

Resilient urban turnaround in migration governance studies

Ricard Zapata-Barrero  

Interdisciplinary Research Group on Immigration (GRITIM-UPF), Department of Political and Social Sciences, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain

Correspondence

Ricard Zapata-Barrero, Interdisciplinary Research Group on Immigration (GRITIM-UPF), Department of Political and Social Sciences, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Ramon Trias Fargas, 25-2, 08005, Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain.
Email: ricard.zapata@upf.edu

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Abstract

Today, cities are under multiple pressures because they must provide responses to global migration challenges, but have limited governance capacity. This is placing chronic stress on physical infrastructures, basic resources, and urban planning, which most often cities must face alone. There is a rising awareness that doing nothing may increase instability and social conflict, giving rise to more segregation, and racism. Focusing on the crucial tension between what cities might do (sovereignty) and what they can do (constraints), this article seeks first to incorporate 'urban resilience thinking' into the current 'local turn' literature on migration governance. In order to achieve this theoretical advancement, a fourth-pronged approach is followed. First, the article proposes that 'urban resilience' captures the emerging but dispersed patterns of pro-active cities, and urges for an analysis of the development of migration governance capacities. Second, a transformative approach to urban migration governance resilience is proposed, and its conceptual consequences explored. Subsequently, the article's focus is on demonstrating the distinctive characteristics of urban resilience when applied to migration governance research, with a particular emphasis on the potential novel contributions that may arise. Finally, in light of the novelties of this research area, the main empirical environments of urban resilience are specified. The concluding

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remarks close the argumentation by returning to the place of urban resilience thinking within the local turn literature, while also pointing to its normative and methodological potentialities.

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW: WHY THE 'LOCAL TURN' IN MIGRATION STUDIES NOW? URBAN RESILIENCE AS A RESPONSE

Today, cities are under multiple pressures because they must provide policy responses to new global challenges, such as environmental degradation, floods and ecological disasters, but have limited governance capacity. This is placing chronic stress on physical infrastructures, basic resources and urban planning, which most often cities must face alone. The present situation also includes the consequence that economic globalisation, climate change, war and political instability in most of the world's countries have increased cross-state movements of people between the Global South and the Global North, and also within the Global South (Ali & Hartmann, 2015; Castles et al., 2020; McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021). We are already immersed in what has been termed a "mobility turn" that is shaping the present and the future of societies (Canzler et al., 2016; Urry & Grieco, 2016), and this is especially visible in most urban systems that have become super-diverse (Vertovec, 2023). No study currently exists to predict that this process may slow down. On the contrary, this pattern of human mobility between states is seen as one of the most complex challenges, and is a permanent, growing feature of the 21st century that local governments face today.

This also shows how interdependent the 'local turn' literature and the 'mobility turn' debate are in practice. Cities have evolved culturally and politically through the influence of the diverse people and cultures that have arrived in their territories over the centuries. Most recently, globalisation, political instability and the growing socio-economic disparities between countries have increased human mobility with the consequence of placing migration and refugees at the centre of cities' governance agenda. The duration and intensity of current human mobility, the frequency of contacts, variety of cultures, religions, languages and traditions shape policies and relationships within and among cities, and reflect the uniqueness of human mobility today. There is almost no city in the world that is not affected nowadays, either as destination, origin or transit of migration and refugee movements. Cities are becoming both sites of residence and hubs of human mobility. This places all domains (society, politics, economy and culture) in a situation of unprecedented instability. International human mobility also forces social and political scientists to question current norms of governance, resources and infrastructure, the role of public opinion, media and social relations in politics and policy decision-making. While it is widely recognised that migrations is at the forefront of most social transformations today, the fact that it is taking place within a framework of democratic values makes the debate historically different from other periods of migration. The challenge today is the extent to which the normative foundations that underpin current forms of governance, based on the substantive values of justice, human rights and equality, continue to function.

This article is, first and foremost, a research plea for bridging the gap between the current academic research approaches guiding urban politics (da Cruz et al., 2019; Mossberger et al., 2015; Pierre, 2011) and new emerging empirical trends of city agency, especially in the field of migration. These new processes of urban agency are clearly a 21st century phenomenon, known as "new localism" (Katz & Nowak, 2018) or "new municipalism" (Russell, 2019; Thompson, 2020) by leading urban researchers, and 'local turn' by migration researchers (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017), and it has only recently been incorporated into the global migration agenda (IOM, 2015, 2017; UN Sustainable Development Agenda, 2030; UN-Habitat III, 2017). The 'local turn' refers to the increasing active role of local governments in migration governance, where they are playing a greater task in the regulation

and integration of international migrants. In front of passivity and being simpler administrative unit of states, many cities today are taking pro-active role to migrant's claim for equality and human rights. This can be interpreted as a response to the difficulties of national governments to effectively manage migration flows, as well as local authorities' desire to address the specific needs and concerns of their citizens, whatever their status and nationality, and keep their social system cohesive. This trend is evident in many countries, including France (Flamant, 2021), Finland (Kettunen, 2021) and many other European cities (Oliver et al., 2020), Turkey (Kaya, 2023); Indonesia (Missbach et al., 2018), Tunisian cities (Zapata-Barrero, 2023b), United Arab Emirates (Errichiello, 2023), North-American cities (Schmidtke, 2019; Varsanyi, 2010; Williamson, 2018), Australian cities (Gravelle et al., 2013) to quote some, where local authorities are taking a more active role in migration governance. In this framework, despite the growing awareness that cities have multi-layered constraints (on their legal, policy and institutional infrastructures, resources availability, social and emotional responses of their citizens, and pressure from political parties with regressive narratives) on ensuring their continuity within the urban regime that has been mapped out by states, and that they are paving their "own way", there is currently no social science discipline that has developed an approach to comprehensively understand the various forms of these processes and predict their consequences.

In this state of the art, this article would like to propose 'urban resilience' as a research area that catalyses most of these initial current debates. The primary objective is to showcase its significance and practicality as a heuristic approach that can comprehend the ways in which the 'local turn' and the 'mobility turn' are merging nowadays in numerous cities.

As a research area, urban resilience applied to migration governance offers a systematic way of understanding different aspects of urban agency to elucidate the particular reactions of cities to governance challenges arising from migration. Urban resilience is the driven force operating in the process of developing urban governance capacities. It depicts the intentional (motivational and voluntary), normative (values of urban justice) and even 'psychological political atmosphere' in learning to govern with the spectrum of uncertainties, hazards and risks associated with multiple migration-related social stresses. These policy patterns of resilient cities and migration governance needs to be comprehensively theorised from inside and also outside, looking at the effects to existing city-state relations.

This specific field of study is essential for guiding the direction of a research programme that explores the specific environments, intentions and actions of cities as they incorporate pressures into their own policy agendas and strategically consider the need to develop their governance capacities to address them. This new research focus in migration studies can advance knowledge and understanding about particular patterns of urban governance that fall within what is now being referred to as the 'local turn'. This research programme illuminates the realisation that cities alone or with state assistance are insufficient to solve most of the challenges related to the human mobility turn. As a result, cities are increasingly seeking greater autonomy (and sovereignty) to inform decision-making and policy action. Furthermore, they are establishing new avenues for collaboration and coordination with a diverse range of stakeholders, including other cities and civil society organisations (CSOs), private and public actors, both within their national boundaries and, to a greater extent, beyond them. Cities are now assuming a more prominent role on the global stage, venturing into geopolitical territory that was previously the exclusive domain of states (Kihlgren Grandi, 2020). This phenomenon is occurring in numerous regions across the globe. For example, in the Mediterranean region, cities are joining forces with CSOs (Open Arms, SOS Mediterranean, for instance) that frequently face persecution from European governments (Trombetta, 2024). This is an additional statement that we are moving towards a post-Westphalian era, in which non-state entities are claiming to be recognised as legitimate actors in international relations. The contemporary city is witnessing an unparalleled and erratic transition from a state of passive acquiescence to one of assertive action, from a position of dependence to that of a claimant of autonomy and sovereignty. For some critical scholars, we are entering a phase of governance activism on a global scale (Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2017), an era of rebellious cities (Harvey, 2012), of city sovereignty (Davis &

Durenedts, 2011), and urban resistance (Filipcevic Cordes, 2017), while the struggle of most cities to formulate 'their own vision' is today taking shape in the governance of migration.

As a key driver in the development of migration governance capacity, urban resilience is generating a wide range of innovative actions and novel strategies that need to be theorised comprehensively. For example, urban resilience is achievable when cities implement pioneering policy models and establish efficient governance systems within their urban structures to improve their limited governance capacities, mainly due to external pressures related to migration flows and needs, as well as their respective urban regimes. While a substantial amount of literature focuses on building autonomous systems (see Baumgärtel & Mielle, 2022; Caponio et al., 2019), a comprehensive framework to understand the trends is currently lacking. The 'urban resilience' research lens aims to bridge this knowledge gap.

Echoing Schragger (2016), such a broad scenario reflects the crucial tension between what cities might do (sovereignty) and what they can do (constraints). This proposed research area of urban resilience focuses primarily on the multi-layered constraints that cities face in ensuring their governance capacity. Most cities today include maintaining their own social and political system in their priority agenda, in terms of continuities and changes, given the enormous pressures and stresses they have to cope with, coming from several, often scattered and unpredictable fronts: border processes; volumes and profiles of new migrants and refugees; urban jurisdiction and regulations; infrastructures of urban agencies; and also the external pressures coming from the geopolitical environment and the behaviour and system of representation of their own citizens, who often find it difficult to absorb all these changes in their own routine urban landscape. Some pilot comparative case studies in very different urban regimes (Zapata-Barrero, 2023a) show us that there is a rising awareness that doing nothing may increase instability and social division, giving rise to more spatial slums, precariousness, territorial segregation, discrimination and racism, with serious unintended consequences such as xenophobia and social hostility towards migrants (da Silva & Morera, 2014; Preston et al., 2022). Migrants arrive in urban areas (often moving from one city to another in a long migratory journey) under conditions that are largely shaped by both national and international migration policies (Haas et al., 2019). It is now widely recognised that for many cities, international migration and refugees have even become a more important determinant of population growth than native age structures, fertility and mortality (Skeldon, 2013), and that urbanisation sprawl and migratory movement intersect closely (IOM, 2015; UN, 2017). This represents a chronic stress because most cities see how part of their most vulnerable population has a migratory origin, how power relations between majorities and minorities polarise their social system, and how political divisions around migration and refugees contaminate their entire eco-social system (Duyvendak & Kestic, 2022; Gest, 2022). This current scenario is further reinforcing its fragility and weakness as an urban system.

The prevailing position for most cities is that states are too reluctant to provide them with sufficient resources (legal, political, economic, etc.) and infrastructure to increase their governance capacity (e.g. Barcelona, Marseille, but also Palermo, Izmir; Orlando et al., 2020). Cities that are networking to gain more governance capacity and become more inclusive are also part of this pattern (Caponio, 2022; Landau et al., 2020). States are increasingly tightening their system of filters and control of international human mobility, and adjusting their laws and regulatory systems up to their limits of human rights and democracy, and for some academics even beyond (Hampshire, 2013; Lahav & Messina, 2023; Pécout, 2021). They even do not hesitate to create regulations and norms to criminalise those that challenge their politics of hostility (Aris Escarcena, 2021; Mosselson, 2021; Tazzioli & Walters, 2019). The situation of pressure in this field of migration and refugees is such that most cities are beginning to renounce, disagree with and/or reshape the traditional infrastructures of dependence on states, and questioning their authority in the current distribution of tasks (housing, health, education, employment, etc.). The field of urban resilience applied to migration governance offers a promising framework for understanding this unstable empirical terrain. As we are in the early stages of this process, it is important to gain a better understanding of the possible avenues that cities can pursue in the short and medium term to strengthen their migration governance capacity.

Against this background, the purpose of this article is to integrate 'urban resilience thinking' into the existing body of literature on migration governance that has emerged in response to the 'local turn'. In order to achieve this theoretical advancement, a fourth-pronged approach is followed. First, the article proposes that 'urban resilience' captures the emerging but dispersed patterns of pro-active cities, and urges for an analysis of the development of migration governance capacities. Second, a transformative approach to urban migration governance resilience is proposed, and its conceptual consequences explored. Subsequently, the article's focus is on demonstrating the distinctive characteristics of urban resilience when applied to migration governance research, with a particular emphasis on the potential novel contributions that may arise. Finally, in light of the novelties of this research area, the main empirical environments of urban resilience are specified. The concluding remarks close the argumentation by returning to the place of urban resilience thinking within the local turn literature, while also pointing to its normative and methodological potentialities.

THE RESEARCH AREA OF URBAN RESILIENCE AND MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

In the scholarly debate bridging urban and migration governance, there are presently two established hypotheses that can be considered as two major premises: firstly, that cities begin to be active because they must address global challenges with local means (Barber, 2013). In migration studies, this often leads to a second hypothesis directly pointing to city-state relations: that local politics initiate a disengagement process by setting their own migration governance agenda (Filomeno, 2017; Lacroix & Desille, 2018; Oomen, 2019; Scholten & Penninx, 2016; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). This is often done in tension with state and/or European narratives and regulations. We enter the domain of power relations, but also of hierarchical structures between states and cities. Within urban regime theories and the debates on the capacity to govern (Stone, 1993) this illustrates the divergence between policy normative views, political agendas, and the resources available to cities to accomplish them (Mossberger & Stoker, 2001).

The rationale for this is that we are entering an "urban resilience turnabout" in migration governance studies. This is due to the fact that most cities around the world are facing increasing constraints directly related to their governance capacities to address global challenges of migration and refugees. This research area is already being used in several multidisciplinary fields (Burayidi et al., 2020), and even a more policy-oriented discussion at the global scale (100 Resilient Cities, 2017; IOM, 2017; OECD, 2014; UN-Habitat, 2015), but always prioritising physical infrastructures, basic resources and natural factors, leaving chronic social and human factors such as migration and refugees out of the theorisation. By taking these human factors into account, the urban resilience debate is reinvigorated. We can now state that urban resilience is about social cohesion and inclusion, and about the values of human rights, social justice and equality. Broadly speaking, a resilient city is one that focuses its efforts on developing its governance capacities to ensure that everyone has access to the resources and support they need to thrive. Cities must be able to respond to the multiple pressures related to migration governance in ways that do not exacerbate existing inequalities and power relations between people or create new ones. It is of the utmost importance to develop a clear understanding of the emerging empirical trends on significant structural changes in the urban systems, particularly in the context of existing debates on urban justice and urban citizenship. Citizenship studies (García Cabeza & Faist, 2024) have developed the category of urban citizenship by focussing on the process by which local authorities extend rights to their residents even if the state does not formally recognise them as citizens (García Cabeza, 2006). One of the latest innovative measures for urban citizenship has been giving an ID to all residents, whatever their status, in New York, San Francisco, Zurich and Berlin (Kron & Lebuhn, 2020; 98). The existing process is inherently resilient when local authorities engage in resistance with regard to the question of how cities respond to repressive border regimes (Kron & Lebuhn, 2020; 83). In other domains, the urban resilience approach is often used as "the ability of a system to adapt to a variety of changing

conditions and to withstand shocks while maintaining its essential functions” (World Bank, 2016; 19). The UN-Habitat (2018) provides the positive transformative approach of resilience that most scholars defend (DeVerteuil & Golubchikov, 2016; Yamagata & Maruyama, 2016):

Urban Resilience is the measurable ability of any urban system, with its inhabitants, to maintain continuity through all shocks and stresses, while positively adapting and transforming toward sustainability. A resilient city assesses, plans and acts to prepare and respond to hazards – natural and human-made, sudden and slow-onset, expected and unexpected – in order to protect and enhance people's lives, secure development gains, foster an environment for investment, and drive positive change.

The term ‘resilience’ was first used in physics and mathematics to describe a material's ability to regain equilibrium following a disturbance, and in biology to understand how natural systems can display homeostasis (Norris et al., 2008). In the 1970s, Holling applied the resilience metaphor to ecological systems and their capacity to adapt to adverse conditions, offering this seminal definition: “measure of the persistence of systems and of their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables” (Holling, 1973; 14). Since then, probably due to its metaphorical origin, a debate has arisen both within and outside various disciplines (Brantz & Sharma, 2020; Chandler & Coaffee, 2017; Hamstead et al., 2021; Lindell, 2020; Wilkinson & Remøy, 2018; Yamagata & Maruyama, 2016).

An initial overview also shows that resilience practice is a way of analysing how capacity building absorbs external disturbances while maintaining its policy routines based on non-linear dynamics, buffering capacity, self-regulation, and learning (Walker & Salt, 2012). As a boundary concept (Brand & Jax, 2007), it designates a perspective and a way of thinking about how a system reacts to external pressures. Core debates regarding this concept have motivated the application of this approach to the novel terrain of urban migration governance. The work of Galderisi (2014) and studies by Da Silva and Morera (2014), MacKinnon (2015), and Biggs et al. (2016), and others that will be quoted, have influenced the approach. Resilient cities look for ways to face pressure in their legal, institutional and policy infrastructures, with interconnected cultural, economic, territorial/demographic, political and social dimensions (IOM, 2017). The focus on urban resilience enables migration studies to scrutinise how cities develop innovative policy strategies that empower them to surmount the various uncertainties brought about by both internal and external factors. This includes the development of governance capacities to handle extreme situations that jeopardise their social system.

A TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH TO URBAN MIGRATION GOVERNANCE RESILIENCE

Urban resilience offers a path to developing theories on the transformation of urban areas. This is a critical scientific claim that emphasises the relevance of evaluating current urban regimes and examines how often the state imposes oppressive and unfair conditions on existing ones. In most cities, such relationships are believed to be an extra factor that adds to existing inequalities and contributes to excluding certain groups from citizenship power. This is the domain where cities begin to develop a resilient strategy to withstand involuntary situations of governance vulnerability. This urban resilience-based approach may enable us to understand the directions of urban change within the traditional hierarchical paradigm of city–state relations (DeVerteuil & Golubchikov, 2016). This research area can bring to urban resilience literature the distinctive manifestations that arise when urban resilience is applied to migratory factors. In this sense, it is worth addressing critically the conceptual limits in implementing this research approach when it is linked with sustainability. For instance, the UN Sustainable Development (SD) Goal 11 to “make cities, inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”, promotes the values of just development

that considers future generations. “Sustainability” and “resilience” both attach importance to ensuring the successful continuity of a system. But in linking urban resilience to migration governance, we need to go beyond this threshold, which for most scholars leads towards conservative ideologies (MacKinnon, 2015; MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013; Swanstrom, 2008), as it fosters reflections and actions aimed at preserving rather than transforming the urban system.

From the very beginning then we need to deal with the great division in the literature between the re-active and conservative meanings of resilience, and a more pro-active, transformative understanding. For example, local authorities may follow state dictates rigidly and either accept the limits of inclusion/exclusion of migrants' rights set by the state or not. In this case, city officials may follow their predisposition to help, be humanitarian and even resist the state's pursuit of its security agenda, being very active against all dynamics that resist incorporating migrants' inequalities and power domination into their mainstream structure. This is happening today in many cities receiving refugees and Mediterranean rescue boats. Cities are creating reception networks (so-called welcoming cities) with other urban systems or supporting CSO initiatives, such as the Lampedusa Charter (2014) and the Palermo Charter (2015). The “Welcoming America” (2022) movement in the US has also spawned a “Welcoming International” dimension with offshoots in the Inclusive Cities initiative in the UK (Compas, 2022). The resilience perspective directs attention towards the manner in which cities intensify multi-level governance tensions by advocating for greater collaboration. The development of resilience in urban areas can be initiated by the incorporation of stressors related to migration and refugees' governance issues into the local agenda. This should be followed by the formulation of a strategic approach to proactively address these pressures. It is at this motivational stage, and psychological political atmosphere that cities begin to implement imaginative policies and strategies, to build new alliances and partnership both within and outside their national boundaries, and to create their own urban regime, becoming active and even activist when necessary. To comprehend the “multi-scale spheres” (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2021) of urban resilience, it is essential to account for this shift in scale. This empirical trend confirms that cities are attempting to increase their urban capacities without the help of the state. Or they are using them as infrastructure for their policy goals (Sellers, 2005).

Another noteworthy contribution to the field of urban resilience studies, particularly from the perspective of transformative and progressive scholarship, is the call for a more normative approach that integrates urban justice and urban citizenship. (Bauböck, 2003; Kron, 2017; Lebuhn, 2013). It is evident that resilient areas frequently demonstrate the necessity for cities to address human rights challenges, including undocumented adults, vulnerable migrant women and children, and refugees. However, there has been a degree of criticism levelled at urban resilience literature for its apparent neglect of issues pertaining to equity, power, and justice (Vale, 2014; Ziervogel et al., 2017), despite some attempts to address them (Fainstein, 2015). This is likely due to the fact that urban resilience has typically been utilised for natural factors and has primarily emphasised physical and resource infrastructures, rather than social and community-cohesion oriented factors. The category of urban resilience offers a promising avenue for new research in the field of migration governance. It provides a valuable analytical framework for much of the migration studies literature, which is consolidating cities as a cornerstone in the defence of human rights and democratic values. (Oomen et al., 2016). Furthermore, it offers insights into the domain of detaching the monopoly of citizenship, with new criteria of inclusion and sense of belonging, beyond the symbolic loyalty to a national flag. From this perspective, urban resilience provides an opportunity to critically examine the dominant modes of legality and state action (Harvey, 2003). Indeed, there is a growing body of literature that addresses the struggle of many cities to define their own interpretation of the right to the city, which could be reinvigorated. (Harvey, 2015; Harvey & Potter, 2009; Lefebvre, 1967).

One of the defining characteristics of urban resilience research when applied to migration governance is its focus on the “grey areas” where there is no clear answer to the questions “How did the problem arise?”, “What can I do?”, and “What are the institutional, legal and regulatory resources I can mobilise to ensure a fairer city, with liveable and inclusive neighbourhoods?” From this perspective, cities can be considered resilient when they engage in decision-making processes that are susceptible to uncertainty. However, they must also be motivated to

respond promptly to social problems, as inaction may leave the urban social system vulnerable to xenophobic and neo-nationalist narratives, such as white tribalism. Despite these multi-layered pressures, action is taken, which demonstrates the normative values of urban justice. This illustrates the capacity of resilience to provide decision-makers with reasons for action.

Urban resilience is an invitation for creative thinking in policy and governance. Examples of these are poverty, economic inequality and unequal distribution of power, social effects of climate change, situations of insecurity and exclusions in general, which more directly affect migrants. The ability to work in grey areas is contingent upon the existence of a broad range of interpretations for the challenges related to migration governance and the implementation of resolute policies. This leeway mainly applies to areas where cities have greater flexibility and innovation than the higher government units. For instance, municipal authorities may promptly establish refugee task forces, initiate pilot projects to accommodate refugees, and oversee various city services and external partnerships. (Mayer, 2018; 234).

Urban resilience is a deliberately pursued political vision. As previously indicated, cities attain resilience when they incorporate migration-related stressors and governance capacity concerns into their own agendas. It is imperative that they adopt a strategic *pro-active approach* to these pressures, which necessitates the construction of *multi-scale spheres of action*, the formation of new alliances, networks, and partnerships within and beyond their original area of power and influence. In essence, they must construct their own urban regime that extends beyond the initial boundaries of the state. The autonomy-building process necessitates the encouragement of *innovative, creative and pioneering governance*, which develops the governance capacities of the relevant authorities. This is only possible because of the resilience of the urban environment. In addition, such circumstances often prompt numerous cities to become involved in contentious political disputes with their state, necessitating that they take an *activist role in advocating for their interests*. It is now time to consider in greater detail the four fundamental aspects of urban resilience, as highlighted above, that require comprehensive attention.

Pro-active cities

Since 2015, with the advent of the Syrian mass migration, and with a markedly intensified focus on European citizenship with Ukrainian refugees, there has been a significant rebranding of cities to differentiate their stance on migrants, particularly those who have undergone a traumatic migration process. The list could be longer, and there is abundant literature supporting it. Solidarity, welcoming or sanctuary cities have been the dominant paradigms in this debate on the 'local turn', in Europe, Australia, North America and beyond. These represent complementary approaches to pro-active policies. It is a way to build policy narratives grounded in human empathy and humanitarian resource support. It is also usual for most of this literature to be actor-based, dependent on how local government builds alliances with civil actors, and the focus on policies, either in legal grey zones (this is the usual focus from sanctuary cities with a long tradition in the United States, one that has recently been incorporated into the European debate, Mayer, 2018; Darling, 2019; Mourão Permoser & Bauböck, 2023; Bazurli & de Graauw, 2023), or a simple legal one yet which broadens the welcoming conditions (usually welcoming cities, Neis et al., 2018; Shrider, 2019; Lambert & Swerts, 2019), or highlighting the priority of the humanitarian perspective for solidarity cities over other of a state's considerations (stability, security, national identity, etc.) (Bauder, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Bauder & Juffs, 2020; García Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019; Kreichauf & Mayer, 2021; Kron & Lebuhn, 2020). Many scholars today adopt an Aristotelian approach to propose descriptive typologies for such city branding. This is because there is a consensus among scholars that each city should implement these policies according to its own unique context and within its existing urban regime. However, this current literature pays little attention to migration governance capacities, or just assumes it. This marks the entry point into the field of urban resilience. The branding of policies by cities is not merely a matter of city identity construction. Rather, it is an ideological position that demonstrates a desire to transcend the traditional spatial boundaries of action established by the

state regime. This 'scale shift' represents an early indication of rebellion and disagreement. Alternatively, it may be a city strategy to enhance its visibility and reinforce its leadership in international relations, a domain traditionally dominated by states. The different types of exclusion experienced by vulnerable migrants create accumulated social problems in cities, thereby increasing the pressure on municipalities to alleviate them (Mayer, 2018; 234). The urban resilience approach is an opportunity to channel all these pro-active patterns under a common theorisation. Through this lens, a pro-active approach is a combination of prevention through strategic measures. It then entails anticipation strategies (Buisman, 2021; Kaur et al., 2022; Tönurist & Hanson, 2020) of future migration-related constraints, and provides reasons for building resilient strategies to face new urban challenges.

Multi-scale debate and scale shift

Many cities make efforts to operate on a broad geographical scale, which is reflected in the concept of urban resilience. As a result, cities shape complex geographies of urban migration governance, and this extends beyond the limitations imposed by states. "Scale thinking" has penetrated migration governance recently (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2021). The spatial domain represents a valuable addition to the field of urban resilience and migration governance research. This debate has epistemological and political dimensions. The epistemological approach posits that the problem definition of governance issues may vary depending on the scale at which they are produced. An urban resilience lens serves to highlight the distinctive problem definition of migration governance at the city level. Politically, cities are shifting the traditional scales of interaction for developing their governance, and this has (in)direct effects on the conventional hierarchies of power. For instance, this is the main "raison d'être" of the French network, the Association Nationale des Villes et Territoires Accueillants (ANVITA, "National Association of Welcoming Cities and Territories"),¹ aiming at making their views on migration governance visible against state control of the public narrative on migration. Another example is the debate on how cities are shaping new regional spaces or penetrating in some regional spaces that were previously under the dominion of states (Zapata-Barrero, 2022). The actions of most Mediterranean port cities (such as Barcelona, Naples, Palermo and Marseille) opening their harbours to Open arms and SOS Mediterranean are also clear examples. Despite the state's criminalisation of CSOs' humanitarian rescue operations, the majority of solidarity cities have welcomed these boats carrying refugees. These transnational urban practices (Smith, 2001) and trans-local spatial geographies (Brickell & Datta, 2011; Christou, 2011; Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013) provide an analytical opportunity to investigate how most of these new scales of urban migration governance can be interpreted as various representations of migration governance capacity development.

Urban innovative governance

The examination of innovative governance measures constitutes a key element of the analysis of resilient strategies. Although not all innovative strategies are responsive to resilience, it is evident that the majority of resilient strategies result in the implementation of innovative actions. There is a growing body of literature that suggests that local public administration has the potential for significant innovation, with the exploration of new and different solutions to achieve urban community goals (Timeus & Gascó, 2018; Vrabie & Ianole-Călin, 2020). A report published by the OECD (2019) indicates that fostering a policy culture that encourages municipal staff to engage in experimentation, take risks, and learn from failure is a crucial factor in fostering innovation. Similarly, external partnerships that can supplement or assist in developing internal governance capacity can also play a significant role. The background to this discussion is that governments are confronted with a multiplicity of intersecting challenges that strain public resources and demand innovative new solutions. The concept of "innovation capacity" is an integral component of the broader field of governance capacity development. It can be defined as the human, financial and institutional

resources and skills that can facilitate the implementation of innovative, collaborative and bottom-up problem-solving. The urban resilience lens provides an opportunity to analyse the operationalisation of urban governance innovation, which frequently entails the reconfiguration of states and governance hierarchies. There is even an interesting new research avenue that analyses how trans-municipal networks led to different innovative models of urban governance in the climate change debate (Bellinson & Chu, 2019). It can be argued that there is a correlation between urban resilience and transformative innovative governance (Fastenrath et al., 2019; McGuirk et al., 2022). This can also be viewed as a fertile area of enquiry for those studying urban migration governance.

Contentious politics and governmental activism

The debate on contentious politics is typically considered a specific branch of social movements research (Tilly, 2015). The incorporation of cities as actors can be achieved through governmental activism (Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2017), and this literature illuminates the contemporary phenomenon of urban resilience. The term “contentious politics” is used to describe the use of disruptive techniques with the intention of making a political claim or of changing government policy. Examples of such strategies are actions that disturb a policy routine or a political decision, such as demonstrations, general strikes, direct action, riots, or civil disobedience. Charles Tilly (2015; 7) defines contentious politics as “interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interest.” He also insists that most contentious politics activate or de-activate existing boundaries (Tilly, 2015; 108). This argument is applicable to the scale shifting expressed in the majority of resilient strategies, as previously highlighted. Tarrow (2015) insists that this research field is distinctive because it focuses on the relational mechanisms while the scale shift focuses on contention. With regard to the latter, Tarrow presents arguments that may facilitate a more analytical understanding of these urban resilience actions. He says that most episodes of contention begin locally; if there were no shift in scale, there would be few national or international waves of contention. Scale shift moves the locus of contention to new actors, touches on the interests and values of new targets, involves a shift in venue to sites that may be more dangerous or more institutionalised than its origin, and can threaten the survival of entire regimes (Tarrow, 2015; 91).

Urban resilience is also a way to enter the realm of governmental activism, of insurgent cities. As a form of governance activism, most often urban resilience in migration governance uses conventional means for unconventional strategies, creates and deploys resources, makes more alliances with social actors than upper levels of governance. One of the first works articulating this research avenue highlights that governmental players engaging in governmental activism through contentious governance permanently face strategic questions: Should we stage a protest ourselves? Should we collaborate with non-governmental players? Is protest at the moment the best form of action for us? How far can we go in pushing our interests without destroying our ongoing relationships with our opponents on this issue? What is also specific, is that cities are not only the targets of third parties, but also the “initiator of claims” (Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2017; 567–568), seeking to alter current state configurations of urban regimes.

Having outlined the conceptual contours of urban resilience applied to migration governance, I will now offer some initial research strands that can contribute to its development as a scientific research programme.

WHAT DISTINGUISHES URBAN RESILIENCE WHEN IT IS APPLIED TO MIGRATION GOVERNANCE RESEARCH? HOW CAN MIGRATION SCHOLARS CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME ON URBAN RESILIENCE?

Some may think that we will not reinvent the wheel through a resilience lens, and they are probably right. As a heuristic approach, it assists in conceptualising existing practices that are often perceived as disparate and not necessarily interrelated. From a linguistic standpoint, the notion of urban resilience in migration governance existed in practice

but lacked a coherent conceptual framework. So, people will probably have an initial reaction of thinking that there is nothing new under this umbrella concept. Focusing on urban resilience can unite various and dispersed policies and practices in the context of the “local turn” literature on migration governance. So far, this article has demonstrated two sides of application. The first is political in nature, arising from the need for cities to navigate power dynamics involving state restrictions, political parties, public opinion, and external geopolitical pressures. The other side pertains to the impact of migrant pressure and the spread of inequalities within the urban system.

The development of an urban resilience approach can assist in the formulation of urban policy programmes and the implementation of practical protocols in instances where the influx of migrants into a city is considerable and occurs in a relatively short period of time. Additionally, the approach can be employed to enhance the social conditions of migrants and to prevent the deterioration of social cohesion. The outcomes of applying a resilient approach may facilitate the planning of migration governance and the foreseeing of social conflicts and political cleavages, as well as the drawing of potential scenarios for urban transformation. Local policy-officers find themselves often in a state of persistent and continuous pressure requiring strategic thinking. When this pressure is perceived as a threat to the stability and cohesion of the urban system, it enters a ‘resilient mode’.

It is crucial to recognise that resilience is not a fixed concept; rather, it is a dynamic process that can be influenced by a multitude of factors. In particular, resilience is observed in situations where proactive, scale-shifting, innovative, and creative governance, along with some form of contentious politics, are perceived as the optimal solution. In the context of urban politics, we can differentiate between “resilience for” and “resilience from”. Urban resilience is motivated by the goal of ensuring democratic principles of human rights, addressing inequalities in power relations, promoting urban justice and urban citizenship. Additionally, as “resilience from”, it represents a strategy against a state’s power and other restrictions that limit the capacities of cities to follow their own normative agenda. The next section will outline the contours of the environment in terms of time and space constraints along with restricted knowledge and availability of resources to meet expected normative standards. The first aspect enables us to emphasise the social and normative incentives. Urban resilience is a bottom-up, grass-roots practice, for instance when there is a collective, cooperative mobilising action looking at legal and political resources for urban justice and to accommodate vulnerable migrants and refugees while fostering a sense of urban belonging.

Apart from the fact that resilience happens when cities enter grey zones, there are also three additional features that shape the contours of urban resilience seeking to develop migration governance capacities: raising holistic awareness, entering into an autonomy-building and empowerment process, and propinquity.

Raising holistic awareness

This is shared by most of the scholars following a resilience-based approach (Fastiggi et al., 2021; Pinheiro et al., 2022; Woodruff et al., 2021). This research area provides a more holistic view to understanding an increasingly interconnected, dynamic and complex urban migration governance. “Holism” is sometimes spelled “wholism”, to accentuate its semantic connections to the word “whole” (Shoroff, 2011; 244–5). It presents an organic view of the urban system and asserts that we cannot understand the whole by merely knowing the components in isolation from each other. For cities to be resilient, topics related to migration governance cannot be analysed outside of the urban regime in which they originated. In common usage this all-encompassing concept emphasises the interconnectedness of its components within a systemic approach. Holism assumes then a multi-scale approach for generating understanding and may help us to explore how migration governance involves a nested system of relationships and a chronic debate between cause and effects in which migration issues are embedded. Resilience invites us to focus mainly on those aspects of urban migration governance that involve several public sectors for its resolution, and a broad array of social inequalities and power relations due to the urbanisation process, so hauntingly portrayed by Florida (2017). An urban resilience lens invites us to focus mainly on those aspects of urban migration governance that are ‘wicked problems’ in public policy (Rittel & Webber, 1973). A wicked problem involves a great variety of actors, sectors and

level of governments, and causes uncertainty because of its complexity. It also emphasises the fact that most current policy constraints need to be discussed in gradual terms assuming the relational character of problem definitions (Termeer et al., 2019) and it is an invitation for creative thinking in policy and governance (Head, 2019). Examples of these are poverty, economic inequality and unequal distribution of power, social effects of climate change, situations of insecurity and exclusions in general, that affects more directly migrants (Raadschelders et al., 2019).

Autonomy-building and the empowerment process

Awareness of the full extent of the situation and the pursuit of local solutions are the driving forces behind the majority of cities' decisions to seek additional resources and power. Consequently, urban resilience encourages policymakers to prioritise the development of autonomy and participation in an empowering process for cities. Specifically, the focus should be on the intersection between an independent policy agenda and capacities to handle migration governance issues. It relates to power management in a specific space and governance system, for a particular urban community. At this point, resilience presents a structure for creating pioneering policies and strategies to construct less vulnerable urban systems. Thus, stressful situations are not only caused by the political intention to stabilise the lack of basic migrants' rights, which is often the result of the state's policies, but also stem from the belief that without pro-active reaction, social conflict may spread. The fostering of resilience necessitates an awareness of the multi-level, multi-actor and polycentric approaches to urban governance that are currently in operation. These include, but are not limited to, the spatial and mobility aspects of urban areas.

Propinquity

One defining attribute of the city is propinquity (Chan, 2019). This characteristic relates to human bonding. The term comes from the Latin word "propinquitias", which means "nearness". Propinquity is a key factor that leads to interpersonal attraction in social psychology. It interrelates physical and psychological proximity between people (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). It can mean physical closeness but also human relationship between people. As a result, it is seen as a fundamental feature of urban politics (John, 2009; 21). At other levels of governance, propinquity is less important. In the context of local politics, and in accordance with the urban resilient approach to migration governance capacities, "propinquity" can be understood in three related ways.

- a. The spatio-temporal sense, where it refers to physical proximity in time and space. Therefore, urban resilience often addresses issues when interpersonal relationships are disrupted by social/political constraints and power imbalances.
- b. In a political and social sense, propinquity refers to connectedness, where an urban resilience strategy aims to provide tangible solutions for a city's residents regardless of their legal status, national origin, race, or religion.
- c. In an ethical sense, urban resilience demonstrates a high level of empathy towards vulnerable migrants and their situations. This inspires policymakers to adopt values that promote a sense of common humanity, including mutual respect, positive recognition, trust, confidence, and social capital.

NOVELTIES OF THIS RESEARCH AREA: SPECIFYING THE MAIN ENVIRONMENT OF URBAN RESILIENCE AND MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

Up to this point, this article has highlighted the primary characteristics and operational potential of this research area, when it is used to scrutinise migration governance capacities at the municipal level. As a final step, it is now

opportune to examine how this research field could potentially contribute to the ongoing discussion on the 'local turn' within migration studies. Legitimate questions may arise for the reader. How do we recognise that a city is resilient? Thus far, the definition of urban resilience has been fragmented. In essence, a resilient city is one that is able to withstand a variety of pressures and challenges related to its capacity to govern migration. It is a city that is in a permanent state of stress and chooses to integrate these pressures into its agenda. Following the first stage of identifying and defining pressure points, the resilient city begins to develop strategies to address these constraints by strengthening its governance capacity. From the outset, we assume that there are "local intentions". We know this from the consolidated debate on the "local turn". Conceptually, urban resilience is an intentional concept, based on cognitive and psychological assumptions that justify why cities actively create their own agenda, often in parallel and/or in tension with higher levels of government, and frequently challenging the traditional hierarchical power structure. As these intentional aspects need to be included in the whole theorisation, urban resilience also becomes a political ideology, as cities may have options to respond to the challenges of migration in a hostile way, adopting state security control and reactive policies against migrant dynamics, and supporting the criminalisation of migrants in an irregular situation and those civil society organisations that try to help them. Cities can also do nothing, and follow the main routines, existing ordinances and power dynamics that have already been shaped by the state structure. They may even feel no responsibility towards a migrant's destiny.

Resilience highlights then an ideological and intentional, a strategic choice that responds to factors such as limited resources, the political climate in the city and region, and geopolitical circumstances. As a political strategy to expand and deepen the sphere of municipal action, this often leads to city pragmatism, since doing nothing for migrants or reacting against them, may increase social fragmentation, inequalities and oppression. This set of intentions invites most cities to enter into a contentious realm with the state and other levels of government, privileging ideals of social justice over hostility or simply ignorance towards the vulnerable situation of migrants. When theorising urban resilience in the context of governance capacity development, it is important to consider these psychological assumptions of administrative institutions. They are often overlooked.

Cities' ideological positions are advanced by the environment, which facilitates their efforts to become more active and incorporate their governance limitations into their own agendas. Taking some initial arguments from an empirical pilot study (Zapata-Barrero, 2023a), this process is configured by the critical interaction of four dimensions, occurring almost simultaneously: time, space, knowledge and resources.

Time

The need for time efficiency is a crucial aspect of urban resilience. A perpetual sense of urgency drives cities to take practical steps, which often result in providing temporary or provisional forms of urban membership and citizenship, guided by the principles of human rights and social justice. Katz et al. (2016: 21) state that a city's decision-makers often observe and promptly adopt innovative practices from other locations. The communication between them suggests that they are facing significant challenges that must be resolved as soon as possible. In addition, city governments possess a certain degree of autonomy in creating and implementing migration policies (Mayer, 2018: 234). This implies governing with urgency, as certain situations cannot be left without policy intervention. Policy officers should provide a prompt but also an efficient response to avoid the exacerbation of stress both at the social system level and in the personal situations of migrants, which may include deeper vulnerability and exclusion.

Space

There are two viewpoints to consider when looking at the dimension of space. The first relates to how space is distributed within the city. This territorialisation is linked to the housing market, discriminatory practices and

socio-economic status. The second perspective on this dimension concerns how public space is shaped and used. This includes the physical places where people communicate and interact within a city. City planners must address migrant issues in urban development planning because public spaces promote the visibility of migrants and their socio-economic conditions and their lacks of citizenship rights.

Information and knowledge

Generally, cities recognise the importance of using information as a tool to enhance their resilience. Three aspects must be considered in this regard. To begin with, the shortage of data stops cities from taking decisions and carrying out preventive actions. Accurate information is essential in devising well-targeted policies and pro-active measures to address any potential threats. In addition, in order to avoid bias and oversimplification, there is a need for greater public knowledge. Thirdly, the state must be cautious in using cities' limited data for control purposes, and we need to give this matter high priority. When data collection on migrants is changing frequently, local authorities must handle these records to maintain trust and avoid harm. Indeed, protecting data boosts confidence and is a long-lasting strategy.

Resources

Cities often report not having enough resources. This is not a new part of being resilient. But when closely connected with time and space, this constant pressure becomes a factor that makes a city more resilient. Migration governance that creates uncertainty has a big impact on cities, especially when it comes to finding sufficient, already scarce resources. A shortage of resources for governing can lead to a high level of resilience. Many policy-makers are driven by a combination of personal motivations for social justice and the initial frustration that arises from having limited resources, which restricts their power and autonomy in decision-making. In stagnant cities, the difference between available resources and policy agenda can be a cause of stress. Most cities usually must deal with four significant issues to different extents: a lack of instruments at the national level to safeguard migrants; a shortage of economic and human resources; poor coordination between local and national central authorities; and inadequate data.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: URBAN RESILIENCE THINKING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF 'LOCAL TURN' LITERATURE IN MIGRATION STUDIES

Urban resilience thinking can provide a valuable research area for the development of the 'local turn' literature in migration studies. By integrating the category of urban resilience into the study of migration governance, scholars can analyse the capacity of cities to adapt, recover and transform in response to shocks and stresses arising from migration patterns and the influx of diverse populations. This analysis should consider the stressful environment constituted by a combination of temporal, spatial, epistemological and material factors. Furthermore, the capacity of urban governance to respond to the multiplicity of pressures emanating from the internal urban regimes, as well as its limited competencies and hierarchical structures, must also be considered. An initial textured understanding of how urban resilience requires a comprehensive analysis of migration governance capacities leads us to recognise the need to search for the fundamental elements of a possible future theory. This should be done with reference to previous usage in the literature to promote continuity and the ability to aggregate new dimensions, as we have done.

By integrating urban resilience thinking into the 'local turn' literature in migration studies, researchers can explore more in-depth the features that shape the contours of urban resilience seeking to develop migration governance capacities: raising holistic awareness, entering into an autonomy-building and empowerment process, and propinquity, and provide more pieces of evidence on how cities react pro-actively to these pressures, build multi-scale spheres of action and a scale shift of most cities in combination with innovative and creative governance, and contentious politics. One approach to this could be to explore how urban resilience strategies are employed to address the social, economic, and cultural challenges posed by migrations and their diversity dynamics. This could involve studying the ways in which cities develop inclusive policies, social support systems, and infrastructure to accommodate and empower migrant populations and the capacity of cities to govern. As urban resilience strives to achieve the capacity to govern migration issues, it must have an identifiable and shared purpose. However, this policy horizon may be subject to contextual nuances and may be deployed in different ways according to the specific characteristics of resilient areas and the restrictions identified.

The genius of the urban resilience thinking when applied to migration governance is that it helps conceptually to channel the most diverse expressions of trends in city empowerment by going back to the foundations: the need to address the multi-layered restrictions and pressures operating on most cities in pursuing their ideals of social justice and urban citizenship. Certainly, this does not imply that urban resilience automatically embodies these principles of social justice. Urban resilience can pursue the sustainability of its urban system without explicitly considering critical perspectives of its current urban regimes. However, the transformative dimension and progressive outcome may not be achieved, as highlighted by this article. To ensure the sustainability of an urban system, it may be necessary to maintain the management function of most cities in relation to their higher-level decision-makers, as administrative units of states in a hierarchical power structure. Alternatively, an active but regressive policy towards migrants may be adopted in the name of maintaining the urban system as it was before, following more conservative ideals.

The perspective this article has adopted is rather transformative. In this case there is a need in this new research area to analyse how urban resilience in migration governance is calling for a more decentralised power structure. The category of urban resilience represents a novel research area that encourages focused critical analysis of the challenges and constraints that cities frequently encounter in developing the capacity to achieve social justice objectives for migrants. This can redirect the focus of urban justice and urban citizenship. Urban resilience thinking involves a critical analysis of the process by which the 'local turn' contributes to the dismantling of state power structures towards more decentralised states. We are only scratching the surface of the details, which require further investigation.

Cities are already trapped in a state-dominated urban regime that leaves them with limited autonomous power or room for manoeuvre. This limitation can affect the entire system and justify the claim for a re-configuration of the urban regime. This research area could aid scholars of the 'local turn' in gaining a fresh perspective on how power operates in urban environments. This emphasises the importance of interrogating the hierarchical structure of the state instead of merely considering it an external factor in the urban system. Further normative and empirical work is necessary to explore the theoretical evolution of the debate.

These final remarks propose two research avenues that can be explored to theorise urban resilience and migration governance capacity development.

From a normative point of view, urban resilience needs to analyse in depth how cities are motivated by pragmatic devices, looking simply at the sustainability of their urban system, but also towards a more cohesive urban community, developing an urban sense of belonging and providing spaces for participation and rights to those that are limited by states, pursuing urban citizenship and urban justice horizons.

For its operationalisation to work, one of the issues that arises especially in cross-national comparison is how much coherence is needed in incorporating restrictions into the policy agenda and how many strategies need to be built around increasing governance capacities. It is highly necessary to develop an index of urban migration governance resilience. As a research technique for scaling and indexing, this methodology is emerging in many

domains as it is becoming a useful tool for capturing the complexity of a category of practice (Reckien, 2018). From an academic viewpoint, indexing is an emerging methodological tool for advancing comparative research (Bjerre et al., 2015). From a policy point of view, indexing would help to benchmark urban governance policy strategies and identify the best pro-active, multi-scalar, creative and contentious practices. Using this tool can help to measure urban resilience and migration governance capacities meeting the criteria of parsimony, hypothesis testing and robust conceptualisations (Nardo et al., 2008).

Working on several resilient areas (for instance, unaccompanied underage migrants, undocumented adults, refugees, the sexual vulnerability of women, and for some southern countries such as Tunisia, necro-policies or the management of corpses) and public sectors directly affected by governance pressures (housing, health, education, employment, etc.), a future theory may establish main patterns and hypotheses by following the drivers or strategies and impact of urban resilience. Working on several resilient areas will also create typologies of cities according to their resilience-building practices. In order to demonstrate the full extent of its research potential, urban migration governance resilience analysis must employ a methodological approach capable of accommodating urban regimes that exhibit considerable variation in terms of their historical and geopolitical contexts, in addition to the social, political, cultural, and economic factors that differentiate them. It is now necessary to embark upon empirical analysis.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

ORCID

Ricard Zapata-Barrero  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3478-1330>

TWITTER

Ricard Zapata-Barrero  ricardzapata

ENDNOTE

¹Retrieved: <https://www.anvita.fr/>.

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