



COSMOPOLITAN URBANISM:
URBAN POLICIES FOR THE SOCIAL AND SPATIAL INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS
Expert Group Meeting

MIUrb/AL

The Experimental Observatory on International Migration in Urban Areas of Latin America

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1. The MIUrb/AL initiative

Cross-border movements of people are deeply rooted in the historical, economic and social heterogeneity of Latin America. Over the past thirty years, intraregional migration has substantially increased, facilitated by geographical and cultural proximity and prompted by structural factors in conjunction with socio-political changes and their uneven effect on the countries of the region. The prolonged economic crisis, the impacts of structural adjustment programmes especially on labour markets and the adverse social conditions derived from the long-standing incidence of poverty and inequality has had stronger effects on emigration trends in some countries than in others.

In 2000, the stock of intraregional immigrants reached a total of 3 million people, principally settled in cities. The large majority of international migrants adds to the low-income urban population, finding employment in the expanding informal sector and generally tending to settle among its own community in informal settlements, contributing to both the existing social segregation and the fragmentation of Latin American cities.

Since international migration is mainly an urban phenomenon it would be logical for local governments of Latin America to include it in their agenda of priorities. However, migration is usually considered as a security issue, and the bulk of *migration policies* is set at a national level, mainly directed at curbing (rather than managing) migratory inflows through restrictive admission regulations and enhanced border controls. Far less attention is devoted to *migrant policies*, i.e. all those measures that should be envisaged and implemented at the city level to guarantee international migrants' urban inclusion and to foster social cohesion.

The ineffectiveness of closed doors policies – whose main effect is usually the uncontrolled growth of undocumented immigration - combined with an inadequate response at the urban level, makes migrant communities extremely vulnerable to discrimination when trying to

access basic urban services, and exposes them to a high risk of being deprived of any citizenship rights. Low awareness about the potential benefits and consequences of international migration, along with limited resources and capabilities, are among the main factors behind the inability of local authorities to cope with the new challenges the phenomenon poses to urban governance.

Furthermore, in most cities of the region, current understanding and analysis of the urban dimensions of international migration is insufficient. Official surveys, censuses and registration instruments largely underestimate the actual magnitude of the phenomenon. There is scant information about migrants' stocks and flows, and even less about their working and living conditions.

Yet, even in those cities where the number of migrants still appears to be modest with respect to the total population, it is growing rapidly, and to a greater extent than reported in official figures, which do not include illegal presences. For example, in São Paulo, Brazil, according to Federal Police statistics, foreign-born residents represented 1.9 per cent of the total population in the year 2000. However during the previous five years, the number of non-Brazilian Latin Americans living in the city grew by nearly 6.5 times (from 9,404 in 1995 to 60,633 in 1999). By 2004 the Municipality of São Paulo estimated the total number of these migrants in the city (both legal and illegal) at some 200,000.

In Tijuana, Mexico, foreign residents represented 1.1 per cent of the total population in 2004 but, due to its strategic position on the border with US, the city hosts thousands of migrants in transit each year, many of them ending up as permanent residents after various failed attempts to migrate further. Due to this continuous movement, an exact assessment of how many leave or stay is quite difficult. It is estimated that migrants from up to 37 different countries live in the city.

According to the 2002 census, 104,000 international migrants – mainly Peruvians and Argentineans - were living in the metropolitan area of Santiago de Chile, representing 2% of the total urban population and 50% of all foreigners residing in Chile. In 1992 international migrants in Santiago were 54,000, which means their number increased by 85% in just 10 years.

Although the growing importance of cross-border movements among Latin American cities calls for targeted policies and guidance on migration issues, this topic has not yet received enough attention. It is of marginal concern for local authorities, which are often already overwhelmed in coping with their own low-income/excluded citizens. It is also very little debated among local public opinion, limiting the chances of mutual understanding and undermining the opportunities to build a shared citizenship culture.

In 2006 Università Iuav di Venezia launched the MIUrb/^{AL} Observatory (Experimental Observatory on International Migration in Urban Areas of Latin America), a three-year research project on South-to-South international migration. Strategic objectives of MIUrb/^{AL} are i) to raise local and international awareness about the issue of international migration in Latin American cities and ii) to create links among cities experiencing similar problems.

The project partners are local research institutes that are respectively examining the following case cities: Tijuana in Mexico (Colegio de la Frontera Norte), São Paulo in Brazil (Instituto Pólis), Santiago in Chile (Universidad de Chile). In order to obtain sound terms of international comparison, good practices for fostering migrants' urban inclusion in Italy (by Università Iuav di Venezia) and Canada (by the University of British Columbia in Vancouver) are also analysed and their replicability critically assessed.

The research results, as well as the information on the Observatory's activities, are published on the MIUrb/^{AL} web-site (www.miurbal.net) while dissemination at the local level is ensured through the organization of specific workshops convened in the selected cities.

2. Focus on “the perception” of the phenomenon

The core activity of the Observatory is to monitor both local and national newspapers (tab. 1) in the three Latin American cities. Starting from June 2006, every 4 months for a total of 24 months, local researchers report on the quantitative and qualitative results of their monitoring activities.

Newspaper	Relevance/Target audience/trend
Santiago	
La Cuarta	Popular - low income-
La Tercera y El Mercurio	Main national daily; traditional/conservative
La Nación	Government-led; Christian intellectuals / Social Democratic
Tijuana	
El Universal	National
El Mexicano	Local
São Paulo	
Folha de São Paulo	Large national circulation; progressive
O Estado de São Paulo	Large national circulation; traditional/conservative
Diário do Grande ABC	Main regional daily in the country; local

Tab. 1 Monitored newspapers

The way in which the press presents the news on international migration has to be considered both as a factor and as indicator of *if* and *how* the phenomenon is perceived and handled locally by public opinion and the political world. A circular relationship exists between the media and the collective perception, which can be vicious or virtuous according to both contingent local circumstances and the dominant values system existing within a given society. The press is a mirror reflecting the prevailing attitudes and opinions on certain issues and on certain categories of ideas or people. In addition, by selecting the type and tone of the information to be delivered, the media have a great responsibility in shaping the public perception of that particular issue or category.

Hence, when a negative representation of immigrants is prevalent in local and national newspapers, it could be either a signal of an increasingly hostile attitude among local society towards this category, or an editorial choice autonomously made by the press itself to focus on just some sensational facts concerning migrants. The second instance easily leads the audience to attribute isolated deviant behaviour to the whole immigrant population, even when the image the media provides of migrants avoids direct forms of distortion that could produce or accentuate stereotypes and prejudices. In both cases, which indeed are reciprocally determining, the existence of a negative image of international immigration reported in the press might be symptomatic of a more general social disquiet that could lead to mounting conflicts and the deterioration in quality of life for all, majority and minorities alike.

MIUrb/^{AL} Observatory carries out research on how the most important newspapers in Santiago, Tijuana and São Paulo address international migration through: i) recording the frequency and attitude of published articles and ii) highlighting the topics to which greater prominence is given and the new ones that are emerging. A common methodology has been devised in order to capture the image of international immigrants living in the three cities as it is presented in the selected press.

A monitoring grid (annex 1) has been designed to comparatively analyse the news published in the three urban areas. Local researchers, due to their experience both as experts in the migration field and as residents (and readers) of their cities, have the most appropriate viewpoint to properly perceive and understand the real attitude of the information published in that given context. Taking as a unit of analysis the newspapers' articles, the grid is divided into three sections: i) basic data; ii) the story; iii) analysis.

The first section registers the name of the newspaper in which the article is published; the headline and the date of publication; assesses the importance and space given to each news item; records whether and who is quoted or interviewed, in order to identify which actors are most involved in the debate on international immigration and who is locally regarded as an "accredited source" or "key witness" when discussing a specific aspect of the issue. The second section refers to the story. It identifies the main migration issues covered in each article and defines its scope and relevance (local, national, regional, international). Finally, the "analysis" assesses the stance adopted by journalists to describe the facts, in order to understand the prevalent tone when reporting on international migration (if neutral or alarming, criminalizing or solidaristic, accusing or pietistic etc.). This section also evaluates if the type of story and the way it is told contribute to either challenge or reinforce stereotypes and prejudices about international migrants. Furthermore, the article is assessed in terms of how the phenomenon is considered: as a well-accepted reality, a potential positive factor, a problem or a potential threat.

The data obtained is complemented by a report on relevant issues that have emerged from the news in each city and investigated in greater detail by MIUrb/^{AL} local researchers. In addition, press monitoring is used as a tool to observe the level of interest the phenomenon raises in the three urban areas under study.

3. Some results from the MIUrb/^{AL} media monitoring

Though the three contexts under investigation are quite different, the first twelve-months of press monitoring reveal several common traits.

As it was indeed expected, with an average of 13 articles per journal during each four-month period, the monitored press pays far less attention to the issue than the media in Europe and North America, where international migration is among the most debated topics in public and political discussion. Emigration rather than immigration often appears as the principal concern of Latin American newspapers. If this is partially understandable due to the high levels of migration outflow that some of the countries concerned - Mexico in particular - are still experiencing, it also highlights how underestimated South-to-South cross-border movements are. In contrast, an analysis of the topics most frequently dealt with when addressing the issue shows a security-driven reaction rather analogous to that prevailing in the global North. In particular, the need for more migration controls and stricter immigration policies as well as the general concern about the growth of clandestine immigration and of crimes committed by undocumented migrants.

In the majority of the cases observed, journalists writing about international immigration tend to quote or interview representatives of the central government, if anyone. The point of view of local authorities is largely missing even in those articles reporting on issues concerning a particular city, denoting that immigration is regarded as a "matter of state" still absent from the urban agenda. Few of the news items published on international migration explicitly refer to its impacts, either negative or positive, on the urban fabric. Furthermore, the conceptualisation of the migration phenomenon noticeably differs from that to date developed in Western countries. The social integration of migrants, and the associated debates on urban diversity, identity, multiculturalism or multiethnicity are not yet part of the ongoing discussion and such terms do not form part of the language used by the media when addressing the phenomenon.

In Santiago, articles on criminal offences committed by foreigners are the norm, although this does not necessarily coincide with an open stigmatization of the whole migrant category. In fact, although Chilean crime rates are among the lowest in Latin America, the local press often concentrates a significant part of its information supply on crime-related

incidents, the large majority perpetrated by nationals. Nevertheless, such an approach is surely a missed opportunity to debate the urban impact of international migration, since events concerning criminal behaviour among immigrants are reported and sensationalised for the sake of 'news value', while the social and economic causes which condition these stories are seldom questioned.

In São Paulo one of the most recurrent subjects in the newspapers has been the exploitation of foreign workers. The working condition of migrants in the textile industries owned by Bolivians is often presented and denounced as a form of modern slavery, negatively influencing the perception that public opinion has of these immigrants. However interviews conducted by local researchers among Bolivians revealed that their point of view is rather different. While they describe themselves as "tireless workers" who freely choose to work for long hours, they claim that the media's attitude in presenting them as exploited forced labourers unacceptably tarnishes the public image of their community.

In the case of Tijuana, emigration towards the United State is one of the central issues within the current Mexican political juncture, and is definitively winning the attention of the media. For example, the recent US decision to expand the fence along the border with Mexico have generated many articles on the topic while the fact that an increasing number of foreigners is ending up settling permanently in Tijuana still remains a marginal concern for local public opinion.

Despite the general lack of attention towards the issue that has been observed, it is worth noting that newspapers sporadically dedicate some space to the artistic and cultural traditions of the larger migrant communities living in the monitored cities. Although stories featuring migrant folklore merely cater to the curiosity about the "exotic practices" of foreign residents, this might nevertheless indirectly contribute to raising awareness about the growing diversity of that particular urban society.

Finally, the articles' attitude appears to be generally neutral. Despite a high level of alarmism with regard to the phenomenon, when information is given on international migrants a feeling of solidarity or concern for their precarious conditions broadly prevails. An accusatory attitude towards foreigners was observed only in the case of serious crime, for which a similar tone would probably have been used even if the responsible party had been a national resident. In any case, from the monitored press it does emerge that the presence of migrants settled in the three cities is commonly perceived as a problem or a potential threat rather than a potentially positive factor.

4. Good practices selection

Creating a collection of good practices is the other core research activity carried out by the Observatory. MIUrb/^{AL} researchers are selecting urban policies and initiatives fostering the integration of international migrants in Canada and Italy, with particular attention to those promoting migrants' right to the city (Annex 2). The collection of good practices is being used as a resource to spread information, both among local policy-makers and other urban stakeholders in Latin American cities, on how some practical aspects of the issue are governed, particularly in those contexts where managing the effects of international migration and promoting the cohesion of diverse societies are a major concern within the urban political agenda.

All good practices are an attempt to better understand what works (and what does not work), how, why and in what conditions. In particular, the MIUrb/^{AL} collection aims at identifying which good practices fostering migrants' urban inclusion might have more chance of being replicated, or serving as an inspiration, in the cities of developing countries', e.g. because they do not require high start-up costs or have proved successful in

spite of being launched with basic resources. As well as describing the characteristics of the selected projects and assessing their strengths and weaknesses, MIUrb/^{AL} researchers are thus highlighting the conditions and prerequisites that might make it difficult to implement the practices in the cities of the South, and the circumstances they consider as essential for successful adaptation in these contexts.

Since the way international migration is perceived at the local level is one of the key-topics investigated by the Observatory, a number of projects specifically oriented at promoting a positive perception of the phenomenon are being included in the good practices collection. These include producing radio broadcasts on the diverse traditions of migrant communities; offering dedicated spaces to migrant speakers; organizing ethnic or multiethnic festivals to foster mutual acquaintance and diversity consciousness and so on.

To date, 5 Canadian good practices and 5 Italian ones have been analysed (tab. 2), the reports are available on the web-site

Canada	
HIPPY PROGRAMME (HOME INSTRUCTION FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL YOUNGSTERS)	Targeting low-income migrant families. Designed to maximize, through early intervention, the educational potential of young children at risk. Main goal is to ensure that children of low-income families are ready for kindergarten and that their parents play a key role in preparing them.
MULTICULTURAL FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES SOCIETY	Offers culturally sensitive services in twenty languages to immigrant and visible minority women and their children who are experiencing family violence.
ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES OF GREATER VANCOUVER	Fosters the association in community/neighbourhood organizations to implement common activities and social services responding to their specific needs (Language training, after school programmes, employment services, technology training)
VANCOUVER CITY GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR MULTICULTURALISM AND DIVERSITY	Comprehensive municipal strategy promoting migrants' inclusion. Activities include The Newcomer's Guide to Vancouver, Multilingual Phone Line, Cultural Harmony Awards
THE IMMIGRANT SERVICES SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA (ISS)	Aims at developing an integrated, equitable urban society that values diversity. Involves local communities in a variety of programmes, to create opportunities for sharing knowledge, skills and experience among cultures.
Italy	
MELTING POT EUROPA	Offers legal, technical and general information on international migration in Italy. Targets both immigrants and social operators. Communication is in seven languages via radio and internet.
AISA (AGENZIA DI INTERMEDIAZIONE SOCIALE ALL'ABITARE)	Promotes immigrants' access to housing, for rent or ownership. Targets migrants living in cities of the Veneto region (Northwest of Italy)
INFO BADANTI	Puts immigrant women who want to work in family assistance in contact, with Italian families seeking persons to care for their elderly and children
CONSIGLIERI STRANIERI AGGIUNTI E CONSULTE DEI CITTADINI STRANIERI	Consultative participation processes activated by several Italian municipalities. Representatives of migrant communities are directly elected by foreign residents.
RADIO BASE AND RADIO ASTERISCO	The first is a radio that, since the beginning of the 1980s, has been broadcasting ethnic programmes and offers spaces to immigrant speakers. The second is the first Italian radio station to be entirely directed by migrants themselves

Tab. 2 Selected good practices

5. Raising awareness and the dissemination of results

In the three selected cities, MIUrb/^{AL} organizes international conferences bringing together researchers, academics, local policy makers, NGO representatives and civil society at large. Through the dissemination of the research results, these initiatives are contributing to raise local awareness about the emerging migration trends and the resulting need for coherent urban policies addressing the migrant population. Additionally, by convening migration experts from different Latin American cities, these events provide constructive occasions for establishing connections among cities experiencing similar problems as well as for facilitating the exchange of views on the general principles and guidelines that could facilitate better urban governance of international migration. In fact, despite the fact that most of the countries of the region actively participate in intergovernmental forums on migration – the most important being the *South American Conference on Migration* comprising eleven Latin American countries – thus demonstrating their political will to agree on a concerted strategy on the issue, the urban dimension of it is rarely addressed nor has a dedicated forum on city-to-city cooperation in the migration field been set up yet.

The first MIUrb/^{AL} conference took place in Santiago (Chile) in March 2007. As well as the public seminar “international migrants and the city” hosted by the faculty of Social Science of the University of Chile, a policy roundtable with local authorities was organized. The participation in the debate by a large public - among which officers from the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation as well as representatives of local UN and IOM offices - proved that the challenges that international migration raises at the urban level are of increasing concern to local stakeholders and civil society at large. The Roundtable permitted a constructive exchange of ideas on specific urban issues among MIUrb/^{AL} researchers and officers from the Chilean Ministry of Urbanism and Housing. In fact the growing number of foreign residents settling in some of the most central areas in Santiago is deeply changing its traditional urban structure. While the use that migrant groups make of public space and their economic activities are giving a markedly ethnic connotation to these neighbourhoods, local authorities are confronted with the need to respond to the new demand for housing and public services arising from migrant residents. This once more confirms that the issue of international migration is primarily urban, and local authorities increasingly have the responsibility of improving, through sound policies, the migrants’ quality of life so as to permit them to effectively be “citizens of their cities”.

Building on the Santiago experience, MIUrb/^{AL} is currently organizing the second conference in São Paulo (Brazil), where a two-day workshop is expected to bring together several local stakeholders, this time also including representatives from migrant organizations. Institutions from other American cities expressed their interest in participating in Observatory activities. In fact, the director of the Gino Germani research institute at the University of Buenos Aires will join the MIUrb/^{AL} researchers during the working days. This represents a positive development for the MIUrb/^{AL} objective of enlarging the network and creating new connections among cities experiencing growing migration inflows.

In order to circulate the research results among a wider public, they are periodically published on the Observatory web-site. This web-site, both in Spanish and English, is the principal arena for dialogue and information exchange. All the reports on Press Monitoring as well as the Good Practices Collection are made available for download, while an international mailing list has been created in order to disseminate information on scheduled activities and conferences. A six-monthly bulletin is also published (the first issue was distributed in May 2007), including the comparative analysis of case studies as well as articles on relevant issues observed during the course of the research. More than 660 people from 36 countries have visited the web-site since a counter was placed seven months ago, for a total of more than 1600 visits. Site accesses from Latin America count for 67% of the total, with 16 countries represented.*

*Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Panama, Uruguay, Paraguay, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Cuba, Dominican Republic

6. Conclusion

While in Europe and North America the impact of international migration on urban societies has become a matter of intense debate, in developing countries it is still receiving limited attention. The press monitoring carried out in the three Latin American cities confirms this general trend. However the relatively high number of news articles published on topics such as irregular immigration or the need for stricter border controls, shows that public and political concern for the migratory flows heading towards the selected countries is rising. This is probably influenced in part by the global climate of alarmism caused by clandestine migration and the alleged threat it represents for the national-security of destination countries.

A more mature debate on what is going on at the urban level is still absent. Migrant communities settling in Santiago, São Paulo and Tijuana are growing and their urban populations are becoming increasingly diverse without a critical problematization of the phenomenon. Lack of dedicated spaces for dialogue, rather than a mere indifference towards the issue itself, seems to be one of the main causes underpinning the low awareness registered of the challenges and opportunities international migration is posing to the urban social and spatial fabric. In fact, when events addressing the issue are organized, the high level of attendance among key urban stakeholders as well as civil society at large demonstrates that international migration actually does raise public interest.

Despite MIUrb/^{AL} Observatory being a small project, it is contributing to convey an important message: that the issue of the social integration of international migrants can no longer remain in the background even in those contexts where urban exclusion afflicts not just some groups of foreigners, but great sections of the resident population. Collaboration among local research institutes and universities participating in the MIUrb/^{AL} initiative is helping to define the common problems and challenges confronting these cities, as well as facilitating the exchange and sharing of good practices and initiatives.

However, cities of the South need to know and learn more about each other and to envision and pursue a common plan of action in the field of migration. Local policy makers need evidence of the potential benefits of international migration as an essential contribution towards the social and economic dynamism of their cities. They also need to understand the costs of failing to manage increasingly diverse societies, especially in terms of decay in civic values and in the cohesion of urban society as a whole. The organization of permanent regional fora to bring together cities experiencing international immigration should be envisaged, in order to further develop policy-oriented research on “international migrants and the city”.