

**“Dealing with diversity in the city:
Exploring the arrival and transition infrastructure in the migrant
neighbourhood Antwerpen-Noord”**

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Abstract

This paper analyses what makes cities resilient for external migration flows. We argue that the logic of socio-spatial differentiation and specialization in cities, as first described by urban sociologists of the Chicago School (but wrongly attributed to ecological forces), can provide cities with resilience in the face of migration. More specifically, we focus on the operation of urban transition zones as areas specialized in the arrival and transition of newcomers, and mobilize a Polanyian framework to analyse the localized resources that are nurtured in these areas and potentially contribute to the integration of migrants in society. Based on a case study of the migrant neighbourhood Antwerpen-Noord, we analyse to what extent these neighbourhoods provide the resources that newcomers need in their arrival and transition process through the mechanisms of market exchange, redistribution and reciprocity, and which impact the policy interventions have on these resources. We show how urban policies focusing on ‘upgrading’ the area undermine the resilience of this neighbourhood as a transition zone and conclude that policy interventions need both to draw extra-local resources to the transition zone and to mobilize the embodied knowledge of the local community to make the city more resilient for all its inhabitants.

Introduction

Sustainability has long been a leading objective and guideline for urban policies in Europe (Informal Meeting of Urban Development Ministers, 2010). Increasingly, however, the goal of sustainability in urban development strategies is complemented by that of resilience. The European Cohesion policy for the period between 2014 and 2020, for example, aims at integrated sustainable development “in order to strengthen the resilience of cities” (European Commission, 2014: 2), while the global network of ‘Local Governments for Sustainability’ ICLEI runs an annual conference on urban resilience and adaptation to climate change (see <http://resilient-cities.iclei.org/>). While the roots of resilience in the scholarly literature on ecology in the 1960s and 1970s still show in the way urban resilience is mainly used to refer to the capacity of cities to absorb and adapt to disturbances caused by climate change and natural hazards, the term is fast becoming a widely used frame through which responses of localised entities to all types of large scale societal changes including financial and economic crises (Walker and Cooper, 2011), demographic transitions (Locke et al., 2000; Adger et al., 2002) and political instability (Coaffee et al., 2008; Rogers, 2013) are formulated.

This paper is concerned with the travelling of the concept of resilience outside of its 'birth place' in the discipline of ecology, more specifically with the use of the concept in analysing how cities absorb and adapt to large-scale migration flows. We will do this by critically assessing the concept of resilience, particularly from the point of view of its applicability to social systems. We will argue that because of some fundamental differences between natural and social systems, the concept of resilience needs to be adapted to take into account the specificities of social systems in order to be useful in social science research. We will explore this in more detail with regard to the response of urban systems towards migration flows. We will do so by revisiting the debate on the ecological concepts used almost a century ago by the Chicago School in urban sociology to analyse the growth of the city, focusing more specifically on the concept of the urban zone of transition. We will argue that this concept is useful to assess the socio-spatial resilience of city-regions in the face of migration flows, when it is taken out of its ecological explanatory framework and embedded into an analysis of the dynamics of the socioeconomic and sociocultural integration of migrants in urban systems. This argument will be illustrated with a case study of the resilience of the neighbourhood Antwerpen-Noord in the city of Antwerp, Belgium, and the urban policies directed at it.

Resilience and the social sciences: towards resourcefulness

Different views have been expressed about the possibility and/or desirability of letting the ecological concept of resilience travel to the social sciences. While Davoudi (2012), for example, argues that resilience is bridging the gap between the natural and the social sciences, Swanstrom (2008) warns about the insurmountable difficulties that arise when the concept of resilience is extended to the social sciences. Human beings initially played only a limited role in the discourse of resilience (besides being identified as partly responsible for changes to various ecosystems). This changed in the late 1990s when the Resilience Alliance (www.resalliance.org) turned Holling's model on ecological resilience (Holling, 1973) into an overarching framework to study the dynamics between social and ecological systems (Folke, 2006; Cote and Nightingale, 2012). The resulting theory on social-ecological systems (SES) is inspired by complex (adaptive) system theory. SES is based on the assumption that social and ecological systems are not independent, but mutually influence each other. SES has been applied to a wide variety of research topics: from altruism among bat populations, investigations of the apartheid regime in South Africa to the global problems of urban sprawl and suburbanization (Cumming, 2011).

The shift from the study of resilience of ecological systems to resilience of social-ecological systems coincided with a much broader interpretation of the resilience concept. There was not only more attention for the interplay between nature and society, but also for the capacity of a system for adaptation, innovation and learning processes. Change within a system became a crucial aspect of the 'new' resilience thinking. In this context, (Adger, 2000: 347) defined social resilience (of a socio-ecological system) as "the ability of groups or communities to cope with external stresses and disturbances as a result of social, political and environmental change". The social resilience of socio-ecological systems has been investigated in relation to demographic challenges such as ageing in place (Wiles et al., 2011) and migration (Locke et al., 2000; Adger et al., 2002). Although the development of the concept of social resilience within the tradition of SES-research should be recognized as an important step to bridge the gap between social and ecological sciences, its transposition to the realm of society remains highly problematic (Adger, 2000; Hudson, 2009; Cote and Nightingale, 2012; Davoudi, 2012; Shaw, 2012; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013).

For the purpose of this article, we focus on one cluster of criticisms of the social resilience concept. This cluster revolves around the socio-spatial stratification of the social system, which makes it difficult to talk about 'the' or any specific social system as a homogenous entity, both in terms of the impact of external disturbances and its responses to it. If we want to translate the ecological concept of resilience into a proper social scientific concept, we hence need to attend to the internal stratification of social groups, the uneven impact of external disturbances (and the degree to which they are really external) and the unevenly distributed coping capacity across and within social groups. If this is not taken into account, resilience as applied to the social world will essentially be a socio-political conservative concept, which ignores questions of social justice (Swanstrom, 2008; Fainstein, 2015)¹. Calls for more resilient communities or cities then imply a shift in responsibility for possible risks from the state to individuals and local or community institutions (Welsh, 2013). MacKinnon and Derickson are therefore calling for "the development of a 'counter-systemic' model of thought (and practice) that transcends systems theory and resilience thinking" (MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013: 6). They propose the concept of resourcefulness as an alternative approach for use in regional and urban policies.

¹ See also Marcuse (1998) for a similar critique of the concept of sustainability.

Unlike resilience, which tend to be used by policy-makers to impose a certain agenda top-down on urban and regional communities, resourcefulness as an approach follows a bottom-up strategy in which local groups themselves define needs and goals (MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013). In doing so, it mobilises local or non-technical knowledge to complement the scientific and 'explicit' knowledge on which strategies for social resilience draw (Innes, 1990). This local knowledge is explicitly highlighted as a resource of the local community. The concept of resourcefulness furthermore highlights the importance of attending to the unequal distribution of resources within and between communities². In this article, we will explore the potential of the social resilience-cum-resourcefulness framework by examining what makes cities resilient towards on-going streams of newly arriving migrants. We will argue that the classical urban sociological concept of the urban zone of transition, which is also rooted in ecological thinking, offers a promising way to explore the resilience of the city in the face of external migration *if* it is adapted to take into account the socio-spatial stratification of the city.

The urban zone of transition

When the urban sociologists of the Chicago School were trying to understand the growth of and social dynamics in early 20th century Chicago, a city undergoing massive growth, industrialisation and migration, they turned to ecology for a conceptual framework (McKenzie, 1924; Plummer, 1997). They argued that the spatial differentiation of the city creates social order in the city. Social and ethnic groups are not randomly spread over the expanding urban space, but tend to cluster in certain areas, with each area or zone becoming a 'natural habitat' for a particular social or ethnic group and its activities (Burgess, 1925). As for the spatial clustering of migrants, the Chicago sociologists observed that migrants tended to strongly concentrate in an area surrounding the urban core, an intermediate zone that suffered from the continuous threat of expansion from the nearby offices and factories in the core and is

² The resourcefulness perspective has some similarities with the work of Fineman (2008) and Kirby (2006) on vulnerability. Both authors integrate resilience in a perspective that puts human beings and social relations central. Fineman (2008) criticises the idea of the liberal subject, i.e. a competent, independent and social actor who takes on competing roles and takes full responsibility for his own success, for not taking into account that the positions that subjects occupy within a complex web of economic and institutional relationships endow them with different assets and hence differential capacities to be resilient. Kirby (2006) argues that vulnerability and resilience lie at the heart of our social responsibility and require shared community action. If communities build up higher resilience, individual and institutional vulnerability decreases.

characterized by pollution, poor housing quality and low housing security as a result of speculation. They called this area the 'zone of transition'. The neighbourhoods in the transition zone fulfil a dual function. On the one hand they are the 'port of first entry' (Burgess, 1928) that allows new immigrants to establish themselves in their receiving cities, to earn an income and to raise their children due to the existing ethnic institutions, the cheaper housing and the supply of low-skilled (informal) jobs. On the other hand these kinds of neighbourhoods fulfil a transition function that can provide the migrants with the necessary skills and social networks to climb up the socioeconomic ladder in society.

The spatial differentiation of the city in various zones and the specialisation of some of these zones in the entry and transition process of newcomers enhance the resilience of urban systems in the face of external migration flows. Massey (1985) for example has elaborated on this classic urban sociological insight in his 'spatial assimilation model' that focuses on newcomers to the city. According to this model two opposing forces are acting upon the segregation of ethnic groups: the concentration of ethnic groups in transition zones and their spatial distribution as they become upwardly mobile and integrate into mainstream society. Immigrants first arrive in a new country in one of its transition zones, where they find low-cost housing, ethnic social networks, economic opportunities and public services, but move out again when they acquire more advantageous socio-economic positions.

We would like to argue here that the idea of spatial differentiation and specialisation in general and that of the zone of transition in particular is worth retaining even though the causal mechanisms that the Chicago sociologists identified to explain their continued existence have been criticised and quite rightly so (see e.g. Gottdiener and Feagin, 1988; Smith, 1995). The human ecology model proclaimed that the spatial differentiation of growing cities can be explained by biotic mechanisms of competition of different species of human beings, which lead to a continued dynamic of invasion and succession, much like the competition for habitats among different species in the natural world (McKenzie, 1924). However, one does not need to adopt this outdated and thoroughly delegitimized explanatory framework in order to take these insights on the spatial logic of the city and the role of segregation for the integration of migrants serious (Downey and Smith, 2011). This spatial logic can equally be explained by political-economic factors related to the interaction between social class and status dynamics and the housing and real estate market.

In line with the re-interpretation of resilience in terms of resourcefulness argued for above, we will look at transition zones from the perspective of local knowledge and resources. The focus on the local knowledge existing in transition zones highlights the importance of practical knowledge which is specific and instrumental to the trajectories of newcomers as an element contributing to the resilience of these zones and the city in general. In order to analyse the resources being generated in transition zones and attend to their uneven distribution, we use the Polanyian concept of socio-economic spheres of integration (Polanyi, 1968; Harvey, 1973; Mingione, 1991; Meert et al., 1997). This concept suggests that the resources that support socio-economic integration can be generated through market exchange, redistribution and reciprocity. In opposition to the idea of community resilience, resources are not just derived from local networks of reciprocity within the community, but attention is also paid to resources being generated – albeit in often very uneven ways – through spatially more extensive market relationships and the hierarchical relations of state institutions. Since a market-led society inevitably leads to structural inequalities, redistribution and reciprocity are crucial for mitigating the harsh effects of the market (Harvey, 1973). Market exchange thrives when it is free from any socio-organizational constraints, while reciprocity and redistribution can only function within forms of social organizations (Mingione, 1991).

In the remainder of this article, the resilience-cum-resourcefulness perspective will be applied to a specific zone of transition to explore how it contributes to the resilience of the city in the face of migration. After a brief description of our data and methods, we first explain how the neighbourhood of Antwerpen-Noord emerged as an exemplar of an urban zone in transition. Second, we focus on the resources being generated for the arrival and transition process of newcomers in our case study, hereby using Polanyi's socio-economic modes of integration. We also analyse the impact of recent urban policies on the localized resources that contribute to the area's resilience.

Data and methods

In order to analyse the resources that allow migrants to create a place for themselves in the neighbourhood, and more broadly in the city of Antwerp, we have conducted 28 semi-structured in-depth interviews with 30 respondents between 2013 and 2015. We have interviewed three groups of respondents: (1) policy makers and social professionals (amongst others social workers and representatives of associations) (2) migrants that arrived recently in the neighbourhood (later than 2005) and key figures within different ethnic communities and

(3) ethnic entrepreneurs. The interviewees from the second group were partially recruited through the local community centre and partially through a local social welfare organization that focuses on refugees. For each group of interviewees different questions were asked. The discussions with the experts revolved around the issue if, and why, they considered the neighbourhood Antwerpen-Noord as an urban arrival and transition zone and what where according to them the factors that contributed to, or hampered, their arrival and transition function. We then asked about the role of the different spheres of socio-economic integration (government, market, civil society and families) in the specialization of these areas as urban zones of transition and asked them to share their views on (the effects of) the policies of local and supra-local authorities on the socio-economic and cultural integration trajectories of migrants. For the group of newcomers and key figures in the ethnic communities the questions were centralized around the localized resources that newcomers use in their arrival and transition process. The interviews always started with the question how and/or why the newcomers ended up in Antwerpen-Noord. Lastly, in the conversations with the ethnic entrepreneurs the focus was on the embeddedness of their shop in local social networks and the broader socio-political and institutional context, on the wider function these shops play within the community and on their ability to survive (and support their families) through their businesses.

The interviews were analysed using Nvivo 10 software. The background characteristics of our respondents³ are pictured in Table 1. The interviews were complemented by a document analysis of local (social and spatial) policy documents and press coverage in order to elaborate on the role of local and supra-local policy actors for the neighbourhood's resilience. Finally, throughout our analysis we also provide some basic demographic data of the area, which is based on general population data at the neighbourhood level from the city of Antwerp. While it is often argued that statistics of these kinds of inner-city migrant neighbourhoods are always lagging behind due to the ever-changing character of an urban zone in transition, we present data that rather emphasizes these rapid transformations in the area.

³ When respondents are quoted in the empirical analysis below, we use pseudonyms to assure our respondents' anonymity.

Table 1: Background characteristics of respondents

Migrants					
Country of origin	Gender	Age	First residence in Belgium	Education	Employment
China*	M	50-60	Antwerpen Noord	secondary school	self-employed
Morocco*	V	40-50	Brussels	unknown	incapacitated
Georgia	M	36	Refugee Centre	secondary school	unemployed
China	V	34	Antwerpen Noord	higher education	unemployed
Guinea*	M	51	Refugee Centre	unknown	unemployed
Tibet	V	35	Refugee Centre	secondary school	unemployed
Chechen Republic	M	34	Refugee Centre	secondary school	unemployed
Guinea	V	32	Refugee Centre	elementary school	Employed
Morocco	V	51	Antwerpen Noord	none	Employed
* = key figures in their ethnic community					
Migrant entrepreneurs					
Country of origin	Gender	Age	Type of business	In business since	Owns several shops
China	M	unknown	Bakery	2014	No
Thailand	F	45	Hair salon	2014	No
Nigeria	F	36	Small grocery shop	2006	Yes
Turkey	M	53	DIY shop	1992	No
Morocco	M	48	Fish shop	1997	No
Morocco	M	35	Vegetable shop	1996	No
Turkey	M	20	Carpet shop	2012	Yes
Experts					
Organization/Affiliation					Gender
Functionary of city of Antwerp					F
Volunteer in neighbourhood groups					F
Architect and urban design expert					M
Spatial Planning expert					M
Social researcher					M
Community worker					M
Doctors (3) community health centre					F/M
Functionary of city of Antwerp					M
Coordinator neighbourhood centre					M
Alderman city of Antwerp					M
Coordinator Catholic social organization					F
Coordinator Protestant organization for refugees					F

The case of Antwerpen-Noord

Antwerpen-Noord is a neighbourhood situated to the North of the Antwerp historic city centre that grew significantly in the second half of the 19th century. However, due to the lack of spatial planning, the growth of the area was chaotic and unstructured. Already at the time, the

area was mostly inhabited by people from the lowest socio-economic classes. After 1860, the city council therefore decided to invest heavily in the neighbourhood and provided some important public facilities such as schools, bath facilities, a hospital and social housing (Plomteux and Steyaert, 1989). It is only a century later, around 1960, that the first migrants arrived in the neighbourhood. Most of them were 'guest workers' that arrived in Belgium as a result of active recruitment of the Belgian government. When this foreign workforce brought over their families they inhabited the abandoned homes of the white working class who had fled the city for a greener and quieter environment in the suburbs. The subsequent crisis in the 1970s impeded social and hence also spatial mobility and thus consolidated immigrant neighbourhoods (Kesteloot, 2000). Today, 72% of the population in Antwerpen-Noord has foreign roots⁴. It is a densely populated area (up to more than 13,440 inhabitants/km² in 2015) that fails to shake of its label of 'socially deprived neighbourhood' as a result of both statistics and media coverage⁵. The average socio-economic profile of its inhabitants is low. In 2015 the unemployment rate⁶ was 18,7% as compared to 11,3% in the city as a whole (Stad Antwerpen, 2015a). The mean net taxable income per capita in 2015 in the neighbourhood was 13,168 Euro, while the city average was 19,089 Euro.

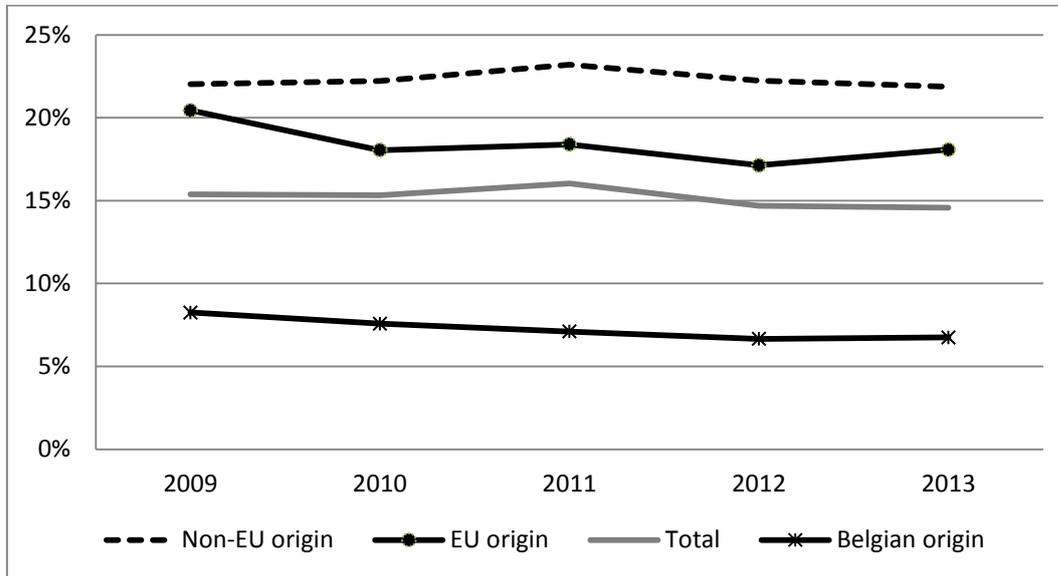
The neighbourhood hosts many local public services, ethnic shops and associations and a large new park (Park Spoor Noord), which attracts visitors from all over the city. Its central location adjacent to the main train station and bus terminal, its ethnic shopping streets, churches and mosques, its relatively cheap (often low-quality) housing stock and commercial property all contribute to the fact that Antwerpen-Noord welcomes yearly ca. 3,600 newcomers with foreign roots from outside the city. Figure 1 clearly shows its function of 'port of first entry' (Burgess, 1928). From the ca. 17,600 foreign newcomers to arrive yearly in Antwerp (from outside the city borders) between 2009 and 2013, one in five (ca. 3,600) arrived in Antwerpen-Noord, rising to almost 23% for the non EU arrivals in Antwerp (or ca. 2,300 out of 10,000 non-EU arrivals). Another element contributing to its status of transition zone is the fact that the residential mobility in the neighbourhood is the second highest of all neighbourhoods in Antwerp.

⁴ Traced back to the nationality of the grandparents.

⁵ When the socio-economic data about the Antwerp neighbourhoods from 2015 were released, De Morgen, a Belgian newspaper published an article titled: 'Who has money, flees. Concerning socio-economic issues, Antwerpen-Noord is the misfit of the city' (De Morgen, 9 April 2015, own translation).

⁶ The unemployment rate was calculated as the number of unemployed job seekers between 18 and 64 years divided by the total population between 18 and 64 years.

Figure 1: Arrivals of newcomers with foreign roots in Antwerpen-Noord as a proportion of total arrivals in the city of Antwerp



Source: Stad Antwerpen (2015a)

Based on research in Antwerpen-Noord we will examine in the next sections of this paper which (combinations of) economic modes of integration are being used to gain access to the different localized resources that newcomers need in their arrival and transition process such as employment, housing and all kinds of urban (in)formal services and aid. We will also examine the impact of policy interventions on these resources.

Formal and informal (self-)employment in the urban zone of transition

In this section we examine the different strategies through which newcomers gain access to employment in Antwerpen-Noord. We will show that many newcomers, hampered by the difficult entry into the formal labour market, rely on their social network for employment or start up their own business. However, the success of ethnic entrepreneurship is not based solely on social networks. Much depends also on the regulatory framework and how strictly this is applied locally.

In capitalist societies, the labour market is the dominant mode of economic integration (Mingione, 1991). Previous studies have shown that the majority of migrants with non-

European roots in Belgium still end up in the most precarious jobs on the labour market where bad working conditions, low wages and short-term contracts prevail, a process which is often referred to as ethno-stratification (Verhoeven, 2000). The discrepancy between the chances on the labour market for foreigners outside the EU-15 and the native born population is nowhere in Europe as big as in Flanders and Belgium (Tielens, 2005). This is also reflected in the unemployment rates in Antwerpen-Noord; in 2015 ca. 21% of the total population of foreign descent (nationality at birth) between the age of 18 and 65 was unemployed⁷ whereas this rate amongst the Belgian residents was 13% (Stad Antwerpen, 2015a). Often, widespread discrimination is the major culprit (Smeesters et al., 2000), but also the required high level of schooling for many jobs, the need for staying- and working permits and the strong focus on the knowledge of the Dutch language render the access to the labour market difficult for newcomers.

In Belgium, most migrants eventually get a job through networks of friends and family and thus by using their reciprocal contacts⁸. This is also the case in Antwerpen-Noord. Mei - a Chinese woman who in 2011 joined her husband working in the Chinatown in Antwerpen-Noord told us that she found her first job through the support of the Chinese community. Together with many other migrants from the Antwerp China town, Mei commuted on a daily basis to a small town about 35 kilometres from Antwerp to work in what she referred to as 'the chicken factory'. The bankruptcy of this poultry slaughterhouse in 2013 hit the local Chinese community badly, but through her Chinese friends, Mei soon found another job at a local Chinese restaurant. Also Zineb, a Moroccan key figure in the Arabic speaking community in the neighbourhood who volunteers for the city as a 'social advisor' stressed the importance of a social network: *"A job? I don't know. You need to find a job via-via."* In addition to family bonds and the ethnic community, Zineb explains how the local community centres are of crucial importance for newcomers to build up their networks: *"The neighbourhood centre is the ideal place where people can [...] exchange all kinds of things."* In this context, a local outreach worker attributed the same 'network value' to the De Coninckplein - a square in the neighbourhood notorious for the concentration of African bars and a population of alcohol and

⁷ Share of unemployed jobseekers of foreign origin in the total population of foreign origin at working age (18 to 64 years).

⁸ A Labour Force Survey conducted by the Belgian federal government in 2008 revealed that 32% of working migrants from non-EU origin found their job or started their own business with the help of family or friends. In comparison, the share of Belgians that relied on their social network for employment was only 14%.

drug users – and explained how newcomers used to go to this square in search of a job and an income: “[...] *many of these guys could just come to the square, and they could find there the next step: sharing a house, making appointments, an income, work, finding work and so on.*” Recently however the square received special governmental attention - including more strict rules for opening hours for bars in the area and targeting policies for its square residents - which had a detrimental effect on its social function (Cools, 2014; see also further in this paper).

Another strategy to gain access to employment is entrepreneurship. Antwerpen-Noord has a vibrant ethnic economy and its central shopping street caters to the local migrant and native Belgian community, but also attracts people from the wider region and even the Netherlands. These often small enterprises do not only respond to the need for ‘ethnic’ products, but are also a meeting place and a source for information in the neighbourhood. Volkan, Turkish owner of a do-it-yourself shop in Antwerpen-Noord explained: *“We are a kind of social information centre. People know where to find me.”*

Also here, social networks of immigrants and family are an important condition to be able to start up a business in the ‘ethnic enclave’ (Portes and Jensen, 1989; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993). This is apparent from the story of Tida, a Thai woman who owns a hair salon in Antwerpen-Noord since 6 months. In fact the hair salon existed already for more than fifteen years, but the previous Chinese owners knew that Tida (who already worked in the neighbourhood) owned a diploma in hair dressing and offered her to take over their business. Thus, slowly but steadily, through those immigrant businesses a new middle class from within the local migrant community has developed. However, this does not mean that self-employment is a direct road to social mobility:

“For many business owners it is now more about surviving than to get rich. [...] I used to have a weekly revenue of around 20,000 euro. Now it is only 6,000 euro. That is a huge difference. Also, there is much more competition. You should count the number of vegetable shops if you walk through the Handelstraat [main shopping street]. There used to be maybe two or three, now there are a lot of them. It used to be easier, more freedom of trade. It used to be better, you could earn here and there a little extra, you could work in informal ways.” (Damir, Moroccan business owner)

The businesses in Antwerpen-Noord are characterized by high turnovers and many struggle to survive. In this context many authors have shown that the informal economy, mostly based on

reciprocity, forms an important coping strategy for newcomers (Kesteloot and Meert, 1999; Lin et al., 2011). The quote from Damir reveals that the more strict law enforcement in Antwerpen-Noord makes it more difficult for local entrepreneurs to make their business profitable by neglecting planning requirements, maximum working hours and minimum wage regulations, employing people without working permits or counting on unremunerated labour supply. This also means that the local context plays a crucial role for the variations in economic relations and success. One civil servant of the city of Antwerp acknowledges the problem and stresses the importance of flexible regulations (without necessarily supporting the law infringements just mentioned):

“We should support the retail unequivocally. If it is Ramadan, sorry but we should allow them to stay open until 10 pm [...]. It is shameful how difficult we make it for people to do business, knowing that they [immigrants] cannot gain access to our labour market.”

This more strict appliance of the regulatory framework seems especially valid for the African business entrepreneurs around the aforementioned square De Coninckplein. Umma, owner of a bustling grocery shop in the area, describes how she feels targeted by the local police. Due to heavy traffic her suppliers often arrive after the official opening hours of her shop, resulting in a visit from the police. Umma feels the police never *“controls the opening hours of the Pakistani or the Chinese in the neighbourhood”*. Loopmans (2008) has also shown that the African bars on the square are often targeted as a source of nuisance and are seen as non-viable businesses by the municipal government.

Furthermore, for some years now some shops operated by ethnic entrepreneurs such as call and night shops are labelled as ‘image reducing’ (‘imagooverlagend’) by the city council. The fact that they may serve the needs of (part of) the local population and may be an attempt of a social group that has less easy access to the formal labour market to make a living is not taken into account. The stigmatizing effect of the ‘image reducing’-label is reinforced by the decision of the municipal government to introduce additional taxes specifically targeted at those small, mostly migrant owned, shops. On January the 1st of 2015, a tax was introduced by which all new image reducing shops were obliged to pay a business license⁹ of 6,000 euro and an annual tax of 1,500 euro, which also applies to already existing businesses (Stad Antwerpen, 2015b).

⁹ According to the official regulations the following businesses are obliged to be in the possession of a special business license: call shops, internet cafes, night shops, video stores, club associations, betting offices, shisha bars and sex shops (Stad Antwerpen, 2014).

Hence, it seems that embeddedness in social networks alone is no guarantee for economic incorporation. Based on the more comprehensive understanding of embeddedness as defined by Polanyi (1968), Kloosterman et al. (1999) therefore propose the concept of 'mixed embeddedness'. Basically, they argue that the success rate of an ethnic business is dependent on both the embeddedness in social networks and the embeddedness in the broader socio-economic and political institutional frame.

From the above we can conclude that access to (self-)employment through formal market exchange is severely impeded for many newcomers due to a combination of supra-local trends such as discrimination, required schooling levels and political/institutional factors and local factors such as more strict law enforcement and less flexible regulations. Therefore, reciprocal social networks and places where social networks are formed (cf. community centres, central meeting squares) are often indispensable to gain access to employment and do not always receive the support they need.

Access to the local housing market

Antwerpen-Noord is a very diverse neighbourhood and this also applies to its housing stock. In order to gain access to the local (predominantly private) housing market, newcomers in Antwerpen-Noord rely on different sources and develop a wide range of strategies to find a place of residence. When they first arrive and need urgent shelter, they often find a temporarily housing solution by staying with friends or family. The awareness amongst the newcomers about the different thresholds on the private rental market such as the language barrier or not having a permanent employment is strong. Amadou (Guinean refugee) explains how he and his friends use creative strategies to be able to find accommodation: *"When someone is maybe moving away, than he will say: Ok, I have an apartment, do you want to take it? So it happens via via."* The coordinator of the Protestant refugee organization acknowledges the importance these kinds of reciprocal relationships: *"The first real estate agency you have is still your own network."*

However, not everyone can depend on a large social network. Diki, a refugee from Tibet who did not know anyone when she arrived in Antwerp, explains how she just started asking people on the street to help her find an apartment, while Badri, a man from Georgia, looked for 'to

let' signs in the streets in search of an affordable room or studio. Others have found their first housing with the help of local organizations such as the local 'tenants union'¹⁰ or the Protestant organization for refugees, which is part of the subsidized welfare sector:

"The organization next door, the Protestant Social centre, they help a lot of people. [...] Sending e-mails, sending letters, making phone calls, because the first time [I went there] I could not speak Dutch very well and that was not good to contact people. I did not know what to do." (Adam, Chechnya)

Once newcomers are getting familiar with the functioning of the housing market in Flanders and its barriers and opportunities, many of them apply for social housing. However, the redistributive force of social housing in Antwerpen-Noord is rather limited, since the social rental sector accounts for only 9%¹¹, large social rental units are scarce and waiting lists are long:

"A social house? It's been three years. I called them and every time they tell me: 'you must seek a house on the private market Madame'. They normally are going to offer me a house with four rooms and a living room. 'Because your children are already a bit older, we cannot give you only three bedrooms and a living room. It is not easy for you'." (Katy, Guinea)

To be eligible for social housing one also needs to meet certain conditions such as staying permits¹². The combination of those factors makes most newcomers dependent on the residual private rental market. Up until today, the neighbourhood is known for its relatively cheap housing, even though housing prices have gone up in the area as well (Stad Antwerpen, 2012). These lower prices can partially be linked to the poor housing quality. 38% of the housing stock in the city of Antwerp that was declared inadequate and/or inhabitable in 2014 is situated in Antwerpen-Noord¹³. It seems that there is a residual, *under the radar* rental market that is defined by market forces and has specialized itself in offering low-cost (and

¹⁰ The 'tenants union' is the predecessor of the current social rental agency (De Decker, 2002).

¹¹ As a proportion of the total number of households in the neighbourhood.

¹² Since a few years a basic proficiency in Dutch, or the willingness to learn the language within a certain period of time after allocation, is required in order to be eligible for social housing. Social renters that fail to meet this goal will be given a fine.

¹³ This high number can also partly be explained by the fact that the city of Antwerp has a special team ('Krotspotteam') that controls the quality of the housing stock in the city. In the past the team has focused specifically on Antwerpen-Noord.

often low-quality) housing to newcomers:

“You see very little houses for rent. [...] You do see quite regularly a house for sale, but you see very little houses for rent. And this while there is clearly an in- and outflow going on. So there must be something ... Yes, there are surely ways or channels to rent and sub-rent. [...] So there is clearly a secondary housing market.” (Coordinator community centre)

This secondary housing market offers rooms, apartments, studios and shared apartments that are rented out on the basis of short-term, often unregistered rental contracts (with in many cases a lower deposit than the maximum sum permitted by law) and has clearly attracted a number of unscrupulous slumlords. Diki (Tibetan refugee) explains how she lives with her husband and two small children in a very small studio without a private bathroom or kitchen. Stories about overcrowding, mould, leaking roofs and broken heating are numerous. Ironically, some of our respondents did gain access to social housing because of the horrible housing conditions they lived in. Indeed, once a house is declared inadequate and/or inhabitable, the inhabitants receive priority for social housing.

The basic need for housing is a sword that cuts both sides. For some migrants who often arrived a generation ago, the pressure on the rental market also creates opportunities. In Antwerpen-Noord mostly Turkish and Kurdish homeowners, but also other groups, have bought and fixed up houses that they now rent out to new generations of immigrants. One of the coordinators of a Protestant refugee organization in the neighbourhood explained how she used her connections with those Turkish and Kurdish homeowners to help refugees finding their first residence. However, she added that nowadays also these apartments became too expensive for most newcomers with little financial resources. As a consequence of the rising housing prices, but also due to urban policies directed at increasing social mix by attracting a richer population from outside the neighbourhood, different actors have expressed their fear for social displacement of vulnerable groups:

“So you see, in my street alone, recently four houses have been bought that used to be either subdivided in apartments or inhabited by first or second generation immigrant families. The latter, they have benefited from it, they have done pretty well and they have sold it at a decent price. This is now all being converted into student housing. That is changing the view of the neighbourhood seriously and I'm not sure if it will be a change for the better.” (Civil servant, city of Antwerp)

Recently the city's spatial planning department developed a Spatial Implementation Plan for the area ('RUP 2060') that not only literally recognized the fact that the neighbourhood has an important arrival function for many newcomers, but also intended to safeguard this function (Apostel, 2011). However, when examined closely, most of the spatial policy measures for the neighbourhood in this Spatial Plan seem to be the result of a compromise between protecting the arrival function and pursuing a social mix. This social mix strategy is based on the problematisation of the spatial concentration of ethnic minorities and poor citizens, which is seen as hindering integration in mainstream society. For example, the spatial plan wants to formulate an answer to the *"increasing trend of improper housing"* (Apostel, 2011: 11). The accompanying spatial measures consist of more strict regulations concerning the subdivision of one family homes and a tightening of the Building Code compared to other neighbourhoods of the city of Antwerp. This policy is directed at attracting tax-paying middle class families to the neighbourhood and hence also works to decrease the supply of smaller (and thus often cheaper) housing units for singles and/or low-income families. As the spatial planner responsible for the Spatial Implementation Plan says herself: *"That is clearly to attract more white people. Maybe that creates gentrification."*

It seems that market exchange is by far the most dominant integration sphere for access to housing. Social networks in combination with the local knowledge present in some of the local welfare organizations are of utter importance to find a place of residence, but cohabitation based on reciprocity is often only a temporarily solution. Furthermore, local spatial policies claim to protect the arrival function of the neighbourhood; but seem to reap the opposite effect by decreasing the (private) housing supply directed at low-income families.

Welfare services, information exchange and social support

Confronted with a precariousness linked to the difficult access to the labour market, newcomers rely on reciprocal social relations and redistributive welfare provision for information, access to goods and social services.

Redistribution can occur through direct income transfers, but also through service provision (funded through tax revenues). As mentioned earlier in this paper, Antwerpen-Noord has always been a neighbourhood with a lower socio-economic profile than the city's average, which resulted in a wide range of public social services. The welfare state is present in the

neighbourhood through the financing of Public Welfare Centres, neighbourhood centres and social workers, social housing, a community health centre, a drug help centre and so on. These welfare organizations are not only providers of services and information but also fulfil an important referral function. Diki (Tibet) explained how she turns to her social worker from the Public Welfare Centre (OCMW) when she has questions regarding occupational training, while she goes to the urban centre for diversity and integration (Atlas) when she needs information about Dutch courses or a school for her children: *“Yes, for the kids, that was easy. They helped me in Atlas. I inscribed them one day and the next day they were already accepted in a school.”* Another very basic provision that is frequently called upon by newcomers in Antwerpen-Noord consists of food provision and cheap meals in the social restaurants.

Throughout the years, these different welfare organizations developed considerable expertise and know-how regarding migration and integration. This local knowledge is essential to facilitate the settlement of migrants, as is also illustrated by Adam (Chechen refugee):

“There are so many organizations here. Because all these people [migrants] live here, the organizations know what sort of problems the foreigners have here. Because these people [migrants] always encounter the same problems, you understand? There are new people arriving and they cannot speak very well Dutch and those people [in the organizations] know what to do in order to help those new people [...]. Antwerpen-Noord is always working for the people.”

But this expertise is not only present in the organizations that are specialized in offering welfare provision to newcomers, it is also latent in the local community;

“I think that it is often underestimated that people here have developed a lot of competences to be able to deal with this complexity in a neighbourhood of hundreds, or 160 different nationalities, I don't know it exactly [...]. People that work here at the KBC [a bank] so to speak. They have developed competences, probably through little training, but just through trial and error, to be able to cope with that diversity amongst their customers. And the same accounts for the education system here.” (Coordinator community centre)

In the last couple of years however, a few of the urban services have been withdrawn such as the local municipal office or the ‘Service for immigrant entrepreneurship’. As a result of both

welfare state reforms and the fact that undocumented newcomers do not have access to all state led welfare provisions, other players have emerged in the urban zones of transition that partly serve to plug the holes in the local welfare state and address the unequal distribution of resources. One example of these organizations are Faith-Based Organizations (FBO's). Inspired by religious values, these organizations offer amongst others free food distribution for the poor, homeless shelters, legal advice for refugees, language courses and sometimes even self-organized housing for people in need. Since undocumented newcomers in Antwerpen-Noord (as in the rest of Belgium) are excluded from the labour market, but also from most formal (state-organized) systems of solidarity and redistribution, FBO's can be crucial and accessible players through which migrants gain access to social networks and informally allocated resources (Blommaert, 2011). These kinds of private charitable initiatives obviously belong in the sphere of reciprocity, but can also fulfil a redistributive function. They as well collect goods and services centrally, store them and redistribute them in a later phase, but in contrast to state-led redistribution their initiatives are characterized by less defined rules, rights and duties (Meert and Kesteloot, 2000). Albeit self-organized and often volunteer-based organizations in Antwerpen-Noord offer people resources that they otherwise might not be able to obtain, this does not mean that they consent to their role:

"So let's say, in our projects, we focus ourselves on people who are really left by the wayside, that fall through the cracks of the welfare system, mostly because they have no papers. But we do not want to be a mere pretext for the government. We also want to give signals to the government." (Coordinator local Catholic organization)

Newcomers then get access to the necessary resources for their socioeconomic and sociocultural integration through both governmental and non-governmental welfare organizations. In addition, reciprocal dense informal social networks in the neighbourhood are also crucial for helping newcomers settle in. These networks are mainly formed along ethnic and religious lines. Chen explains the importance of the Chinese community for many newcomers: *"There is a very strong network. This can be about helping people with translations and everything, but also about financial help"*. And once newcomers start to settle in and create their own organizations, the knowledge about the rules and legislation grows. When asked if he received government funding for his self-organization, Amadou responded: *"Yes for our activities. But it is not easy. Sometimes you ask for it [funding] and then they say no. The criteria are strict. [...] But yes that is integration; now we know the law."* When it

comes to networks that are being forged beyond the own ethnic group, it is again the local community centre that plays a crucial role.

However, without the necessary support for the organizations and networks the different inventive reciprocity strategies struggle to survive. In this context two division lines seem to emerge. First; there is the division between 'older' migrants that arrived one or two generations ago and the newcomers: *"Not all groups have an equally strong social network. You see that there a few of these older groups of migrants that dissociate themselves from the newer groups"*. (Doctor, Community health centre). Or also: *"Where there used to be collective support, there is now disassociation"* (Coordinator community centre). One of the reasons is that the different ethnic communities and social networks cannot always cope with the increasing inflow of people in need. A second division is the one between documented and undocumented newcomers, as becomes clear from the story of Amira, a Moroccan woman who first lived a few years in Antwerp without a staying permit. She explained how all the other woman in the Moroccan community refused to help her. It was only when Amira received her documents that she was accepted in the community. This story highlights how migrant communities are also internally stratified, leading to unequal access to the resources it commands. It is the often very precarious situation of undocumented migrants, and the policies directed at them, that also worried one of the local outreach workers in Antwerpen-Noord. According to him there is a clear tendency towards criminalisation of undocumented newcomers by the local authorities in the area:

"In my eyes, that is a huge denial of the fact that they are here. They are also often approached [...] because they are dealers or this or that ... So basically the whole phenomenon is criminalized in order to be able to get to them. But actually originally they are undocumented migrants trying to survive here. That is the basis why they actually are here in Antwerpen-Noord. In Antwerpen-Noord, they have the best chance [...] to submerge, where they can disappear into anonymity."

This comment can be seen in light of the 'punitive turn in local social policies' which was initiated in the last decade in Antwerpen-Noord under the previous Mayor Janssens (Cools, 2014: 36). Starting from the conviction that the Belgian welfare system was no longer viable in the light of an evolving labour market and a diversifying population, the City Council opted for a strong revision of the provision of social services. The consequences of this change in policy were especially pronounced in Antwerpen-Noord where a broad set of safety measures were

taken. Many fear the real policy goal is to disperse the vulnerable population in Antwerpen-Noord in order to attract wealthier residents.

Conclusion

This article has addressed the growing call for more resilient cities by arguing that the adoption of the concept of resilience in the social sciences needs to attend to the stratification and uneven distribution of resources in socio-spatial systems. We have explored this in more detail with regard to the response of urban systems towards migration flows and argued that the concentration of migrant newcomers in particular neighbourhoods allows for the specialisation of these neighbourhoods in arrival and transition, an idea since long captured in the notion of 'urban zones of transition'. On the basis of the case of the migrant neighbourhood Antwerpen-Noord we have analysed to what extent these neighbourhoods provide the resources that newcomers need in their arrival and transition process and related this to the three economic integration spheres of Polanyi.

We found that poor access to (self-)employment leads newcomers mostly to focus on alternative coping strategies such as informal economic activities based on reciprocity. These reciprocal social networks are often forged at the local community centres and on the local squares. Furthermore, due to the weak redistributive effect of the small share of social housing, most newcomers with little financial resources end up on the secondary housing market. Again, the social network but also the different NGO's in the neighbourhood are crucial actors in the quest for housing. Throughout the discussion about the different resources for newcomers in Antwerpen-Noord, one frequently highlighted element was the local knowledge that is present in both the welfare services targeted to migrants and the local community.

What the analysis shows is that spatial concentration of migrants in particular areas in the city promotes the internal production of resources that support the arrival and transition of migrant newcomers. These resources are, however, not only the result of community dynamics, but of a combination of reciprocity within communities, state-based redistribution and market exchange. This conclusion therefore entails a critical look of community resilience in the sense that, at least for poor communities, the resilience of the local community critical depends on extra-local mechanisms such as state redistribution and market exchange. This

does, however, not mean that any combination of community, state and market is beneficial, as we observed in this paper how social mix and gentrification and other policy strategies actively problematize and undermine the resourcefulness of urban transition zones for supporting newcomers. Governments should hence be careful in their involvement in urban transition zones to support rather than undermine the volunteer-based socio-cultural, poverty and faith-based organizations and invest, amongst others, in affordable and qualitative housing and labour market assistance programs. Our analysis clearly shows that urban policy interventions in zones of transition need to both draw extra-local resources to the transition zone and mobilize the embodied knowledge of the local community to make the city more resilient for all its inhabitants.

The focus on spatial concentration and specialisation as an important attribute of resilient cities in this paper goes against the pre-occupation of policy-makers all around the world with social mix strategies (Arthurson, 2012). By doing so, we aim to contribute to a shift in the policy and research agenda on migrant neighbourhoods away from their framing as problem neighbourhoods or ghettos that accumulate poverty. Further research should be done to unpack how different urban zones of transition combine reciprocity, redistribution and exchange in their daily operations and how effective this is for different groups of newcomers. Another question is to what extent the effective operation of transition zones is dependent on a central position in urban systems or whether they could also function in more peripheral or suburban locations. Finally, future research on the basis of longitudinal data that tracks newcomers' socio-economic trajectories would be welcome to assess the differential capacity for residential and social mobility of various urban zones of transition or to compare newcomers in transition zones with those not living in transition zones.

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