



URBAN  EUROPE

URBAN MIGRATION

Project Results Catalogue URBAN MIGRATION

This publication is part of the JPI Urban Europe Projects Catalogues series which has been issued since 2016.

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The Urban Migration Challenge in Context

Cities are the very product of migration. As centres of large populations, they are set up to absorb newcomers into their ranks. However, in recent decades an unprecedented influx of displaced people towards Europe has arisen, due largely to international conflicts.

In response, national policies have created a hostile environment for further arrivals, as – we are told – countries strain under the demand for resources. However, local authorities have a legal duty of basic care to all residents. This often motivates municipalities to adopt a more empathetic stance and offer more support services, albeit in a limited capacity, than their state or national counterparts. This lenient interpretation of policy, however, can lead to uncoordinated mechanisms of support that differ between and even within cities.

Furthermore, both migrants and local authorities are hampered by the challenges connected to the impenetrably complex range of legal statuses migrants are given, a continent-wide housing crisis, and a cost-of-living squeeze.

As a result, cities struggle to provide the holistic support that meets the needs of some of our most vulnerable residents. This has a profound impact on the integration of newcomers as they learn to navigate an alien landscape of language, culture, mobility, healthcare, education, recreation, law, childcare, and of course housing in their new home city.

So, what can we do differently? This is what the eight projects that participated in the JPI Urban Europe Urban Migration call¹ aimed to determine. This catalogue briefly introduces each of the projects and some of their main findings. Collectively, these results shed light on both the complex challenges facing migrants and the innovative solutions that are available –some of which are already active in Europe's cities today.

¹ Information on the Urban Migration call is available at <https://jpi-urbaneurope.eu/calls/urban-migration/>



About JPI Urban Europe

The Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) Urban Europe is an intergovernmental and strategic partnership of countries addressing the challenge of sustainable urban development through coordinated research and innovation. It is a collaborative initiative formed under the European commission Horizon 2020 framework which will be continued by the European partnership Driving Urban Transitions to a Sustainable Future (DUT) under the European commission Horizon Europe framework.

JPI Urban Europe builds capacities for urban development and policy implementation through joint calls. Since 2012, JPI Urban Europe has launched at least one call for research and innovation projects per year. These calls continuously expand its portfolio of ongoing and completed research and innovation projects.

Twenty European countries have been engaged in the JPI Urban Europe initiative, and they have also developed international collaborations that extend beyond the continent. Its ambition is to become the go-to platform for those who want to create, discuss, and make available the most up-to-date knowledge and robust evidence for the creation of sustainable urban solutions and pathways. The final calls by JPI Urban Europe were issued in 2023. Meanwhile, the DUT will continue with annual calls for the period of 2022-2028.

Among its areas of interest, JPI Urban Europe focuses on how to:

- transform urban areas into centres of innovation and technology
- ensure social cohesion and integration
- reduce our ecological footprint
- enhance climate neutrality
- take advantage of technological solutions
- realise efficient and sustainable urban systems and networks (mobility, energy, water, ICT, etc.)

JPI Urban Europe's Urban Migration Call

The Urban Migration call was issued in December 2019. It sought to bring together transdisciplinary, international teams of researchers, practitioners, and those active in migrant communities to align primary research with existing knowledge and facilitate exchange for a greater understanding of urban migration across Europe at a local and national level.

The aim was to create a deeper understanding of the ways that migration affects and is affected by the life and functioning of European cities. Projects funded in the call focused on one or more of the migration types, as categorised by the three principles set out by the World Economic Forum.²

These are migration caused by:

- political boundaries (internal vs. international migration)
- movement patterns (step, circular, or chain migration)
- taking a decision-making approach (voluntary vs. involuntary migration).

The eight two-year research projects funded in the call concluded in January 2023.



² Migration and Its Impact on Cities can be read in full at https://www3.weforum.org/docs/Migration_Impact_Cities_report_2017_HR.pdf

Call Topics

Topic 1
Socio-spatial integration and citizen involvement

Topic 2
Urban governance of housing issues

Topic 3
Managing migration (enhancing cities’ administrative capacities and supporting evidence-based integration policies)

The table below categorises the eight Urban Migration projects clustered (by acronyms) by their main relevance to the three call topic categories.³ It also details how each of these relate to the thematic priorities set out by JPI Urban Europe’s Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda⁴ (SRIA 2.0) and the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals⁵ (SDGs). This is helpful in contextualising the research in its contribution to the global sustainability agenda.

PROJECT	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	SRIA 2.0	SDG
EMPOWER	X			3	11, 5, 10
LoReMi			X	3	11, 10, 3, 5, 16
ProSHARE		X		3, 2, 4	11, 10, 12
MAPURBAN	X			3, 4	11, 10, 16
Inclusive Housing		X		3	11, 10
MICOLL		X		3, 2	11, 10, 12
HOUSE-IN		X		3	11, 10
The Art of Belonging	X			3, 4	11, 10, 5

Participating Countries and National Funding Agencies

The participating countries which made funding available were Austria, Germany, Latvia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

FFG – Austrian Research Promotion Agency: Austria

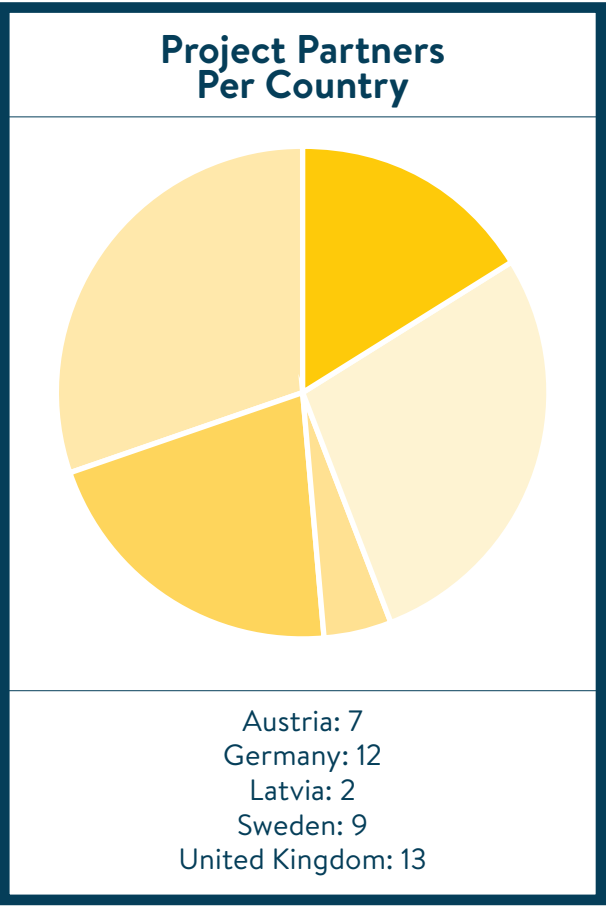
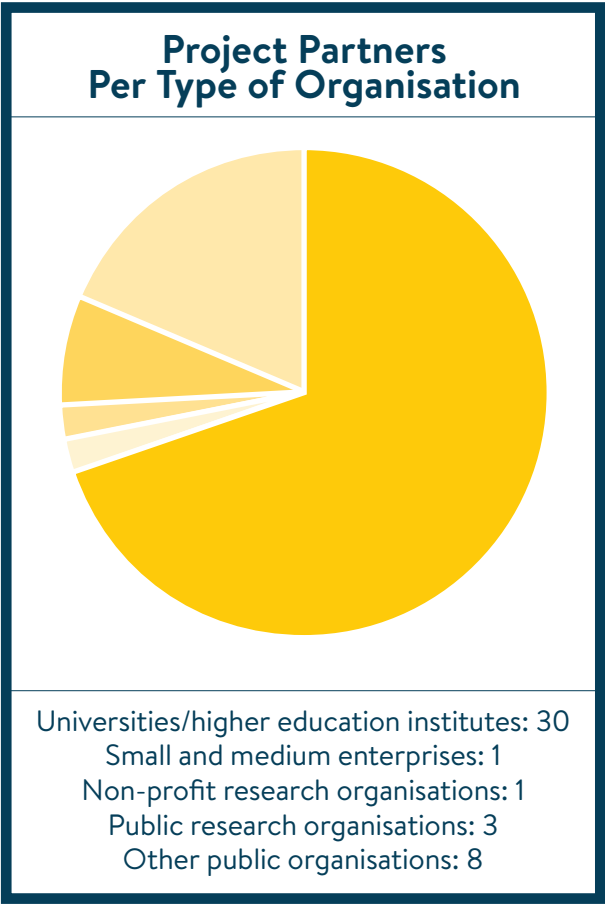
DLR Project Management Agency on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF): Germany

IZM – Ministry of Education and Science: Latvia

FORMAS – Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning: Sweden

AHRC – Arts & Humanities Research Council: United Kingdom

ESRC – Economic and Social Research Council: United Kingdom



³ A full explanation of the call topics can be found in the initial JPI Urban Europe projects presentation slides at <https://jpi-urbaneurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Urban-Migration-projects-presentation-FINAL.pdf>
⁴ For an explanation of the SRIA 2.0, visit <https://jpi-urbaneurope.eu/about/sria/sria-2-0/>
⁵ The United Nations offers a complete explanation at <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Explaining Urban Migration

The JPI Urban Europe research projects offer us a clear picture of urban migration in the twenty-first century European city, including the myriad complex challenges it presents and what solutions have been implemented to deal with them.

When we talk of migrants, the results tell us, it is usually as an all-encompassing term, but we know that this is not a homogeneous group. Newcomers arrive with their unique identity built around cultural backgrounds, languages, ethnicity, gender, age, education, careers, belief systems, and family arrangements. They have diverse needs, which also differ depending on whether they are men, women, or children.

The legal definitions for different types of migrants can be equally complicated. Someone may arrive voluntarily, as an economic migrant, or for a family reunion. Their visit may be temporary and conditional, such as for a funeral. Citizens of the European Union have the right to free movement within the Bloc, but even their stability can be upset if they lose a job and therefore eligibility for social welfare.

Forced migration is even more complex. People fleeing conflict or disaster may be unaccompanied or arrive as families. As refugees, they have the right to claim asylum, but it may not be granted, leaving them in an extremely precarious situation. Undocumented migrants may in fact have documents, but not permits. The more appropriate term for this group is 'irregular'.

A legal status dictates the restrictions and eligibility criteria that influence the lives and integration of new arrivals and longstanding migrants. This impacts on a migrant's reception in the community, as well as his or her wellbeing and ability to contribute to society – as is so often their intention.

Gender, too, is of utmost significance. Women typically face enhanced vulnerabilities and challenges related to health concerns, pregnancy, exploitation, domestic violence, trafficking, and responsibilities for childrearing.

Migrants arriving in European cities enter a confusing social and bureaucratic landscape characterised by a mix of openness and hostility. Arrival infrastructure differs from city to city, with little consistency in how national and local governments handle integration processes, housing provision, and access to vital support.

Accommodation is a major problem. In many countries, refugees have no choice but the shelters or hotels they are placed in temporarily – in which they often remain for a significant and unplanned amount of time. A housing shortage, a dearth of choice in dwelling sizes, and discrimination are all barriers to a migrant's access to quality, affordable homes. The places they can secure and afford tend to be poorly maintained.

These problems are not always caused by a disinterest on behalf of decision-makers, but rather financial concerns, knowledge gaps, and a limit to change-making power.

Local authorities lack an understanding of the diverse groups and needs that migrants present, and so often the sensitivity that should be employed to engage them. Non-government organisations help bridge this gap with expertise, cultural knowledge, or direct (and more flexible) service provision. But this support can be discretionary and inconsistent, and insecure funding streams undermine the long-term security of any services.

Even though this is clearly a deep-rooted and intertwined set of challenges, many European cities are implementing positive actions, policies, and collaborative long-term plans proven to ease pressure on resources, support migrants' settling process, and promote inclusion and community cohesion.

MORE INFORMATION

Find out more in our series of articles by following the links below:

- Exactly What Is Urban Migration?
- Why is the Integration of Migrants Important in European Cities?
- The Challenges of Urban Migration in European Cities
- Challenges & Solutions for Migrant Housing in European Cities
- Gendered Issues in Urban Migration & Integration in European Cities
- The Role of NGOs in Facilitating Migrant Integration in European Cities
- Tools for Cities to Facilitate Migrant Integration in European Communities
- Policy Recommendations & Mechanisms That Support Urban Migrant Experiences

For a deeper dive, the original published results from each of the eight research projects can be read in full here.

⁶ Access a wide range of articles and how-to guides on all manner of sustainability issues for free at <https://citychangers.org/>



As part of the JPI Urban Europe Urban Migration call, eight projects identified and tested a range of mechanisms designed to respond to the myriad challenges inseparable from the urban migrant experience. Many of these feature in a series of articles produced in collaboration with the urban sustainability community-content platform, CityChangers.org.⁶

Synthesising the research into themes, these articles offer an easy-to-read overview of the major findings. They cover topics that include the main challenges, definitions of migration, why integration matters, and issues pertaining to gender, housing, and the role played by non-government organisations. Finally, they summarise the tools, policy instruments, innovative housing models, and research recommendations designed to respond to the challenges our cities and their inhabitants must tackle. This should serve as a quick-access resource from which urban authorities and migrant-adjacent actors can select and adapt to meet local conditions.



EMPOWER

Like many facets of urban life, the housing sector is riddled with biases that hamper equality for female residents. This was the target of research for the EMPOWER project (Empowering Cities of Migration: new methods for citizen involvement and socio-spatial integration) during their investigations in Bochum (Germany), Gothenburg (Sweden), and Birmingham (UK).

Through the use of innovative mixed-method collaborative research, the study wanted to find out the impact that community-led infrastructures in superdiverse neighbourhoods have on a female migrant's ability to 'reclaim the city'. With a focus on women with a secure immigration status, this would reveal new knowledge on the housing needs of the target group and go on to inform a Theory of Change. This in turn serves as a guide for cities to test gender-sensitive activities that confront these challenges. The impact of COVID-19 on housing governance was also considered.

As the name suggests, one of the project's objectives was to empower citizens. In particular, it set out to influence new, sustainable, and gender-aware approaches for housing and integration through co-design and co-delivery with local migration, housing, and urban planning specialists. Place-making strategies were found to positively impact female residents' integration, as were other participation practices and micropolitical strategies.

Community Researchers

Putting empowerment at the fore of the project, people from local migrant populations were recruited as Community Researchers (CRs) and given basic training in conducting interviews and quantitative surveys. There was an emphasis on enlisting women. As a group usually excluded from mainstream research, their involvement proved integral to engaging peers from diverse backgrounds; the face-to-face approach garnered many more responses than digital surveys.

While there were variations in how committed they were and in the quality of their research, the CRs themselves helped EMPOWER reach a much wider audience in the allotted time. They were also essential for overcoming language barriers. Thanks to their participation, the CRs themselves also benefitted from upskilling in problem-solving, knowledge production, and how understanding a situation can inform official decision-making.

Gender shapes individuals' routines, access to resources, and opportunities for social interaction.

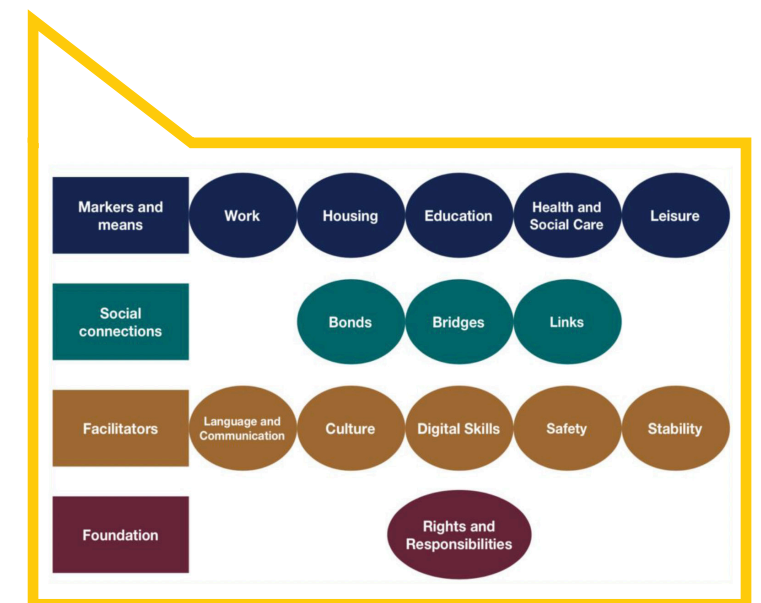
Multidimensional Factors of Integration

Concurring with previous research, EMPOWER highlights how initiatives with a migrant empowerment focus have failed for ignoring structural barriers to inclusion. It also states that integration is multi-dimensional (see diagram) and explains that the following domains are at play in settlement experiences: local resources; political discourse; relationships; institutional and structural factors; and support services, whether official or informal.

Applying a gender lens to the research helped addresses gaps in knowledge. This identified the influence established power hierarchies, discriminatory practices, and social norms have on the settlement experiences of diverse and marginalised groups. Socio-spatial segregation impacts massively on wellbeing; migrant women are more vulnerable to isolation, displacement, poor access to services, and sexual and gender-based violence in mixed-sex settings. As a result, some interviewees reported living an insular existence.

Participation and innovative solutions can help solve these challenges. However, there was found to be an absence of female resident empowerment in housing and urban development decision-making. The voluntary sector proved to be a catalyst for change.

Social connections were also shown to be strongly conducive to settling. In the sample communities, these connections formed much more prominently between women than men, even across social groups. This led EMPOWER to conclude that the conviviality and solidarity that help develop social connections appears to be gendered.



MORE INFORMATION

Project overview
Project report: Empowering Cities of Migration, New Methods for Citizen Involvement and Socio-spatial Integration

PROJECT PARTNERS
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Migrants with precarious and irregular legal statuses are the most vulnerable and face the greatest restrictions from essential services. This debilitating level of exclusion was the focus of the LoReMi project (Local Responses to Precarious Migrants: Frames, Strategies and Evolving Practices in Europe). Taking housing, healthcare, education, and legal advice as a basis, it critically examined municipal policies and service provision, including responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Precarious migrants are those at risk of losing their right to stay in a European country but who still maintain some basic social rights. This might be because they have a temporary or conditional visa or are due to divorce an EU citizen, for example. Irregularity is more closely linked to overstaying lapsed visas and denied asylum claims resulting in the forfeit of basic social rights and support.

Low-threshold housing options are indispensable for the prevention of violence and exploitation.

Collaboration & Knowledge Sharing

The project team hosted interviews and roundtables with local authorities, public services, and civil society actors in Cardiff (Wales), Frankfurt (Germany), and Vienna (Austria) to examine how current legal frameworks support or hamper vulnerable migrants' experiences. The discussions emphasised the significant role partnerships and knowledge sharing play in improving the urban outlook and gave particular focus to the challenges faced by women.

Fulfilling its aim to strengthen knowledge bases and transnational information sharing useful to developing future local strategies, LoReMi issued a report of their findings around improving precarious migrants' inclusion. A summary of these findings was presented in 2022 in cooperation with the City Initiative on Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe (C-MISE).

Deservingness

The notion of deservingness features heavily in LoReMi's research. Children, one interviewee said, haven't done anything wrong, so why should they be blocked from services the same way their parents are? This tallies with the 'children first and migrant second' attitude seen in Wales, which aims to provide children with an education regardless of legal status.

The research saw a willingness among some municipal staff and certainly representatives of non-government organisations (NGOs) for using discretion to give flexible support to those most in need. While kind, this creates an inequality of provision, which can be confusing for both those dealing with precarity and for the multidisciplinary agencies that need reliable referral pathways.

Healing Divisions

Despite many countries adopting hostile national immigration policy, laws seem to be interpreted more empathetically at city levels. Services in the three test cases were generally more inclusive to the needs of migrants with a precarious status. However, there rarely seemed to be firewalls in place to prevent clients' data from being shared with authorities – a problem for those who fear deportation or detention and how this could break up their family. NGOs bridge these kinds of gaps, boosting engagement, and have the trust of maligned groups, the cultural awareness to support them, and often cost-free services which make them accessible to destitute individuals.

One key finding is the positive impact that legal assistance has on addressing the underlying issues preventing precarious migrants from accessing the services, rights, and benefits they are entitled to.

MORE INFORMATION

Project overview
Project report: Local Responses to Migrants with Precarious Status: A Comparative Report on Frames, Strategies and Evolving Practices in Europe
Policy recommendations

Project book (in German):
Lokale Antworten auf aufenthaltsrechtliche Prekarität – Zugänge zu Gesundheitsversorgung, Unterbringung und Bildung
Project website

PROJECT PARTNERS
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University of Oxford – School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography
Technische Universität Wien – Raumplanung
Hochschule Fulda University of Applied Sciences



Looking to the Future

Of particular note is the need for a better joined-up vision between internal municipal departments, longer-term options for housing people living in precarity, multilingual counselling across services, and a significant increase in gender-sensitive solutions. Particularly with regard to healthcare and protecting women from exploitation and domestic violence, more could be done (e.g. providing more spaces in refuges).

ProSHARE

Authorities and local services cannot provide for a migrants' every need, which can be nuanced and spontaneous. This assumption was essentially the starting point of the ProSHARE project (Enhancing Diversity, Inclusion and Social Cohesion through Practices of Sharing in Housing and Public Space). It investigated the presence of and conditions for the co-production of non-commercial sharing between migrant groups, host communities, and other stakeholders. It also took a focus on sharing in houses and public spaces within socially mixed neighbourhoods. The study team looked at the forms that sharing spaces and resources take, how these create community cohesion, and what limits are involved not only for newcomers but also second and third generation migrants.

A continuation of the German-based StadtTeilen project, this research made use of experimental real-world Practices-of-Sharing-Labs in seven districts across Germany, Austria, France, Sweden, and the UK: Nordstadt in Kassel; Wrangelkiez and Reichenberger Kiez in Berlin; Heusteigviertel in Stuttgart; Ottakring in Vienna; Bagneux in Paris; Poplar in London; and Gottsunda in Uppsala. The project resulted in a European Union-wide knowledge base for innovative urban co-production practices.

How Common is Sharing?

ProSHARE identified three forms of sharing: that organised by municipal and institutional actors (e.g. festivals, courses, counselling services); bottom-up neighbourhood sharing initiatives (including co-housing); and informal networks between residents for sharing tangible and intangible goods, such as tools, mobility, housing, and expertise.

Survey results revealed that nearly one-third of people regularly engage in commercial sharing practices, partly because of the ubiquitous nature of platforms like AirBnB and Uber. The research showed, however, that non-commercial sharing is a much more local affair (at meetings, clubs, gardens, festivals, and markets), which places it right among the gamut of instruments that facilitate sustainable and socially inclusive urban development. A fifth of those questioned for the research shared items regularly, but poverty and associated feelings of shame (which can derive from a migrant's legal status) were shown to trigger exclusion from sharing and commoning practices.

The Garage Grande lab in Vienna provides useful insights into the connection between sharing and migrant integration. Many who took part came from diverse backgrounds and expressed the relevance that sharing practices had for them. A common theme was the sense of belonging this fostered, plus the sense of self-empowerment, solidarity, and mutual support it provided. In isolated areas and neighbourhoods associated with crime (Gottsunda, in Uppsala and North Holland, in Kessel) a culture of sharing was thought to improve social cohesion, integration, and security.

Conditions for Sharing

Digital media, while often used to facilitate sharing, was nowhere near as important to organising sharing practices as close social connections (family, friends) proved to be. Sharing occurs most commonly in private spaces (predominantly homes) because it's safe, trusted, low-threshold, and unregulated. Items, activities, peer support, and information are all frequently exchanged in neighbourhoods, which act as sharing nuclei.

Sharing, however, is less evident where existing social ties are absent. Here, ProSHARE showed, it's down to institutional actors – among them, cultural institutions and the housing industry – to motivate sharing practices. Because of their links to community groups and penchant for engaging vulnerable groups, faith organisations can also be effective partners.

A highly relevant finding is that... the social status, gender or religion of their sharing partners have virtually no significance; common interests, cultural background and age of the peers are more likely to play a role.

MORE INFORMATION

Project overview
Shared Framework: Sharing Knowledge and Practice
Analysis of the Transnational Research
Information on ProSHARE-Labs in Paris & London, Berlin, and Vienna
Sharing and Space-Commoning Knowledge Through Urban Living Labs Across Different European Cities
Policy brief
Project website

PROJECT PARTNERS

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University of Sheffield – School of Architecture
Goldsmiths
University of London – Centre for Research Architecture
Technische Universität Wien – Raumplanung
Uppsala University – Institute for Housing and Urban Research
Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft HTW Berlin



MAPURBAN

Migrants' experiences upon arriving at their destination are largely shaped by the public and semi-public infrastructures in place there. These experiences shape the extent to which newcomers can integrate and claim their 'right to the city'.

The MAPURBAN project (Migrant Mobility and Access to Public Urban Resources) examined socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural conditions in three major European cities: Stockholm (Sweden), Berlin (Germany), and London (UK). Using multi-scale (national, regional, local) spatial analyses, they investigated how access and barriers to essential urban resources, plus urban design and municipal or support services, affect inclusion, segregation, and mobility.

Children, elderly people and women are much more likely to rely on the area they live in. Therefore, the provision of infrastructure for daily needs within reach is of great importance.

Arrival Infrastructures

By interrogating common 'arrival infrastructures' – housing, education and language, health, mobility and social interaction – the research identified inconsistent approaches towards migrant integration in cities across the continent, and even between actors within single municipalities.

MAPURBAN found that authorities and the communities in which migrants live expect them to integrate. The contradiction is how scarce the provisions are which can aid that process. Considerable barriers to language comprehension, for example, differed between case studies but ranged from a lack of spaces on courses to refugees being barred entirely until granted the right to remain. The participation of multidisciplinary stakeholders in the study helped to shed light on socio-spatial discrepancies; not only were many migrant communities disadvantaged by poor transport links, but those links that existed felt unsafe or were too expensive for them to use anyway.

By mapping the locations of services such as libraries and childcare facilities, the study correlated geographical segregation with the affects this has on income, health, education, and life expectancy. As such, this seems an important reference when formulating urban development strategies that aim to enhance inclusion.

The study also identified the significance of public spaces as opportunities for migrants to be co-present with native communities. Access to parks, town squares, public transport, etc. provide chances for public encounter and forming connection with people and places.

The insights of this study can help policymakers, planners, and practitioners in migrant arenas to develop a more coordinated approach for shared learning and, at a local level, ease the urban pressure points which prevent new arrivals from full participation in civic society.

Mapping Arrival

The MAPURBAN project culminated in the Mapping Arrival exhibition and summary report, both of which showcased findings from the two-day mapping workshops conducted in Berlin. This exercise exposed the narrow understanding child and women refugees living in shelters and decentralised housing have of their city.

It proved how migrant experiences can be limited by intersectional disadvantages (age, gender), restricted eligibility to services, urban transport networks, and fear of unfamiliar spaces. When asked to make their own maps, those living in shelters on the city's periphery drew only their rooms and what they saw from the window. They desired pets and the chance to be in nature. Those living in mixed neighbourhoods depicted friends, shops, and public spaces. But none of them showed awareness of positive institutional or recreational spaces such as schools, libraries, or swimming pools.

MORE INFORMATION

Project overview
Project report: Migrant Access to Public Urban Infrastructure
Mapping Arrival: Children's and Women's Perspectives on Arrival Spaces in Berlin.
Mapping Inequalities & The Kitchen Square (English)
Project website

PROJECT PARTNERS
University of Kent, UK
KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden
Free University Berlin, Germany
University College London, UK
Coventry University, UK
Growth and Regional Planning Office, Stockholm, Sweden
Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing, Germany
The City of Sundbyberg, Sweden
Marabouparken Art Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden
Borough of Tower Hamlets, London, UK



The Kitchen Square

Built on an existing idea by architect-artist Elin Strand Ruin, the multicultural Kitchen Square experiment was set up in the Sundbyberg area of Stockholm to address these exclusions. Combining design and social sustainability concepts, recent female migrants were invited to cook and eat together in a temporary kitchen set up in a public square. Not only was this found to strengthen social networks among the participants; the women also welcomed members of the public and local children too, generating a wider sense of community and belonging.

Inclusive Housing

Refugees, like other disadvantaged groups, are largely cut off from long term housing in European cities, and many of the reasons can be traced back to policy. The Inclusive Housing project (Inclusive Housing policies: Housing is the beginning) wanted to deal with this predicament.

Assembling a multidisciplinary team from the fields of migration, integration, and housing to identify the main challenges, their workshop-based research focused on the realms of housing markets, governance, and 'special types' of housing in cooperation with local stakeholders in Vienna (Austria), Hamburg (Germany), and Umeå (Sweden). These are detailed in the final report, alongside recommendations for the policies and practices the consortium proposes will improve access for migrant and marginalised groups to appropriate dwellings. The recommendations were informed by best practices seen in the sample cities and are relevant for scaling across the European Union.

Exclusive Housing

For reasons of low income, discrimination, information gaps, complex and high-threshold access criteria, and the existence of too few affordable units, refugees' prospects on the housing market are limited. This often leads to them living in precarious situations, including overcrowded, overpriced, or unhealthy accommodation.

The research found that refugees are especially vulnerable when transitioning from temporary accommodation (shelters, hotels, primary care quarters). Those relying on social networks can find themselves in situations of dependency or exploitation. Social housing seems to be one of the best options, thanks to its greater affordability. But even this, which is usually provided by municipalities, comes with access criteria that may be restricted due to legal residency status. For other migrants, conditions around length of stay can also be a barrier.

Economic hurdles were some of the most prominent in refugees' housing dilemmas. For many, independent house hunting can simply be off limits. If they arrived with any savings, these are generally used when the individual gets asylum. Restrictions on work prevent them earning in the meantime. The research also revealed examples of people taking loans to pay for furniture and broker costs, pushing them into debt.

What Makes Housing Inclusive?

Affordable housing is the stalwart of an inclusive market. Germany and Austria seem to do well at providing this, especially for low-income groups: policy actively pushes for the promotion of social housing. Building regulations and land use laws were seen to activate development of need-responsive options and to cement subsidised housing into building plans. It is also well regulated, controlling occupancy and rent levels with strong tenancy laws. Similar instruments are used to activate private rented housing as social, affordable housing and prevent homes standing vacant when there is a shortage. Vacancy taxes can also be an incentive for landlords to rent to refugees.

The vulnerability of refugees should be a priority for policymakers, especially to prevent rough sleeping. The research team recommends securing transitional and emergency housing for those in precarious living situations and strengthening rights to long-term rental contracts or regular maintenance by landlords.

Cities can also ease financial issues by creating instruments for financial aid, for example: offering affordable loans for deposits and furniture; reducing up-front payments in public and subsidised housing; and crowdfunding among citizens to support their refugee neighbours by creating a Solidarity Fund. To enable financial independence Inclusive Housing also advocates for legal access to the labour market for those seeking asylum, but this is likely in the hands of national decision-makers.



Finding adequate housing is the base for arriving in a new society and building a new home. Therefore, it represents an important foundation for social inclusion.

MORE INFORMATION

Project overview
Inclusive Housing Policies: Housing is the beginning
Factsheet: Policies and Trends for Inclusive Housing for Refugee Migrants in Austria, Germany and Sweden
Project website

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Universität Wien – Institut für Soziologie

MICOLL

With particular interest in improving access to long-term quality, affordable dwellings for refugees, the MICOLL project (Migration and housing: meeting refugees' housing needs through collaborative housing programmes) focused on how to embed innovative housing models in European cities as an alternative to overstretched traditional social housing options.

In light of the housing shortage and affordability crisis throughout Europe, the study presents a case for mainstreaming collaborative housing and for enabling it by developing approaches and interventions in relevant institutions, policies, and legislation.

MICOLL's study pinpoints the social, economic, policy, and institutional barriers vulnerable groups encounter in accessing suitable accommodation, or which prevent co-housing developments from getting off the ground.

Using testbeds (an in-location practice-based 'experiment') as a 'transition arena', MICOLL drew on close involvement with residents and local actors to demonstrate how to instigate, support, and sustain refugee-centric co-housing. Each testbed reflected conditions typical of that country: a functioning collaborative house in Austria, where the model is already established; engagement in the co-design stage with locals in Sweden, where there's little precedent; and knowledge exchange among the few disparate but pioneering examples in the UK.

International visits between countries exemplified the collaborative and knowledge sharing ethos of the project. Tours of sites like Grüner Markt, Vienna and Svartlamon in Trondheim, Norway allowed teams to exchange their learnings in refugee participation and diverse uses for communal areas.

Culminating in a cross-country transition agenda, the research sets out guidance on what actors, institutional frameworks, and processes are required for the co-design, co-development, improvement, and scaling up of co-housing to establish it as a legitimate urban housing model.

Challenges & Advantages

Co-housing was found to be gaining traction in Europe, although the research discovered a trend of suspicion about the kinds of 'bottom-up processes' that co-design involves. In Sweden and the UK, a lack of available and affordable land, appropriate legislation, and funding – as well as unwillingness from municipalities to support experimental housing projects – saw many of them stall at the concept stage. Only in Austria – namely Vienna – were authorities catalysing conditions by subsidising land and rent for low-income residents. Co-housing developments were found to be highly cost-effective and to make efficient use of space.

Specifically for refugees, co-housing was seen to relieve some very common problems, which include overcrowded accommodation, lack of privacy, poor or disruptive maintenance, high rents, social exclusion, and the threat of gentrification.

Co-Design

MICOLL advocates for including refugees in the design process. The research found that giving potential residents a chance to voice their needs and contribute to the final construction provided multiple personal advantages, not least skill development and building of social networks.

Vienna's testbed case of OASE.inklusive provides a working example. Made possible by a partnership between the Neues Leben non-profit housing developer and a local resident association, it provides 84 different-sized affordable rental units to a wide mix of social backgrounds, plus 15 for families and diverse communal spaces. The families occupying these rooms participated in the planning process, with mediation by the NGO 'neunerimmo'. Boasting low-threshold self-organisation, OASE.inklusive puts inclusion at its heart and acts as a standout anchor organisation for demonstrating good practice, which MICOLL suggests can be a powerful tool in leveraging support among authorities and communities.

As the transition agenda specifies, however, there is a need to support vulnerable groups in co-working processes. Architects and planners should provide flexible top-down support to ensure refugees feel included and motivated to contribute.

MORE INFORMATION

Project overview
Project report: A cross-country Transition Agenda for Innovative Collaborative Housing with Refugees
Project website

PROJECT PARTNERS

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Integration Unit of the Municipality of Tjörn
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IBA_Vienna
Community Led Housing
London hub
London Borough of Camden
Housing Associations' Charitable Trust
UK Cohousing Trust
Neunerimmo

Mainstream housing sectors insufficiently cater to the needs of people with migrant and especially refugee backgrounds.



HOUSE-IN

The HOUSE-IN project (The Housing-Integration-Nexus: shaping exchange and innovation for migrants' access to housing and social inclusion) conducted extensive research into the ways in which housing options influence forced migrants' integration into European urban neighbourhoods.

To confirm the assumption that the right housing can support better integration, the project conducted a series of work packages including case studies and Urban Living Labs in the real-world context of five historic cities to assess their innovative housing strategies: Leipzig (Germany), Vienna (Austria), Riga (Latvia), and Helsingborg and Lund (Sweden). The process identified diverse challenges and stimulated local co-creation to identify innovative, replicable, sustainable housing solutions to address them.

For the sake of this project, researchers applied a broad definition to housing, referring to spaces for living in and the residential environment where neighbourly and 'micro-public' interaction takes place.

HOUSE-IN brought together a wide-ranging consortium of expertise and stakeholder networks at both the local and European level, including residents, scientific project partners, municipalities, NGOs, activists, policymakers, and of course actors in the housing sector. This culminated in a series of international exchanges held in May and September 2022 in which the responses to the housing and integration needs of Ukrainian refugees were discussed.

Differing Approaches to the Housing-Integration Nexus

Variations in cities' approaches to housing became clearly evident. The authorities' handling of migrant support and housing in general, combined with urban characteristics and stakeholder networks, presented foundations for diverse but comparable conditions for the success of test cases. Sweden, for example, appears to be giving a longer-term focus to the shortage of housing and refugee integration, whereas Riga, Leipzig, and Vienna take a more arrival-centred approach.

Europe's empathetic emergency response to the movement of eight million Ukrainian women and children has helped identify cases of discrimination at both a societal and policy level. Although many people opened their homes to help accommodate the new arrivals, racial prejudice saw white refugees given priority. In some cities, Ukrainian refugees were given expedited access to municipal housing, while earlier arrivals remained on waiting lists.



Policy Recommendations

Subsequently, HOUSE-IN has published a series of papers that provide extensive policy reflections and recommendations for urban decision-makers in public, civil, and housing organisations. These address key issues in the housing-integration nexus, including discrimination, low-income, inequalities, socio-spatial segregation, and knowledge gaps. Careful to acknowledge the multi-scalar nature of governance in the housing sector, the recommendations offer solutions that range from local interventions to national policy review.

HOUSE-IN calls for more collaborative living units to facilitate cohesion. Sharing communal areas like a kitchen, for example, allows and encourages residents to interact, which normalises diversity. The affordable SällBo (Companion Housing) initiative from Helsingborg in Sweden is a typical example. By mixing young migrant (and local) adults in with pensioners, it mitigates the isolation and loneliness that both groups often experience. Daily encounters offer grounds for mutual support, and migrants can benefit from local people's knowledge of the city and its culture.

We understand integration not only as a process of societal inclusion of newcomers or people with a migration history but all people living in the urban area.

The recommendations also include establishing language support, including multilingual counselling on housing matters. Decentralised and subsidised housing, as well as private hosting platforms, can help prevent refugees being isolated in shelters on the periphery of the city, and therefore located closer to local communities and the services essential for settling. The first step though, HOUSE-IN highlights, is understanding migrants' needs. Taking Leipzig's lead, cities can set up municipal anti-discrimination offices. Round table discussions among local actors in the sector would also help eradicate unfair treatment of migrants and allow for more fluid integration experiences.

MORE INFORMATION

Project overview
Policy paper: Housing Refugees from Ukraine: Preliminary Insights and Learnings from the Local Response in Five European Cities
Journal article: Refugee Migration from Ukraine to Other Parts of Europe
Policy information: Forced Migrants' Access to Housing
Policy information: Enabling Settling Down and Belonging
Policy information: Discrimination Against Forced Migrant Newcomers in the Housing Market
Blog post: Now and Then. Precariousness, Double Standards and Racism in Housing Refugees
Case study: Inclusion Potentials of Co-Housing – A Look at OASE.inklusive
Project website

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The Art of Belonging

Forced migration has implications for physical and mental health. Fleeing persecution or conflict and undertaking a perilous journey to end up in a different culture, not speaking a common language, is disorientating and lonely.

The Art of Belonging project set out to mitigate the isolation which forced and, in some cases, unaccompanied young migrants feel by being separated from all that is familiar to them. Working with artists, city leaders, and practitioners from migrant communities, this project used art as a form of therapy, a means for skill development, and as a place-making tool to facilitate improved wellbeing, the capacity to aspire, and a sense of cultural citizenship. Art therefore behaved as a catalyst for meaningful attachment.

The focus of the study was informed by observations, interviews, engagement events, and input from transdisciplinary actors: artists, cultural representatives, key stakeholders in migrant arenas, and participants. It provided a guided programme appealing to young migrants aged 15-18 in Nottingham (UK) and 11-21 in Lund (Sweden). They represented a diverse picture of the mass movement of people, including individuals from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Vietnam, Syria, and Sudan.

Cultural Rucksack

This programme of creative and cultural activities at different artistic institutions around the city gave participants the chance to form their own Cultural Rucksack, a concept originally implemented in Norway. The metaphorical rucksack gets filled as participants build an understanding of the culture of their new city.

As the practical activities aren't affected by language barriers, the research identified art as a signature (teaching) mechanism for engaging new arrivals excluded from mainstream education because of their legal status.

The activities proved extremely popular and fused social bonds within the groups. Smartphones were found to be a key connector, as the young people shared images and videos of the culture, nature, and food from their native countries, used translation apps, and took selfies together.

An Empowering Public Interface

The study shows how viewing migration through a social lens is much more constructive than judging the worth of migrants based on labour-market value.

Conducting activities in public places such as Nottingham Castle and local libraries drew attention from the public. Out of genuine interest, passers-by often spoke to the young artists, enhancing reciprocal respect, understanding, empathy, and social connection. This helped to dispel community tensions based on stereotypes and left participants feeling welcome in their city.

The Nottingham project concluded with a public exhibition of the artwork participants had created, further cementing participants' place in the city. Some even revealed how their pieces brightened up their stark accommodation, contributing to a better sense of feeling settled.

Useful Discoveries & Surprising Findings

The Art of Belonging revealed how unaccompanied migrants are predominantly male. Although alone, these youths had the confidence to join sessions. For females, safety was a bigger issue. Girls were more inclined to attend in groups, if their families trusted the activity leaders, or if getting to the venues did not require them to travel far across the city alone.

In some ways, this is an indication of why authorities extensively depend on community and faith groups, volunteers, and charities, which migrant communities tend to trust more.

Decision-makers should build this knowledge into official support structures for these target groups by recognising and investing in art as a cost-effective tool for integration and improved wellbeing. More information can be found in the project's policy brief aimed at regional and local authorities.

Future programmes of arts and cultural activity should... recognise and build on the potential of mobile phones in the planning of sessions.

MORE INFORMATION

Project overview
Project report: The Art of Belonging: Social Integration of Young Migrants in Urban Contexts Through Cultural Placemaking.
Policy brief
Project website
Workshop activities for use in the Cultural Rucksack

PROJECT PARTNERS

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