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# Instigating

*Manchester, Genoa, Leipzig and Bremen: All four European cities have strong immigrant populations and carried out major regeneration and integration programs in the past. How did these cities deal with migration movements? How did the face of the cities change? In this article, an approach for dealing with migration termed migration-led regeneration is portrayed as a variant of urban regeneration.*

FELICITAS HILLMANN

# Integration



People of various backgrounds in the European cities of

Manchester, Bremen, Leipzig and Genoa (clock-wise).









Above: Harbours are important arrival points for newcomers.

Below: People with different backgrounds in Genoa.

In the late 1990s it was a widely held view that the function of cities at the political level was at most a nostalgic one. This was explained with the fact that cities in a nation-state did not represent independent political units and thus could not be counted as significant players responsible for migration and integration policies (which instead were dealt with at the national level and “occurred” globally). Nowadays the nearly opposite view has become dominant. European cities have increased their scope of action, at the regional, national and even supranational, i.e. the EU level, by negotiating local solutions concerning migration and integration. On the one hand cities are reaching out to newcomers (“flow population”), on the other hand they are compelled to react, internally, to processes of displacement and exclusion to which the resident population (“stock population”) may be subjected. In this article, a proactive approach for dealing with migration will be termed migration-led regeneration and is portrayed as one of several variants of urban regeneration. Thus far urban development practice has identified regeneration approaches initiated through investments (investment-led regeneration), by means of flagship projects such as iconographic architecture (flagship-led regeneration) or based on events and cultural activities (culture-led regeneration). Migration policy, until recently, was not counted as an explicit regeneration strategy. In the last decade, however, the challenge of integrating foreigners became an important argumentative element in the debates about urban development processes. Over many years, relevant discourses centered around the notion of “learning by doing”; in fact, this is still the case in the present. Cities change in the manner in which they are involved in the new mobilities propelled forward by globalisation, i.e. mobilities of capital, knowledge and humans. What we see are reactions to these changes in the form of regeneration approaches.

Migration-led regeneration strategies have been developed in recent years for a variety of reasons, often out of sheer necessity. For one, city administrations would use, in implicit ways and with individual departments acting on their own, urban development policies in a top-down manner to attract new inhabitants or pacify the existing immigrant population. A second reason had to do with urban development being driven forward from the bottom up by the practices of migrant and civil society organizations – many European

cities by now have high percentages of immigrant population. Thirdly, European cities had a tendency to draw inspiration from internationally distinctive examples such as New York City or Toronto, about whom they learned through supranational city networks and extensive reporting in the press. Fourthly, many European cities are currently confronted with an increased influx of refugees – a phenomenon frequently explained as a fallout of globalisation, with its concomitant shifts of economic and political power, discrepancies in available resources and conflicts within and between nations. In this context, it is argued, cities are forced to take a stance. Strident examples are the initiatives of the mayors of Naples and Palermo, who have courageously opposed the national government and continue to help ship-wrecked migrants via their ports, being supported by highly active civil society organizations. Across Europe one can observe how cities react to areas of conflict and tension in different, locally determined ways. These reactions extend from “complexity management” to the denial of reality, or a mixture of both approaches respectively. Where and how in recent years have migration and integration led to concrete strategies and measures of urban development, and what can be deduced from these cases for future developments? How can different types of migration and mobility be guided and linked in order to use them as strategic resources for the regeneration of cities?

In our lead project conducted at the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space from 2015 to 2018, we researched typical ways of dealing with flight and migration through case studies of four cities. These four cities do not count among the big radiant metropolises of Europe, but they do share the same problems. All four have a substantial percentage of immigrant population and have carried out major regeneration programs in the last 15 years in reaction to de-industrialisation.

## Genoa

Genoa is a city with an above-average proportion of elderly inhabitants. Since 1986, the number of registered foreigners has increased tenfold, a trend that has slowed down the shrinking of the city. Since 2011 the number of foreigners has remained stable at 50,000 to 55,000 people, most of which come from Ecuador, Albania and Romania. Mi-

gration-related measures by the city administration have primarily addressed acute crisis situations (e.g. the accommodation of 2,493 refugees in 2017) and the integration of families. The immigrant population is granted, based on the regional legal framework, the same access as all other citizens to health care, educational and training opportunities and language instruction as well as social programs and labor market integration. An overall strategy for handling migration and integration did not exist and the different municipal departments did not coordinate their actions. Notwithstanding this practice, Genoa Mayor Marta Vincenzi signed the “Integrating Cities Charta” in London in 2010, a document in which the big European cities committed themselves to emphasise the importance and value of immigration and integration. In Genoa, many issues were solved by city officers making phone calls in order to find pragmatic solutions for concrete problems. Genoa has always viewed itself as a city committed to solidarity, our interviewees said. Subsequent to the signing of the “Integrating Cities Charta”, the city launched a further education program for its employees, financed by the EU and the Italian Ministry of the Interior and carried out by the City’s Department of Legal Affairs. In addition, the mayor’s office organised a conference in 2015 that aimed at bringing together state, civil society and private actors. The conference included a notable initiative titled “Io sono Genovese” (I am a Genoese) in the course of which Mayor Marco Doria conferred “urban citizenship” upon all middle school children, regardless of national origins. Such events were primarily symbolic in character. Conferring citizenship sent a signal to the civil society (“everyone is a part of it”), to the population in general and at the same time to the government in Rome (“naturalization must be made easier”); however, this did nothing to change the structural situation.

The physical regeneration measures were primarily directed at the old town. Sections of Genoa’s historic center were declared a UNESCO world heritage site, which made this part of town more interesting, especially for tourists. Furthermore, the city administration made efforts to open up the old town for greater cultural diversity. Recruitment activities were directed at the creative class, not least because the EU offered subsidies for the promotion of inclusion and diversity. As a result of these measures, social labs such as *Insito* as well as several arts and crafts centers were

founded. None of these initiatives, however, have been able to remedy the old town’s long-lasting problems. While it remains the city’s highlight for tourists, the old town has always been the main trading post for gang crime and drug traffic by the mafia and its various offshoots, even before immigrants arrived. At one time the old town was the city’s main shopping district as well as the place where the city administration’s headquarters were located. After the municipal government relocated in 1992, the customers stayed away. Today the old town is inhabited by many North Africans, who have taken over the abandoned, dark and therefore inexpensive apartments on the ground floors of the palazzi. The former diversity waned: in the quarter *Prè-Molo-la Maddalena*, for example, the percentage of foreigners is today twice the average of the city (9.5 percent, according to official documentation). In some streets, migrants today are almost completely among themselves; rejected asylum seekers especially seek refuge in such areas and are offered opportunities to drift into criminality. More and more traditional businesses shut down because, with the exception of regular clients, hardly any visitors dare to venture forward into the alleys. An increasing number of stores is taken over by immigrants, often leading to a reduced range and quality of goods offered. Thus, on the one hand the old town is enlivened by cultural diversity, while on the other it remains the place of residence for a marginalised immigrant population. This situation also provokes fierce counter-reactions among the inhabitants. The new mayor is a member of the right-wing *Le-ga* party and has already announced that he will take a tougher stance towards immigrants.

## Manchester

Between 1930 and 1990 Manchester lost almost half of its population as a consequence of de-industrialisation. It is only since 2001 that the city is growing again and currently disputing Birmingham’s place as the second largest city in Great Britain. What facets of a migration-led regeneration can be observed in this city?

The city administration of Manchester, the Manchester City Council, professes by principle a positive and liberal-minded attitude towards immigrants. Minorities have been part of its urban society ever since the 1960s. “The Mayor’s view has always been that migration is beneficial for Man-

chester, and this has been the case as far as you can look back.” (Hillmann and Calbet 2019). Despite Great Britain’s centralist planning system and the limited leeway at the local level resulting from that, Manchester makes efforts to deal with migration in ways that view it as a constituent of urban development practice. Universities, for example, have been attracting international students, in particular from Asia.

In Manchester’s current integration policies, origin and ethnic identity play only a minor role. According to our interviewees, this is due to a focus on the reduction of socio-economic exclusion. Multicultural approaches were developed since the 1960s, shifting from debates over the right kind of political economy towards an emphasis on the creation of a social atmosphere of mutual tolerance. The two approaches, the new multiculturalism and the previous integration policies, remained unrelated to each other. After the racial riots in Oldham, a town in the Greater Manchester area, in 2001 the city administration recalibrated its local policies. It based its policy changes on the nationally debated conviction that integration had failed – due to cultural difference and not because of poverty and the discrimination of minorities. The spatial concentration of certain ethnic groups came to be viewed as a problem. Local urban policies distanced themselves from community empowerment and instead began to implement measures of community cohesion. A case in point was the inner-city area Hulme, which was plagued by a high poverty rate and ethnically segregated (most inhabitants were Afro-Caribbeans), a condition related to the 1960s public housing that dominated much of Hulme’s urban fabric. Between 1991 and 1997 Hulme became the showcase project of Labour’s new local-level politics and was transformed into a renewed, well-governable quarter designed to be especially attractive for families. To increase the area’s “social mix” condominiums were built and the percentage of council housing was reduced. This in turn led to an exchange of population and a steep rise of housing prices in the free-market segment. Here, diversity was defined as the mixing of ethnically homogenous and economically weak neighbourhoods.

The shift towards a community cohesion approach was characterised by ambivalence. On the one hand, the “mixing” of neighbourhoods displaced precisely those population groups that were most dependent on integration measures. On the

other hand, social cohesion was promoted by articulating multiculturalism and integration approaches at the neighbourhood level. The focus on the neighbourhood scale manifested itself through a growing number of local cultural initiatives. The different ethnic groups were represented in various city bodies and therefore able to influence political decisions at the local level. Since 2010 however, when new austerity policies were imposed, measures to further a multicultural urban environment have been barely funded any more. Instead, urban redevelopment projects were left to private investors, a policy that exacerbated the existing polarisation. Not least the Brexit vote has demonstrated how much the treatment of ethnic minorities polarises British society: Even if in Manchester overall a majority of citizens voted in favor of staying in the EU, in Greater Manchester towns such as Rochdale, one of the poorest communities in Great Britain, it was the EU opponents who won. Indeed, the Brexit vote, which was preceded by a scapegoat campaign that blamed most problems on migration, can also be interpreted as a gauge for the perceived state of local diversity and integration policies. As a closer look shows, the young voters rejected Brexit and the elderly held on to bygone ideals; in other words, there is a generational conflict.

### Bremen and Leipzig

Bremen in West Germany and Leipzig in East Germany are two cities that underwent a protracted structural crisis. Since 2010 however, they have registered sizable gains in population, with an increasing number of the new inhabitants originating from foreign countries. Both are university towns, with 33,000 enrolled students in Bremen and 37,000 in Leipzig. In Bremen, where many foreign guest workers settled in the 1960s, today about a third of the resident population is of immigrant background. In Leipzig, this percentage is much lower at 12 percent. To further population growth, both cities have focused on attracting highly qualified immigrants and university students, indirectly offering special prerequisites for these groups (housing offers for highly qualified individuals, a Welcome Center in Bremen, a bonus for new residents in Leipzig).

Despite their starkly different migration histories, both cities today apply similar, distinctly

formalised integration policies. It is frequently the political and administrative bodies of the city that initiate action. Overwhelmingly, both cities tend to emphasise through their programs the positive effects of an “increased diversity”. To promote this goal, they rely on a variety of urban policy instruments, such as turning the city’s administrative offices into interculturally staffed and competent institutions, establishing migrants’ advisory boards and supporting immigrant associations. In its current urban development concept document, for example, Leipzig characterises itself as an “international city”; in fact, diversity plays an important role in the city’s branding and marketing strategies. Bremen likewise hopes for further growth of its population through immigration (Kühn und Bernt 2019). The focus on population growth did not, however, lead to a neglect of existing problems of the stock population, in particular a stark social-spatial segregation. Already since the late 1990s both cities had been offering, as part of their urban development programs, projects aimed at integrating marginalised groups, in particular those consisting of foreign guest workers and their descendants. An example is the “Social City/Living in Neighbourhoods” revitalisation program in Bremen. The northern German port city uses neighbourhood management systems as a new planning strategy on the district scale. Selected neighbourhoods are assigned a team that establishes new networks among citizens and promotes social stability by supporting a wide range of activities. Today Bremen has a Council for Integration and Migration, even political parties have been founded by immigrants. During the massive influx of refugees from 2015 to 2017 numerous civil society organizations stepped in when the municipal authorities were unable to react fast enough or lacked flexibility – an experience that forced the city planning bodies to rethink and alter their procedures, at least temporarily. Bremen developed a cross-departmental integration strategy. Multiple initiatives emerged that, for example, would seek to integrate new arrivals in existing associations or offer German language instruction in refugee shelters. In addition, the municipal bodies created new formats that placed stronger emphasis on issues of social cohesion. A case in point is the program “Together in Bremen”, where full-time employees help volunteers coordinate their activities such as sponsorships and language cafés. Leipzig,

the largest city of Saxony, has seen, in parts of its civil society, a rejection of such policies. One can also observe a growing radicalisation in right-wing circles and political organizations.

In both cities new neighbourhoods have emerged that are characterised not only by an above-average percentage of immigrant populations but also by a vibrant immigrant economy and a variety of active immigrant associations. Compared to the rest of the city, these neighbourhoods are economically weaker and show a higher turnover of inhabitants. These “arrival quarters”, as they are called in Bremen, are simultaneously part of the problem and part of the solution; new neighbourhood programs have been launched. Both Bremen and Leipzig cooperate with other cities nationally and internationally via various city networks: Bremen presents itself as a “safe haven”, thereby emphasizing its humanitarian outlook. The city government is currently preparing to have Bremen become a member of Seebrücke, a newly founded European network of cities that seeks to provide a safe arrival to refugees and migrants rescued in the Mediterranean. Leipzig has become internationally active via the much older and larger Eurocities network, which pursues such goals as a greater cultural diversity, a greener urban environment and sustainable growth. For both cities, membership in these supranational organizations is also a way to gain access to EU funding opportunities.

### Lessons learned

A notable result of our research is the fact that the four cities investigated acted at first reactively, especially in situations of acute crisis. In Genoa and Manchester, problems of marginalisation that had been affecting part of the existing immigrant population, were subsumed under general policies and solved individually by particularly engaged city employees. The two German cities, by contrast, developed a standard set of immigration-related policies such as neighbourhood management programs, migrants’ advisory boards and welcome centers. Given their diversity and partial institutionalisation, these measures offer excellent starting points for further development. On the whole, in Germany the attention paid to migration, which for many years was directed at internal deficits in the cities, has been turned to the outside, i.e. to the “flow population” and the poten-

tials it might offer. At the same time, the actors and stakeholders involved did not deny that migration and integration will bring about conflicts and problems in the initial phase. By simultaneously offering support for integration and opportunities for participation as well as policies promoting diversity, Germany, when compared to other countries, can be judged to have implemented far-sighted policies. To be sure, in all four cities civil society organizations needed to step in repeatedly to fill vacuums left by municipal administrations. However, in Germany in particular the intense migration flows of 2015 to 2017 have caused city administrations to rethink their handling of immigration. Municipal bodies have become much more active and some advocate a proactive implementation of policies.

Likewise, in all four cities neighbourhood organizations engaged in integration work from which the city as a whole profited. Frequently, these neighbourhoods were also the parts of town where flagship projects such as museums or festivals were located and subsequently spawned further societal innovations. In all four cities, we are currently witnessing an intense debate on how foreigners should be treated and how many of them can be handled. This debate has been accompanied by a political move to the right.

The four cities also participated in the activities of Europe-wide city networks – an important factor since, as is well known, the successful ideas for dealing with migration and integration travel from city to city. Promising starting points for a migration-led regeneration do, in fact, exist. The next step to be made is to link and combine these different approaches within individual cities as well as among cities across Europe. Cities have also become major instigators for answering the challenges that migration and integration pose; in fact, they are the bearers of hope for solving many of the global challenges humanity is faced with. As national governments in Europe have become mired in a polarised debate about immigration that often leads to gridlock, it is the cities that have been able to convert the intense debate among citizens into pragmatic action that is based on a progressive outlook. Certainly, cities do not have the power to actually leverage national legislation; but their small-scale, concrete solutions create pressure to act at the higher levels of government, a pressure that, as we know from experience, is inevitably needed to produce change.

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