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Background paper for the United Nations Workshop on Migration and Cities, Session VI on policy, governance, and planning

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Interest in the relationship of cities with migration has grown steadily over the past few years with renewed vigour, stimulated significantly by the international community. A look at only the past few years reveals a conference, *Migrants and Cities*, organized by the International Organization for Migration in 2015 together with an issue of their World Migration Report devoted entirely to this theme; the United Nations gathering on urban matters, the Habitat 3 Conference, which in 2016 paid considerable attention to migration; the Final Report of Sir Peter Sutherland's tenure as the Special Representative to the UN Secretary General on Migration with recommendations regarding the role of cities in managing migration and its effects; and many more. Cities have returned to the foreground in the migration field and have turned our attention once again to the writings of, for example, Jane Jacobs on livable cities, Manuel Castels on cities as flows, Richard Florida on creative cities, Saskia Sassen on global cities, and Nina Glick Schiller on transnational cities.

The relation between cities and migration is an intimate one simply because cities came into existence through migration, through the gathering together of people acting in co-operation, pooling ideas and labour, and enhancing the quality of their lives. Cities, the confluence of people, ideas and innovations, together with the essential element of co-operation, have been one of the most significant achievements in the history of humanity. They are an achievement to be celebrated. The world's migrants, whether internal or international, to this day overwhelmingly choose cities as their destinations, for it is in cities that their human capital is most rewarded. Migration and urbanization have become almost synonymous. This should have us pause with regard to the governance of migration.

It has often been noted that, although it is national governments that control a country's external border and determine migration policy, it is cities that bear the brunt of the responsibility for settling and integrating migrants. But the suggestion that cities are little more than passive recipients of migrants or powerless victims of national policy is misleading for it ignores the agency of cities as determinants of migration flows, whether the migration is internal to a country or international. The efficacy of cities in influencing migration has received comparatively little attention in discussions of migration governance. It is time that cities recognize their influence and act upon that recognition, and it is time that national governments recognize the influence of cities and empower local governments and other institutions to assume a greater degree of responsibility. It bears noting that many countries today, especially highly developed countries, have constitutions that were written at a time when their societies were far less urbanized than they are today, and the constitutional division of authorities reflected a more rural population. In many cases, municipal authorities remain extremely limited, but, with today's concentration of populations in urban areas, a re-thinking of jurisdictional authorities may be warranted with more powers offered to local governments including on matters related to migration. Re-drafting constitutions is highly complex, usually extremely controversial, and highly time-consuming; but in the meantime, national governments ought to exercise their option to bring local authorities into policy discussions of migration and integration, whether those discussions concern

numerical migration levels, the skills sought from migrants, other matters regarding who is selected for a visa, managing integration, and so on.

In their White Paper of 2015, the Joint Migration and Development Initiative of the United Nations and the IOM called for the mainstreaming of migration in local planning and policy, putting it this way:

> *The importance of local authorities in developing and implementing Migration and Development (M&D) policies and initiatives, as well as in driving integration processes, is increasingly recognized at the global level. At the same time, the process of integrating migration within policy design and planning, known as the "mainstreaming" process, is increasingly perceived as key in addressing issues related to migration as well as in building on all the opportunities brought by it. This process is based on the recognition of the wide range of policy areas that affect and are affected by migration, and on the subsequent building of coherence among concerned policies and actors. Although mainstreaming processes are now mainly addressed at the national level, their translation and application at the local level is increasingly considered as a crucial aspect in view of maximizing the potential of migration for development.[i]*

This sentiment was affirmed during the IOM's 2015 conference on Migrants and Cities where the JMDI White Paper was released as well as by the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda arising from the Habitat 3 Conference of 2016 which states:

> *We commit to ensure the full respect for human rights and humane treatment of refugees, internally displaced persons, and migrants, regardless of migration status, and support their host cities in the spirit of international cooperation, taking into account national circumstances, and recognizing that, although the movement of large populations into towns and cities poses a variety of challenges, it can also bring significant social, economic, and cultural contributions to urban life. We further commit to strengthen synergies between international migration and development, at the global, regional, national, sub-national, and local levels by ensuring safe, orderly, and regular migration through planned and well-managed migration policies and to support local authorities in establishing frameworks that enable the positive contribution of migrants to cities and strengthened urban-rural linkages[ii].*

These and other contributions of the international community re-iterate the increasingly accepted position that cities are to be recognized and supported as agents in the governance of migration and its effects on societies.

For example, with regard to migration itself, many societies with well-developed economies are facing a growing competition for skills and talent in response to ageing populations and shrinking labour forces. National migration and integration policy will make a difference to how a country fares in the competition, but it is its cities that will make the principal difference. It is in cities where most of the economic opportunities lie, where education systems are strongest, where health and social services are most developed. It is in the institutions of cities, notably the private sector, the education sector, the civil society sector, and the health and social services sectors among others that will be the principal draw for migrants. In addition, it is in cities where prospective migrants are more likely to find other members of their co-ethnic community, where their social capital will best develop, something that

leads to yet more economic and cultural opportunities. How well a country does in the competition for talent will depend heavily on how well its cities do in this same competition. The governance point here is, again, that national governments seeking talent from outside their borders should work in partnership with local governments and institutions.

It remains the case, however, that most attention is given to the role of cities and their institutions in the *integration* of the migrants who have come to live there. In carrying out this role, cities exercise varying degrees of autonomy from national government policy and legislation. For example, in Canada, cities tend to offer integration programs under federal and provincial funding programs and thereby support higher level government objectives such as with regard to language training, early settlement, and job search strategies, and in so doing apply a concept of integration that is described by the federal Multiculturalism Act. These same cities are, furthermore, free to offer their own programming through their own funds. Yes, integration happens largely locally, yet this is not to deny that national norms matter, norms that may be encoded in law including constitutions or are matters of cultural tradition. At times, local norms and values may diverge from those of national governments, and this is perhaps especially the case regarding migration which can be a very sensitive political topic. At an extreme end of the spectrum are cities that choose to act in defiance of national legislation such as Sanctuary Cities which offer integration and other services to undocumented migrants where national law prohibits the offer of these services and requires that local authorities in fact to identify the undocumented migrants to national law enforcement officers.[iii] Often in so acting against national policy or law, cities will argue that they are in fact the defenders of long-established values. There are many variations in the relations between local and national authorities and they can ebb and flow with the priorities of either level of government and who occupies positions of leadership.

There is a growing acknowledgement of the value of contributions to integration by civil society with many calls for partnerships between local governments and local non-governmental associations, particularly those established by migrants themselves. When migrant-run associations take on responsibilities for integration, it serves to empower the migrant communities and signals to the societal mainstream that the migrants are willing contributors to their host society. Robust and active civil society organizations are also strong markers of democratic development, and this may be particularly the case for those organizations managed by migrants and other minorities, especially when their mandates expand beyond their co-ethnic responsibilities. A civil society sector that is active in migrant integration can suggest that the migrants are taking a degree of responsibility for their own integration; this also suggests that integration is what some refer to as a "two-way street", where both the migrants and the host society play active roles in bringing about integration and where there are adaptations on both sides. This idea of integration as a two way affair is often opposed to a strong assimilationism whereby migrants are expected to leave behind their ethnic and cultural past and do whatever possible to become like those in the host community.

At some point, successful integration will need to be defined by the destination society allowing a concrete understanding on all sides of what integration will look like, what integration initiatives are to achieve, and do so from the point of view of both the migrant and the host. These are matters that

cities can take into their own hands, preferably with the guidance of national norms and tangible support from partnerships with national governments. The international community is trying to establish an appropriate role for itself as it has long done through UN Habitat and more recently by convening discussions and drafting documents on migrants and cities that include policy guidance. Universal human rights are expected to be followed not only by national but by local authorities, and national governments are expected to work with their local and provincial/state jurisdictions on implementing the provisions of the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda, and so on. One trend that will require a certain degree of policy attention is the emergence of the middle class suburban ethnic enclave which in some countries has come to rival the mainstream as the milieu for integration. Some have argued that enclaves represent a failure of integration and can be dangerous parallel societies, damaging social cohesion. Regardless, these forms of residential concentration are tangible realities and they raise the question of how a local government can build mutual contributing relations between mainstream and enclave.

Of particular importance for local integration is urban planning. The recent discussions on migrants and cities have placed more emphasis on local policy than on urban planning and, although mainstreaming migration into local policy is itself of potentially great benefit, the tangible effects of policy are usually made concrete through implementing urban plans. A neglected but valuable approach to planning for migration is to be found in multicultural planning theory which takes intrinsically into account the presence of migrants and minorities in such standard planning considerations as land use, transportation systems, water, sanitation, electricity, other public utilities, recreation, business regulations, and so on. The needs and expectations of migrant communities may be significantly different from those of the mainstream and planning for diversity requires attending to these differences. Traditional urban planning tends to look to the general public good without attending to cultural differences. But in contemporary multicultural cities, multicultural planning principles offer advantages to cities that aim to be inclusive and cohesive.

Some advice to cities in planning for diversity was offered by Professor Mohammad Qadeer:

- Provide minority language facilities, translations and interpretation, in public consultations.
- Include minority representatives in planning committees and task forces as well as diversifying planning staff.
- Include ethnic/minority community organizations in the planning decision-making processes.
- Recognize ethnic diversity as a planning goal in Official/Comprehensive Plans.
- Include city-wide policies for culture-specific institutions in plans, e.g., places of worship, ethnic seniors' homes, cultural institutions, funeral homes, fairs and parades, etc.
- Routinely analyze ethnic and racial variables in planning analysis.
- Study ethnic enclaves and neighbourhoods in transition.
- Establish policies/design guidelines for sustaining ethnic neighbourhoods.
- Establish policies/strategies for ethnic commercial areas, malls and business improvement areas.
- Include culture/religion as an acceptable reason for site-specific accommodations/minor-variances.
- Accommodate ethnic signage, street names and symbols.
- Address ethnic-specific service needs.

- Address immigrants' special service needs.
- Establish policies/projects for ethnic heritage preservation.
- Develop guidelines for housing to suit diverse groups.
- Promote ethnic community initiatives for housing and neighbourhood development.
- Develop strategies taking account of inter-cultural needs.
- Promote ethnic entrepreneurship for economic development.
- Promote ethnic art and cultural services.
- Accommodate ethnic sports (e.g., cricket, bocce, etc.) in playfield design and programming.[iv]

Regardless of the specific planning principles invoked, it is to be urged that the planning process involve migrants and their associations. This involvement will itself support integration and build bridges between the mainstream of the community and migrant minorities.

It must be acknowledged that the emphasis in this short paper has been largely from the perspective of wealthier countries in the OECD. Protecting human rights and the rights of migrants in particular, offering specialized services for migrants through dedicated funding programs, and carrying out urban planning with an eye to the cultural differences within the local community are possible only within a context of relative prosperity and social order. These conditions are not always the case, particularly in lower income countries some of whose cities are growing extremely rapidly.[v] Most of the world's megacities are now in the Global South and many of these large cities are home to numerous slums, some of which are themselves extremely populous, many with over one million residents. Conditions in slums are well-known to be characterized by inadequate supplies of drinking water, poor if any sanitation systems, highly inadequate transportation systems, some without roads that will accommodate emergency vehicles, poor housing quality, and a relative lack of governance of any sort, poor access to education, employment, and services, and so on. Some governments in the Global South simply cannot cope with the pace of urbanization and are seeking ways to control and reduce migration as they are simply not in a position to offer the kinds of services, policies, and institutions that the contemporary discussions of local migration governance recommend. A great many cities in the Global South do not have a planning function whatsoever, making the ideal of multicultural planning or planning for migration generally elusive at least in the near-term. The point is that when the international community sets standards for how cities manage migration and integration, it must recognize that for many cities, these standards will remain aspirational until development gains offer a realistic basis for acting towards these standards. Celebrating diversity is possible only upon a strong foundation of life's essentials.

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[i] See http://www.migration4development.org/en/events/conference-migrants-and-cities-side-event-launch-joint-jmdiiom-study-mainstreaming-migration

[ii] HABITAT III, New Urban Agenda, Draft outcome document for adoption in Quito, October 2016
10 September 2016. Article 28.

[iii] The Sanctuary City movement in the United States is an example where declaring a city to be a Sanctuary City implies a willingness to disobey federal law, thereby committing acts of civil disobedience. In the United Kingdom, the term is used more simply to indicate that a city welcomes migrants.

[iv] Qadeer, Mohammad. "What is This thing called Multicultural Planning?" Special edition of Plan Canada (undated). See http://canada.metropolis.net/pdfs/qadeer_extracted_plan_canada_e.pdf.

[v] Look for example at the case of Lagos whose population is in fact unknown but is estimated to have grown from 1 million to 21 million over the past 40 years.