

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Scaling migration network governance? City networks and civil society in multilevel policymaking dynamics

Tiziana Caponio 

Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute, Convento di San Domenico, Via delle Fontanelle 19, 50014, San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy

Correspondence

Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute, Convento di San Domenico, Via delle Fontanelle 19, 50014, San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy.

Email: Tiziana.Caponio@unito.it; Tiziana.Caponio@EUI.eu

Present address

Tiziana Caponio, Department of Cultures, Politics and Society, University of Turin, Lungo Dora Siena 100, 10153 Torino, Italy; Collegio Carlo Alberto, Piazza Arbarello 8, 10122, Torino, Italy

Abstract

Although existing studies have documented the capacity of migration city networks (CNs) to mobilize on the vertical/intergovernmental dimension, there is less evidence of how CNs can contribute to scaling up network governance with societal actors beyond local jurisdictions and favour the emergence of multilevel governance arrangements. In this article, I aim to contribute to deepening our understanding of migration CN horizontal state--society relations by throwing new light on how CN leaders' agendas affect the policy actions undertaken by two migration CNs in Europe and one in the United States. Evidence shows that migration CNs engage differently with non-public actors depending on agendas that reflect the aims of their leaders. These agendas can be more or less conducive to scaling up migration network governance. When horizontal/state--society relations are conceived as subordinate to vertical relations, lobbying and political advocacy prevail with little room for the emergence of multilevel governance.

KEYWORDS

city networks, European Union, migration, network governance, state--society relations, United States

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INTRODUCTION

Local migration policies have been seen as results of complex patterns of relations between politics and governance that exist both vertically—between local authorities and higher tiers of government—and horizontally—between cities officials and non-governmental organizations (for a review, see Caponio et al., 2019; Filomeno, 2017). In this context, city networks (CNs) are organizations that, through relations established with multiple actors on different territorial scales, precisely articulate the complexity of migration and mobility issues beyond city walls. If, and to what extent, these multilevel political dynamics can lead to the emergence of a new multilevel governance of migration is still an open question.

In this article, I aim to contribute to this debate by focusing on the horizontal dimension of migration CN policy relations. Although existing studies have documented the capacity of migration CNs to mobilize internationally and put pressure on higher-ranking governmental authorities (Oomen, 2020; Penninx, 2015; Scholten et al., 2018), there is less evidence of how CNs engage with societal organizations that play a crucial role at the local level in favouring the emergence of local inclusion policies (e.g. Filomeno, 2017; Schiller, 2019) and/or in supporting vulnerable groups like undocumented migrants (de Graauw, 2014; Spencer, 2018), asylum seekers and refugees (e.g. Glorius & Doornik, 2020; Williamson, 2018). Investigating this horizontal state–society dimension is all the more important considering that CNs are often regarded by scholars as laboratories for broadening innovative approaches to globalization (Agranoff, 2018, p. 214) and to establish a ‘new multilevel governance of migration’ (Penninx, 2015; see also Thouez 2022 in this Special Issue). In other words, the puzzle is that of understanding whether and to what extent CNs can contribute to scaling up network governance beyond local jurisdictions (Ansell & Torfing, 2015) and favour the emergence of multilevel governance arrangements on highly politicized issues like migration (Scholten et al., 2018).

To this end, in this article, I explore the role of CN leaders in establishing connections between public and non-public actors and promoting processes of scaling up network governance. Debates on cities paradiplomacy have portrayed mayors as key leaders in CNs mobilization (see e.g. Acuto, 2014; Miller, 2020). However, sociological perspectives taking a more pluralistic approach to CN organizations (Oosterlynck et al., 2019; Payre, 2010; Pinson, 2019) suggest that other types of leaders, from CNs officers to policy experts, can have a considerable influence in their agendas. To broaden our understanding of how CN leaders engage in migration multilevel policy-making, I present the results of in-depth qualitative case–study research on three migration CNs in different institutional contexts, two in Europe—the Eurocities Working Group on Migration and Integration (WGM&I) and the Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC)—and one in the United States—Welcoming America (WA). Evidence shows that different types of CN leaders articulate policy agendas that may be more or less open to establishing relations with societal actors, and therefore more or less conducive to scaling up migration network governance. When such relations are lacking or are conceived as subordinate to vertical relations, lobbying and political advocacy prevail with little room for real inclusion of non-governmental actors in multilevel governance policymaking arrangements.

The article unfolds as follows. In the next section, I discuss the relevant literature on migration CNs and their engagement in multilevel policymaking processes to show the scarce attention that has been given to the conceptualization of horizontal relations. I also argue for a need to unpack CNs to understand how these organizations are shaped by the agendas of different types of leaders. In the second section, I introduce the empirical study and provide details of the methodology employed. Section third is devoted to illustrating the different approaches of the leaders of the three CNs studied to engagement in migration policymaking, with specific attention to horizontal state–society relations. In fourth section, I discuss the research results, and in the conclusion, I highlight the main implications of this article for a research agenda on migration policymaking and the scaling of network governance more generally.

MIGRATION CITY NETWORKS AT THE CROSSROADS OF VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL POLICYMAKING DYNAMICS. CONCEPTUALIZING THE ROLE OF LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL AGENDAS

Even though states have always been reluctant to devolve control over a sensitive issue for national sovereignty like migration, scholars have noticed an increasing dispersion of authority since the late 1990s, with states' responsibilities shifting up to international and supranational institutions, out to non-public actors and down to local-level authorities (Guiraudon & Lahav, 2000). In this context, migration CNs have been depicted as organizations that lie at the intersection of processes of subnationalization and supranationalization of migration (Flamant et al., 2022), and their role in shaping a new multilevel governance of migration has become a matter of lively debate among migration scholars (Caponio, 2022; Penninx, 2015; Scholten et al., 2018). Attention has focused on relations between migration CNs and national and supranational governmental authorities (see also Oomen, 2020), while relations with non-state actors have been scarcely considered.

The focus on migration CNs' vertical relations reflects the institutionalist perspective dominating debates on city internationalization. Both the research stream on the Europeanization of subnational authorities (Huggins, 2018; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009) and that on cities' international relations and paradiplomacy (Acuto, 2014) conceptualize cities as municipal/metropolitan governments pursuing strategic goals through relationships with higher ranking governmental authorities. In these literatures, CNs are outcomes of broader processes of empowerment of cities and weakening of state authority taking place in the wake of Europeanization and globalization (Curtis, 2014). Conceived as unitary actors, CNs articulate the interests of cities in international and supranational decision-making arenas and reflect the agency of mayors as international leaders. This emphasis on mayoral/city leadership in vertical relations has resulted not only in overshadowing the horizontal state–society dimension of CN activism but also in scarce attention being paid more generally to the variety of organizations and leaders epitomizing city mobilization in policymaking processes (see, e.g. the literature on new municipalism: Thompson, 2021).

Regarding highly pitched migration issues, the quest for multilevel governance is often assumed to be somehow inherently linked to the mobilization of CNs on the topic. In other words, CNs are thought of as organizations articulating cities' interests in finding pragmatic and effective solutions to locally salient migration-related challenges (Penninx, 2015; Stürner & Bendel, 2019). However, although various studies certainly document the ambition of cities to influence high level policies and have a seat in key decision-making venues (for a review see Thouez, 2022), this does not necessarily reflect their willingness to promote multilevel governance, which, as scholars emphasize, implies establishing collaborative relations on both the vertical/intergovernmental and the horizontal/state–society dimensions of policymaking processes *at the same time* (Alcantara et al., 2016; Bache & Flinders, 2004; Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Piattoni, 2010). The question then arises of whether and to what extent migration CNs effectively engage in relations with societal actors that are then scaled up in policymaking processes taking place at the national and/or supranational levels.

To this end, in this article, I posit a need to unpack the somewhat monolithic notion of CNs and, following urban studies and political sociology approaches, to conceive these organizations as political arenas where different actors ranging from mayors and councillors to city officers, experts in urban policy, activists, internal CN officers and so forth interact (Oosterlynck et al., 2019; Payre, 2010; Pinson, 2019). In this pluralistic and relational perspective, CN agendas are not given but are instead actively constructed by different types of leaders. The importance of understanding who CN leaders are and which goals they pursue comes to the fore. Different types of leaders may conceive the involvement of cities in migration multilevel policymaking differently and be more or less interested in promoting horizontal relations with societal actors or multilevel governance altogether.

In fact, although there is extensive literature documenting the key role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations in shaping local integration policies and initiatives (for a review, see Filomeno, 2017; Schiller, 2019) and in assisting vulnerable groups and migrants with uncertain legal status (de Graauw, 2014;

Spencer, 2018), there is far less evidence on whether and to what extent CNs actually contribute to broadening local governance networks beyond the jurisdiction of municipalities. CN leaders are certainly key in this respect. They can play the role of political advocates and exert pressure for the adoption of policies that aim to empower local government institutions, as seems to be suggested by the few existing studies on the city officers leading the Migration and Integration Working Group of the Eurocities network (Flamant, 2017; Gebhardt & Güntner, 2021); or they can act as policy brokers and establish alliances with non-governmental actors in the attempt to promote cities' approaches to migration in high-level policymaking venues. Although the first type of leadership will engage essentially in lobbying, the second seems more likely to spearhead collaborative modes of interaction on both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of migration policymaking. Building on these insights, in this article I aim precisely to generate new, and still missing, inductive knowledge on the role of CN leaders in multilevel migration policymaking processes, thus contributing to throw light on leaders' agency as a pre-condition for the scaling of network governance and emergence of multilevel governance more generally.

METHODOLOGY

As is illustrated in the introduction to this special issue, migration CNs form a composite category including longstanding institutionalized organizations and more social movement-like initiatives such as sanctuary cities in the United States, the United Kingdom and Belgium. To make justice of such a variety of organizations is beyond the scope of this study, which has the more focused aim of generating insights into how migration CNs engage in horizontal relations with non-public actors, a key and yet poorly researched dimension of CN policymaking dynamics. To this end, I use a comparative case-study method, which is deemed to be particularly well-suited to generating new insights and extending our understanding of insufficiently explored topics (see Gerring, 2017).

In order to gather strong and valid inductive observations, I follow Gerring's (2017, p. 98) diverse-case method, according to which cases are intended to achieve maximum variance on the dimensions that are deemed relevant for the analysis. As mentioned above, the key factor investigated in this study is CN leadership. To explore how leadership affects the engagement of migration CNs in horizontal state-society relationships in migration multilevel policymaking, I consider three CNs, two in Europe and one in the United States, which present different types of leaders. More specifically, in the EU supranational context, the WGM&I is a typical case of a city-led organization, with mayors and city officials playing key roles in controlling the network's agenda. It was established in 2004 on the initiative of Eurocities members, as we shall see below. In contrast, the ICC is a CN characterized by an external leadership, since it was established in 2008 by the Council of Europe (CoE). The third selected network is WA, a case of grassroots mobilization established in 2009 in the United States on the initiative of civil society organization leaders.

As is clear, this study does not aim to be representative but instead takes an explorative approach to generate new insights on the impact of leadership in CN policymaking relationships through an in-depth investigation of three specific instances of CN organizations that are among the most established and active in the migration policy field (see the introduction to this special issue). Table 1 presents the key features of these organizations: the year of founding, the type of membership and the number of cities affiliated.

The case studies were carried out in two steps. As a first step, I undertook a qualitative content analysis of official documents published on the websites of the three networks. The documents were collected and downloaded in different time periods, more precisely in November-December 2018 for the first time and then in spring and autumn 2019 to check for new documents and updates. Overall, a corpus of 38 documents for the WGM&I, 30 for the ICC and 29 for WA was constructed and qualitatively analysed in order to gather information on processes of involvement in policymaking and, more specifically, on (1) the actors engaged in CN policy actions and (2) the type of relations between different actors (see the Appendix for the documents cited in this article).

In a second step, I carried out a series of qualitative elite interviews with key leaders in each CN to reconstruct their engagement in policymaking processes concerning migration. More specifically, the interviews treated three main

TABLE 1 General features of the migration city networks (CNs)

	WGM&I	ICC	WA
Year of founding	2004	2008	(2001) 2009
Membership	City governments and metropolitan areas	City governments	Local governments (cities and counties), non-profit organizations
Number of cities	97	145	79

Abbreviations: ICC, Intercultural Cities Programme; WGM&I, Working Group on Migration and Integration; WA, Welcoming America.

topics: (1) the genesis and structure of the network, (2) the main actions promoted and the actors involved and (3) the type of relationships established with civil society organizations. Leaders were identified on the basis of information collected through the analysis of official documents and the CNs' webpages. In total, eight interviews (four for the WGM&I, two for ICC and two for WA) were carried out in the period between June 2019 and September 2020.

CASE STUDIES

The Eurocities Working Group on Migration and Integration

Eurocities is a network of cities for all the matters that concern cities ... This has been its specificity since its founding at the end of the 1980s. We have different forums ... It was born like this, as a lobby group from the cities towards the European Union, the national states and other actors ... And the WGM&I is a small part of this bigger organisation, and of the Social Forum more precisely. It is a small but very active working group ... It was started informally in 2001 by a collaboration of city officials from Barcelona and Rotterdam and then incorporated in the Social Forum ... it truly reflects cities' needs, since it is city officials that establish the agenda while staff officers in Brussels just provide support ... Their role is exactly to help cities to raise the topics they want to work on and to guide them in the difficult navigation of European institutions ... because if you do not work in Brussels you do not fully understand how it works ... Policy officers are there to help your understanding, they are a secretariat (WGM&I_int4).

The quotation above clearly reveals how the genesis of the WGM&I and its structure are strictly entrenched in the history and organizational development of Eurocities as a network of 'second'—non-capital—cities (see Payre, 2010) founded as early as 1986 in the context of the reform of EU regional and cohesion policy. The vertical intergovernmental dimension has been of key relevance since the very beginning, as is emphasized by the reference to a 'lobby' of cities vis-à-vis the EU and national governments. Like all the other Eurocities working groups, the WGM&I is led by a chair and a vice-chair, who are elected every 2 years from member city representatives. As my interviewees noted, usually city representatives in the WGM&I are officials with expertise on migration and more rarely politicians like mayors or vice-mayors, although a remarkable exception was the vice-mayor of Athens, who was elected vice-chair in 2014 and then also served as chair (2016–2018).

The primacy of vertical policymaking relations in the mission of the WGM&I is clearly flagged on its homepage, which emphasizes engagement with EU institutions while no mention is made of relations with stakeholders or civil society organizations:

This Working Group (WG) is focused on guiding the cities to embrace the diversity of their population and ensure equal opportunities for their population. The aim of the WG is to use a bottom-up approach to ensure that local experiences play an important role in drafting the EU migration and integration policies. It works as an environment for mutual learning on integration governance, by using mentoring activities and sharing experiences and good practice between cities (WGM&I_web1).

Consistently, the main policy actions developed by the WGM&I over the years seem to have privileged the vertical dimension of relations with the European Commission (EC) and member states. In this context, the horizontal dimension has assumed the form of city-to-city collaboration in processes of mutual learning and policy exchange, while relations with non-governmental actors have remained overall marginal in the policy actions promoted by the WGM&I.

This pattern is clearly highlighted by the main flagship action of the WGM&I, the Integrating Cities (IC) process, which was officially launched in 2006 'as a partnership between Eurocities and the European Commission to promote the local-level implementation of the Common Basic Principles on Integration' (WGM&I_web2). The partnership, which is still ongoing, is based on two actions: Integrating Cities conferences and bi-annual projects funded by the European Commission and coordinated by the WGM&I (WGM&I_web2).

The Integrating Cities conferences are events that give visibility to the work of member cities and involve policymakers at different levels, like national governments, international organisations and of course cities and the European Commission ... The substance is provided by projects, through which member cities concretely engage in a process of learning and implementing innovative practices that reflect their priorities and needs (WGM&I_int2).

Hence, as is clear, the projects aim to strengthen horizontal city-to-city relations, providing 'a platform for municipal integration experts to meet with counterparts in other cities and find inspiration in approaches to local integration policy taken elsewhere. Our ambition was to organize this exchange in an intensive and focused way' (see the Inti-Cities project: WGM&I_doc1, p. 6).

The central role of municipalities in local policy networks is clearly affirmed in the 'Diversity and Equality in European Cities' project (DIVE, 2008–2010), which led to the drawing up of the Eurocities Charter on Integrating Cities, which specifies the commitments to which cities should subscribe as 'policy-makers', 'service providers', 'employers' and 'buyers of goods and services' to promote equal opportunities and migrant integration (WGM&I_web2b). Evaluation reports compiled in 2013, 2015 and 2018 (WGM&I_web2b) show that some cities actively collaborated with NGOs, civil society organizations and migrant associations to achieve the Integrating Cities commitments. However, these initiatives were scattered practices rather than part of a broader strategy promoted by the WGM&I.

Hence, the Integrating Cities process testifies to an ongoing engagement of the WGM&I in establishing a policy strategy combining horizontal city-to-city collaboration with a solid partnership with the European Commission. This strategy also underpinned the WGM&I's mobilization in the context of the 2015 'European asylum crisis', even though the tone became more contentious. In particular, the Eurocities Statement on Asylum in Cities (WGM&I_doc2) criticized the EU and member states for not addressing the 'whole range of migration and integration issues, especially with respect to the issue of asylum' (WGM&I_doc2, p. 1). Following this statement, in April 2016, the Mayor of Athens launched the Solidarity Cities initiative to strongly advocate for a bottom-up asylum seeker redistribution mechanism directly managed by cities.

It was a provocative and symbolic move indeed ... Solidarity was the message: we wanted to show that cities, by collaborating together, can put in place that solidarity that member states were not willing to demonstrate (WGM&I_int3).

Along with policy advocacy, the Solidarity Cities homepage (WGM&I_web3) emphasizes city-to-city collaboration to share information and knowledge on the situation of refugees in cities and to provide technical and financial assistance and capacity-building. At the same time the website also flags examples of local collaboration practices with NGOs and civil society organizations (also see the report 'Refugee reception and integration in cities,' WGM&I_doc3) to provide evidence of different local strategies to cope with the asylum challenge.

In other words, horizontal relations with non-public actors were to some extent leveraged by the Solidarity Cities initiative in order to claim a seat at high-level decision-making tables and to lobby the EC and national governments for more financial support for cities, and therefore with the aim of strengthening vertical relations. This strategy seems to have borne fruit: in May 2016, the mayors supporting Solidarity Cities and representatives of the WGM&I were invited to participate in the Partnership for the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees established by the Dutch Presidency of the European Union in the context of the so-called Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU) and coordinated by the City of Amsterdam and the European Commission. As my interviewees reported, the Partnership represented an important opportunity for the WGM&I to strengthen its collaboration with DG Home. On the one hand, representatives of the WGM&I and of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), representing in particular medium-sized and small cities, actively collaborated with DG Home in drafting recommendations for the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework, which regulates all the EU funding resources for migration and integration policies (WGM&I_int2, WGM&I_int3 and WGM&I_int4). On the other hand, the WGM&I collaborated in the realization of the Urban Academy on Integration, the flagship action promoted by DG Home (WGM&I_int3 and WGM&I_int4).

In our work with DG Home during the Partnership we have been able to draw attention to the key role that cities have played in the context of the refugee crisis ... And they [DG Home officials] agreed with us that cities should matter more in the making of integration policies, and supported our proposal to introduce the 'principle of conditionality,' whereby in order to have access to EU funding national governments first have to establish partnership agreements with local authorities on implementation (WGM&I_int4).

Hence, as is clear, the vertical intergovernmental dimension has always been crucial for the city government representatives engaged in the WGM&I, while horizontal relations with non-governmental actors have remained quite marginal. An exception is the VALUES project, which was promoted in 2019 with the aim of developing 'communities of practice' or clusters engaging both city officials and volunteers from NGOs in policy learning exercises on the issue of refugee integration. According to my interviewees, this project, funded by the Integrating Cities Programme, responded to a request from the EC to strengthen coordination with non-government actors (WGM&I_int3 and WGM&I_int4). However, the following Connection project (2020–2022) again prioritizes 'transnational learning' and exchanges of best practices, showing a more traditional approach based on city-to-city horizontal networking (WGM&I_web2e).

Intercultural Cities Programme

The origins of the ICC can be traced to two main sources of inspiration (ICC_doc1): work on conflict prevention and reconciliation carried out by the CoE since 1957 and culminating in the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, which was adopted by the foreign ministers of the 47 member states in 2008; and research work by the British think tank Comedia on diversity management in urban contexts. Officially, the network was started in 2008 as a joint initiative

of the CoE and the European Commission which launched a call for proposals for the selection of a group of 10 cities to participate in a 2-year pilot programme which had the aim of reviewing local governance, policies, discourses and practices from an intercultural perspective (ICC_doc2, p. 45). The general statement below, which was posted on the ICC homepage, flags the network's mission.

The Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC) supports cities in reviewing their policies through an intercultural lens and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies to help them manage diversity positively and realise the diversity advantage (ICC_web1).

Hence, the network's general aim and early history reveal the centrality of the vertical dimension in the ICC Programme, which was conceived and managed top-down by the CoE through a dedicated secretariat who supported annual meetings and city intercultural initiatives. However, during the first pilot project, cities also provided inputs to further elaborate policy instruments, leading to the emergence of a partnership between a supranational institution like CoE and local authorities. In this context, non-governmental actors, and more specifically private employers and civil society organizations, while they were regarded as important actors to 'increase policy effectiveness and make the city attractive for people and investors alike' (ICC_doc3, p. 26), were not directly involved in ICC activities.

Our main goal has always been that of raising the profile of cities in the global governance of immigrant integration ... On emergency issues, such as asylum seekers reception, cities are clearly on the front-line ... yet we should not forget the long-term challenges of integration and diversity, including second generations and young migrants, the emergence of different religions etc. ICC was founded precisely to bring attention to these issues, leveraging on the intercultural approach elaborated by CoE on conflict resolution and prevention (ICC_int1).

This is clearly evidenced by the main flagship action, the Intercultural City Index, a series of indicators put forward by ICC to assess city policies and adjust efforts in compliance with the intercultural approach to diversity management (ICC_doc4). This action, which started in 2013, requires cities to set up an intercultural support group tasked with reviewing urban policies from an intercultural perspective. In this process, cities are encouraged to broadly involve citizens, including civil society associations (ICC_doc4, p. 2). In a similar vein, the formation of broad partnership platforms with stakeholders at the local level was presented on the ICC website as crucial for the implementation of the 'Diversity in Economy and Local Integration' (DELI) (ICC_web2) and 'Anti-Rumour Strategy' (ICC_web3) projects, both promoted in 2014–2015 with the financial support of the EC. In other words, the involvement of stakeholders and citizens was supposed to take place at the territorial level through initiatives carried out by the municipalities belonging to the network.

In 2016, the document 'ICC Programme—Medium Term Strategy 2016–2019' (ICC_doc5) that was approved at the Reykjavik Annual Meeting of Coordinators marked the start of a new strategy explicitly labelled 'multilevel governance'. Every year, this meeting brings together representatives of the member cities (100 in 2016) and the ICC Secretariat. To increase the outreach and impact of the intercultural approach to integration, the document argued for a need to overcome the limits of the local-level focus and reach out to regional and national authorities, academia and NGOs (ICC_doc5, p. 5). However, as was explained by the Head of the ICC programme at the CoE, national governments were the main target of the new multilevel strategy.

We, as Council of Europe, have the connection with the states and can act as a bridge to establish meaningful dialogues between cities and states. This is important for cities, that can get the feeling and evidence that their expertise on intercultural policies is meaningful. In the end, through MLG, we aim to promote a win-win approach: on the part of the state, that can learn from the cities and promote long

term processes of integration, and of the cities, that can gain in terms of support and legitimacy for their local action (ICC_int1).

This intergovernmental vertical approach to MLG is well reflected in the Policy Laboratory on Inclusive Integration (Policy Lab), a platform launched in November 2017 to engage local and national officials in building ‘coherent policies and an effective multi-level governance of integration and diversity management’ (ICC_web4). Afterwards, three meetings followed in June 2018 and May and November 2019. According to documents available on the internet, the Labs engaged representatives of the CoE, of national governments (i.e. Spain, Ireland, Portugal, Switzerland and Germany) and of ICC member cities (ICC_doc6), and discussions focused on drafting the so-called ‘Policy Framework for Intercultural Integration at the National Level’ to represent ‘an inspirational model to foster common understanding, a coherent approach, and shared responsibilities among all levels of governance in relation to migrant integration’ (ICC_doc7, p. 1). Horizontal relations with civil society organizations do not seem to have been of any relevance.

The conclusions of the 2018 Annual Meeting of Coordinators held in Reijka (Croatia) acknowledged this limitation by stating that there is still a need to ‘expand the coalition ... Leaders from the NGO world, as well as media, businesses and associations of local and regional authorities should be involved in the conversation’ (ICC_doc8, p. 3). However, from my interviews, the horizontal state–society dimension appears less strategically relevant to the ICC Secretariat, with the remarkable exception of relations with private companies.

Many ICC cities have already established various forms of cooperation with NGOs and there is no need to further develop initiatives, this is a task of the cities ... On the contrary, there is more to do when considering businesses and local firms. These are important actors because they employ immigrants, and yet it is often difficult to engage them in local policy. We chose this as a focus area for ICC in order to generate knowledge on how to build effective partnerships and make businesses aware of the contribution they can give to implement intercultural integration (ICC_int2).

Consistently, in 2016, in the context of the Council of Europe’s ‘Building Inclusive Societies Action Plan’, ICC launched two pilot projects to support immigrant entrepreneurs and diversity in incubators for start-ups (ICC_web2), while no specific initiative was directed at NGOs or civil society organizations.

Welcoming America

Officially registered as an NGO in Atlanta in 2009, Welcoming America’s origins date back to 2001, when David Lubell, leader of the organization, founded the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC) in Nashville (WA_doc1, p. 4).

At the time the climate in Nashville was very tense ... Local residents were facing the arrival of foreign migrants and changes in their community with increasing anxiety and hostility, and even though there were migrants’ associations and services supporting them nothing was happening to create a link with the receiving society. And so we launched the Welcoming Tennessee Initiative ... We wanted to convey a positive message to the community, that of the value of welcoming, of bringing people to know each other and to engage together for the wellbeing of their community ... Following success in Nashville, other immigrant integration coalitions across the United States, from Nebraska to Massachusetts, started to mobilise and in 2008, with the support of private foundations, the first national campaign was organised (WA_int1).

On the 'Who We Are' page of the WA website, the network is described as a 'non-profit, non-partisan organisation' and a 'movement of communities' (WA_web1). Its aims are stated on the same page under the heading 'The Welcoming America Model:'

Connect: Welcoming America connects leaders in the community, government, and non-profit sectors. Our networks provide support both locally and nationally.

Build: We build on the great work happening in local communities by providing tested methods and approaches to creating inclusive, welcoming places for immigrants.

Change: Our goal is to change systems and cultures. We help communities create policy, reinforce welcoming principles, and communicate the socioeconomic benefits of inclusion (WA_web1).

From these statements, the horizontal dimension of relations between public institutions and civil society actors clearly stands out. This prominence is also reflected in the composition of the WA executive bodies, that is, the Board of Directors and the Network Leadership Committee. The first of these is composed of 11 members representing local partnerships, NGOs, independent research institutes and private companies from all over the United States (WA_doc5, p. 19), whereas the second has five members from municipalities and counties (WA_doc5, p. 19). Similarly mixed is WA's membership: in the 2019 Report of Activities, 213 members were listed, including non-profit organizations, municipalities and counties.

At the beginning the network was formed primarily by NGOs, there were also some pro-active municipalities but these were rather the exception... However, with the passing of time we realised the importance of engaging local governments to move from the promotion of a culture of tolerance to a more active welcoming approach. Hence, from a primarily NGO-based membership, WA developed in the direction of engaging more and more local authorities (WA_int2).

The main initiative reflecting this change is the Welcoming Cities and Counties programme, which started in June 2013 with the support of the German Marshall Fund (WA_web2). The aim of the programme was to promote the sharing of innovative policies and to develop new practices to improve 'the quality of life and economic potential for immigrants and non-immigrants alike' (WA_doc3, p. 11). Following in these footsteps, a Welcoming Standards and Certified Communities Programme was introduced in 2017. Drafted with the help of 'leading experts' (i.e. practitioners, academics and business and civic leaders), the Welcoming Standards aim to provide 'rigorous benchmarks and requirements' that communities have to meet in order to be certified as 'welcoming' (WA_web3). The certification process has to be initiated by a city or county government, yet 'partners, such as non-profits, can contribute at any stage, including completing the application, contributing to the self-assessment and being consultants during the site visit' (WA_web3). Furthermore, the assessment criteria give particular importance to building public-civil society partnerships in local communities (WA_doc4, p. 11).

Another key initiative targeting local governments is Welcoming International (WI), which was established in 2016 in collaboration with the German Marshall Fund to promote the welcoming model and culture internationally (WA_web4). With the financial support of various German and American foundations, between 2016 and 2018 WI organized three rounds of city visits involving a total of 30 American and German municipalities with the aim of supporting peer-to-peer mutual learning on city integration policies. Since 2017, WI has been supporting welcoming initiatives in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (WA_web4; see Broadhead in this Special Issue).

Thus, in recent years, WA seems to have embarked on actions that emphasize the role of local authorities and aim to establish horizontal city-to-city transnational relations. However, establishing partnerships with the non-profit sector remains the fundamental *modus operandi* underlying the Welcoming philosophy. This is evident in two other WA flagship actions: the Gateways for Growth programme and Welcoming Weeks.

Launched in 2015 together with New American Economy (NAE), Gateways for Growth is a competitive challenge that 'offers resources to communities that demonstrate a public-private commitment to creating a welcoming environment for all residents' (WA_web5). More specifically, the programme offers technical assistance from WA and NAE on drafting, executing and communicating 'a multi-sector immigrant integration strategy' (WA_web5).

As for Welcoming Weeks, they are annual series of events in which communities 'bring together immigrants, refugees and native-born residents to raise awareness of the benefits of welcoming everyone' (WA_web6). Welcoming Weeks are not necessarily organized by municipalities. In 2016, for instance, a partnership was launched with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), which helped organize 50 events in its local headquarters around the country together with 20 other organizations.

As is clear, the actions directly promoted by WA seem to involve limited interaction on the vertical dimension, namely with states and federal governments. However, in 2014, WA participated in consultations undertaken by the Task Force for New Americans, an inter-agency body created by President Obama to develop 'a coordinated federal strategy to better integrate immigrants into American communities' (WA_doc5, p. 2).

During the Obama administration we started to have conversations on how the federal government could support the work that was taking place at the community level. They were interested in understanding our approach ... We had meetings with different federal agencies, and as a result of these conversations we co-launched the Building Welcoming Communities Campaign (WA_int2).

This joint initiative, which officially started in April 2015, established multilevel governance relations between a federal-level agency—the Corporation for National and Community Service, WA, the YMCA, Catholic Charities and refugee resettlement organizations, with the aim of supporting local communities' access to federal funding for immigrant integration and other resources like extra staff for municipalities (WA_web7). With the victory of Donald Trump in 2016, the Building Welcoming Communities Campaign was discontinued.

COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS

From the analysis above, three different CN policy agendas emerge to the fore: (1) the political advocacy agenda of WGM&I, (2) the policy-oriented agenda of ICC and (3) the social movement agenda of Welcoming America. These agendas appear to reflect the aims and interests of different types of leaders, and have different implications in terms of horizontal relations with societal actors.

The first agenda is that pursued by city officers and local politicians leading the WGM&I. This network since its very outset had the aim of putting pressure on national and EU institutions to acknowledge the role of cities in the everyday management of migration-related issues. Initiatives like the Integrating Cities process and, more recently, Solidarity Cities clearly epitomize this political advocacy agenda, implying mobilization primarily—if not almost exclusively—on the vertical dimension. The horizontal dimension is defined essentially as city-to-city relationships, while NGOs and other civil society organizations have always played a rather secondary role, being only indirectly included in the network's initiatives through actions implemented by municipalities in the context of EU-funded projects.

The second agenda is that of the CoE Secretariat leading ICC, which was started as a programme aimed at engaging cities in the realization of a specific type of immigrant integration policy, that is, the intercultural model. This top-down approach seems to have been softened over the years through increasing collaboration between the CoE Secretariat and city officials. Recently, the CoE Secretariat has started to put emphasis on multilevel governance, acting as a

policy broker with the aim of bringing to the table and establishing a dialogue between representatives of national and local authorities. However, NGOs and civil society organizations do not directly participate in these dialogues, and their engagement is regarded as taking place at the local level through the implementation of the intercultural policies adopted by ICC member cities. As my interviews revealed, the centrality of the vertical/intergovernmental dimension is consistent with the policy agenda of leaders from an international organization pursuing the aim of strengthening collaborative relations with member states' national governments.

The third agenda underlies the mobilization promoted by the civil society activists engaged as leaders of WA. The actions promoted by the network reflect the aim of sustaining horizontal community-based relationships in which city governments are conceived as actors in broader local partnerships. In fact, not only does WA promote the principle of partnership in all its activities but non-profit organizations are put on the same footing as local authorities and are actually identified as representing specific communities even when the city government of the area is not a member of the network. Intergovernmental relations play a secondary role and are only established if solicited from above, as in the Building Welcoming Communities Campaign.

Thus, a first result of this study is that migration CNs engage differently in relations with non-public actors depending on agendas that reflect the aims of those who take the lead in promoting city mobilization. It follows that societal actors, who usually are key partners of local governments in local level policymaking, are not necessarily strategic allies of CNs. In fact, local government leaders appear the least likely to engage with civil society organizations in multilevel policymaking processes on migration.

Linked to this, a second result of this study is that CNs do not always act as laboratories for broadening innovative approaches to migration (Agranoff, 2018) and agents of multilevel governance (Penninx, 2015). More specifically, the WGM&I local government leaders have been primarily engaged in lobbying national governments and the EU for greater involvement of local authorities in decision-making, more funding and so forth, while there seems to be little evidence of actions directed at scaling up local governance approaches into national and/or EU migration policies. In this latter respect, the experience of ICC appears more relevant since in 2015 this network started to explicitly pursue the goal of broadening the scope of application of the intercultural model beyond the city level, presenting it as an approach to immigrant integration worth scaling up to national-level policy. However, to pursue this goal, the CoE secretariat has invested almost exclusively in shaping collaborative intergovernmental relations with national governments without engaging societal actors, despite the fact that the latter—at least in principle—have always been recognized as having a key role in the implementation of intercultural initiatives.

The only CN that seems to have been able to scale up its horizontal relations with civil society and network governance approach to migration is WA, even though, as was mentioned above, WA activists have always been scarcely involved in vertical/intergovernmental relations. In fact, the opportunity to scale up was provided from above, that is, by the Task Force on New Americans established by the Obama Administration as a multilevel governance venue to engage local/state authorities and non-governmental actors in national policymaking.

Overall, my study reveals how processes of scaling up migration network governance are quite rare and as a key premise require intense and solid relations with societal actors on the horizontal dimension. When such relations are lacking or are conceived as subordinate to vertical relations, lobbying and political advocacy seem to prevail, with CNs certainly advocating for a shift in the balance in power relations that does not necessarily imply though the emergence of a new multilevel governance approach to managing migration-related issues.

CONCLUSION

Starting from a conceptualization of CNs as organizations that articulate the complexity of migration issues beyond city walls through interactions established with multiple actors on different territorial scales, in this article, I have analysed how still under-researched horizontal state–society relations unfold in CN engagement in multilevel policy-making processes. Existing research has focused on vertical/intergovernmental relations (e.g. Penninx, 2015; Scholten

et al., 2018), while interactions with non-public actors have been poorly considered. This gap is all the more surprising considering that NGOs and civil society organizations are key in the local governance of migration (Filomeno, 2017; Schiller, 2019), and yet it reflects the tendency of studies on Europeanization and paradiplomacy to conceptualize CNs as unitary actors articulating the institutional interests of local governments.

However, by looking at CNs as political arenas and providing an in-depth analysis of the policy actions promoted by three migration CNs, two in Europe and one in the United States, this study has shown the emergence of different patterns of intersection between the vertical/intergovernmental and horizontal/state–society dimensions of migration policymaking that basically reflect CN leaders' policy agendas. Furthermore, contributing to debates on the scaling up of network governance and multilevel governance (Ansell & Torfing, 2015), this study has revealed that CNs do not necessarily act as “laboratories” for the broadening of local network governance’ (Agranoff, 2018, p. 194). For local governance to scale up, two key conditions have to be met: (1) CNs have to rely on solid horizontal relations with societal actors and (2) a window of opportunity has to be offered from above, meaning that multilevel governance arrangements usually take place in the ‘shadow of the hierarchy’ (Börzel, 2010).

These results certainly cannot be considered conclusive since they are based on observation of a limited numbers of cases and for them to be generalized would require a broader sample of CNs operating in different institutional contexts. However, they provide further research and theorization on migration policymaking and multilevel governance more generally with relevant insights. Processes of scaling up local migration network governance are still poorly conceptualized in the literature, and are often depicted in a simplistic manner as a desirable outcome of the engagement by migration CNs in policymaking processes dominated by the interests of national states. However, normative discourses on the beneficial effects of cities and mayors ruling the world (Barber, 2013) risk obfuscating the relations of power within CNs and the role of leaders in promoting the networks’ agendas. It is only by paying greater attention to the agency and relational pre-conditions underlying processes of scaling up network governance that future research can contribute to deepening our understanding of how and why multilevel governance on particularly conflictive issues such as migration can eventually take place.

List of interviews

WGM&I_int1, Past Officer WGM&I (2004–2009), 26 July 2019.

WGM&I_int2, Project Manager, Eurocities Forum for Social Affairs, 10 July 2019, Brussels, Eurocities.

WGM&I_int3, vice-Mayor of a city member of the WGM&I, 23 July 2020, skype interview.

WGM&I_int4, city officer, member city of the WGM&I, 24 August 2020, skype interview.

ICC_int1, Officer ICC-CoE, 30 March 2019, online interview.

ICC_int2, Officer ICC-CoE, 19 June 2019, Turin, municipality of Turin.

WA_int1, Deputy Director, 27 May 2019, Berlin, Welcoming America (Skype interview).

WA_int2, Deputy Director, 24 July 2019, Washington, Welcoming America local office.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study have been deposited in the EUI ResData repository and are available on request from the corresponding author. The data from the interviews are not publicly available due to restrictions regarding the privacy of the research participants.

ORCID

Tiziana Caponio  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1067-0318>

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APPENDIX: DATA SOURCES

Eurocities Working Group on Migration and Integration

Official websites and documents (last access: December 2019)	http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/working_groups/Migration-and-integration-&tpl=home	WGM&I_web1
	http://www.eurocities.eu/integrating-cities	WGM&I_web2
	http://www.integratingcities.eu/integrating-cities/projects/inti-cities	WGM&I_web2a
	http://www.integratingcities.eu/integrating-cities/projects/dive	WGM&I_web2b
	http://www.integratingcities.eu/integrating-cities/projects/implementoring	WGM&I_web2c
	http://www.integratingcities.eu/integrating-cities/projects/values	WGM&I_web2d
	http://www.integratingcities.eu/integrating-cities/projects/connection	WGM&I_web2e
	https://solidaritycities.eu/about	WGM&I_web3
	Bencharing Integration Governance in Europe's Cities. Lessons from the INTI-Cities Project, Eurocities, Brussels, 2008	WGM&I_doc1
	Eurocities Statement on Asylum in Cities, Eurocities, 13 May 2015	WGM&I_doc2
Refugee reception and integration in cities, Eurocities, March 2016, available at https://solidaritycities.eu/images/RefugeeReport_final.pdf	WGM&I_doc3	

 Intercultural Cities Programme

Official websites and documents (last access: December 2019)	https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/home	ICC_web1
	https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/business-and-diversity	ICC_web2
	https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/anti-rumours	ICC_web3
	https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/-/policy-lab-for-inclusive-integration	ICC_web4
	Intercultural Cities. Towards a model for cultural integration. Insights from Intercultural cities, Joint Action of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, ed. By Phil Wood, Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing	ICC_doc1
	Highlights of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, European Communities, Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2008	ICC_doc2
	The Intercultural City Step-by-step. Practical guide for applying the urban model of intercultural integration, Strasbourg, Council of Europe 2013	ICC_doc3
	Intercultural Cities. Membership Criteria and Procedure for Accession	ICC_doc4
	Intercultural Cities Programme—Medium term strategy 2016–2019, available at https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806a5e96	ICC_doc5
	Policy Lab for Inclusive Migrant Integration, Lisbon 28th November 2017 - Conclusion, https://rm.coe.int/policy-lab-for-inclusive-migrant-integration-lisbon-28-november-2017-c/1680780451	ICC_doc6
Inclusive Integration Policy Lab, Limassol (Cyprus), 13–14th November 2019, https://rm.coe.int/4th-meeting-of-the-inclusive-integration-policy-lab-limassol-cyprus-13/1680992bad	ICC_doc7	
Meeting of Intercultural Cities’ Coordinators, Rijeka, 26–27th September 2018, Conclusion, https://rm.coe.int/meeting-of-intercultural-cities-coordinators-rijeka-26-27-september-20/16808eca6c	ICC_doc8	

 Welcoming America

Official websites and documents (last access: December 2019)	https://www.welcomingamerica.org/	WA_web1
	https://www.welcomingamerica.org/news/announcing-welcoming-cities-and-counties-initiative	WA_web2
	https://certifiedwelcoming.org/	WA_web3
	https://www.welcomingamerica.org/programs/welcoming-international	WA_web4
	https://welcomingamerica.org/gateways-for-growth	WA_web5
	https://welcomingamerica.org/programs/welcoming-week	WA_web6
	https://www.welcomingamerica.org/news/white-house-launches-building-welcoming-communities-campaign	WA_web7
	Forward, David Lubell, Executive Director WA, in Jones-Correa M., All immigration is local. Receiving communities and their role in successful integration, Centre for American Progress, 2011.	WA_doc1
	Welcoming America, 2019 Annual Report. 10 Years of Welcoming, www.	WA_doc2
	Welcoming Cities: Framing the Conversation, written by WA, supported by The German Marshall Fund, Winter 2012	WA_doc3
The Welcoming Standard & Certified Welcoming, Welcoming America, 2016	WA_doc4	
Strengthening Communities by Welcoming all Residents. A Federal Strategic Action Plan on Immigrant and Refugee Integration, The White House Task Force for New Americans, April 2015	WA_doc5	
