknowledge cities’ experience of safeguarding migrants’ and refugees’ rights on the ground and offer cities greater access to communicate this experience in intergovernmental frameworks. EU and UN institutions could benefit greatly from the legitimacy such multi-stakeholder cooperation would lend to their

strategies. On the local level, the support from European and international actors is of major importance especially to cities whose national governments adopt increasingly restrictive migration and asylum policies.

Nation states should work together with local governments to ensure accountability and uphold international and European commitments to respect rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. A more coherent approach is of particular importance with regard to safeguarding the fundamental rights of irregular migrants and rejected asylum seekers who cannot return to their home countries. This could be achieved through well-coordinated approaches between the national and local level to achieve Objective 15 of the 'Global Compact for Migration': 'Provide access to basic services for migrants' (United Nations 2019, paragraph 16). As naturally not all cities are open towards migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, mutual advocacy for accountability between the national and local level is necessary.

Cities should continue and step up their engagement in national and transnational multi-stakeholder cooperation (including with civil society, academia and the private sector) to raise awareness for the importance of rights-based migration governance, to provide legitimacy to rights-based strategies at the national, European and international level and to hold national, European and international actors accountable by their own norms and values.

4.3 Municipal Engagement in Migration Governance Development

Goal: Set up structured municipal representation in intergovernmental deliberations on migration governance at the European and international level. Define concrete local priorities within international and European framework agreements and elaborate transnational action plans for achievement on the ground.

To reach this goal the EU/international level should collaborate with local authorities in multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve long-term engagement at the intergovernmental level. In this context, the creation of the 'Mayors Migration Council' at the UN level is a very positive development. Furthermore, local authorities should be actively engaged in the first 'International Migration Review Forum (IMRF)' in 2022 where progress towards implementing the 'Global Compact for Migration', including at the local and regional level, will be assessed. Within the context of the European Union, the 'EU Urban Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees' should be continued beyond 2018 and institutionalised as a forum for multi-

level cooperation to contribute to rights-based and sustainable integration and migration governance.

Nation states should open up intergovernmental deliberations to input from local authorities. Furthermore, national authorities should make greater efforts to inform and consult with local authorities in preparation of discussions at EU or UN level. Within the context of EU funding, EU member states and their local authorities should engage in an EU-wide dialogue to elaborate concrete indicators for the implementation of the Partnership Principle of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) to strengthen local authorities' involvement in the planning and prioritising of EU funding for asylum, migration and integration.

Cities should make active use of the opportunities presented through the new 'Mayors Migration Council', the 'Mayors Mechanism' in the 'Global Forum on Migration and Development' and the 'EU Urban Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees'. To do so, cities should clearly highlight the value of their policy expertise and the legitimacy this expertise provides for the national, European and international level. Cities should elaborate transnational action plans with ambitious local implementation goals in the framework of intergovernmental agreements, communicate the support they will need from the national and international level to achieve these goals and advocate the inclusion of the local level in global and European evaluation strategies. At the EU level, cities should call for a prolongation of the 'Urban Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees', clearly stating how their role could be further strengthened in the future Partnership.

Conclusion

'Cities can and do govern globally because they are organisms in which local urban nodes naturally assimilate and integrate via global synopsis into glocal networks defined by their local needs and global interests' (Barber 2013, 112). This article has shown how by engaging in a two-way glocalisation of human rights many cities establish themselves as agents in transnational migration governance. Cities localise international human rights top-down in welcoming and integrating refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. Through municipal strategies to provide housing, access to education, the labour market or legal counselling services, these cities implement abstract European and international norms on the ground. However, in the absence of national engagement in multilateral cooperation or in the presence of deadlocked intergovernmental negotiations, cities are presented with a window of opportunity to engage directly with the international and

European level on questions of migration governance. An overview of cities' transnational activities over the last few years shows that many cities are making active use of this opportunity. As international and European actors increasingly acknowledge the importance of local action to address global migration and displacement challenges, these transnational phenomena turn into local issues and subnational actors transform into experts for global problem solving. The rising awareness of their own expertise and capacity strengthens cities' self-confidence and supports their demands for political authority in the field of migration governance. In this context, the retranslation of cities' local practices into international and European human rights discourses enables local authorities to become active agents in migration governance. This article has presented three municipal bottom-up strategies, namely the creation of transnational soft law, advocacy for legitimacy and accountability and structured municipal engagement in intergovernmental deliberations. Actors at the national, European and international level should value the expertise and engagement of local authorities by creating and strengthening opportunities for structured exchange and joint policy development to create truly coherent and rights-based migration governance in the future.

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