Article

Spatial Integration of Refugees: Towards a Post-Migrant Approach

Juliana Canedo * and Hassan Elmouelhi

Habitat Unit, TU Berlin, Germany

* Corresponding author (canedo@tu-berlin.de)

Abstract
In the context of increasing social mobility, extensive global migration flows and the growing importance of understanding the diverse circumstances of urban life, ideas of a homogeneous, and stable social mainstream are decreasingly in line with social reality. Post-migrant studies understand migration as not only a force that shapes society but also as a factor in place-making. This article aims to discuss a different integration paradigm, focusing on the spatial integration dimension from the perspective of the refugees and their experiences of everyday practices. It aims to reflect on the role of the artic-ulation between these practices with local actors that can intermediate and influence the quality of life of the incomers, either positively or negatively. The main research question we address is: Can spatial transformation in the public space foster the integration of and a feeling of belonging by refugees through collaborative processes? This analysis is devel-oped through a critical reflection on the role of institutional actors as potential mediators between everyday practices and long-term solutions and, at the same time, as reproducers of hegemonic power relations. The proposed debate is based on collaborative teaching and research activities conducted in 2021 and 2022 in Berlin, Germany, and Irbid, Jordan, involving different groups of actors—researchers, students, and local and national institutions, as well as refugees and local residents.

Keywords
Germany; Jordan; post-migrant studies; refugees; spatial integration; spatial transformation

1. Introduction

Every society is directly or indirectly shaped by migration. Rather than understanding it as an issue to be solved or as the outcome of failures, post-migrant studies propose taking migration as the starting point of all societal analy-sis (Foroutan, 2015, 2018; Weiss et al., 2019; Wiest, 2020). According to Foroutan (2018, p. 15), the post-migrant paradigm acknowledges that migration "touches all areas of social life, it also opens up the perspective of look-ing beyond the migration moment and focusing on social transformation in relation to negotiations that accom-pany this empirical, narrative and discursive act.''

In the last number of decades, migration and seek-ing refuge have become an unprecedented phenomenon that impacts urban life. According to Betts and Kainz

(2017), from 1970 to 2017 the number of migrants around the world increased from 82 million to 244 mil-lion people, a number that represents 3% of the global population. Although migration processes are "as old as human history" (Castles, 2003, p. 17), they need to be understood and analysed in the contemporary context as both the cause and the effect of major societal trans-formation in the host cities. Post-colonial theories have expanded the temporality of the notion of migration and its understanding as a multiplicity of movements that go beyond moving from here to there. This view also impacts the notion of belonging and the integration of the incom-ers into the host communities (Mains et al., 2013).

Although there is no internationally accepted legal definition of the term "migrant," according to the International Organization for Migration (2019, p. 32), a

migrant is "a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons." Among this group, there are those who are forced to leave their countries as a result of fear due to persecution related to race, religion, nationality, or political views. These people are considered refugees (International Organization for Migration, 2019). Refugee is also a legal status that is understood through the 1951 Geneva Convention (International Organization for Migration, 2019). Those who have already fled their place of residence but have not yet been granted refugee status are considered to be asylum seekers. In this article, we will focus on the group of refugees and asylum seekers, often considered to be the most vulnerable of migrants. Language and cultural barriers, as well as a lack of social connections in their place of arrival, have a great impact on their process of social and economic integration (Aksoy et al., 2020).

Post-migrant studies advocate for acknowledging refugee migration not as the exception, but rather as a constitutive part of cities worldwide and, therefore, refugees themselves should be included as part of policy making and urban development (Wiest, 2020). Despite this, refugee policies are often described from the solidarity point of view, which, on the one hand, implies a sense of superiority of those who provide the help needed and, on the other hand, hides the responsibility of the Global North countries in the global dynamics that generate the violence and poverty from which millions of people flee (Agier, 2011; Bauder, 2021). This perspective reinforces hegemonic power relations and social control by operating through institutional mechanisms of symbolic domination (Bourdieu, 1986; Foucault, 1988).

Integration has long been considered one of the most important aspects of policies related to refugees and migrants (Ager & Strang, 2008; Bach et al., 2017; Gluns, 2018). Despite this, approaches towards integration vary and the concept is often understood as an individual task and is based on a view of assimilation; in other words, the individual—or family—that migrates needs to integrate into the existing structure of the host community (Dalal et al., 2018, 2021; Weiss et al., 2019). Access to employment, housing, education, and health are considered to be the main factors for successful integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Bach et al., 2017; Gluns, 2018; Senate of Berlin, 2018). Other aspects, such as social linkages, cultural experience, and a feeling of safety and belonging are usually either disregarded or placed as secondary goals. Belonging can be understood to be a form of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) since it reflects social networks of support and an increased sense of identity and recognition by the other—here represented by the host community. Therefore, belonging and integration operate in the dimension of uneven power structures (Bourdieu, 1986; Foucault, 1988).

From this debate, we aim to discuss a different integration paradigm, focusing on the spatial integration dimension from the perspective of the refugees' experience of their everyday practices. It aims to reflect on the role of the articulation between these practices with local actors that can intermediate and influence, either positively or negatively, the quality of life of the incomers. The main research question we address is: Can spatial transformation in the public space foster the integration of and a feeling of belonging by refugees through collaborative processes? This analysis is developed through a critical reflection on the role of institutional actors as potential mediators between everyday practices and long-term solutions, and at the same time as reproducers of hegemonic power relations (Bourdieu, 1986; Foucault, 1988).

The article focuses on two experiences of collaborative research with refugees in the cities of Irbid, Jordan, and Berlin, Germany. In the next section, the article addresses the theoretical debate around integration and belonging from a spatial and post-migrant perspective. Thereafter, in Section 3, we describe our case studies and main methods. Section 4 looks at collaborative research as a post-migrant method and Section 5 is dedicated to discussing the articulation between everyday practices and institutional actors, focusing on a critical reflection on existing power relations.

2. A Post-Migrant Approach to Spatial Belonging and Integration

Space can only be understood through social practices, and at the same time all social practices take place in and conform to a certain space (Harvey, 2012; Lefebvre, 1992; Soja, 1985). "To be alive is to participate in the social production of space, to shape and be shaped by a constantly evolving spatiality which constitutes and concretizes social action and relationship" (Soja, 1985, p. 90). Spatiality therefore has a crucial role in the social integration and processes of belonging that both affect and are affected by refugees. The dialectic process of space as being formed by social life and at the same time as being contingent to social life (Lefebvre, 1992; Soja, 1985) is crucial for a post-migrant understanding of the spatial integration of refugees in the host communities. Spatial transformation can be both a tool for the social reproduction of existing hegemonic power structures (Bourdieu, 1986; Foucault, 1988) as well as for the processes of resistance and challenge.

The right to the city, as initially conceptualised by Lefebvre (1968) and further developed and reflected on by many other authors (e.g., de Souza, 2012; Harvey, 2012; Marcuse, 2009), advocates for the right to actively participate in the production of the city. It emphasises the role of urban spaces in enabling individuals and groups to exercise their agency, access resources, and ultimately build their identities, or their role in preventing the same. In refugee studies, identity formation and its relation to space and spatial practices have become a central dimension (Brun, 2001).

Brun (2001), however, highlights the fact that relating identity to certain places is often understood from the perspective of homogenous and static cultural entities related to the idea of nation-state-based belonging. This view has a close connection to integration policies developed for refugees. The idea that displaced people are those who are temporarily located in one place but have a feeling of belonging and identity connected to another place can lead to the conclusion that they can "never belong to a territory where they are refugees, and therefore, the only solution would be either to end their refugee status by integration or relocation, or by repatriation, either forced or voluntary" (Brun, 2001, p. 18). Integration from this perspective means an assimilation process where the refugees would "neglect their 'old identity,' and absorb the culture and habits of the new place" (Brun, 2001, p. 18) and places the responsibility for integrating exclusively on the incomers. This not only considers not integrating as an individual failure but also transforms the concept of integration into one of exclusion that paradoxically acts as an obstacle to integration (Dalal et al., 2018; Foroutan, 2015). Brun (2001, p. 15) advocates for:

An alternative understanding of space and place, that separates identity from place to show that though refugees have to move from their places of origin, they do not lose their identity and ability to exercise power. This approach suggests that space is constructed from the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales.

Integration and belonging are therefore not static and cannot be permanently achieved. They are constantly being built and rebuilt through everyday practices and social networks developed in certain spaces and spatialities. In this sense, the experiences of belonging and identity are often connected to intercultural encounters in the public space (Weidinger et al., 2021). These views contradict the idea of refugees as a homogenous group of people who are purely victims and emphasise their active roles as actors of space and social transformation in the host communities.

Aligned with this debate, post-migrant studies seek to focus on the voices of the groups usually excluded from hegemonic discourses by critically approaching the power structures that built the historical narratives. They intend to shift these groups from objects of study and place them at the centre of the production of knowledge about the contemporary world (Bock & Macdonald, 2019; Foroutan, 2018; Weiss et al., 2019; Wiest, 2020). The post-migrant approach seeks to search for identities and narratives that are no longer predominantly defined through ethnicity or nationality "but rather by attitudes and ideologies towards migration, plurality, heterogeneity and diversity" (Bock & Macdonald, 2019, p. 144).

Critically reflecting on and approaching the concept of integration is crucial to consider the plurality of

post-migrant societies as potential for the development of new forms of living together. Integration should be perceived as a complex process of mutual accommodation and negotiation, both of the incomers and the host society (Ager & Strang, 2008; Brun, 2001; Foroutan, 2018; Weiss et al., 2019).

Several authors have elaborated on key factors that shape the integration of refugees, ranging from economic to social factors (Ager & Strang, 2008; Aksoy et al., 2020). However, the significance of space in those processes is often overlooked, especially when considering public policies regarding the integration of refugees. Despite this, Weidinger et al. (2021) highlight the relevance of the spatial dimension, as well as the mobility and immobility of refugees, in the establishment of belonging as well as social inclusion and exclusion.

Spatiality in connection with identity and the belonging processes of refugees in host communities cannot be understood without considering the debate about power dimensions. For Foucault (1988), power should not be understood exclusively as a tool of domination and control, but could also be seen as a productive force. According to Foucault (1988), power relations exist at multiple levels and operate through a set of networks and social interactions between individuals, groups, and institutions. Similar to the theories of social capital developed by Bourdieu (1986), this view emphasises that power relations are dependent on articulation between individuals and key actors or institutions that can bring certain benefits. In this sense, power is relational and dispersed as well as inseparably linked to the local context.

In this section, we have intended to explore a different paradigm of integration and belonging, a paradigm that is connected to spatiality and everyday practices and that acknowledges the complex tale of power networks that operate both to favour and to prevent the integration of refugees into host communities. From this perspective, the process of how to learn from the refugees about their spaces and practices is as important as the data gathered. In the next section, we will describe our case studies and the methodological approach of the fieldwork.

3. Collaborative Research With Refugees in Two Different Contexts

The debate presented in this article is based on collaborative research conducted with refugees living in two different cities and contexts: Berlin, Germany, and Irbid, Jordan. By using similar methods in different contexts, we aimed to develop a possible comparative analysis that could raise issues beyond the local context, but that was still grounded in local specificities. The methods chosen place refugees at the centre of the research by inviting them to engage, participate, and actively shape their spaces. "A participant oriented approach, thus, gives them power over how and which knowledge is produced" (Weidinger et al., 2021, p. 2). It is more than giving them a

voice, however; it advocates for incorporating them into key positions of decision-making and spatial production.

3.1. First Case: Märkisches Viertel, Berlin

Berlin is praised as being a city of migrants (Senate of Berlin, 2018) and Germany is the country with the fourth-largest number of refugees in the world, according to the UNHCR (2023). Currently, Berlin has a population of 3,775 million (Senate of Berlin, 2018) and in 2022 received 14,704 asylum seekers, according to the state institution responsible for all refugee matters: Landesamt für Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten (2023). Between 2013 and 2022, the majority of the asylum seekers that arrived in Berlin came from Syria and Egypt (average 32%), followed by Afghanistan and Iraq (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2022). The asylum seekers are distributed around the city and are placed in different types of refugee accommodation depending on several criteria established by the Landesamt für Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten, and also determined by the available space in the shelters since the mobility of refugees from the shelter to the housing market faces many challenges (Dalal et al., 2021; Steigemann & Misselwitz, 2020).

Since 2015, the Landesamt für Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten has built several types of refugee accommodation, from container-type temporary structures to durable modular buildings called *Modulare Unterkunft für Flüchtlinge* (Dalal et al., 2021; Steigemann & Misselwitz, 2020), scattered around the city. These different types of accommodation can host up to 450 families, and, in many neighbourhoods, the arrival of this large number of refugees has generated resistance from the local residents (Wiedner et al., 2022).

For our research, we focused on the refugees living in the neighbourhood of Märkisches Viertel, the largest housing estate complex in the former West Berlin, which was planned in the 1960s to be self-sufficient. The majority of the flats in the area are still owned and managed by one of the biggest housing associations in the city, Gesobau (Hess et al., 2018; Senate of Berlin, 2019). The levels of social precarity, including child poverty and lack of access to jobs, are higher than the average of the rest of the city and the population is characterised by its migrant profile. In Märkisches Viertel, 47% of the residents have a migrant background, while the average in Berlin is 32.5%. Around 45% of the residents with a migrant background come from Muslim-majority countries (Senate of Berlin, 2019). A large part of the non-refugee migrant resident population has a Turkish background and is related to the 1960s guest work migration (Bock & Macdonald, 2019; Hess et al., 2018).

In 2017 refugee accommodation was built in the neighbourhood and currently accommodates 380 people, more than half of whom are under the age of 18. The majority of the residents in this accommodation are families from 22 different nationalities, a large number of them from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, according to interviews with its managers. Our main partner during this research was BENN Märkisches Viertel. BENN stands for Berlin Entwickelt Neue Nachbarschaften ("Berlin develops new neighbourhoods") and is a programme by the Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing that aims to strengthen neighbourhoods where refugees live by promoting integration between the refugees and their neighbours. From the discussions with BENN, we developed a series of research activities in 2022 that aimed to experiment with different collaborative research tools to investigate the perceptions of integration and liveability of the neighbourhood from the perspective of the refugees.

3.2. Second Case: Assarih, Irbid, Jordan

The second case we will discuss is located in the city of Irbid, the second-biggest city in Jordan, with a population of 1,770 million people (Jordanian Ministry of Interior, 2023). The country has a history of being host to several waves of refugee influxes, which extends to recent years, most of them coming from Palestine and Syria. Although there are several refugee camps built in the country, around 80% of the more than 650,000 Syrian refugees living in the country are not living in camps, but live instead amongst the host community. Besides this, more than half a million other Syrians are in Jordan as forced migrants without any official refugee recognition (Jauhiainen & Vorobeva, 2023). Along with growing economic challenges in Jordan, social tensions between Jordanians and Syrians have increased; after a few years of the presence of Syrians in Jordan, 95% of Jordanians believed that Syrians might take their jobs (Kelberer, 2017).

Muslims make up about 97.2% of Jordan's population. A few of them are Shiites. Many Shia in Jordan are refugees from Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq (Office of International Religious Freedom, 2022). Official government figures estimate that Jordanian Christians make up 4% of the population; in a country of almost 10 million, Christians are thought to number 250,000–400,000, excluding the tens of thousands of Syrian and Iraqi Christians in the country. The area of Husn, in the south of Irbid, is predominantly Christian (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2005).

Of Irbid's population, 92% live in urban areas. Moreover, as of 2015, the governorate hosted around 792,924 refugees, including Syrians, Palestinians, and Iraqis (UN-Habitat, 2022b). For this article, we focused on a neighbourhood in the Assarih area, situated in the eastern region of Irbid. The region attracts many Syrian refugees due to its proximity to Dara'a and to the Al Hasan Industrial Estate. Around 30% of the residents of Assarih are Syrian refugees (UN-Habitat, 2022a). The discussion that follows is based on workshops developed in cooperation with Jordanian academic partners from Yarmouk University, with contributions from UN-Habitat Jordan.

3.3. Integration in the Two Contexts

"Germany has been widely praised for its welcoming culture while heavily criticized for failures of integration" (Soederberg, 2018, p. 923). The construction of the idea of a refugee crisis, related to the arrival of a large number of refugees fleeing from the Syrian war in 2015 and 2016, focused on the failure of the individuals who came to Germany to integrate and not on the failure of the state to promote the conditions for them to be integrated. This approach contributes to legitimising authoritarian measures towards the incomers and to delegitimising various forms of agency from the refugees (Bock & Macdonald, 2019; Kallius et al., 2016; Karakayali, 2018). The programme of integration of refugees focuses on them acquiring the German language, entering the labour market, and accessing health care following a technocratic approach that often disregards the social and cultural aspects of human life (Gluns, 2018).

In addition, the settlement policy regarding refugees in Germany plays a role both in the integration of the refugees and in the perception of the local residents towards the new incomers (Aksoy et al., 2020). Germany has a strict system of distribution of refugees among its states using percentages that determine the share to be received by each state based on its tax revenues and population size (Aksoy et al., 2020). In Berlin, the refugees are placed in state accommodation according to several criteria, such as level of integration, families or single travellers, and disabilities, among others (Landesamt für Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten, 2023). These measures result in a complete lack of power for the refugees to decide where to live, which has a negative impact on their process of integration. According to Aksoy et al. (2020), the location where the refugees are first placed influences their feeling of belonging and therefore their integration practices.

The issue of spatial integration in the context of Syrian refugees living in Jordan assumes a different character than in the German case. Language, cultural, and religious barriers are not the issue; in fact, there is a historical exchange between the two countries, as Irbid is located only 40 km away from the Syrian border. Even so, integration is perceived as a major issue for the Syrians who have fled the war to live in Jordan, where only 18% of the Syrian refugees are accommodated in refugee camps (Hamad et al., 2017). The majority of the refugees are living in urban areas outside refugee camps and, therefore, with limited support from the main agencies present in the country, such as the UNHCR. According to Hamad et al. (2017), over 75% of Syrian refugees are considered by UNHCR to be highly shelter-vulnerable.

The precarious conditions related to poverty, unemployment, and lack of food security of many refugees in Jordan have been highly publicised, but there are still some unexplored areas. According to Hamad et al. (2017), the psychosocial and social vulnerabilities of the refugees remain invisible to the support institutions and researchers. The author emphasises the lack of knowledge about:

> How needs and vulnerabilities are shifting over time for the same households as their stay in Jordan is prolonged, as the numbers of refugees peaked (following the closure of the border in 2016) and as the policy, programming and funding landscape continues to evolve. (Hamad et al., 2017, p. 34)

From our research, we discovered that, despite the many differences in the systems in Berlin and Irbid, in both cases, refugees face many challenges to integration. Those challenges go beyond having shelter or access to the labour market and involve social practices that, as described in Section 2, cannot be understood outside the spatial dimension. Therefore, we aim to illustrate the role of space in the process of refugee integration using collaborative research activities developed in Berlin and Irbid as the focus.

4. Collaborative Research as a Post-Migrant Method

The use of collaborative methods and tools was intended to place refugees at the centre of the knowledge produced (Foroutan, 2018; Weidinger et al., 2021; Weiss et al., 2019) and to enter into dialogue about their view of the spatial dimensions into which they are placed. We conducted a mixed-method approach that combined qualitative data collection methods like participatory observation and interviews with collaborative design-and-build activities.

Our process was divided into two moments of interaction: (a) collaborative mapping and (b) collaborative designing/building. The first moment involved a visualising exercise with the refugees and other residents where the general questions "How do you see your neighbourhood?" and "How would you like your neighbourhood to be?" were addressed. In order to do this, a set of mixed methods was used, of which the main ones were (a) walking interviews, (b) focused debate groups, (c) a map of emotions (see Figure 1), and (d) a wish box.

These activities were conducted by an international group of students and researchers from the fields of architecture, urban design, and sociology. Besides the tools already mentioned, we also relied on several non-verbal tools. The non-verbal activities involved using pictures and games that made it possible for people who did not speak the same language to communicate. By using such tools, we also invited people to explore the dimensions of different discourses and to discover unexpected problems or solutions.

During the interaction with the community, the students wrote reports that provided data and information that were used further afterwards. All the information gathered during this first phase was systematised and translated by the students into drawings, maps, guidelines, and reports (see Figure 2). In the case of Berlin, the

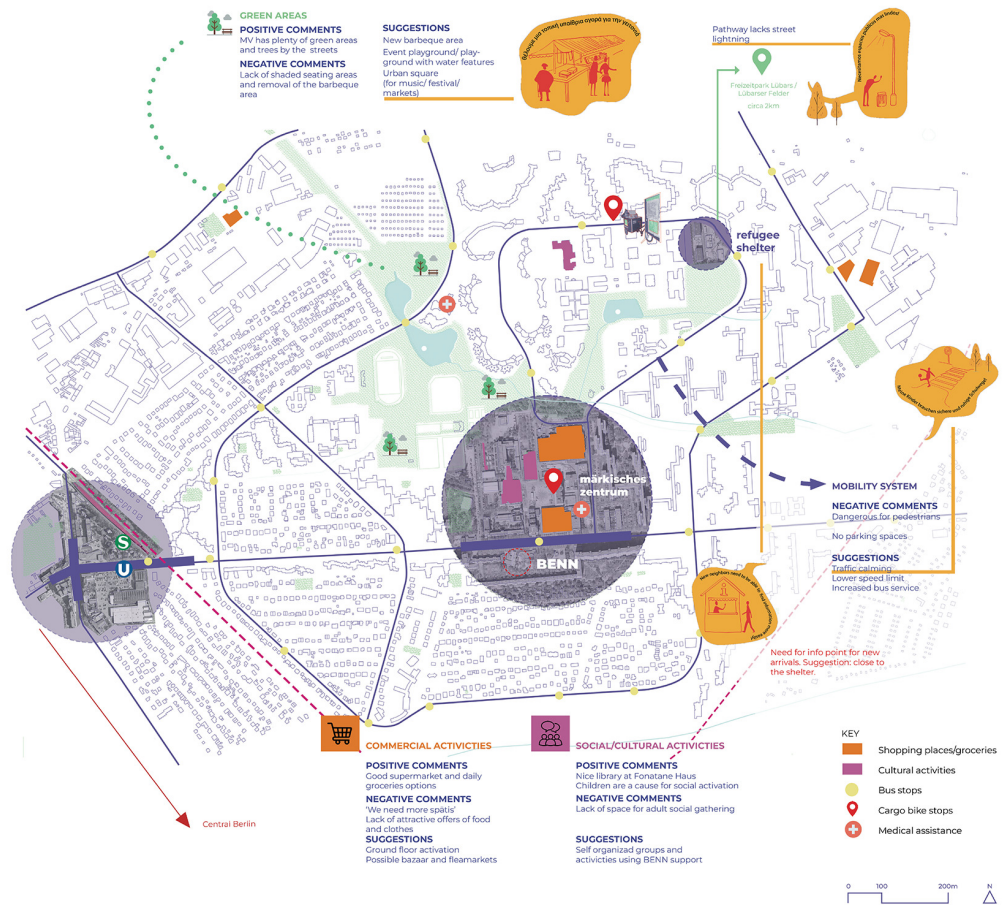**Figure 1.** Map of emotions in Märkisches Viertel, Berlin.

Figure 2. Material produced in Märkisches Viertel, Berlin.

outcomes were presented to the community and to the district office and shared with our local institutional partners. In the case of Irbid, this exchange with local institutions and residents did not happen in the same way, as we will explore further in the next section.

For this first phase, in the Berlin case, we had the participation of 33 students and researchers from nine different nationalities and 126 local residents (50 of them were children) from 22 different nationalities, with 36 refugees among them. In the Irbid case, there were 25 students from eight nationalities and 50 local residents, including 30 children, of whom around 30% were Syrian refugees and the others were local residents.

The second phase involved collectively building a small public space together with the residents. The decision on what and where to build was an articulation with the findings from the previous phase and the negotiations with our local partners. In the case of Irbid, the goal was to develop a neutral common space in an area with a mixed population of Jordanians and Syrians, to be appropriated by both communities. In the case of Berlin, the public space was developed inside a community garden.

In both cases, the main outcome of the collective building action resulted in a playground. In the case of Irbid, the playground was built on an empty public space (see Figure 3) and the proposal involved not only a space for children but also a space for collective eating and an artistic intervention on a wall (see Figure 4).

In Berlin, the playground (see Figure 5) was built inside a community garden where BENN Märkisches Viertel developed part of their neighbourhood events and other activities with refugees. In order to engage the local community, we organised two social events with activities for children that were related both to the design of the playground itself as well as to building or decorating parts of it. We organised a food event in parallel and invited the refugee women to bring traditional dishes to be shared. This event around food and children-focused activities proved to be important for building trust and creating a safe environment for exchange.

One important characteristic of these activities was the presence of students who spoke the mother tongue

Figure 3. Public park in Assarih before intervention.

Figure 4. Public park in Assarih after the intervention.

Figure 5. Playground after intervention at Beettinchen, Märkisches Viertel.

of the majority of the refugees and who acted as mediators between the students who did not speak the language. Although we relied on non-verbal tools, it was important to offer the possibility of creating dialogues in their native language and, most significantly, with others who shared a similar culture and background. We wanted to obtain information and perceptions from the residents that went beyond such techno-pragmatic issues as, for example, lack of access to housing, language skills, or income problems.

One aspect that differentiates the two experiences methodologically is the timeframe. In the Berlin case, long-term cooperation between BENN Märkisches Viertel and the residents of the refugee accommodation had been developed in a continual way for more than a year when the playground was being built. In Irbid's case, although the research with Syrian refugees in Jordan had been conducted two years prior, the playground hands-on action took place over a summer school that lasted six days in total. This difference in time was reflected in the potential use of the outcomes and particularly in the articulation with local institutions. But what was not reflected was that in Jordan the local community— although in smaller numbers—was much more engaged in the actual hands-on work and exchange with the students than in Germany.

The methods described in this research aimed to build bridges and dialogues between the researchers and the community and therefore to co-produce knowledge and information from a post-migrant perspective (Foroutan, 2018; Weidinger et al., 2021). The proposed activities required the active engagement of all partic-

ipants. At the same time, they aimed to build a safe environment to share common experiences, wishes and perspectives. This is particularly relevant in the case of refugee studies, due to the potential psychological effects the research may have on traumatised individuals (Clark-Kazak, 2021).

Seeking to avoid a hegemonic "parasitic relationship" between the researcher and the researched (Clark-Kazak, 2021), the collaborative research tools were intended to incorporate different types of knowledge and foster exchange between the different groups involved: refugees, non-refugees, neighbours, students, researchers, and local institutional actors. The combination of data collection and broader research reflections with meaningful short-term outcomes for the refugees and local actors was fundamental to the creation of mutual learning environments.

5. Between Everyday Practices and Institutional Actions: Towards a Different Paradigm of Spatial Integration

In their research with refugees, Ager and Strang (2008) show that, besides having access to housing, employment, health care, and the other usual measurements, the sense of belonging to a certain space and community was described by many interviewed as the ultimate indicator of being integrated. This goes beyond having social connections with the local residents, and, as emphasised by Ager and Strang (2008) and corroborated by our research experience, involves the possibility of developing "bonding capital" or, in other words,

the ability to experience family, ethnic, national, and religious social bonds.

Another relevant aspect to be highlighted is the "social links," defined as the individual connections between the refugees and institutional actors. This connection plays an important role in navigating the host community systems and accessing benefits and rights. To build these links and bonding relationships, refugees must encounter a friendly environment that not only acknowledges them but is inviting and open to their participation (Ager & Strang, 2008).

These practices that promote integration and belonging cannot be detached from the spatial dimension and power structures and hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1986; Foucault, 1988). In this section, we will explore the public space as a potential materialisation of these encounters and conflicts (Harvey, 2000; Lefebvre, 1968, 1992; Soja, 1985).

5.1. Bonding Capital and Social Links

In the two experiences analysed for this article, the articulation between refugees and institutional actors—formal or informal—can be defined as fundamental for their processes of integration into the host cities. This articulation, however, does not depend solely on the existence of this institutional support focused on refugee matters, but mostly on how those institutes operate, articulate, and connect with the incomers. This involves not only their practices but also the spatialities that arise from these practices and the potential for interaction and exchange.

In the Jordanian case, there is no official governmental entity that is responsible for supporting the Syrian refugees living outside the camps and for facilitating the process of integration, including the Assarih area. The UNCHR is present in Jordan, but they are mainly concerned with the refugees living in camps. The Syrian refugees living in Assarih are spread, formally or informally, throughout the neighbourhood. They are, therefore, not supported by any institutional body. The official and popular narrative is that they are guests and deserve to be treated in the best way according to the Arabic and Islamic culture, while, in fact, we observed during our research that there is a lot of hostility towards the Syrian refugees and from them towards the Jordanians.

In the Jordanian case, the neighbourhood social networks are sometimes more important than the institutional ones. In Irbid, the most obvious social institutions are the family coalitions. Each big family has its own guest house built with the money of the family members to serve as a meeting place and a venue for weddings and funerals. Guest houses play an important role in community articulation and are central spaces that are often also related to local conflicts or disputes between families.

This tale of social links is deeply rooted in Arabic culture and can, for example, be transported to Berlin's case relating to one very common comment we received from different people from Arab countries that we interviewed: The fact that they were forbidden to receive guests after a certain time in the shelter was one important reason why they did not feel part of the community. This is also represented in another regular comment present in most of our conversations with Islamic refugees from Arab countries: The lack of mosques in the neighbourhood was one of the first points mentioned when asked about what was missing in Märkisches Viertel. Mosques, as well as other religious institutions, have more than a religious role, they are often community spaces, where collective gatherings, cultural celebrations, and educational activities take place.

Refugees in both Berlin and Irbid lie in informal networks to be able to navigate and therefore integrate and belong to the host community. In both cases, we observed that, even when there are support institutions, refugees rely on non-formal networks to build their bonding capital and increase their possibilities. We argue that those negotiations are not separate from the spatial dimension and are related to many spatial factors, such as where and how refugees live or are settled, what kinds of existing spaces foster the social practices that are fundamental for their belonging process, and to what extent they are involved in decision making about their own social/spatial practices.

5.2. Challenging Power Structures: The Role of the University

In addition to local and national institutions, as well as informal networks, the university engagement can bring mutual learning and exchange for all involved. On the one hand, the opportunity for the students to act and deal with real and complex issues is an enriching and fundamental aspect of their professional training, especially if we aim to promote critical and innovative views of the field of urban studies and architecture. On the other hand, the experimentation and innovative character of academic work can bring different perspectives to the local context and local actors (Passos et al., 2010).

The articulation of the research activities with goals, objectives, and ongoing local projects has the potential to produce meaningful and long-term outcomes. In both case studies analysed, we aimed to combine a diverse group of students and researchers from different disciplines with key local actors and institutions to encounter common goals and increase engagement and knowledge exchange. The use of collaborative research methods aimed to promote transformation knowledge and mutual learning processes for all involved and focused on bringing awareness to the silenced voices—those of refugees, children, and women. In both contexts, the research also aimed to produce concrete outcomes for the residents in the short or medium term, avoiding a "parasitical" relationship between the researcher and the researched group (Clark-Kazak, 2021).

In the case of Berlin, our main institutional partner was BENN Märkisches Viertel, with whom we observed initial common interests, such as the integration between refugees living in the refugee accommodation and their neighbours, and went on to develop common goals and methods. In 2022, we conducted a series of activities in the neighbourhood, starting with a workshop in March, developed through a seminar combined with workshops from April to July and concluding with a summer school in September. During these activities, we had intensive discussions with BENN and developed mutually relevant cooperation whereby, on the one hand, we profited from the existing network, knowledge, and trust built by the institution and, on the other hand, producing material that they could use afterwards in discussions with the Senate and the District Office.

In the case of Irbid, the interventions developed in a public park as well as the small intervention of a children's roundabout had different impacts on the local dynamics and the expected appropriation did not occur as imagined. Even so, the intensive events developed during the workshop built, even if for a short period of time, community efforts that involved different groups that may not have worked together in different circumstances. The participation of Syrian and Jordanian children, for example, was an unexpected factor in this experience.

In the two experiences, we observed that the university can, in many cases, act as a neutral actor and even mediate conflicts to some extent. Therefore, we argue that the articulation of different levels of institutional support that incorporate refugees into their official bodies, with diverse groups from the university, along with the acknowledgement and support of informal social networks, can increase the potential for mutual integration and transformation, not only improving the refugees' quality of life but creating better cities for all.

6. Conclusion

This article aimed to propose a shift in the paradigm of the integration of refugees into host communities, by using post-migrant studies as a lens to debate the relationship between identity and place, belonging and spatial practices (Brun, 2001; Foroutan, 2018; Mains et al., 2013; Soja, 1985). Beyond acknowledging that migration is a constitutive part of most cities and therefore should be understood as a dialectical process of mutual transformation between local residents, incomers, and their practices in space, we aimed to demonstrate that different research tools and methods are needed to apprehend this complex reality. To illustrate this, the article has focused on two case studies: Märkisches Viertel in Berlin and Assarah in Irbid.

In the two experiences we observed, through active and collaborative research, that refugees relied on formal and informal networks based on spaces and, at the same time, built spatialities to develop their sense of belonging and therefore integration into the host society. The challenges reported by the refugees went far beyond the usual paradigms of integration that address issues such as access to shelter, the job market, and health care services. The role of communal spaces—which often overlap with religious ones—where refugees can meet others who share similar backgrounds and cultural practices, are often described as equally important as having a place to live and to work.

These spaces can be associated with institutional or non-institutional actors—for example, the community garden mediated by BENN in Berlin and the guest houses run by local families in Irbid. The existence of these actors and their articulation with the refugees have to be understood within the system of power relations (Bourdieu, 1986; Foucault, 1988). By using collaborative methods of research and actively engaging and interacting with the community, we added the university as a crucial actor.

We understand that the university—and the scientific field—play the role of broadening the local context and producing knowledge that can be reused to further produce other forms of knowledge. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that these processes come with many contradictions and limitations. Through hands-on work, we intended to overcome hegemonic structures of knowledge production and invite refugees to collectively produce not only space but knowledge. The existing tools, the language and cultural diversity, and the articulation with institutional and non-institutional actors were often barriers or challenges to the desired engagement of the refugees in the proposed activities.

Despite this, the intention of producing long-term concrete outcomes based on the everyday practices of the residents, that went beyond academic discourses, was central. The durability and the success of the experiences in terms of activating communal integration varied. We argue that the effectiveness of the Berlin case was grounded on the clear joint work developed with existing local actors. In the Jordan case, the lack of trust in the municipality among the different resident groups, as well as the lack of local institutions that could mediate the dialogues, created a scenario that ended in the quick destruction of the public garden.

An understanding of post-migrant societies, which recognises diverse forms of living as a constitutive part of cities worldwide, requires an understanding of engagement with refugees and migrants that goes beyond issues such as language and cultural barriers. It is crucial to include a diversity of actors in the decision-making sectors, in academic production and debate, as well as in city design and planning.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *21*(2), 166–191. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016

Agier, M. (2011). *Managing the undesirables: Refugee camps and humanitarian government*. Polity Press.

Aksoy, C. G., Poutvaara, P., & Schikora, F. (2020). *First time around: Local conditions and multi-dimensional integration of refugees* (EBRD Working Paper No. 250). European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Bach, S., Brücker, H., Haan, P., Romiti, A., van Deuverden, K., & Weber, E. (2017). Refugee integration: A worthwhile investment. *DIW Economic Bulletin*, *7*, 33–43.

Bauder, H. (2021). Urban migrant and refugee solidarity beyond city limits. *Urban Studies*, *58*(16), 3213–3229. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098020976308

Betts, A., & Kainz, L. (2017). *The history of global migration governance* (RSC Working Paper No. 122). Refugee Studies Centre.

Bock, J.-J., & Macdonald, S. (2019). *Refugees welcome?: Difference and diversity in a changing Germany*. Berghahn Books.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.

Brun, C. (2001). Reterritorilizing the relationship between people and place in refugee studies. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, *83*(1), 15–25. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0435-3684.2001.00087.x

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. (2005). *2005 report on international religious freedom*. https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2005

Castles, S. (2003). Towards a sociology of forced migration and social transformation. *Sociology*, *37*(1), 13–34. https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385030370001384

Clark-Kazak, C. (2021). Ethics in forced migration research: Taking stock and potential ways forward. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, *9*(3), 125–138. https://doi.org/10.1177/23315024211034401

Dalal, A., Darweesh, A., Misselwitz, P., & Steigemann, A. (2018). Planning the ideal refugee camp? A critical interrogation of recent planning innovations in Jordan and Germany. *Urban Planning*, *3*(4), 64–78. https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v3i4.1726

Dalal, A., Fraikin, A., & Noll, A. (2021). Appropriating Berlin's Tempohomes. In A. Million, C. Haid, I. C. Ulloa, & N. Baur (Eds.), *Spatial transformations* (1st ed., pp. 285–293). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003036159-25

de Souza, M. L. (2012). Panem et circenses versus the right to the city (centre) in Rio de Janeiro: A short report. *City*, *16*(5), 563–572. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2012.709725

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. (2022). *Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2022—Modul Asyl* [The Federal Office in figures 2022—Module Asylum]. https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2022-asyl.html;jsessionid=11FAA27A215C0C263671B45E2392DA2A.intranet661

Foroutan, N. (2015). Konviviale Integration in postmigrantischen Gesellschaften [Convivial integration in post-migrant societies]. In F. Adloff & V. M. Heins (Eds.), *Konvivialismus: Eine Debatte* [Convivialism: A debate] (pp. 205–216). transcript Verlag. https://doi.org/10.18452/21917

Foroutan, N. (2018). Die postmigrantische Perspektive: Aushandlungsprozesse in pluralen Gesellschaften [The post-migrant perspective: Negotiation processes in plural societies]. In M. Hill & E. Yildiz (Eds.), *Postmigrantische Studien* [Postmigrant studies] (1st ed., Vol. 1, pp. 15–28). transcript Verlag. https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839439166-004

Foucault, M. (1988). *Power knowledge*. Random House.

Gluns, D. (2018). *Refugee integration policy and public administration in Berlin* (LoGoSO Research Paper No. 6). LoGoSo.

Hamad, B. A., Jones, N., Samuels, F., Presler-Marshall, E., Plank, G., Essaid, W. A., Ebbini, S., Odeh, K. B., Taleb, H. A., Amayreh, H. A., & Sadji, J. (2017). *The effects of UNHCR and UNICEF cash assistance on Syrian refugees in Jordan*. UNHCR.

Harvey, D. (2000). *Spaces of hope*. University of California Press.

Harvey, D. (2012). *Rebel cities: From the right to the city to the urban revolution*. Verso.

Hess, D. B., Tammaru, T., & van Ham, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Housing estates in Europe: Poverty, ethnic segregation and policy challenges*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92813-5

International Organization for Migration. (2019). *Glossary on migration*. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf

Jauhiainen, J. S., & Vorobeva, E. (2023). Syrian refugees and other Syrian forced migrants in Jordan: Forms of capital approach. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, *50*(2), 281–299. https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2021.1964068

Jordanian Ministry of Interior. (2023). *Irbid Governorate*. https://moi.gov.jo/EN/ListDetails/Governorates_and_Sectors/57/2

Kallius, A., Monterescu, D., & Rajaram, P. K. (2016). Immobilizing mobility: Border ethnography, illiberal democracy, and the politics of the "refugee crisis" in Hungary. *American Ethnologist*, *43*(1), 25–37. https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12260

Karakayali, S. (2018). The Flüchtlingskrise in Germany: Crisis of the refugees, by the refugees, for the refugees. *Sociology*, *52*(3), 606–611. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038518760224

Kelberer, V. (2017). *The work permit initiative for Syrian refugees in Jordan: Implications for Policy and practice*. Boston Consortium for Arab Studies.

Landesamt für Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten. (2023). *Zugangslage Geflüchteter für Berlin* [Refugee access situation for Berlin]. https://www.berlin.de/laf/ankommen/aktuelle-ankunftszahlen/artikel.625503.php

Lefebvre, H. (1968). *Le droit à la ville* [The right to the city]. Anthropos.

Lefebvre, H. (1992). *The production of space*. Wiley.

Mains, S. P., Gilmartin, M., Cullen, D., Mohammad, R., Tolia-Kelly, D. P., Raghuram, P., & Winders, J. (2013). Postcolonial migrations. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *14*(2), 131–144. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2012.753468

Marcuse, P. (2009). From critical urban theory to the right to the city. *City*, *13*(2/3), 185–197. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810902982177

Office of International Religious Freedom. (2022). *2021 report on international religious freedom: Jordan*. https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/jordan

Passos, E., Kastrup, V., & Tedesco, S. (2010). *Pistas do método da cartografia: Pesquisa-intervenção e produção de subjetividade* [Clues to the cartography method: Research-intervention and the production of subjectivity]. Sulina.

Senate of Berlin. (2018). *Comprehensive programme for the integration and participation of refugees*.

Senate of Berlin. (2019). *Monitoring Soziale Stadtentwicklung 2019* [Monitoring social urban development 2019].

Soederberg, S. (2018). Governing global displacement in austerity urbanism: The case of berlin's refugee housing crisis. *Development and Change*, *50*(4), 923–947. https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12455

Soja, E. W. (1985). The spatiality of social life: Towards a transformative retheorisation. In D. Gregory & J. Urry (Eds.), *Social relations and spatial structures* (pp. 90–127). Red Globe Press. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27935-7_6

Steigemann, A. M., & Misselwitz, P. (2020). Architectures of asylum: Making home in a state of permanent temporariness. *Current Sociology*, *68*(5), 628–650. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392120927755

UN-Habitat. (2022a). *Amman spatial profile (Jordan)*. https://unhabitat.org/amman-spatial-profile-jordan

UN-Habitat. (2022b). *Irbid spatial profile (Jordan)*. https://unhabitat.org/irbid-spatial-profile-jordan

UNHCR. (2023). *Refugee statistics*. https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics

Weidinger, T., Kordel, S., & Kieslinger, J. (2021). Unravelling the meaning of place and spatial mobility: Analysing the everyday life-worlds of refugees in host societies by means of mobility mapping. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *34*(1), 374–396. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fez004

Weiss, G., Adam, F., Föbker, S., Imani, D., Pfaffenbach, C., & Wiegandt, C.-C. (2019). Angekommen in postmigrantischen Stadtgesellschaften? Eine Annäherung an subjektive Integrationsvorstellungen von Geflüchteten und beruflich oder ehrenamtlich in der Flüchtlingsbetreuung Tätigen [Arrived in postmigrant urban societies? An approach to subjective ideas of integration of refugees and professional or voluntary refugee care workers]. *Geographica Helvetica*, *74*(2), 205–221. https://doi.org/10.5194/gh-74-205-2019

Wiedner, J., Schaeffer, M., & Carol, S. (2022). Ethno-religious neighbourhood infrastructures and the life satisfaction of immigrants and their descendants in Germany. *Urban Studies*, *59*(14), 2985–3004. https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980211066412

Wiest, K. (2020). Preface: Postmigrant city? Urban migration societies as a starting point for a normative-critical reorientation in urban studies. *Geographica Helvetica*, *75*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.5194/gh-75-1-2020

About the Authors

Juliana Canedo is an architect and urbanist with a doctorate in urbanism (PROURB/UFRJ and Bauhaus-Universität Weimar). She is a senior researcher and lecturer at the Habitat Unit, TU Berlin, where she holds a fellowship from DFG in the project entitled "Beyond the Shelter: Understanding the Limits and Potentialities Between Emergency and Endurance in Refugee Camps in Germany." Her research topics involve housing for vulnerable communities, insurgent practices, and collaborative design, focusing on the critical debate of the role of city-building professionals.

Hassan Elmouelhi (PhD, 2014) is an architect and urban planner, as well as a senior researcher and project leader at the Habitat Unit, TU Berlin, Germany. He focuses on culture and urban informality in relation to urban development and governance in the Global South. He is involved in projects that cover interdisciplinary topics, including urban management, public space, refugees and migration, urban mobility, and localising global agendas. With the UN-Habitat in 2022, he is a co-author and technical reviewer for the *State of Arab Cities Report 2022*.