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(doi: 10.2383/81432)

Sociologica (ISSN 1971-8853)
Fascicolo 2, maggio-agosto 2015

Ente di afferenza:
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Symposium / Rescaling Immigration Paths: Emerging Settlement Patterns beyond Gateway Cities, edited by Eduardo Barberis and Emmanuele Pavolini

A Multiscalar Perspective on Cities and Migration

A Comment on the Symposium

by Ayse Çağlar *and* Nina Glick Schiller

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We support Eduardo Barberis and Emmanuele Pavolini's call for further explorations of the relationships between migration and localities that are not "gateway cities" including towns and rural areas. Their project points beyond methodological nationalism and builds on the critical geography of the neoliberal restructuring of cities. They wish to capture the complex, plural, heterogeneous, multidirectional relations and ties between migrants and various localities in a world that is constantly in political, economic, and cultural flux. However, to meet these goals we suggest that it is urgent for both migration and urban scholars to put aside many of the key concepts that have become the stock in trade of studies of cities that have been dubbed global and gateway and ask about what are the appropriate concepts and methodologies for the task at hand. We would also suggest that the concepts that have been generated by the study of migrants' relationships to a handful of cities are not appropriate, because these concepts are *not useful for the study of the relationship between localities and migrants anywhere and at anytime*. These key and apparently tried and true concepts include those of ethnic segregation, ghettoization, immigrant communities as units of study and analysis, ethnic enterprises, push and pull, assimilation, segmented assimilation, old and new migration and typologies of cities by population size.

The concepts are not useful because they: *1*) disconnect the entangled processes of city/locality making, migration settlement, and the restructuring of processes of capital accumulation; *2*) misunderstand the difference between localities as entry

points to study relations of power and as units of analysis; and *3*) consequently are unable to grasp the concept of multiscalar analysis, which explores the processes of the mutual constitution of the local, regional, national and global through time and in the construction of social space. Taken together, these points highlight our argument that to understand the relationship between migrants and cities we need a processual multiscalar analysis. We define locality as places constituted within multiple intersecting trajectories of power that have some type of territorially based system of governmental authority.

A multiscalar perspective discards a nested concept of scale as encompassing a distinct hierarchy of administrative units such as neighborhood, city, province, nation-state, international organizations. Instead, a multiscalar perspective recognizes that each locality is differentially positioned in relationship to multiple networks of globe spanning power including those that link them unevenly to other localities regions and nation-states around the world. Moreover, typologies of size are inappropriate. Differentiating cities as small or third tier or separating town dynamics from those of "global" cities as if they were subject to a different set of forces keeps us from understanding the multiscalar and relational reconstitution of all localities.

In this short discussion we would like to think in dialogue with Barberis, Pavolini, and the authors contributing to this special issue about what we meant by our initial use of the term "small scale," [Glick Schiller, Çağlar and Guldbrandsen 2006], "downscaled" [Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2011] and later "disempowered cities" [Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2015] in order to highlight that the scalar question is not about size but power. The concept of differential and relational power is at the heart of the concept of scale. By power we mean the differential access to resources including the institutional and discursive resources that shape life possibilities. The concept of disempowerment acknowledges that some cities have relatively less access than others to institutions and resources necessary to generate wealth. To speak of disempowerment is to highlight that in some localities the actions taken by their economic, political, and cultural leaders, institutions have relatively little effect within the wide-ranging regional, national and global networks in which they were situated.

The positionality of each locality affects the opportunities, aspirations, and the ways in which the city's residents, including newcomers with migrant backgrounds, construct social relations and seek to forge sociabilities. Without this concept of positionality in relations of power, scale becomes just another synonym for the measurement of population size, or analytically distinct levels of analysis or a particular "dimension" of a city or to "local context" [Barberis and Pavolini in this issue; Bonizzoni and Marzorati in this issue; Garzón in this issue.]

Given the constraints of space, here we explicate our analysis of the centrality of concepts of multiple networks of economic, political and cultural power for discussions of the scalar analysis of cities through a critique of the concept of segregation, a topic that runs through most of the articles in this special issue. In making this critique, we also query methodologies that generalize from the neighborhoods of first settlement and densest ethnic concentration to conceptualize the relationships between migrants and differently positioned localities (see for example, Bonizzoni and Marzorati in this volume). We also suggest a different framing for analyses of cities, where despite descriptions of neoliberal restructuring, the narrative focus still remains imprisoned in the particularities of a locality [Garzón in this issue].

Much of the past and current research on migrants in cities placed migrants outside of city making or more broadly locality making. Various scholarly and policy pronouncements projected migrants as self-segregating by living apart from the "national society," encased by choice within "traditional" ethno-religious "communities" [Philips 2005; Logan, Zhang and Alba 2002, 300]. This terminology has reflected and contributed to a millennial trans-Atlantic dialogue on migrant and ethno-religious communitarianism in which a pattern of living in co-ethnic religious communities was taken as if it were the norm for migrants wherever and whenever they settled. In various ways, the papers of this special issue, in fact, demonstrate that the segregation that the authors highlight is part of broader processes, which must be analysed in relation to each other but they fail to analyse these connections. By setting migrants apart from the processes that affect all of the population of a specific place and by categorizing them as segregated, the authors are unable to place discriminatory laws, policies, and procedures within the broader processes of capital restructuring, which in various configurations displace and dispossess people everywhere.

To speak about the processes of capital restructuring is not to deny the social and political agency of city residents, migrant or not. On the contrary, these restructuring processes to which we are referring are unequal social relations of power. Together with other residents of the locality, people of migrant background contribute to these relations, are subject to them and work to contest them. Urban residents are constituted as actors in multiple ways within these broader processes.

Understanding that migrants, together with all residents of the locality, are subject to the broader political, economic and social dynamics of the restructuring of a locality, rather than approaching migrants as marginalized or segregated, enables us to see them as actors in a range of local dynamics. These dynamics include the maintenance of property values in neighborhoods with decaying infrastructures, gentrification, the transnational connectivity of the locality, redevelopment including the

growth of property bubbles and their aftermath, multiple forms of cultural production, and political engagements including party activism and social movements.

We suggest that highlighting processes of capital accumulation that currently are encompassing people everywhere within mechanisms of dispossession, displacement, and emplacement allow us to set aside the assumptions of binary difference between migrants and non-migrants. Conceptualizing this encompassment gives us analytical tools to address both how we all live our lives in specific places and to differentiate between the situations, opportunities and barriers to emplacement in which people find themselves in different localities.

Accumulation through dispossession is one of the processes through which capital has historically been constituted. Capital is an unequal social relation in which value is directly accumulated from labor but also indirectly in forms of the taking of property such as resources and land. The recent historical conjuncture has been marked by a renewed significance in the processes of accumulation through dispossession, which revives and expands upon older forms of directly seizing land and mineral resources [Luxemburg 2003 (1913); Harvey 2005]. However, the neoliberal restructuring of work, the surge of informalization, flexiblization and the growth of low-waged and contract labor in service sectors are also important in understanding how what is addressed in these articles as local conditions are constantly reconstituted in relationship to their positioning within national and globe spanning networks. That is to say, "local opportunity structures" as well as barriers to emplacement can't be analysed and understood within the "internal" dynamics of local contexts [Garzón in this issue].

Though appropriations are maintained by force, accumulation of capital including through dispossession is realized and justified by narratives of racialized and gendered differences [Quijano 2000], in which those who have generated the extracted value are categorized as less than human. The stigmatization of an impoverished neighborhood of the Eastern German post-industrial city of Genthin [Kreichauf in this issue], the continuing question of racialized differentiation of Latinos and African Americans described by Mayorga Gallo [in this issue] in her article about Durham, NC – a locality connected to the aggressive neoliberal restructuring of the Raleigh-Durham area [Holland, Lutz *et al.* 2007] – and the devaluation of people and the city as part of the deindustrialization and restructuring of the Swedish city of Landskrona are cases in point [Scarpa in this issue].

It is important to note in light of the concern in this special issue for localities beyond what have been called "global cities" that while circuits of capital are currently global and fluid, at the same time processes of accumulation including through dispossession take place within specific places at specific times. Local or global do

not refer to different "dimensions" of particular cities. They are mutually constituted. That is to say globalization is always a localization process; the global is part of the here and now [Friedman 1995; Harvey 2006]. Dispossession, displacement and emplacement underlie contemporary "actually existing neoliberalism" [Brenner and Theodore 2008] and its changing forms of restructuring.

These concepts provide the methodological and analytical tools with which to situate the relationships between migrants and cities of varying power within a common framework. They make it possible to analyze segregation as an integral part of the processes of dispossession and displacement, which are entangled with the restructuring and positioning of localities and the accumulation of capital. Approaching accumulation through dispossession in this way challenges urban scholars to rethink the criminalization of the urban poor and the places they inhabit. The reconstitution of capital takes multiple forms of violent appropriation in a process that often begins with the attribution of danger and criminality to a place by inscribing difference to a group of displaced people designated as foreigners, migrants or the disreputable poor [Feltran 2015]. These are not peripheralized or marginalized people.

Hence, segregation or residential concentrations that some scholars term "ghettoes" [Barberis and Pavolini in this issue; Kreichauf in this issue] are the outcomes of a process of attributing difference, which obscures the multiple ways in which such places and their residents are integrally part of the dynamic of capital accumulation. Cultural or religious differences as well as danger – attributed to the residents of certain neighborhood – are part of this process of devaluation and possible future restructuring and revaluation, as Kreichauf [in this issue] documents for Saxony Anhalt. This is often followed by intensive policing, eventual evictions, land and housing appropriation and finally revaluation. For this reason, without highlighting the devaluation and the revaluation processes in the city and the accompanying narratives of criminalization, the dynamics of the process of segregation could not be understood.

The processes of dispossession produce various forms of physical and social displacement. Globally, displacement takes multiple forms: the development of local precariats, migrations precipitated by war, so called development, the implementation of neoliberal "reforms," structural adjustment, and subsequent impoverishment [Feldman-Bianco *et al.* 2012]. Whether we consider ourselves "natives" or of "migrant descent," anywhere around the world, we are subject to the forces of dispossession and displacement and it is by being part of these processes that people in various localities search for ways to construct sociabilities of emplacement.

We define emplacement as the relationship between the continuing restructuring of place within multiscalar networks of power and a people's efforts, within the barriers and opportunities of a specific locality, to settle and build networks of

connection. Thus emplacement within the local is always a relational process and cannot be explained from within a bounded locality, whether defined as a neighborhood, city, or region. It is for this reason we have always emphasized a global perspective on migration and city-making [Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2008; Glick Schiller 2010]. The concept of emplacement is central to our analysis because it allows us to capture this relationality and to situate all of a city's residents within the transformation of space over time. As a processual concept, emplacement links together space, place, and power.

We use the term emplacement because, unlike the terms integration or assimilation, or the discourse that targets migrants as threat to social cohesion, it allows us to focus on a set of experiences shared by people who are generally differentiated by scholars and policy makers as either migrant or native. Consequently we argue that urban restructuring and migrant displacement and emplacement are part of a single globe-spanning process but refer to instances of the locally situated neoliberal process of the destruction and reconstitution of capital. However, these emplacement processes and the nature of the constitution of capital are always a political process.

To speak about disparate political power is to link control of force and resources to narratives of nation, belonging, connection and difference. Therefore discussions of local opportunity structures necessarily include an assessment of the local configurations of political forces but these can only be understood within their variable linkages to multiply situated and more widely connected discourses and struggles over political, economic and cultural power. We suggest that this conceptual framework proves useful in analyzing Bonizzoni and Marzorati's description of the local contestations between the Italian Northern League anti-immigrant forces and the Catholic transnational social movements' networks and their local institutions. We argue that highlighting the intersecting pathways of migrant and non-migrant displacement, emplacement, and city making represents a much-needed direction in comparative urban studies.

We have found that cities that are relatively and relationally disempowered provide helpful entry points for theory making. Among the benefits of working in such localities is that often migrants are part of multi-faceted aspects of city making in ways that can be more readily studied and theorized. The leaderships of cities with minimal degrees of power often engage in urban regeneration and branding within globe spanning efforts to attract capital, the "creative classes," and supranational institutions that could alter the positionality of these cities. As part of these efforts, leaders often craft surprisingly migrant/minority-friendly narratives and policies of disempowered cities [Preston 2013]. In turn, migrants in a wide range of class positions engage in activities that reconstitute social, political and economic relations

within which all residents of live their lives. However, city leaders are not always cognizant of migrants' city making and rescaling activities.

In specifying these processes, we stress that relations between cities and migrants in cities of different positions of power vary within rapidly changing conjectural moments. As Barberis and Pavolini note, quoting Stephen Castles,

> "migration has to be considered as part of the process of transformation of global structures and institutions, which arises through major changes in global, political, economic and social relationships" [2010, 1556].

They also remind us, quoting Eric Sheppard [2002, 310], that

> "we have to consider 'how space is continually restructured and produced under capitalism'."

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A Multiscalar Perspective on Cities and Migration

A Comment on the Symposium

Abstract: This comment aims to set the agenda for future developments in the study of migration in urban contexts. Starting from the point that the scalar question is not about size but power, the Authors critically assess the contributions in this symposium, arguing that new concepts and methodologies are needed.

Keywords: Multiscalar Perspective; Scale; Positionality; Emplacement.

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