

Towards a Comparative Theory of Locality in Migration Studies: Migrant Incorporation and City Scale

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Building on the scholarship that theorises the restructuring of cities within neoliberal globalisation, this article calls for a comparative scalar approach to migrant settlement and transnational connection. Deploying a concept of city scale, the article posits a relationship between the differing outcomes of the restructuring of post-industrial cities and varying pathways of migrant incorporation. Committed to the use of nation-states and ethnic groups as primary units of analysis, migration scholars have lacked a comparative theory of locality; scholars of urban restructuring have not engaged in migration studies. Yet migrant pathways are both shaped by and contribute to the differential repositioning of cities. Migrants are viewed as urban scale-makers with roles that vary in relationship to the different positioning of cities within global fields of power.

Keywords: Urban Rescaling; Migrant Incorporation; Methodological Nationalism; Transnationalism; Neoliberal Restructuring

Introduction

In this article, we call on scholars who study the departure, settlement and transnational incorporation of migrants to theorise locality comparatively. Often, cities enter international migration scholarship as containers that provide spaces in which migrants settle and work. It is a migrant population—variously called an ethnic group or minority community—that is the subject of study and analysis. We argue that, because of their ‘ethnic lens’, migration scholars have generally failed to

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examine the dynamic relationship between migrants and the places of migrant departure and settlement (Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006). They have paid too little attention to the differential neoliberal restructuring and rescaling of cities and the way these processes reconstitute global capital and migration.

This article also speaks to a gap in studies of the political economy and geography of urban life: namely the failure of those scholars who do examine the contemporary reinvention of cities to include migrants as actors in contemporary urban restructuring. There are, of course, specific insights about migrants and cities, such as Taylor and Lang's observation that 'cities with large concentrations of immigrants can have strong global connections due to the ebb and flow of both people and money back to countries of origin' (2005: 2). Migrants figure as labour within global cities studies. However, only a handful of scholars have examined the multiple and varying ways in which migrants actively contribute to the globe-spanning neoliberal processes that come to ground within acts of contemporary place-making (Garbaye 2005; LeGales 2002; Mitchell 2003). In general, urban researchers contributing to the vibrant scholarship on the neoliberal restructuring and rescaling of cities have been rather silent about the interplay between migration and urban transformation. They have not produced a comparative view of migrant incorporation with the analytical power sufficient to address the relationship between place, global restructuring processes and migration processes.

After defining our terms, we begin by first reviewing the conceptual barriers that have stood in the way of developing an analytical framework which brings together the study of migration with urban reconstruction and rescaling processes. We then highlight the theories of urban restructuring that can be invaluable in the reconstitution of a migration studies capable of theorising locality in relationship to varying pathways of migrant incorporation. The article proceeds to argue for a comparative scalar approach to migrant settlement and transnational connection. Finally, we use this approach to initiate discussion of migrants as urban scale-makers. We examine the relationship between the varying positionings of cities within global fields of power and the different roles migrants play within the reconstitution of specific cities.

Definition of Terms

It is first necessary to define several terms that are key to building an analytical framework which brings together the place-based implementation of neoliberal agendas and migrant pathways of settlement and transnational connection: neoliberalism, locality and incorporation. Neoliberalism can be defined as a series of contemporary projects of capital accumulation that constitute social relations of production, including the organisation of labour, space, state institutions, military power, governance, membership and sovereignty (Harvey 2005; Jessop 2002). We classify the accumulated impact of the transformations wrought by these projects and the policies and technologies that accompany them as neoliberal restructuring.

Neoliberal restructuring includes the reduction in state services and benefits, the diversion of public monies and resources to develop private service-oriented industries from health-care to housing (sometimes in arrangements called public–private partnerships), and the relentless push towards global production through the elimination of state intervention in a host of economic issues—from tariffs to workers’ rights. Each of these aspects of neoliberal restructuring has a different impact on particular urban areas, but all affect the relationship between migrants and cities.

One of the cornerstones of neoliberal projects is the ongoing, yet uneven, disinvestment by states in urban economies. This has disrupted fixed notions of territorially bounded political units. The result is a qualitative transformation of the spatial relationships that are referred to as geographic scales.¹ No longer can urban, regional, national and global scales be understood as a nested set of territorial relationships. Some urban theorists describe the neoliberal rearrangements of governance of territory as ‘rescaling processes’ through which localities change the parameters of their global, national and/or regional connectedness so that they ‘jump scale’ (Swyngedouw 1992). The term rescaling has emerged as a way to address the repositioning of the status and significance of cities, both in relationship to states and within global hierarchies of urban-based institutional power. Rather than understanding the local and global scales as either discrete levels of social activities or hierarchical analytical abstractions, as in previous geographies of space, ‘the global and the local (as well as the national) are [understood to be] mutually constitutive’ (Brenner 2001: 134–5).

We use the term ‘locality’ to refer to the concrete spaces within which the broader dynamics of neoliberalism are actually constituted. Depending on the context, locality could refer to a neighbourhood, a city, a conglomerate or a region. In this paper, we focus on cities as analytical entry points where neoliberal transformations become grounded in time and space. Moreover, not only does a growing portion of the world’s population live in cities (in 2007, 74.8 per cent of the population in developed countries and 43.8 per cent of the population in developing countries were urban), but migrants have also increasingly settled in diverse kinds of city (United Nations 2008: 12). In migration studies, cities, if approached comparatively and within a global perspective, can serve as important units of analysis in exploring the interface between migrants’ pathways of incorporation and the materialisation of broader neoliberal processes.

In discussing the networks that link migrants to institutions within and across the borders of nation-states, we use the term incorporation. All terms that speak about migrant social connections—integration, inclusion, assimilation, incorporation and transnationalism—are politically inflected because they are shaped by particular national discourses about migration. Incorporation is less the subject of political rhetoric, however, while having several decades of usage in English language scholarship (Portes 1995; Schmitter Heisler 1992). Our starting points for the study of incorporation are individual migrants, the networks they form, and the social

fields created by their networks. For us, social fields are understood not as spatial metaphors but as systems of social relations composed of networks of networks that may be locally situated, or may extend nationally or transnationally (Glick Schiller 2003, 2004; Mitchell 1969). Most importantly, these networks are embedded in power asymmetries.

Conceptual Barriers

Several conceptual barriers prevent scholars of migration from theorising localities as they are being reconstituted within global restructurings of capital. Each, in their own way, reflects a methodological nationalism that is deeply embedded in migration studies and in most urban studies that focus on migrants. Methodological nationalism is an orientation that approaches the study of social and historical processes as if they were contained within the borders of individual nation-states (Beck 2000; Martins 1974; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Nation-states are conflated with societies. Some writers prefer to label this approach a ‘container’ theory of society, to highlight the fact that most social theorists, including Durkheim, Weber and Parsons, have contained their concept of society within the territorial and institutional boundaries of the nation-state (Urry 2000). However, we prefer the term ‘methodological nationalism’ because it makes clear the political assumptions and identifications that underlie so much of migration scholarship. To critique the methodological nationalism of migration studies and speak of the ‘territorial trap’ of equating society and the nation-state does not deny the role of the continuing significance of state borders, institutions and surveillance powers (Agnew 1994: 71).

In formulating theories of migrant assimilation, integration or incorporation, migration scholars have long been concerned with the institutions and cultural norms that maintain social cohesion within nation-states. Taking state borders as societal boundaries creates a mode of logic that makes immigrants the fundamental threat to social solidarity; natives are assumed to uniformly share common social norms. Coming from what are thought of not only as different states but also societies, foreigners are portrayed as carrying with them particular distinctive common national norms. Much of migration theory consistently disregards both the social and cultural divisions within each nation-state, as well as the experiences, norms and values migrants and natives share because they are embedded in social, economic and political processes, networks, movements and institutions that exist both within and across state borders.

The methodological nationalism of migration scholars impedes efforts to link migrant incorporation in particular localities with social and economic processes fuelled by the past and present unequal global reconstitution of capital. This problem persists despite the fact that the scholarship on migrants in cities, which crosses many disciplines, offers a rich empirical foundation on which a theorisation of locality in migration studies can be built. Even scholars of transnational migration—the living of migrants across state borders—have not sufficiently addressed the local/global

nexus in a way that contributes to a theory of locality and its contemporary transformations.

Among the conceptual barriers that stem from methodological nationalism and that keep migration scholars from theorising locality are:

- restricting global perspectives on locality to global cities;
- generalising from locality to nation via paradigmatic cities;
- the persistence of the ethnic lens; and
- studying transnational communities rather than transnational social fields.

Restricting Global Perspectives on Locality to Global Cities

The global cities perspective had its roots in research conducted in the 1980s on the international division of labour, the mobility of labour and capital in response to the global dynamics of industrial financing and the growth of the informal sector of urban employment (Nash and Fernandez Kelly 1983; Sassen [-Koob] 1984). Saskia Sassen's book *The Global City* (1991), which used the examples of New York, London and Tokyo, became the most cited example of a wave of global cities scholarship. Those who adopted the term argued that a small set of cities had begun to operate in domains which were, in many ways, unmoored from the nation-states in which they were geographically located. This transformation reflected the restructuring of capitalism in the context of contemporary globalisation, the mobility of labour, and the dynamics of global capital flows. The global cities approach highlighted the entanglements and structural similarities of particular kinds of city between themselves, rather than with the nations in which they are located (Friedmann 1986; King 1991; Sassen 2000). The global cities hypothesis and the literature it generated had many strengths and weaknesses and it is not our purpose here to add to the debate about the utility of the concept (Samers 2002). Instead, we assess the contribution of the global cities literature—and the related concept of the gateway city—to migration studies.

Without comparison to other cities, global cities researchers assumed that their observations about the institutions and practices of migrants applied only to the cities they had designated as global (Dürschmidt 1997; McCann 2002). In cities that had not been defined as global, it was possible to discuss migration as if these localities remained tightly nested within the particular nation-state, its national welfare policies and historic discourses on migration (see, for example, Bommers and Radtke 1996). The thrust of the global cities hypothesis did not challenge migration researchers who worked in other localities to link their findings to the study of the uneven spatialisation of globalisation and the configuration of localities. Consequently, despite its contributions, the global cities hypothesis impeded the systematic development of a theorisation of locality in migration studies and a comparative perspective on migrant incorporation in cities.

Our critique of the global cities literature builds on, but differs from, the one offered by scholars who react to what they saw as an economic determinist argument by highlighting the significance of local political and cultural factors in urban dynamics (McEwen *et al.* 2005; Robinson 2006). Smith, for example, foregrounds the dynamics of local politics and trajectories within transnational processes through his concept of ‘transnational urbanism’ (2001). However, Smith does not distinguish between variations in these local dynamics that are linked to the uneven spatial dynamics of globalisation. As a consequence, the city becomes a ‘cultural metaphor’ rather than a physical site, a space where institutions and dynamics are embedded in the differential consequences of globalisation (Smith 2001: 5). This type of critique of the global cities literature leaves migration scholars with no substantive analysis of cities as institutional frameworks through which local practices, social relations and organisations of social, economic and cultural production respond to and shape the broader dynamics of the global economy. We suggest that the social, cultural and political dynamics of urban life can best be addressed by examining the ways in which all cities are now globalising, but are embedded within differential power hierarchies and with varying outcomes. We argue that, in part, these variations shape and are shaped by different forms of migrant incorporation.

Generalising from Locality to the Nation-State using Paradigmatic Cities

In the 1980s and 1990s, the global cities literature was only one facet of a broader scholarship that addressed the remaking of European and US cities in the face of industrial restructuring. City transformations were studied under various rubrics including ‘post-industrial’ and ‘cities of high finance’ (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996: 4, 14), the ‘post-Fordist/post-modern metropolis’ (Scott and Soja 1996: viii) and the ‘capitalist city’ (Smith and Feagin 1987). Urban scholars studying these changes did examine the role of migrant labour, noting the emergence of a dual economy with a low-wage sector filled by increasing flows of migrants (Mollenkopf and Castells 1984). However, the topics of research—ethnic entrepreneurship or enclaves, identity politics, racial and ethnic divisions—were insufficiently situated within a comparative analysis of the effect of global economic and political restructuring processes on specific localities. In fact, many researchers reacted to what they saw as the too-universalising structural models of world systems and global cities literature by addressing only the historical particularity of each city. Others confined their comparisons to national and cultural variations—such as national differences in public policies, differences in ethnic cultures and their particular mix, or the educational background of immigrants (Cross and Moore 2002; Stepick and Portes 1993).

Despite their attempts to examine the local specificities of urban economies, researchers have often glided seamlessly from a narrative about a particular city to generalities about migration in an entire nation-state. As Amin and Graham (1997: 417) aptly stated, making reference to generalisations in urban studies:

The problem with paradigmatic examples is that analysis inevitably tends to generalise from very specific cities . . . What should be a debate about variety and specificity quickly reduces to the assumption that some degree of interurban homogeneity can be assumed.

Thus, Waldinger and Lichter (2003: 20–1), while noting that Los Angeles is ‘a somewhat singular region’, moved from data about ‘immigration’s transformation of the social organisation of work in Los Angeles’ to claims that the city is ‘a microcosm of twenty-first-century America. What better place than the City of Angels and its environs . . . to study how immigrants fit into the new American order?’ Similarly, studies in Miami and New York yielded concepts like ‘ethnic enclaves’ and ‘ethnic niches’, which were then posited as generally applicable categories of analysis in migration studies (Logan *et al.* 2002). Underlying the long-standing tradition of generating theories about migrant incorporation in an entire country from research in a specific city is the implicit assumption that the nation-state functions as a homogenous society and space. Hence, cities within one national territory can be treated *de facto* as interchangeable from the perspective of migrants.

Although it is contradictory, this homogenisation of specific localities as representative of a uniform and bounded national terrain is often a product of ‘gateway cities’ research. The term ‘gateway’ is applied to cities containing a combination of historical and opportunity factors that attract large proportions of new migrants. Yet despite the fact that these cities are chosen because they are deemed different from the other cities in the country, migration scholars have frequently used data from gateway cities to discuss patterns of migrant settlement throughout an entire nation-state (Baumann *et al.* 2004; Clark 2004; Hiebert 2005; Ley 2004; Waldinger 1996).² Locality is first highlighted then put aside in matters of theory so that the urban context and the regional, national and global positionings of the city cease to be a variable in gateway cities scholarship.

Some migration scholars in Europe and the United States responded to this *de facto* disregard of the dynamics specific to locality by raising the question of the ‘city as context’, but did not produce comparative explorations of the relationship between cities and migrants (Brettell 2003; Rogers and Vertovec 1995). Increasing numbers of ethnographies of immigrant incorporation, especially in the United States, describe migrants settling in suburban, rural or non-gateway cities, but without theorising locality. Geographers studying migration to particular cities have been particularly aware of the significance of locality, but these scholars have not developed a sufficiently comparative framework (Mitchell 2003).

Beginning in the 1990s in Europe, migration researchers did begin to study urban contexts comparatively but, unfortunately, most researchers either only looked within one country or made national policies of integration the primary variable of concern in cross-country comparisons (Koopmans and Statham 2000). The comparisons examined the relationships between the size, significance or political configuration of particular cities in which migrants were settling, and the pattern of incorporation of these migrants. Most of them frequently focus on a limited set such as the

unemployment rate, the 'regulatory regime', or the degree of 'spatial segregation' of migrants (Ellis 2001; Musterd and Ostendorf 2005). In much of this literature, as Smith and Favell (2006) point out, migrants are reduced to faceless labour. There are, of course, exceptions to these trends. For example, Roman Garbaye (2005) explored the impact of migrants in local urban politics in cities in two different countries. Ray (2003) has brought concerns about differing urban contexts into public policy discussions and called on cities to develop their own distinctive policies and services.

Most of these studies have provided little or no discussion of the relationship between the positioning of a particular city within broader domains of financial, political and cultural power and migrant pathways of incorporation. As Favell (2006a,b) has noted in reference to the European Union, because national terrain has been taken for granted as the unit of analysis in migration studies, cross-border influences on the incorporation of migrants into specific cities have rarely been mentioned and, even less frequently, systematically explored. In short, while a passing mention of globalisation has become fashionable, despite Rath and Kloosterman's (2000) call to understand the significance of the restructuring of the local for migrants' relationships to cities, outside of the global cities literature little attention is being paid to the synergy between the global rescaling and the incorporative processes that differentially link migrants to localities.

The Ethnic Lens

A related weakness in the study of the relationship between migration and the city is the persistent use of the ethnic group as the unit of analysis in migration studies. This is true in the old and new assimilationist literature, and the study of migrant settlement in cities, as well as in transnational migration studies. In all three areas of scholarship, the heterogeneous social fabric of the city often disappears from view. Consequently, the study of the city and migration is reduced to either the study of an ethnic group in a particular city or an ethnic pathway of migrant incorporation such as an 'enclave' or an 'ethnic entrepreneurship'.

Starting with Barth (1969), there is a voluminous historical and ethnographic literature that details the constructed nature of ethnic identities and ethnic group boundaries, and the diversity that lies within a population labelled as an 'ethnic group' (Modood 1997; Sollors 1989). However, despite the scholarship detailing the social construction of difference and the challenge to write 'against culture', migration studies continue to approach migrants' relationships to economic, social and political forms of urban incorporation through an ethnic lens. In most of these studies, migrants from a particular nation-state or region are assumed to constitute an ethnic group before their identity, actions, social relations and beliefs are studied (for further discussions of this point see Brubaker 2004; Çağlar 1990, 1997; Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006). Such a research design prioritises one form of identification—subjectivity, a basis for social interaction and source of social capital—over all others. Even those scholars who begin their study by critiquing the ethnic group as a unit of analysis or by

demonstrating the constructed nature of ethnic boundaries, present their data as the study of a population identified ethnically.

Migrants approached as a specific ethnic group, such as Turks, Pakistanis or Haitians, have been studied in a particular city and most often in an environment where the concentration of this particular ethnic group has been the highest. The research then becomes the study of Turks in Germany, Pakistanis in Britain, or Haitians in the United States (Çağlar 1995; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Werbner 2002; White 1999). Furthermore, the study of migrant settlement in particular cities has been utilised to compare integration processes and transnationalism in different nation-states. Studies of Turkish migrants in specific cities—namely Berlin and Paris—have entered the literature as representing differences among the Turkish migrants' experiences, opportunities and organisation modalities in Germany and France (Amiriaux 2001; Kastoryano 2002).

Efforts to develop a more sophisticated approach to internal differentiation between migrants classified by ethnic labels have noted internal class differences as well as regional factors that influence different settlement patterns (Modood 1997). Research on Indian and Pakistani migrants in the UK has highlighted the role that regional factors have exerted in shaping different pathways of local incorporation (Eade 1997; Werbner 2002). The recent work on 'superdiversity' in British cities acknowledges the internal divisions within ethnic groups in terms of language, place of origin, legal status, stratification and the challenges this situation poses to the service providers (Vertovec 2007). Yet, even theorisation developed to move beyond the ethnic lens reflects its tenacity. The sources of 'superdiversity' are said to lie mainly in the proliferation of migrants of different ethnic origins, rather than in the actual practices of migrants which contribute to the heterogeneity of the city. Similarly, Jacobs *et al.* (2004) see non-ethnic networks of migrants as a bridge between ethnically based communities and the majority population. The assumption of migrant settlement as a process of ethnic community formation remains intact.

Studying Transnational Communities rather than Transnational Social Fields

Much of the transnational migration literature also disregards the significance of locality in restructuring processes and the specific contributions that transnational migrants make to the methods by which localities are restructured, positioned and marketed. Much of this scholarship also contains an unnoted transition in the narrative from the research done in specific sending localities or cities of settlement to generalities about the entire sending or receiving state. From this perspective, transnational migration theorists and the accompanying migration scholarship that they have criticised share a common ground. As in the case of studies of migration settlement and 'integration', there has been a consistent blurring of the units of analysis in transnational migration research. Studies of specific localities are used to draw general conclusions about trajectories of transnational families, gender, politics,

remittances and diasporic identification (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Portes *et al.* 2002; Salih 2003).

This confusion is compounded because the term ‘transnational community’ or ‘transnational social space’ has a variable domain of reference. It may refer either to a set of networks that stretches between two specific localities or to migrant relationships that extend across two or more states (Faist 2000; Levitt 2001; Pries 2001; Smith 2006). In either case, the networks or imaginaries of diasporic identity that link people are envisioned as circumscribed and bounded by a common communal or national identity, even though the domain of connection is transnational. This approach minimises the place-specific character of migrant networks and the ways in which a specific locality may shape relationships that extend beyond national borders.

The work done by geographers and urban theorists to re-envision localities as transnational spaces certainly provides ways for scholars of transnational migration to link migration to theorisations of place. Massey (1994: 4) has argued that localities include ‘relations which stretch beyond—the global as part of what constitutes the local.’³ Latour (1993: 122) has approached the local and global as ‘a point of view on networks that are by nature neither local nor global, but are more or less long and more or less connected’. More recent work has offered typologies of transnational space and of cities within such space (Featherstone *et al.* 2007; Voigt-Graf 2004). However, across the disciplines, there has generally been a failure to fully theorise the relationship between the neoliberal restructuring and rescaling of specific cities and the formation, maintenance and dynamics of migrants’ transnational social fields and imaginaries.

Within the transnational literature there are important perspectives on which to build. The study of transnational networks of interconnection which constitute a social field of relationships consisting of multiple actors and institutions can be the basis of a methodology that allows for new insights. Comparative data on migrant networks of local and transnational incorporation can provide data on variations in migrant pathways. This approach would examine opportunity structures in localities of settlement and transnational connection, as well as the base that they provide for employment, remittance flows and investment, and various modes of transnational activity and identity. Katharyne Mitchell’s (2003) examination of the relationship between Hong Kong Chinese transmigrants and the neoliberal restructuring of Vancouver offers a promising example of the productivity of approaching migrants as active agents of urban transformation, rather than as transnational communities.

Rescaling of Cities and Migrants

Clearly not all currents of social science theory that address migration and cities are framed by methodological nationalism. However, we suggest that the literature on the contemporary neoliberal restructuring of cities offers the most useful foundation on which to build a theory of locality in migration studies. Rather than focusing only on

a group of cities designated as global cities, this literature approaches *all* cities as global, but also as differentially situated within various trajectories of power (Brenner 1999; Brenner and Theodore 2002; MacLeod and Goodwin 1999; Smith 1995). Instead of categorising cities as post-industrial or global, scholars studying neoliberal restructuring processes have highlighted the comparative implications of capital restructuring for the urban labour forces, housing stocks, entrepreneurial strategies, infrastructure development and tax policy of cities that were no longer based on industrial production.

They have highlighted the intensified pressure on local authorities to seek competitive advantages, noting that these authorities are increasingly exposed to capital markets and forced to compete for the investments necessary to transform their post-industrial cities into bases for the 'new economy'. For example, urban planners are advised that:

... as cities aim to position themselves better economically, they must remember that they operate in a global marketplace. Cities able to grow and attract globally-connected, high value service firms can access, and benefit from, a worldwide array of customers, workers, and contracted services, ultimately boosting quality growth at home (Taylor and Lang 2005).

Urban authorities must put increasing efforts into branding and marketing their cities because state activity is also being rescaled (Brenner *et al.* 2003; Jessop 2003). States, rather than losing their role as active players in urban spaces, contribute actively to the development of uneven geographies of urbanisation and territorial inequalities within the national territory. By re-concentrating their socio-economic activity to increase the competitiveness of certain cities and zones, states shape this restructuring process through their spatially selective interventions. Through the provision of state subsidies or contracts, and support for key infrastructural facilities and public services—such as airports or research facilities—in particular zones, states remain important actors in shaping the new patterns of uneven spatial development. In this context, the competition among cities to attract global capital is also entangled with their competition to attract multiple forms of state support.

Local authorities must attract foreign capital and market their cities by recasting them as centres of knowledge, finance, recreation and/or tourism (Brenner *et al.* 2003; Holland *et al.* 2006; MacLeod and Goodwin 1999; Zukin 1995). It is important to note that, in these new-economy industries, distinctions between financial and cultural capital blur; both are needed for knowledge and tourist sectors to thrive. During the period of the industrial revolution, cities fared in diverse ways according to their locational advantages, such as access to harbours, railroads or highways. The analysis of urban rescaling makes it clear that all contemporary cities must compete for a new set of assets. Currently, in order to attract new-economy industries such as computer-related technologies, cities must offer a certain mix of human capital, higher education, cultural and recreational facilities.

In order to systematically study these new forms of urban competition, a concept of city scale can prove useful. If we put aside an approach to scale as a geographically fixed spatial relationship, the concept of city scale can allow us to highlight the dynamic and transductive relationships that cities achieve through their relative positioning within intersections of hierarchical fields of power. We define city scale as the differential positioning of cities determined by the articulation of institutions of political, cultural and economic power within regions, states and the globe. This approach allows us to theorise the dynamic contemporary reconstitution of capital as it takes place within physical spaces. Our definition reflects a comparative approach to the articulation of migrants and cities that builds on, but reaches beyond, a world cities framework which places cities within a 'hierarchy of spatial articulations' (Friedmann 1995: 22).

This approach produces a concept of city rescaling that projects a continuum in which various cities are relatively positioned as a result of neoliberal restructuring measures. In this sense, some cities operate on a smaller scale than others and we can speak of up-scale and down-scale cities as different ends of a continuum of positioning of urban places. These different positionings reflect and shape the relationship of urban places to regions, states, supra-regions and the globe. From this perspective, city scale is a relative measure operating on a field of power, rather than a measure of the density of population or of new-economy connections such as that posited by world cities researchers (Beaverstock *et al.* 1999). The size of the population of the city or the extent of the geographic space the city occupies may sometimes reflect the relative scalar positioning of a city. However it is also possible for cities large in physical extent and population to be relatively less significant in terms of power than cities which are smaller in size but serve as up-scale or top-scale (world) cities because they are centres of economic, political or cultural capital.

It is important to note that the scalar positioning of cities is a dynamic process rather than a deterministic one based on the implementation of neoliberal policies. Neoliberal programmes of capitalist restructuring are always shaped by the existing political and institutional contexts, which are themselves the product of earlier regulatory regimes, institutional arrangements and political configurations between different social forces (Leitner *et al.* 2007). Thus, neoliberal urbanism unfolds in close interaction with the historical and structural legacies of each city. Similarly, urban social forces—including the agency of migrants in the rescaling processes—take shape within these legacies and are influenced by past political compromises and alliances. Even when cities experience similar rescaling processes, the historical and institutional background of a particular city plays a crucial role in the way in which restructuring processes are carried out, challenged, negotiated by local actors and locally experienced.

Comparative Perspectives: Migrants as Scale-Makers within Varying Pathways of Incorporation

It is evident that the literature on neoliberal urban restructuring provides important new perspectives from which to approach the significance of locality in relationship

to migrant settlement and transnational connection. Unfortunately, a comparative scalar approach has yet to be considered by migration scholars, and theorists of neoliberal urban rescaling say very little about migrant incorporation. Yet migrants, whose locations in urban economies, culture and politics are shaped by the trajectories of neoliberal restructuring of each particular city, are themselves constitutive of the repositioning struggles of these cities. Migrants contribute to the positioning of cities in national and global markets and within national, regional and global hierarchies as they labour, produce wealth, raise families, and create and reproduce social institutions. Migrants enact and thereby contribute to the cultural representation of the city and become engaged as facilitators of neoliberal governance.

Migrants may also participate in rescaling a city by contributing to a re-evaluation of a city's global image. As the leaders of each city seek to attract capital and to market their city as a globally recognised brand, they may re-evaluate the presence of migrants. In certain neighbourhoods and cities—but not in all cities—migrants become a marketable asset. Cultural diversity in cities which are in a position to improve their competitive position has become a saleable urban resource for cultural industries (Çağlar 2007; Scott 2004). Migrants also bring with them transnational connections that can link cities to flows of capital, goods, ideas, new ideas and cultural representations. In short, migrants, as full participants in political, cultural and economic forces, have an impact on the changing forms of urban governance, development and social movements, all of which are central to that strand of urban studies. Thus, migrants may serve as scale-makers in multiple ways.

Scholars such as Smith and Favell (2006) have begun to address the impact of migrants in urban economies by noting the importance of skilled migrants in the constitution of globally competitive cities. McEwan *et al.* (2005) have noted that migrants' transnational relations may give cities the global connections that they seek. However, it is possible to move beyond these general statements and begin to identify varying patterns of relationships. The contemporary neoliberal restructuring of cities, which changes the dynamics of local governance, the nature and quantity of jobs, the way culture is represented and marketed, and the availability of public spaces, has implications for the opportunities a particular city provides for its migrants.

The relative positioning of a city within hierarchical fields of power may well lay the ground for the differential life-chances and incorporation opportunities of migrants locally and transnationally. It is likely that migrants enter into urban life in different ways and have a differential impact in the restructuring trajectories of cities, depending on the city's scalar positioning. By examining the ways in which cities have variously experienced neoliberal restructuring and rescaling processes, migration scholars can more readily compare the different local urban dynamics that migrants confront and in which they actively participate. Such an approach will also allow researchers to investigate situations in which migrants' agency may contribute to the efforts of a city to reposition itself globally, or maintain its position of dominance. If researchers compare cities in terms of their differential positioning, as outlined above,

then it becomes possible to systematically investigate both variations in migrant pathways of incorporation and transnational connection and the impact migrant pathways have on the efforts of a particular city's leadership to reinvent and reposition their city.

We suggest that the first step in exploring the consequences of the different positioning of cities for the relationships between migrants and cities is to develop a descriptive terminology of comparative urban positioning. In the next section of the paper we compare cities using attributes of positioning—top-scale, up-scale, low-scale and down-scale. We briefly counterpoise the widely accepted description of the relationship between migrants and cities which have been called global or world cities with data taken from a set of exploratory case studies of cities which have achieved varying positions of global salience. These data include our own research in two down-scale cities: Halle/Saale, in Sachsen-Anhalt, eastern Germany; and Manchester, New Hampshire, in the eastern United States. It is important to stress that we are not presenting a typology of cities but rather positions that cities may hold within a dynamic continuum of power which they achieve and within which they must constantly reposition themselves. The terms do not constitute categories but possibilities along an entire range of differential power. Migrants are becoming incorporated in cities positioned all along this continuum. Migrants themselves forge some of these connections, which extend into other cities and various states and regions. However, the relationship between migrants and a particular city is influenced by the positioning of the city along the continuum.

Top-Scale

Top-scale cities such as London, New York or Paris, which are distinguished by their multiple new-economy industries and their massive accumulations of cultural and/or political capital, offer the broadest range of possibilities for migrant incorporation and transnational connection. For example, top-scale cities depend on large and ready supplies of highly educated migrants with a wide range of skills, who are located through global talent recruitment industries. The global networks of these migrants are important resources for their employers. However, in order to sustain the infrastructure for financial, cultural and service industries, these cities also rely on migrants who work for low wages. In short, a wide range of migrant insertions supports the multiple globe-spanning ties of these cities.

The wide variety of migrant pathways of incorporation in these cities was until recently not apparent because they also contain the greatest concentrations of associations and institutions organised around ethnic and diasporic identities. Because these cities also serve as tourist hubs and because global talent is attracted by cultural diversity, top-scale cities support displays and organisations of multiculturalism and/or cosmopolitanism. Migration scholars have lavished their attention on these ethnic local and transnationally connected organisations in top-scale cities, sidelining the many other ways in which migrants become part of the life of these

cities. Cities on the powerful end of the continuum have sufficient resources, even in neoliberal times, to support multiple types and forms of ethnic institutions in ways that make ethnic institutions part of the cultural capital of the city and contribute to its positioning. Only as we compare top-scale cities to cities with different positions on a continuum of global power does the particularity of ethnic organising in these cities become clear.

Up-Scale

Cities with new accumulations of cultural and political capital linked to their success in developing new-economy industries can be considered as occupying relatively up-scale positions. As in the case of top-scale cities, localities that have achieved up-scaled positions rely on a range of migrant pathways of incorporation and need both highly educated professionals and unskilled workers. Nevertheless, there are differences in the relationship of migrants to these cities that reflect these cities' relatively weaker competitive positions. While up-scale cities may have multiple modes of migrant pathways of incorporation, including ethnic pathways, the role of the latter may not only extend beyond cultural industries but may also play a significant role in the city's ability to obtain an up-scale position.

For example, Dallas-Fort Worth, which boasts 600 corporate headquarters, has built its up-scale position on the basis of a thriving knowledge economy, including companies such as Texas Instruments and large medical facilities. In 2006, it ranked third in the United States for information and communications jobs (Sturgeon 2006). This hi-tech economic base requires a large supply of computer professionals, engineers and health professionals. Many of these positions are filled by migrants, who are recruited through migrant networks. According to an agency specialising in the health professions, Pakistani networks are the second most import source for the recruitment of Dallas' doctors (Sturgeon 2006). Caroline Brettell's forthcoming path-breaking research demonstrates that transnational migrant organisations such as 'Texas Instruments Indian Diversity Initiative', supported by local corporate interests, provide a vital source of hi-tech labour for the city. That is to say, corporate resources directly support migrant transnational associations that are organised around homeland identities. These associations play crucial roles in the city's ability to achieve and maintain its growing global competitiveness.

As a consequence of their vital role in the rise of Dallas-Fort Worth to global prominence, migrant organisations and their transnational extensions, which are actively involved in recruiting the global technical talent and professionals from these populations, occupy positions of prominence in the metroplex, and the city authorities stress diversity. On its website Dallas features the slogan 'Dallas, the City that Works: Diverse, Vibrant and Progressive' and notes that it is among the 'nation's 100 Most Ethnically Diverse Communities'.⁴ The presence of this migrant technical talent contributes not only to the power and wealth of these corporations, but also to the scalar positioning of the city.

Low-Scale

Migrants face very different prospects and play different roles in cities occupying low-scale positions. Cities so positioned on the continuum may also have a base of new-economy industries that they market globally; but this base is small in size and breadth. Because its restructuring strategy may rely on or be confined to a single type of industry in which workers are particularly scarce, such as the medical professions, and because the city may not be attractive to professionals, cities in low-scale positions may be particularly reliant on migrants in their efforts to restructure their local economies and reposition themselves globally. Yet these cities may not have a corporate structure capable of investing in migrant transnational organisations. For example, lacking either the new-technology industries of Dallas-Fort Worth or the financial service industries (accounting, advertising, banking/finance, insurance, law and management consulting centres) which would allow it to compete with nearby New York City, the US city of Philadelphia looks to its prestigious university and hospital complex as the agent of its redevelopment. Philadelphia's political and economic leadership strives to use this institutional base to reinvent the city as a centre of knowledge filled with high-earning professionals and wealthy students (Goode forthcoming).

Unlike Dallas-Fort Worth, ethnic organisations are not supported as transnational recruiting agencies for foreign talent. Instead, the city recruits more generically, welcoming the migrants, who fill the faculty, health professional and student body necessary for Philadelphia's knowledge industries, as a cosmopolitan 'creative class.' In turn, the migrants, with ready cash and cultural capital, and eager for a cosmopolitan lifestyle, contribute to repopulating and gentrifying the city centre. The transformative role they play in the city then facilitates the further recruitment and retention of 'global talent' and the further marketing of the gentrified city centre as a diverse and attractive place for residency, up-scale shopping and tourism.

In a low-scale city such as Philadelphia, migrants have not only been a significant part of the workforce, but have also contributed to the rebuilding of a range of urban neighbourhoods. Their willingness to invest in marginal neighbourhoods may initiate real-estate revaluations and raise property values. In some cases, migrants may restructure neighbourhoods in ways that are unanticipated by urban leaders and planners. For example, by settling in low-income neighbourhoods in Philadelphia outside of the gentrified city centre, and by restoring houses, immigrant entrepreneurs and merchants contributed to the redevelopment of these neighbourhoods and raised real-estate prices. This redevelopment, in turn, contributes to the general efforts to rebrand and market Philadelphia (Goode 2006). In the context of the struggle to reposition and rebrand the city through its 'med-ed' industries, migrants referred to as foreign talent in this sector are not being interpellated and incorporated in ethnic terms. In their efforts to restructure the city, the city leadership, including a sector of African American professionals, has become less supportive of ethnic or

multicultural organising. Such organisations have become a base of opposition to the gentrification of working-class neighbourhoods.

Down-Scale

Further along the continuum are cities that have not succeeded in restructuring efforts but none-the-less have some global capital investment. The leaders of these cities may have embarked on aggressive campaigns of rebuilding and rebranding their city, but they have still not built a critical mass of new-economy sectors such as knowledge, tourism or entertainment. Without such sectors, migrants' transnational networks and their ability to lend the city a cosmopolitan image are insufficient, in themselves, to reposition the city. Consequently, skilled migrants are not highly valued; even those with locally attained credentials may be delegated only to low-wage employment. In the course of their becoming implicated in the life of a city, migrants may bring to bear local and transnational networks and follow more than one pathway, but ethnic pathways of incorporation are not likely to be prominent. There are neither sufficient local public, corporate or charitable resources, nor a stratum of migrant professionals to sustain ethnic organising.

The ways in which migrants' incorporative experiences in down-scale cities differ from cities that have stronger positions became evident to us through our research between 2001 and 2005 in down-scale cities. We worked in Halle/Saale, a city in eastern Germany that experienced severe deindustrialisation and depopulation after unification, and in Manchester, an old industrial city in the New England region of the United States (Glick Schiller and Çağlar forthcoming). In both these cities, neoliberal transformations had reduced state support for social services and resources. Consequently, there were few or no resources for migrant-specific assistance and ethnic-based organisations and institutions, and almost no corporate or charitable resources available for such organising efforts. Employment opportunities were limited for the entire population.

In Manchester, even migrants with professional backgrounds primarily found work in small factories, many of which were owned by multinational conglomerates. In Halle, most migrants (undocumented and/or refugees) were not allowed to work and the shortage of illegal work was so severe that natives monopolised even these positions. In both cities, the small-business niche provided some migrants with one of the few pathways to incorporation, although it was not a large enough sector to provide employment for the majority of migrants. Migrant businesses were distributed in various neighbourhoods, but those concentrated in the city centres were particularly important to the city's redevelopment and gentrification.

When Manchester's political leaders needed to revitalise the small-business sector of the decades-long-abandoned city centre, they looked to migrants to jumpstart this development. Migrants made up a significant component of the small entrepreneurs willing to invest in businesses on the main street of the city and replace second-hand clothing stores and empty store fronts with bright new business facades. City

developers might envision a future Manchester whose culturally diverse city centre will attract hi-tech workers and tourists. However, at the time of our research, migrant businesses were primarily valued for their role in the main-street gentrification rather than in the marketing of ethnicity and consequent cultural diversity.

Halle's struggles to reinvent itself, attract private capital and skilled labour, and rebrand itself have been largely unsuccessful. It has remained a city with high unemployment rates and little local industry. Halle claimed on its website in 2005 that it was a centre of hi-tech industries, but the same website could only list a chocolate factory and a railroad-car assembly plant that was closing. In the 1990s, the small-business sector was particularly open to migrant entrepreneurs because refurbished store fronts in prime locations were available and inexpensive and the local population had little experience during socialism in developing retail businesses. Consequently, migrants, including those with professional backgrounds, became small merchants and filled shops in the newly renovated city centre. In the city centre area that we surveyed in 2001, 12 per cent of the shops were migrant businesses, although only 4 per cent of the population consisted of migrants. Migrant entrepreneurs provided affordable clothing and food for a substantial portion of the German population who were reduced to subsisting on low-wage jobs or social welfare. They contributed in various ways to the amelioration of the economic and social disparities experienced by many inhabitants of the city.

On the one hand, these cities lacked the opportunity structures to attract and sustain a critical mass of members of the so-called 'creative classes' (both from their natives and the newcomer population) to facilitate and allow for the marketing of a cosmopolitan life-style and related forms of consumerism. On the other hand, the positioning of Manchester and Halle allowed for other pathways of migrant incorporation, such as non-ethnic entrepreneurial pathways. As we have documented elsewhere, migrants also brought to both cities transnational fundamentalist Christian networks which provided natives and migrants alike with connections to both resources and social capital, locally, nationally and globally (Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006). Religion, a basis of migrant activity and identity in many cities, provided a significant pathway of incorporation in both Manchester and Halle.

The scalar positioning of down-scale cities provides a different set of opportunities for the insertion of migrants into the urban economy, politics and culture than cities able to position themselves more favourably along the continuum. This continuum represents the ability of various cities to position themselves not only in respect to various networks of capital but also in respect to the differential possibilities for migrants' agency. Migrants play different roles within urban structures, depending on the opportunity structures and growth potential of the place. Thinking in terms of a globally situated continuum allows researchers to explore the relative weight of migrants' contribution to the neoliberal restructuring of urban economies and politics in particular places.

Two preliminary observations, generative of future research hypotheses, emerge from the examples we have provided of cities positioned at four different points on the continuum. The first observation concerns the relationship between the positioning of a city and the range of pathways of incorporation. While at the high end of the continuum there are multiple pathways of incorporation (ethnic, cultural/cosmopolitan, religious, entrepreneurial etc.) which provide migrants with opportunities to participate in local politics, economy and culture, the range of pathways declines dramatically towards the opposite end of the continuum. At the low end, i.e. in cities in which rescaling efforts have failed to position them competitively at a regional and/or global scale, the variety of pathways for migrant incorporation is much more restricted. For example, if we take the ethnic pathway of incorporation, we see that this loses its salience at the low end, where there are few resources to be committed to addressing, organising and involving the migrants in the urban economy, politics and culture in ethnic terms.

However, the multiplicity of pathways must be differentiated from the significance that a specific migrant pathway may have on a city. Migrant pathways of incorporation may have differing impacts on a city, depending on a city's positioning along the continuum. In a city that is positioned towards the low end of the continuum, there may be no possibility of a vibrant ethnic mode of incorporation and the range of possibilities may be fewer and yet migrants may have more of an impact on the locality. The pathways that remain—entrepreneurial or religious perhaps—may not only play a more significant role in the daily life of the city but may also be relatively more effective for the local incorporation of migrants.

These observations lead directly to a wide range of new research questions. The task would be, after identifying the varying patterns of relationships between migrants and urban rescaling, to compare cities of different scalar positionings to see why, in certain cities, some pathways become more available for incorporation at the cost of other pathways. Among pending research questions are:

- What are the relationships between the pathways that acquire prominence in migrant incorporation in a city and the migrants' contribution to the restructuring process as scale-makers?
- Do the pathways that stand in close relationship with the ways in which migrants are incorporated in a city actively contribute to the rescaling processes of the city in question?
- Why do particular pathways of migrant incorporation find institutional and discursive support from local authorities and leading sectors of industry in some cities, while they are ignored and/or not facilitated in other cities?

Exploring these questions systematically will allow migration scholars to more fully address the history, structure and transformation of locality and permit scholars of cities and regions to confront the significance of migrants for the rescaling of urban life.

Conclusion: Rescaling Migration and Urban Studies

Despite the 'urban turn' (Prakash 2002) in migration research, the analysis of migrant incorporation in cities still remains nested in national welfare regimes and their opportunity structures. In this paper, we have called for a dialogue between migration scholars and scholars of the restructuring of cities in order to theorise locality comparatively and recognise migrants as active participants in the reconstitution of urban life. As an increasing number of migrants are settling in cities of different scalar dimensions and a growing number of migration scholars are working in these cities, it is both more necessary and more possible for migration scholars to pay attention to the scalar dimension of different cities. Similarly, in a situation in which migrants are increasingly dispersed and are living within social fields that extend in multiple directions, scholars of urban restructuring face the challenge of developing a comparative scholarship of city rescaling that includes migrants as active participants in this process.

This scholarship, while noting patterns of variation, cannot neglect the specifics of localisation. Although we argue that the place and role of migrants in the repositioning struggle of cities differ depending on their scalar positioning, we do not negate the significance of the history of migration in a particular locality. No matter how similar cities are in terms of overall scalar positioning, their complex layers of social history and social structure result in specific local forms of incorporation built on place-specific representations, legacies and expectations. By paying attention to the location of migrants within the social fabric of specific cities, scholars of neoliberal restructuring may be better able to explore the differential outcomes of rescaling processes even in places of similar scale.

Considering migrants as constitutive of neoliberal rescaling processes will enable researchers of urban restructuring to capture the processes of neoliberalism *in action*. An examination of migrants' varying pathways of local and transnational connection contributes to approaches to neoliberal rescaling as a historically embedded and context-sensitive process (Ong 2006). The intersection between the historical path-dependency of each locality and its relationship to the global forces which shape the city's scalar positioning will become accessible to analysis.

Migration studies must move beyond its very selective engagement with political economy to address the global restructuring of the local. If globalisation is at the same time a localisation process and one of uneven spatiality, migration studies must acknowledge and analyse these processes in relation to variation in migrant local and transnational pathways of incorporation. Migration scholarship cannot be built separately from an analysis of the past and present restructuring of the localities from which migrants depart and settle (Çağlar 2006). There is an urgent need to theorise the dynamic between locality, migration and global restructuring. A scalar approach to migrant dynamics enables us to incorporate the uneven character of globalisation and its dynamics into our analysis.

The concept of city scale developed in this paper can contribute to a comparative framework with which to analyse the structures and processes of contemporary urban (and/or urban zone) development. It is a place-based concept that includes processes and dynamics of the accumulation of various forms of capital that are not necessarily confined within the states yet interact with states controlling very different degrees of wealth and power.

A comparative perspective can produce a clearer idea of the differing ways in which cities incorporate migrants within restructuring projects and in which migrants develop different pathways of incorporation in cities whose global position varies. Relating the dynamics of locally specific dimensions of opportunity structures to the dynamics of urban restructuring and the repositioning struggle of cities at a regional, national and global scale moves the opportunity-structures approach to migrant incorporation beyond methodological nationalism and opens new perspectives for the development of migration and urban policy.

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Notes

- [1] There has been considerable debate about the utility of the concept of scale among geographers. While the concept is often used metaphorically and without sufficient definition (Samers 2006), we argue that the literature on rescaling processes is useful and the concept should be retained. For a critique, see Marston *et al.* (2005). For a defence, see Hoefle (2006). We argue for a concept of scale that builds on the existing debate but includes dimensions of situated power.
- [2] Occasionally, research on specific forms of incorporation in a city designated both 'gateway' and 'global' has been compared to a city of smaller scale, and differences in pathways of incorporation are noted, such as in the studies of Itzigsohn and Saucedo (2002) in New York and Providence. However, even in these instances, the researchers did not build from their observations of differences in pathways of incorporation in the two localities to a theory of locality and migration.
- [3] Global competition between cities is certainly not new (Abu-Lughod 1999). However neoliberalism imposes new pressures on localities and local authorities.
- [4] <http://www.dallascityhall.com/info/about.html>

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