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The UN Migration Agency



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MIGRANTS AND CITIES: STEPPING BEYOND *WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2015*

As an update to the *World Migration Report 2015*, which was devoted to the relationship between migration and the cities of the world, this chapter examines the role of the modern city in migration governance. Nearly all migrants, whether international or internal, are destined for cities. Migrants and their relationship to cities has been the focus of an unusually large number of activities in the international community over the past two years. How we

think of the governance of migration or, indeed, the governance of societies more broadly, is changing in recognition of the rapidly growing importance of the world's cities to the workings of societies and their economies. In this context, this chapter explores "sanctuary cities", slums, and the role of cities in responding to the recent "migration crisis" in Europe. The continuing growth in the influence of cities in social and economic affairs and in shaping migration trajectories, both international and internal, demands greater attention from policymakers, practitioners and scholars.

KEY POINTS

- Urbanization has increased to such an extent throughout most countries of the world that its effects may force a re-thinking of many aspects of governance, including the governance of migration. Some cities are finding it difficult to manage the rapid growth in populations, while others are trying to find their way as their residents leave for cities elsewhere.
- Cities have become significant determinants of global migration flows and their patterns, which has implications for governance that need to be better understood and considered. It is not only national policies that determine migration flows; city administrations, together with the other local institutions in the private and non-governmental sectors attract economic activity and promote interest, investment and immigration. National policy regimes provide a background within which local activity takes place, but increasingly it is city institutions that recruit and retain migrants. This lack of

recognition has led to a gap in research and migration policy development, a gap where those who are arguably the major determinants of migration flows are absent from the policy discussions.

- Growth in the importance and influence of cities requires shifts in our attitudes about governance roles and national governments need to enable cities to take on more responsibilities as the global actors that they have become in international migration. National and other upper levels of government need to find ways to bring cities to the migration and integration policy tables. Local governments and institutions need to recognize the influence that they have – either in reality or potentially – and assume a degree of responsibility and leadership appropriate to their circumstances.
- The challenges specific to cities of migration *in the Global South* need to be better understood and requires more focused attention. These include mega-cities and slums, such as coping with very rapid population growth and pressures on infrastructure and basic services, the expansion of slums and peri-urban settlements, and the lack of an adequate planning capacity. For cities facing these challenges, continued high levels of migration are a significant problem. Finding ways to turn internal rural-to-urban migration into a net positive for large cities is becoming increasingly urgent.
- Examples of cities exerting a degree of autonomy over migration affairs reflect the current lack of involvement of cities in national migration policy development and point to the need for local–national partnerships to be developed. Some cities have simply asserted themselves on some aspects of migration policy by, for example, promoting their city as a preferred destination for migrants or, declaring themselves to be a *sanctuary city*, in defiance of national law on the treatment of those in a country illegally.
- The interface of planning, including urban planning, and migration requires more attention as it is in planning that appreciation of diversity and concrete implementation begins. Plans embody priorities for allocating resources, and they frame decisions made by administrators and elected officials. The planning process itself can be an act of inclusion; the participation of migrant and minority groups at the table will also ensure that the interests and needs of these communities are understood and appreciated from a planning perspective.
- Mutual exchanges of knowledge and experience among cities should be enhanced. This should include elected leaders, their policy officials, their planners, and the many institutions within them whose actions contribute to the outcomes of the migration processes.
- The New Urban Agenda that emerged from the Habitat III conference is ambitious and comprehensive. While non-binding, it offers very useful long-term guidance to local and national governments on how to make cities more livable, sustainable and inclusive.

To read the report, please go to <https://www.iom.int/world-migration-report-2018>

