

SETTING THE STAGE FOR MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN DETROIT

ANA ČUKOVIĆ

is a first year PhD student at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Central European University

The ongoing urban regeneration in Detroit includes a variety of developments and municipal changes that seek to reposition the city within global fields of capital accumulation. Among many components of redevelopment, migrant communities become integral. To better understand the migrant role in Detroit's revitalization, I use the theoretical perspective of migrant emplacement, which is understood as the ability of migrants to settle and build networks of connection within the opportunities and constraints of a specific locality. Placing the analytical focus on time, the shifts within the municipal governance and its efforts at urban revitalization reflect the infrastructural changes that, among others, create favorable conditions for migrant settlement. For Detroit, the recent inauguration of the Immigration Task Force and the Office of Immigrant Affairs fosters a welcoming climate and municipal inclusiveness, while simultaneously benefitting from the economic, political, and cultural capital migrant communities bring. This paper looks at the current moment in Detroit's historical trajectory to analyze how migrant communities become part of broader municipal structures and play a role in urban revitalization.

Introduction

Attempting to move forward from a recent bankruptcy and large-scale industrial decline, Detroit is in the midst of what some call a "renaissance". The city's rebranding and urban regeneration strategies include local, national, and global large and small-scale development projects, whether in art, technology, or business. These developments aim to repopulate and revitalize the city, simultaneously reflecting its broader attempt to reposition itself within global economic, political and cultural networks of power. As part of global repositioning, which will be discussed by using the scalar cities perspective, Detroit is at a point in time in its trajectory whereby the municipality takes on the favorable infrastructural shifts for migrant settlement. I will argue that these attempts include Detroit's institutional ambition to both retain, include, and draw migrant communities as reflected in the municipality's joining the national Welcoming Cities network and creating the Immigration Task Force and the Office of Immigrant Affairs, among others. The historical trajectory will trace Detroit's favorable position within the former global power structures as the result of its industrial strength. The research will then demonstrate the negative impact of neoliberal policies on Detroit's current global positionality and power networks. A brief discussion related to city's attempt to recover and jump the scalar positioning through municipal efforts and public-private investments will ensue. The paper's final portion will demonstrate municipal efforts of attracting and retaining migrant communities that contribute to broader revitalization processes.

Theoretical Perspectives

A scalar cities approach yields a clear perspective for understanding Detroit's current development, urbanization, and migrant related policies. Detroit's institutional structure and governance, along with territorialized opportunity produced by contemporary economic and political conjunctions of power and its geographic positioning, make it a substantial place for inquiry (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2013, p. 500). The scalar cities approach states that cities are not nested in interstate or national-regional hierarchies, but are rather situated within global fields of power (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2011b). Thus, "... city scale [is] the differential positioning of a city, which reflects both its articulation of flows of political, cultural, and economic capital within regions, state-based, and globe-spanning histories and capacities..." (ibid., p. 74). Furthermore, cities' placements are determined by their positionality within the global economic, political, and cultural networks and hierarchies of power (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2013, p. 500). The positionality of a locality is shaped by space and time and is relational to its position to others, their power in terms of influence, and reproduction and challenges vis-à-vis preexisting configurations of hierarchies (Sheppard, 2002). Thereby, positionality of cities situated within the global economy and in the globalizing world discloses their future in terms of shifting, asymmetric, and path-dependent processes linked to their interdependencies with other regional, national, and global spaces (ibid., p. 318). Thus, all cities become global because they are affected by and take part in global processes of "neoliberal restructuring and rescaling" (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2011a, pp. 5-7). In order to attain favorable position within the global arena, cities adopt neoliberal programs which result in urban policy to reorganize and construct "place-marketing, enterprise empowerment zones, local tax abatements, urban development corporations, public-private partnerships, and new forms of local boosterism to workfare policies, property-redevelopment schemes, business incubator projects, new strategies of social control, policies, and surveillance, and host of other institutional modifications within the local and national state apparatus" (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, p. 21). Within the context of scalar cities, Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2011b, p. 72) see migrants as "scale makers who in their multiple positionings within urban life contribute actively to facilitating, legitimizing, and contesting neoliberal restructuring and its local constitution of global process." Incorporating the transnational and cultural reach of migrants, cities like Detroit benefit from place-making and immigrant-friendly policies. As migrant communities become factored into municipal restructuring processes and agendas, they become assets in Detroit's repositioning efforts.

In order to reposition itself in the globalizing world, Detroit, like many other post-industrial cities, adopted neoliberal projects and urban austerity measures. Jason Hackworth notes that, "...in the Motor City, neoliberal ways of framing reality have become so pervasive that the city's prevailing policy options particularly with respect to land management, have been restricted to "market-first" and "market only" policy regimes" (Kirkpatrick & Smith, 2015, p. xii). Detroit's current discourse of regeneration, redevelopment, and rebranding reflects a particular space and time in its trajectory. Its efforts at place-making, empowerment zones, and other initiatives create a favorable time and space for migrant emplacement. "Emplacement is understood as a relationship between the continuing restructuring of a city within networks of power and migrants' efforts to settle and build networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific locality" (Glick & Çağlar, 2013, p. 495). Focusing on the conjunction between time and space, emplacement considers migrants' local and transna-

tional networks in relation to local institutions, their structures, and narratives (Schiller & Çağlar, 2013, p. 495). Here, Detroit's institutionalized efforts create opportunities for migrant resettlement, which will simultaneously benefit the city itself. However, these efforts are results of historical and temporal processes which initially contributed to the city's decline.

Contextualizing Detroit

Detroit's large physical size and image as an are related to its manufacturing past and city's positioning in the earlier world systems.¹ By the mid 19th century, Detroit's biggest industry became shipping, and the first rail connection with New York resulted in a large influx of Polish and Italian immigrants. By the late 19th century, half of Detroit's population was born outside of the United States, with over 40 nationalities represented (Detroit Historical Society, n.d.). The 20th century saw Detroit's population rise to 285,704 residents (12% non-English speaking) while becoming a leader in industries like ship building, tobacco, pharmaceuticals, beer brewing, rail cars, and other steel production lines (Detroit Historical Society, n.d.).

The booming manufacturing industry, technological advances, and capital made Detroit a distinguishable destination. By 1912, the Detroit Board of Commerce partnered with the immigration commissioner at Ellis Island to provide transportation costs to immigrants willing to relocate to Detroit (Peterson, 1987, p. 13). While this contributed to the arrival of new immigrants, it made Detroit attractive to their families and friends from abroad. Competitive wages drew workers, resulting in a significant shift of the city's ethnic and racial background. Between the 1910s and 1930s, as a result of immigrant arrivals and the migration of African-American population from the South, Detroit's population grew significantly. The Detroit Board of Commerce, like Ford Motor Company's Sociology Department, developed "Americanization" initiatives, providing English and "cultural" classes to their foreign-born workers (Meyer, 1980). Despite federal immigration restrictions of 1921 and 1924, Detroit's population expanded to about 1.6 million in the 1930s, becoming the fourth-largest city in the United States (Sugrue, n.d.). Migrants from Russia, Germany, Poland, and Italy took residence and established themselves throughout the city by building churches, shops, businesses, and other ethnically centered enterprises. African-Americans coming from the South were excluded from white neighborhoods and federal loan programs and were directed toward old and deteriorating districts (Sugrue, n.d.). "Real estate agents refused to show houses in "white" neighborhoods to blacks, unless they were deemed "blighted" or "transitional" neighborhoods that were expected to lose white population...The result was the creation of two separate cities, one black and one white" (Sugrue, n.d.). The in-migration to Detroit contributed to the city's diversification and physical expansion that sought to address both the rise of population and the expansion of the manufacturing sector.

¹ Many cities of the U.S. industrial North, like Philadelphia and Detroit, enjoyed favorable national and global positioning due to its manufacturing strength and product output (Goode, 2011, pp. 143-165).

The growth of the automotive industry contributed to the bureaucratization and increase in “white collar” positions, contributing to the uneven socioeconomic spatial development of Detroit. Thousands of managers and supervisors, as well as top level officials and skilled professionals, relocated farther away from industrial centers, establishing more affluent and wealthy neighborhoods (which stand to this day). The sociopolitical consequences of the Great Depression resulted in loss of employment and production decrease, creating discriminatory hiring policies towards women and minorities (Sugrue, 2014). Roosevelt’s call to help the allied powers in Europe during World War II helped Detroit retrieve its manufacturing power and become an “Arsenal of Democracy” by producing war materials. By the end of World War II and with return of war veterans, urban sprawl was under way, aided by federal policies and the development of highway systems.

The second half of the 20th century and the beginnings of the 21st proved to be significantly detrimental for Detroit, as demonstrated in the following table (Farley, 2015):

1950 – 2007	1947 – 2007	2007 – 2012
Population: –63%	Manufacturing Firms (MF): –86%	Per capita income: –14%
Employed Detroiters: –74%	MF Employment: –93%	Employed Detroiters: –18%
Occupied Homes: –51%	Retail stores: –88%	Poverty Rate: +41%
	Wholesale Firms: –88%	

In 1947, Detroit hosted about 3,300 outdated plants, causing manufacturers to rebuild in the suburban ring (Farley, 2015). Simultaneously, national housing policies and accessible mortgages (Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Administration) helped finance and facilitate the out-migration of working class, white and immigrant Detroiters. With the relocation of the manufacturing centers and population, retail businesses also fled the urban core (Farley, 2015). “This spatial separation contributed to a new national politics in which attitudes toward race were a central factor” (Tabb, 2015, p. 61). Civil rights movements and racial integration were viewed by many whites as a threat to their position in the liberal society; therefore, the liberalism of the New Deal era unraveled, securing a top-down favoritism by many white, working class Americans. Until the 1970s, revenue sharing, funded assistance and social programs created a city dependent on federal funding, thus increasing the cost of city services (Tabb, 2015). However, the stagflation of the mid-1970s enabled neoliberal and market-oriented alternatives to become more favored among the U.S. population. Re-industrialization efforts in cities like Detroit were suspended because of the political opposition towards government involvement in restructuring. Detroit’s average yearly incomes decreased and the city lost more than 20% of population (Tabb, 2015). The Reagan administration cut federal aid to cities, including Detroit, in an attempt to promote local self-reliance, resulting in a decrease in spending for education, transportation, health service, and other urban services (Tabb, 2015). In the 1980s, globalized capital sought to secure investment wherever preferable and most profitable while circumscribing government and abandoning American workers. Throughout this time, the depopulation of Detroit became even more significant and the city’s decline evident, as demonstrated in the table above. The closure of manufacturing plants in a city that was built on blue-collar, industrial workers offered no

alternatives or expansion of education and other professions for the city's mostly African-American residents. Therefore, the impact of global neoliberal, market-driven, socioeconomically selective policies is closely related to the uneven economic development and racial segregation of Detroit's urban core in relation to its metropolitan region. Currently, the median income in Detroit is a little less than \$26,000 per year with almost 40% of residents living below the poverty line (DataUsa). Positions mostly taken by Detroiters are also those that are the lowest paid, namely in the health services and administrative support sectors, while the highest paying positions of architects, physicians, and lawyers are least represented in the city (Ibid.). In addition, the city's immigrant population is currently at a little over 6%, with most residents being of Hispanic, Middle Eastern, and South Asian descent.

Despite various attempts to counter the decline, including Mayor Dave Bing's 2012 creation of the Detroit Future City comprehensive plan for development, Detroit was unable to sustain itself. In 2012 Michigan's governor Rick Snyder became involved in city matters when he was informed that Detroit would soon be unable to pay its employees or debts because of the decrease in tax revenue (Farley, 2015). Although the voters removed Michigan's Emergency Management Law by ballot, "a lame-duck legislature in December 2012 enacted a new emergency manager law that closely resembled the one the voters rejected" (Farley, 2015, p. 100). Governor Snyder intervened in local governance by appointing the Emergency Manager, Kevyn Orr, who filed for Chapter 9 municipal bankruptcy. During the bankruptcy, the negotiated settlement awarded some national and international banks that profitable contracts and development-ready, valuable city-owned real estate at a discounted price (Peck, 2015). Chapter 9 further enforced Detroit's global and national image of a failed city; however, it created a favorable space for national and international economic investment at a cheap price. This contributed to uneven economic development in the city and the inequality gap between the wealthy investors and those able to reap its benefits and long-time Detroiters. Furthermore, local territorial unevenness became even more prevalent as specific neighborhoods became targeted for revitalization, redevelopment, and investment.

Detroit Recently

Detroit's historical placement, coupled with its decline and diminished property values and rents, started to create a brand of its own. A lack of city services and resources prompted neighborhoods and individuals to self-organize, creating cultural and artistic spaces, advocacy and neighborhood associations, community gardens and watches. While the city resisted decline on a grassroots level, the national and international community took a different approach. Detroit came to represent a ghost-town barely living amidst its abandoned structures, a destination of 'ruin-porn' tourism. Many were drawn to Detroit, moving because of cheap rents, creative and artistic opportunities, and the like; thereby celebrating and simultaneously contributing to the "counterculture which has been transformed into postmodern consumer culture" (Carducci, n.d.). The underdog status became celebrated by Chrysler's "Imported from Detroit" commercial during the 2011 Super Bowl, playing on the city's national and international image, drawing from "America's Great Comeback Story". Furthermore, "Move to Detroit" or "Detroit is Hiring" campaigns from New York, are accompanied by the movement of art spaces that

are relocating to Detroit due to high rents in New York City, while other speculative investors are taking advantage of the current momentum to capitalize on real estate and the city's 'comeback'. Vince Carducci, Dean of Undergraduate Studies at the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit explains, "The serious efforts at gentrification have been driven more by speculative financial interests, in keeping with the rent-gap theory, and embraced by more upscale lifestyle consumers rather than working artists" (Carducci, n.d.). While there is no documented form of displacement from gentrification in one of Detroit's neighborhoods, the 'cultural displacement' in which residents feel culturally isolated from others while physically remaining in their original home, prevails (Dewar, Weber, Seymour, Elliott, & Cooper-McCann, 2015).

Much of the conversations surrounding the revitalization of Detroit is attributed to the growth and redevelopment of the Greater Downtown. In the past years, Quicken Loans (mortgage company) chief officer Dan Gilbert moved his headquarters to Downtown Detroit and claimed more than eighty buildings, including offices, commercial buildings, casino, parking decks and hotels, mostly purchased in the aftermath of the great recession (Aguilar, 2016). In another part of the city, he created "Tech-town," an incubator of technology which seeks to attract high-skilled talent to Detroit. The construction of the new Red Wings arena, largely subsidized by public funds, by the Ilitch family is a component piece for the new entertainment district, only stones throw away from their Tigers Stadium. Among others, the Q-Line, a public-private transportation project, is a street-car connecting the 3.3 miles of developments in the Greater Downtown area, side-by-side of the already present public transportation lines. Municipally established Detroit Land Bank holds online property auctions, requiring purchasers to bring the land up to code within a specific amount of time, aiming to expand the tax base and clear blight (Farley, 2015). Aforementioned projects provide only a glimpse of Detroit's urban restructuring and interests representative of some public and private actors. Looking to become an attractive and viable place for tourism, investment, and life, Detroit's regeneration demonstrates a favorable place and time to retain and attract migrant communities. Thereby, the introduction of initiatives for attracting and retaining migrant communities reflect the city's interest in and need for population increase, economic investment, and diversification through transnational reach.

Detroit: A Welcoming City

Around 12% of Detroit's residents over age 25 have a four-year college degree, in comparison to 36.6% of Michigan's immigrants (Tobocman, 2014). In 2014, Governor Snyder, under the motto "Reinventing Michigan," announced the creation of the Michigan Office for New Americans. Closely focused on Detroit, the Governor requested federal approval of an additional 50,000 employment-based visas until 2019, which would, "...seek to attract highly-skilled, entrepreneurial, legal immigrants who commit to living and working in Detroit, thereby contributing to its economic and population growth" ("Snyder - Fact Sheet: Encouraging Immigration in Michigan," n.d.). Such efforts are demonstrative of the synergies between the state and the locality. Thereby, the state comes to play an active role in the development of uneven geographies and restructuring of territories in spatially selective interventions (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2011a). The city's desire to attract immigrants and foreign in-

vestment is reflected in its ability to revitalize and gentrify neighborhoods, which are favorably reflected in the city's "competition to attract forms of state support" (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2011b: 72). Detroit's regeneration synchronizes with municipal and state-led efforts in migrant retention, while simultaneously contributing to the overall accumulation of social, political, and economic capital.

Established in January 2014, "...[i]n an effort to cultivate a more diverse, inclusive, global city", the Detroit City Council members created the first City of Detroit Immigration Task Force" ("Immigration Task Force Presentation," n.d.) The Detroit Immigration Task Force (DITF) includes thirty members of different backgrounds, local organizations, and regions of the world. In addition to planning to release a comprehensive strategy plan, DITF is divided into six committees: Municipal Services, Immigration Rights, Economic Development and Investment, Marketing and Engagement, Re-Population, and Social Services. The municipal subcommittee aims to engage public needs in order to create an accessible virtual office central for immigrants seeking housing, education, employment, etc. It further seeks to "create a Language Access Plan for Limited English Proficient (LEP) constituents" by convening an LEP committee, hiring multilingual staff, and creating volunteer and internship programs for foreign born immigrant youth ("Immigration Task Force Presentation," n.d.). The Economic Development and Investment (EDI) group seeks to increase exports, trade, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by establishing an International Investor and Trade Partner Collaborative in identifying EB-5 investors and secure FDI. Additionally, the EDI Committee focuses on smaller immigrant business growth and start-ups by increasing investment in incumbent and 'untapped' entrepreneurs through knowledge dissemination and mentor relationships. Furthermore, this subcommittee looks to municipally influence favorable business licensing and zoning regulations. The Immigration Rights Committee plans to coordinate with federal regulatory bodies and engage in issuing Municipal IDs while coordinating campaigns with various regional and national organizations. A Meeting and Engagement Plan works to promote Detroit as a Welcoming City by creating a brand, highlighting immigrant-owned businesses, promoting tourism in immigrant neighborhoods, publicizing naturalization ceremonies, and fostering cross-cultural community programing. The Repopulation Committee is designated to create a welcoming environment for refugees and immigrants by enacting immigrant-friendly policies and ordinances. Furthermore, it aims to increase affordable housing for refugees and immigrants through partnerships with HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development), developers, the Board of Realtors, and MSHDA (Michigan State Housing Development Authority) and increase retention of existing immigrant groups by identifying and resolving challenges and concerns within communities. Finally, the Social Services and Education Plan aims to promote English as Second Language services and GED and connect foreign-born residents with social services in the city ("Immigration Task Force Presentation," n.d.).

Mayor Mike Duggan solidified Detroit as an immigrant friendly city by creating the Office of Immigrant Affairs in October 2015. Following the Paris attacks in November 2015, only one month after opening the Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Mayor openly opposed Governor Snyder's call to suspend refugee resettlement to Michigan, stating that Detroit is a place for immigrants (Warikoo, n.d.). One of the goals of the Office of Immigrant Affairs is the resettlement of Syrian and other refugees in Detroit over the next three years. Furthermore, the office will help incoming and residing communities connect with government and non-profit resources

and assist in obtaining loans and other means of financial support (Davis, n.d.). OIA will serve as a gateway in helping immigrant businesses become successful through various initiatives, such as the Motor City Match, and encourage economic investment. The inclusion of migrant communities within the municipal government, is a significant step not only in recognizing the diverse populations of Detroit, but ensuring that the needs of different communities are met.

In September 2014, Detroit became part of the Welcoming Cities and Counties national network. Welcoming America is a network of municipalities, counties, and organizations leading a movement of inclusive communities that embrace immigrants and foster opportunity for all (“Welcoming America: “Who We Are,” n.d.). By becoming a member of the network, Detroit gains access to national and international exchanges and government leadership influencing immigration and urban policy. Welcoming cities receive support and recognition through participation and access to the creation of sustainable and effective programs. Moreover, the network connects Detroit to federal leadership, thereby providing access to national funding resources. Becoming a Welcoming City or County demonstrates that a locale is part of a national movement of locally-driven municipal efforts “to create more welcoming, immigrant-friendly environments that maximize opportunities for economic growth and cultural vitality and position communities as globally competitive, 21st century leaders” (“Welcoming America: “Who We Are,” n.d.). The Immigration Task Force and Welcoming Michigan initiated the process that has given the city not only access to many national and international government and non-profit resources, but also visibility as an emerging city and a viable destination for migrant communities which can be used in the city’s branding and overall goals.

For Detroit, immigrants of all skill levels play a particular role in its redevelopment, thereby explaining the emerging immigrant-friendly institutional structure. Municipal initiatives such as the Immigration Task Force, establishment of the Office of Immigrant Affairs, and membership in the Welcoming Cities and Counties network demonstrate that Detroit is at a particular time for migrant emplacement. With aims of repopulation, economic development, and diversification, the city of Detroit sees migrants as actors and generators of political, economic, and cultural wealth. Retaining high-skilled immigrants suggests a flow of investment and financial capital to Detroit, consequently widening the city’s transnational reach. The municipality’s desire to retain and attract low-skilled migrants reflects the city’s need to accumulate cultural capital and materialize its welcoming image. By providing favorable conditions for migrant groups, the city will see its neighborhoods revived, tax base and property values increase and urban space diversified. The increase in immigrants would then set the stage for further in-migration, satisfying needs for repopulation, economic investment, and overall vibrancy. Therefore, the favorable infrastructure of the city intentionally creates opportunity, rather than constraining it, for establishment of migrant communities.

Conclusion

Detroit is embracing its momentum. Rapid urban development and regeneration has been carefully crafted and packaged, fitting Detroit's brand as an emerging national and global underdog. Its historical trajectory demonstrates the negative consequences of global neoliberal structures that simultaneously attempt to rectify themselves through the same, yet disguised development and growth tactics. Thus, the city is at a particular time of urban revival whereby migrant communities are viewed as actors of change satisfying the overall municipal agenda. Municipal campaigns seeking to attract and retain migrants further reflect the city's aim to accumulate capital and become a global destination for economic investment. At the same time, the inclusion of migrants within the municipal restructuring is an important step that would eventuate in broader benefits for the city's migrant and overall residents and would provide them with a previously absent access to the city government. Results from political, economic, and cultural investments offer a more favorable repositioning within the global fields of power. Although the current percentage of foreign born individuals in Detroit is low, city's efforts in setting the stage for expansion through immigration should be followed closely. Because Detroit is in the midst of a regeneration, successful or not, it becomes viable for furthering the scalar cities approach, as well as studying the impact of varying municipal strategies and migrant communities.

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