



Of Bastions and Bulwarks: A Multiscalar Understanding of Local Bordering Practices in Europe

Barbara Oomen

University College Roosevelt; Utrecht University, Netherlands

Moritz Baumgärtel

University College Roosevelt, Netherlands

Sara Miellet

University College Roosevelt; Utrecht University, Netherlands

Tihomir Sabchev

Utrecht University, Netherlands

Elif Durmuş

Utrecht University, Netherlands

Abstract

In recent years, local authorities in Europe have increasingly developed bordering practices that hinder or further migrant rights, such as the freedom of movement. They bypass national borders by facilitating refugee resettlement, they claim local space to welcome or shun certain migrants, and they develop or break down local impediments to migrant mobility. These local practices, we argue, can best be understood from a multiscalar perspective, which considers processes of placemaking as reproductive of power dynamics. Applying such a perspective to local bordering practices in Greece, Turkey, the Netherlands, Italy, and Germany, we point out the importance of the multitude of the actors involved; legal pluralism; and the contextual role of social, economic, and spatial factors. This offers a theoretical foothold for understanding the power dynamics at play when local authorities become bastions or bulwarks, in which some migrants are welcomed, and others are not.

Keywords

Multiscalar bordering; local actors; cities; forced migration; human rights; freedom of movement.

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Introduction

Borders can be considered the ultimate litmus test of human rights, the affirmation or the negation of paper promises in real life. Hannah Arendt's critique of rights was that these are nothing without a door to knock on that opens a space that makes "opinions significant and actions effective" (2017: 388). If so, borders—whether physical or social—form the doors to that space. Bordering practices are often associated with nation-states and, increasingly, with their externalization of migration control by means of joint front posts pushed further and further into the desert (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Hathaway 2015). The wealth of literature on bordering practices has, of course, long-debunked such simplifications, pointing out how processes of inclusion and exclusion—and the realization or denial of rights associated with them—take place in many sociospatial units and with the involvement of different state and non-state actors (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Van Houtum and Van Naerssen 2002).

One unit of analysis that has increased in prominence over the past years is that of localities and, within them, local governments. In Europe, the increased arrivals of people fleeing a wide range of rights violations since 2015 have caused localities of varying size and scale to engage in a myriad of bordering practices, physical and symbolic. Take, for instance, Palermo in Sicily, where the mayor stood on the docks every time a ship with migrants arrived, assuring them "you are citizens of Palermo now" (van der Zee 2017). By contrast, in the small Italian town of Castell'Umberto, the mayor installed a roadblock to stop migrants from arriving (Mocciaro and Modica 2017). Local authorities, in this manner, position themselves as bastions of freedom, enabling migrant mobility of some, or as bulwarks, hampering freedom of movement of other groups of migrants.

These local bordering practices have received wide academic interest, among others, from scholars advocating for a turn away from methodological nationalism (De Genova 2013). At the same time, recent studies also highlight the danger of the opposite in the wake of the local turn in migration studies: engaging in methodological localism (Filomeno 2016). However, empirical research on bordering practices, local authorities, and migration governance reveals that it is not only necessary to consider the local, the regional, the national, the supra- and the international, but to also acknowledge that these scales are not simply a "nested set of institutional relationships" (Schiller and Çağlar 2011: 5). Instead, scales should be understood as relative and as "sociospatial spheres of practice," which are not only constituted in relation to each other but also within the various hierarchies of networks of power (Çağlar and Schiller 2018: 10). Multiscalar perspectives have likewise garnered increasing attention in scholarship that focuses on the role of law in bordering processes, most notably in debates on crimmigration (e.g., Wonders 2017), as well as criminal justice and jurisdictional games (e.g., Mofette and Pratt 2020). Amid such complex theoretical debates, it is important to monitor the practical dimension of local bordering practices, such as the role of and effects on the enjoyment of migrants' human rights in everyday bordering practices. This article, then, seeks to contribute to such an understanding on the basis of a grounded and multisited research in localities throughout Europe. For this purpose, we ask: How can local bordering practices, concretely in relation to the freedom of movement, be understood from a multiscalar perspective, and what are the theoretical implications?

We conceptualize bordering practices as processes of inclusion and exclusion that involve the shaping of a local "city-zenship" based on discourses on who is in and who is out, day-to-day practices, and the recognition or denial of rights (Calavita 2007; Oomen 2020a; Vraști and Dayal 2016). A wide range of rights is at stake in local bordering practices. Some local practices, such as handing out municipal ID cards, strengthen the civil rights of migrants (de Graauw and Vermeulen 2016). They can also be political, enabling migrants to take part in decision-making on their future. Local authorities that provide shelter to irregular migrants strengthen their social rights, such as rights to housing and education (Baumgärtel and Oomen 2019). Ensuring that forced migrants work under decent conditions contributes to their economic rights. Such processes may not lead to universal guarantees but can make the difference between rights realization (or not) of the particular migrants they target. This often amounts to a form of bordering and, by extension, filtering based on assumptions of, for instance, deservingness (Bonizzoni 2020; De Genova 2013).

Out of all the rights concerned, this article focuses on one critical and highly symbolic right: the freedom of movement. The freedom of movement is an enabling right that opens up access to a wide variety of other rights; moving between cities can, for instance, substantially increase economic opportunities. Another is its close relationship to bordering practices. All over Europe, irregular migrants, asylum seekers, and recognized refugees are subjected to spatial restrictions as part of containment and dispersal strategies or reporting requirements (see Slingenberg 2020: 400). Even if the freedom of movement does not entail the right to enter a national territory, it does involve the right to liberty of movement within a territory, including the freedom to choose residence (Article 12.1 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR]) and the freedom to leave any country, including one's own (Article 12.2). Although the ICCPR has been recognized by all European countries, the practical implications of this freedom differ per constitutional dispensation, actual location, person, and over time, as is the case with many human rights in practice (Goodale and Merry 2007).¹

The empirical basis for this article was created in the period of 2017–2020 when we conducted empirical research in various European localities where local migration policies diverge from national ones. Our research covered five countries—Greece, Turkey, the Netherlands, Italy, and Germany—characterized by different governmental and legal structures. As a result, we obtained a database of local authorities that significantly differed in terms of their decision-making and financial powers, size, local socioeconomic context, immigration dynamics, and reception and integration policies. For the purpose of this article, we selected those local authorities with explicit bordering practices in relation to the freedom of movement. On the basis of the legal guarantee outlined in Article 12 of the ICCPR as described above, we deductively constructed three categories corresponding to movement between states, within national territories, and within localities. We then assigned each local authority from our database to one or more of those three categories, which resulted in three types of bordering practices: (1) local authorities and actors “bypassing” formal national borders by facilitating the international mobility of forced migrants through (de facto) resettlement; (2) local authorities and actors strengthening borders of the locality (broadly defined) by explicitly enabling or refusing the freedom of (certain categories of) migrants to move into the locality; and (3) the introduction or removal, within the locality itself, of impediments to the freedom of movement of (certain) migrants.

In a second step, these three types of practices were analyzed from a multiscale perspective, with specific attention paid to the constitution of sociopolitical spheres of practice and the networks of power concerned. We used data from interviews with key stakeholders, such as local public officials and representatives of civil society groups, as well as from legal and policy documents, municipal proceedings, press releases, media publications, and social media posts. The systematic review of the data and the application of open coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990) brought insight into how spatial relationships, power, governance, and narratives of rights interplay in relation to the freedom of movement (Schiller and Çağlar 2011: 7).

The results of this analysis are presented below. However, first, we will take a closer look at local bordering practices, the insights offered by multiscale perspectives, and the lacunas that it holds, particularly in relation to human rights. Subsequently, we discuss the three types of bordering practices as viewed via a multiscale lens, presenting a number of examples from the cases we examined. On this basis, we engage with the three central themes in this special issue: the multiscale bordering practices, which often “filter” migrants; the actors influencing these processes; and the way in which reference to the rights (in this case, the right to freedom of movement) strengthens the discretionary space for the actions of these actors. In concluding how local authorities become “bastions or bulwarks” through various bordering practices, we then point out the importance of the multitude of actors involved; legal pluralism; and the contextual role social, economic, and spatial factors play in such processes.

Local Bordering Practices, Human Rights and Legal Pluralism

As discussed, one of the most striking responses to the increased arrival of refugees in Europe in 2015 came from local authorities. How cities of different sizes and scales developed independent approaches to

the arrival of refugees has reinforced discussions on the “local turn” in migration management (Caponio and Jones-Correa 2017; Zapata-Barrero, Caponio, and Scholten 2017). This applies to (recognized) refugees, but also to irregular migrants, ranging from local authorities restricting arrivals and stay to those pledging to become “shelter cities” or “fearless cities” in their support for those who, formally, have no right to stay (Baumgärtel and Oomen 2019; Spencer and Delvino 2019). In adopting such approaches, local authorities diverge from national policies to steer a more inclusive or more exclusionary course (Ambrosini 2020; Scholten 2016). Policies of inclusion and exclusion are often complementary, interconnected, and mutually dependent, as inclusive measures for specific groups like recognized refugees are premised upon notions of deservingness that include some but exclude others, most notably, irregular migrants (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015: 80).

Bordering as an everyday process of inclusion and exclusion essentially concerns the everyday shaping of citizenship (Calavita 2007; Van Houtum and Van Naerssen 2002). Such citizenship, as set out by Ambrosini et al. (2020: 4), “is not a fact, but a process” as local authorities become involved in creating a type of “city-zenship,” actively shaping legal status and political membership, setting out rights and obligations, and stimulating practices of engagement with a “politics of presence” as a basis for such actions (Bauböck 2020; Darling 2016; Oomen 2020a). A wide variety of state and non-state actors are involved in this process, and the everyday actions of street-level bureaucrats can be as important as formal policies (Ambrosini, Cinalli and Jacobson 2020; Oomen and Leenders 2020). In addition, discursive acts can play a key role in demarcating the difference between welcome and rejection, belonging and alienation, refuge as a right or as a form of temporary relief—a welcome not to be overstayed (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2018).

From a human rights perspective, the object of these practices is often not so much the wholesale drawing up of walls, but rather processes of filtering for different categories of migrants who are allocated different types of rights, with varying spatial and temporal restrictions (Anderson 2013; Bonizzoni 2020). Research on bordering practices shows how these categories often involve a distinction between different degrees of deservingness (Ambrosini 2016; Chauvin and Garcés-Masareñas 2014). This emphasis on deservingness is most clear in relation to social and economic rights and has taken the shape of welfare nationalism, welfare chauvinism, or welfare exclusionism (Bauböck and Scholten 2016; Keskinen 2016). Importantly, Guentner and others (2016) have set out how such bordering practices also play out locally, with local authorities in the UK giving preferential treatment to long-term residents in what could be called “welfare localism.” However, such policies of filtering, as we will demonstrate, do not only concern social and political rights but also civil rights like the freedom of movement.

To be sure, none of these rights are conclusively defined at the international level. While their framework and minimum requirements are formulated in treaties, most of their content is fleshed out in regional, domestic, and even local laws and policies (Oomen and Durmuş 2019). Further, from a sociolegal point of view, what a human right, such as the freedom of movement, means for one particular migrant in one particular place and at a given point in time is influenced by more than the law alone (Oomen and Durmuş 2019). In this context, it is also worth drawing attention to the discursive dimension of bordering, which is shaped by the power play involved in defining the actual content of the freedom of movement. In a situation of legal pluralism, in which different interpretations of the right concerned are possible and even compete, the interplay between actors in networks of power can also foreground certain understandings, either to the detriment or advantage of the migrants concerned (Corradi et al. 2017; Oomen and Durmuş 2019). The agency of actors (including local stakeholders, such as municipalities) is hereby further shaped by the discretionary spaces that they can inhabit (Oomen et al. 2021). Thus, far from considering the state as an “all-powerful and stable constellation of knowledges and practices,” the dynamics involved in the actual practices of defining rights within local “migration states” (Coleman 2012: 183) call for a more fine-grained theoretical approach, which can be found in multiscale perspectives on bordering.

The Need for and Challenges around a Multiscalar Perspective on Bordering

As argued, local authorities do not operate as bounded entities. The “localist” thesis that understands local policies of migration as shaped uniquely by local factors has been criticized by scholars pointing to the relevance of national and international processes (Filomeno 2016). Many have captured this relevance under the heading of *multilevel* governance (Hooghe, Marks, and Marks 2001; Scholten 2016). However, critical social scientists reject the “fixed hierarchy of bounded territorial units”, such as local authorities, provinces, nation-states, and the EU, that the multilevel governance approach implies (Çağlar and Schiller 2018: 10). Instead, they propose *multiscalar* analyses that focus, for instance, on the way in which “socio-spatial spheres of practice . . . are constituted in relationship to each other and within various hierarchies of networks of power” (Çağlar and Schiller 2018: 10). This turn toward multiscalar perspectives is part of a broader proliferation of “scalar thought,” as exemplified by work on multiscalar perspectives on cities and migrants (Çağlar and Schiller 2021), urban scales and sanctuary (Darling and Bauder 2019), and bordering (Laine 2016; Mofette and Pratt 2020).

This “scalar paradigm” presents opportunities but also challenges for theorizing the role of local actors in bordering processes that are worth setting out in further detail. First, the notion “multiscalar” is often used descriptively to refer to a plethora of phenomena, ranging from multiscalar migrant emplacement (Çağlar and Schiller 2018; Meeus et al. 2019) and border politics (Laine 2016) to urban solidarity (Bauder 2021). Moreover, there is only limited scholarship available that analytically and empirically adopts a (comparative) multiscalar perspective on migrants, local authorities (Çağlar and Schiller 2018; Meeus et al. 2019), and bordering.

Multiscalar perspectives on local migration governance generally discard notions of levels of analysis and, especially, “nested concepts of scale that . . . denote a fixed hierarchy of bounded territorial units” (Schiller 2018: 205). However, rather than simply seeing the “global” in the “local” and the “local” in the “global,” they generally understand scale as a relative process of placemaking where scales are imbued with and reproduce power dynamics. The relationships between local actors and other nodes and networks of power should, therefore, be critically assessed, as should the very idea of a bounded local entity.

Multiscalar perspectives on borders further highlight the dynamic character of borderscapes and bordering. This strand of research on multiscalar and polymorphic approaches to borders (Brambilla and Jones 2019; Burrige et al. 2017) also highlights how borders are continuously constructed, reconstructed and deconstructed through “multiple socio-spatially ambiguous processes of b/ordering which disrupt the modern, state-centric geopolitical order as well as its essentialized, fixed and uncontroversial understandings of borders” (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, as cited by Brambilla and Jones 2019: 293).

To be sure, there are also more narrow understandings of the concept “multiscalar,” such as the multiscalar perspective on migrants and cities from Çağlar and Schiller, which draws attention to the mutual constitution of urban regeneration and migrant emplacement (2021: 5). We concur that multiscalar perspectives on migration and bordering benefit from being situated within broader analyses of urban processes, such as urban restructuring (Çağlar and Schiller 2021). However, it is also important to include urban politics of human rights (Roodenburg 2019) in such an analysis. Such an investigation of the role of human rights in bordering processes also resonates with recent calls of scholars to shift the focus on bordering research from crime, criminal law, and crimmigration to broader debates about multiscalar, multi-actor, and multijurisdictional governance of (irregular) migration (Mofette and Pratt 2020).

As concerns the actors involved, our analysis seeks to unpack the wide variety of local actors that shape bordering practices: political parties; municipal departments; local branches of national, European and international agencies; churches; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); migrant organizations; and businesses (Ambrosini, Cinalli, and Jacobson 2020). Beyond the contribution of each of these collective actors to facilitating or obstructing migrant movement, we are also interested in the specific role of the individuals who populate them (Sabchev, Miellet, and Durmuş 2021). Therefore, our analysis also seeks to

elucidate the concrete ways in which mayors, politicians, civil servants, university teachers, church leaders, and migrants themselves shape bordering practices, both practically and discursively.

This article, in sum, adopts a multiscale perspective on local actors and bordering that draws on all these critical reflections on scale. What sets this multiscale perspective on bordering apart from polymorphic, borderscape, and multilevel governance theories is this integration of a critical interrogation of conventional understandings of scale and essentialized notions of statehood. Our multiscale perspective hereby occupies a middle ground between broad and narrow multiscale approaches as it analyzes bordering and freedom of movement within a context of legal pluralism and urban politics. In what follows, we apply this perspective to three types of local bordering practices in relation to the freedom of movement to, on this basis, return to and further develop theory.

Three Types of Local Bordering Practices and the Freedom of Movement

In this section, we elaborate on the three types of bordering practices identified above: (1) local authorities and actors facilitating the (de facto) resettlement of forced migrants from one state to another, thus, “bypassing” formal borders; (2) local authorities and actors enabling or refusing the freedom of (certain categories of) migrants to move into the locality, effectively turning the locality into a “bastion” or a “bulwark”; and (3) the introduction or removal, within the locality itself, of impediments to the freedom of movement of (certain) migrants. For each type of practice, we focus on a number of cases with varying contextual characteristics, highlighting the multitude of actors involved in everyday processes of bordering.

Facilitating the (De Facto) Resettlement of Forced Migrants

The first instance of local bordering occurs when local actors seek to circumvent or bridge restrictive national practices and formal borders by supporting refugee welcome and taking measures to enable forced migrants to move directly from camps and situations of conflict abroad to the (destination) locality. These processes are best understood in reference to the opening of pathways to protection in Europe.

At a symbolic level, a number of European cities have been openly advocating a stronger role of local authorities in migration management, emphasizing the humanitarian character of asylum policies (UNESCO 2016). In 2015, for instance, Palermo’s City Council, under the leadership of Mayor Leoluca Orlando, adopted the *Carta di Palermo*, which calls for a substantial change in migration legislation and recognition of the right to mobility as a human right (City Council of Palermo 2015). A year later, Athens’ Mayor Giorgos Kaminis and Barcelona’s Mayor Ada Colau proposed a relocation scheme for the direct transfer of 100 refugees between the two cities, a plan that was ultimately halted by the Spanish government (Garcés-Masareñas and Gebhardt 2020). Such symbolic actions often include explicit criticism of national policies and take place in the context of city networks (Oomen 2020b).

In a quest for more tangible results, many local actors have also engaged in practical attempts to facilitate the movement of forced migrants between states. While, in some instances, this has brought about conflicts with national authorities, it has resulted in an enhanced collaboration in others. For example, in 2020, Berlin’s senate took legal action against Germany’s Interior Minister Seehofer after he rejected its plan to take in more refugees (City of Berlin 2020). At the same time, a program established by Germany’s Federal Office for Migration and Refugees allows local communities across the country to support the resettlement of refugees if they opt to provide accommodation and integration services for a certain period (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2019).

One of the most prominent European examples of tearing down borders and strengthening the freedom of movement through a bottom-up initiative is the Humanitarian Corridors project developed by the community of Sant’Egidio and other religious organizations (Marazziti 2019). In collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and a number of local civil-society actors, Sant’Egidio

de facto resettles refugees from camps in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and the Greek island of Lesbos to Italy (Sabchev and Baumgärtel 2020). The beneficiaries of the project are initially issued humanitarian visas with limited territorial validity in accordance with Article 25(1)(a) of the EU Visa Code (EC Regulation 810/2009). Once they land in Rome, they apply for international protection and follow an integration program for at least a year, sponsored and delivered entirely by the religious organizations and their local partners. In this way, about 3,000 people have found a safe haven in more than 90 municipalities across Italy since the start of the project in late 2015. Importantly, this example illustrates that national borders are not necessarily torn down by directly confronting and defying the central government or the established legal and policy frameworks, but also through a process of negotiation, collaboration, and use of already available legal tools.

The above examples highlight the multiscalar nature of local authorities' symbolic and practical efforts to enhance refugees' freedom of movement between states. In this respect, localities do not necessarily operate as bounded entities. In some cases, local authorities initiate or support attempts to de facto resettle refugees, while in others, these attempts are advanced by other local actors, such as religious organizations. In some cases, resettlement efforts are marked by a strong conflict, but in others, by a fruitful collaboration with national authorities geared toward the expansion of the local room for discretion in this area. This is in line with recent developments in other European countries, where the expansion of similar local community-based refugee resettlement programs can be either enhanced or undermined by the respective local authorities (Phillimore, Reyes, and Hassan 2020). Therefore, our analysis ultimately points toward the complex interplay between the multitude of actors that collaborate and clash in their attempts to facilitate refugee movement across national borders, driven by their collective and individual (political) interests and their interpretations of existing legal instruments.

Bastions and Bulwarks

Locally, bordering practices often amount to either opening up the imaginary city walls to forced migrants or closing them. As such, localities can become bastions of freedom and inclusion or bulwarks that restrict and exclude. In terms of inclusionary approaches, cities can strengthen the “city-zenship” of those already present in the locality, acting at times as a “shield” against restrictive national laws and policies. A good example is the local mobilization across Italy against the so-called “Security Decree” 113/2018, which put on halt the local registration of asylum seekers, thus, effectively excluding them from locally provided services. A number of local actors (NGOs, grassroots organizations, lawyers) protested against this provision and challenged it in local courts, often receiving the explicit support of the respective local governments. This was the case in Bologna, where, in May 2019, the local civil court ordered the registration of an asylum seeker from Guinea in the municipal registry (Docket No. 5022/2019)—a decision that was publicly celebrated by Mayor Virginio Merola. In the concrete case, the judge explicitly referred to Article 12 of the ICCPR, which guarantees the right to freedom of movement to any individual lawfully present on the territory of the state, including asylum seekers. The issue ultimately reached Italy's constitutional court, which stipulated that the provision of the Security Decree prohibiting the local registration of asylum seekers was unconstitutional.²

The act of registering newcomers, including those considered irregular, often forms a pathway to a wide variety of services. While such policies are often flagged as those of “fearless cities” and contain an element of shaming national governments, there are also many instances of local authorities opting to hide such activities from public and political scrutiny. A large Dutch city, for instance, supplies undocumented migrants with a card that gives free access to public transport to prevent public order issues but also avoids exposure of this practice.³

Just as some localities become bastions, others serve as bulwarks, enacting legal and practical impediments to migrants wishing to move to the place concerned. One such instance comes from Turkey, a country in which the population of many cities has doubled (or more) with the arrival of an estimated four million refugees over recent years. Here, in 2014, the chief of police of the province of Antalya announced that Syrians under temporary protection who were given freedom of movement within Turkey

would not be permitted to enter the province (Uzun 2014). Referring to an unspecified directive from the central government, the chief of police approached the central government to make an exception for the province, as what is known as Turkey's tourism heaven would face an "intense migration wave" otherwise. His request was granted (Uzun 2014). Another instance of Turkish provinces practicing bordering is a declaration by the Governorate of Istanbul, dating from July 2019, that Syrian refugees not registered as beneficiaries of temporary protection would be deported from the city (Tekten 2019).

The Turkish cases, again, underline the multiscale character of the processes concerned and show how the power relations with the national government and other actors critically shape understandings of the law in bordering practices. Local actors are actively involved in shaping the national (or subnational) laws and policies that serve their understanding of the freedom of movement. In Germany, for instance, the Residence Act, in section 12(a), obliges refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection to take up residence within the state where their asylum procedures were completed (AIDA 2018). The act also enables state and local authorities to impose further restrictions to the right to freely take up residence, either via "positive" residency requirements that oblige refugees to reside in a specific municipality or via "negative" residency requirements that prohibit refugees from moving to and settling in specific municipalities (AIDA 2018; Renner 2018). The implementation of such residency requirements differs greatly between federal states in Germany (Renner 2018).

Some local state actors in places like Salzgitter, Delmenhorst, and Wilhelmshaven framed the application of negative residency requirements as necessary for the integration of refugees. They argued that due to a comparably higher number of refugees, their municipalities were facing structural economic difficulties and pressures on local services, such as childcare (AIDA 2018: 199). The application of this negative residency requirement and this restriction of the right to residence of refugees in these localities, while premised on concerns with the long-term integration of refugees, was sometimes contested by other local actors such as civil society groups and in the municipal council by councilors of opposition parties (e.g., in Freiberg).

The positive residency requirement (i.e., the obligation to take up residency in a specific municipality) that this law also enables illustrates how bordering may involve filtering and ideas about deservingness. This form of residency requirement is more common, temporary (maximum period of three years), and can be lifted in specific circumstances, such as a change in job (Renner 2018: 11). The law grants considerable discretion to municipalities to lift this restriction for humanitarian reasons. This emphasis on one's ability to arrange for a sufficient income means that these restrictions are unevenly distributed, affecting those who are already experiencing precarity. The right to freely seek residency for recognized refugees, in this instance, becomes increasingly contingent on one's ability to secure a sufficient income and, thus, subject to ideas about deservingness and neoliberal subjectivity.

In all, the creation of virtual bastions of bulwarks is not the work of the local actors alone but often involves multiscale processes that—even where the object is the inclusion of some—leads to the exclusion of others. Negotiating the actual content of the freedom of movement in a situation of legal pluralism forms an important stake in this interplay.

Intracity Impediments

A third manifestation of bordering practices that involves local actors concerns both physical and social impediments put up, or broken down, within a given locality, again serving as filters or antidotes against them.

To begin with, the Greek municipality of Larissa illustrates how local actors can break down barriers, enhance the freedom of movement of refugees, and secure their right to healthcare, even in a context where refugee reception is an exclusive competency of the central state. In 2016, a reception center was opened by the Greek government in an old military site within Larissa's municipal territory, about 20 km away from the urban center. In combination with the limited and expensive public transport, this "out of

sight, out of mind” solution, which was the *modus operandi* of the central government during that period, effectively cut off the refugees from a range of publicly provided services available in the city (Lohmüller 2016). To address the emerging issues, the municipal government, in collaboration with the local hospital, arranged a vehicle that transported the refugees who needed medical assistance to the clinics free of charge. In addition, the local authorities provided accommodation in the municipal shelter for female victims of violence and a number of pregnant refugee women residing in the camp, effectively securing them decent living conditions in the pre- and postnatal period. In doing this, the municipal authorities largely sidelined the national regulations governing the access to these facilities at the time. Finally, the partners of the women concerned were also provided temporary accommodation in the municipal shelter for the homeless, thus, being given the opportunity to remain close. The example of Larissa stands in stark contrast with other parts of Greece, where municipal authorities decided not to engage in any activities related to the local presence of refugees, leaving many forced migrants with very limited opportunities to access urban centers and the services available there.

Another instance of local actors countering national bordering orders comes from the city of Utrecht, where municipal actors sought to develop an alternative approach to asylum seeker reception centers that recognizes the importance of one’s residence for access to other rights such as education. Utrecht’s policy advisors describe regular Dutch asylum-seeker centers as “border camps” that defy municipal control because they are operated by centralized Dutch reception authorities. Although they lacked formal competencies in refugee reception, Utrecht’s policy advisors developed an alternative approach through their “Plan Einstein” project, which brought about an asylum seeker center that provided more municipal control over reception conditions and allowed them to mitigate spatial exclusion resulting from peri-urban locations of regular reception facilities. In the center, 38 young locals lived in a building of a local housing company adjacent to the asylum center, which, over the course of the project, housed 400 refugees. The idea underpinning this EU-funded project was that cohousing, co-learning, and common open spaces counter social-spatial exclusion and enable integration of the asylum center within the neighborhood. In this process, Utrecht’s policy advisors drew on the city’s experience as a human rights city and coalition of local human rights organizations. In the spirit of this tradition, the project also protected the right to education by ensuring early access to “future-proof” education for locals, residents, and other refugees in the city. Utrecht’s policy-makers also sought to develop a socially deprived neighborhood in this project together with civil society groups and social enterprises. The project garnered international attention and helped the municipality further position itself as a pioneer of progressive migration governance internationally (see Geuijen et al. 2020). In this instance, bordering practices are, therefore, also linked to urban and neighborhood development and city branding.

Instances of borders within a locality breaking down can easily be contrasted with examples of how these are shored up in each of the countries researched. In the Netherlands, for instance, the mayor of Nijmegen in 2016 imposed a restraining order on 15 persons (asylum seekers from safe countries, such as Algeria), prohibiting them from entering the city’s center (AD 2017). In other localities, such as Weert, Venray, and Heerlen, mayors decided to impose a 24-hour house arrest on a number of asylum seekers who had previously been involved in acts that disturbed public order. This decision to impose house arrest instead of a restraining order for a specific zone received considerable criticism and scrutiny. A house arrest issued by the mayor of Weert as part of an emergency order, for instance, was investigated by the public prosecutor and found to be unlawful as it “tested” and “exceeded” the limits of the law (Openbaar Ministerie 2017).

Thus, as are the cases of facilitating (de facto) resettlement and formation of bastions or bulwarks, intracity impediments are always subject to a tug and pull between different actors with different competencies and influence in a multiscale context. One example illustrating this comes from the touristic Turkish municipality of Gazipaşa, Antalya, where the city council passed a motion banning Syrians from entering the beaches so that they would not “disturb other beachgoers” (Bulut 2019). The motion was promoted by a representative of the center-left Republican People’s Party (CHP) and adopted with the votes of parties generally supportive of individual rights and in opposition to Erdogan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP). However, the mayor, likewise a CHP member, first abstained and later vetoed the vote, citing

considerations of nondiscrimination and human rights, claiming they were particularly important for the tourist destination (Gunaydin 2019). The centrally appointed governor of Gazipaşa reacted that only the central government, not the municipality, had the authority to make decisions concerning access to beaches. The city council, reconsidering the issue, voted against the ban, which was not sponsored by the mayor's CHP anymore (Gazipaşa Manşet Gazetesi 2019). In the deliberations, a sponsor of the ban argued that this was “not a question of human rights” that Gazipaşa was a tourist destination that should never have been “opened to Syrians” (Gazipaşa Manşet Gazetesi 2019). An AKP representative pointed out the impropriety of banning Syrians from the beach when Turkish men were hiring Syrians for low wages and marrying their women.

In this instance, we can see how a bordering practice is shaped and contested within a multi-actor and multiscalar context. Local political actors can position themselves in relation to national politics, leading even to ideological inconsistency. Further, proximity to nodes of power shapes what actors can or cannot do, creating or reducing spaces of discretion, for instance, to filter between those welcome on Antalya's beaches and those to be shunned. The focus on international tourism with Antalya as a “global hub” for a particular group of people (wealthy tourists) created space for the initial ban. Factors such as social impropriety, legal competencies, and reference to human rights gave actors the space to contest and ultimately reject the bordering.

Discussion and Conclusion

After the increases in refugee arrivals in 2015, local authorities all over Europe came to engage in bordering practices understood as processes of inclusion and exclusion. This article used a multiscalar perspective to identify three types of local bordering practices concretely in relation to the freedom of movement. More specifically, a wide range of local actors became involved in (1) processes of “external” bordering, (2) “internal” bordering in the sense of the creation of bastions or bulwarks, or (3) through intracity bordering. By means of laws, policies, but also discursive practices, the actors involved sought to carve out discretionary spaces to realize the rights of some and negate those of others. After considering these processes, this article draws attention to four characteristics of local practices that inform the theoretical discussions in this special issue.

First, the cases presented highlight the agency of local actors involved, which we use as a shorthand for a myriad of public and private, individual and collective actors participating in the bordering practices. The examples of the Greek municipality of Larissa and the Dutch city of Utrecht show how local state actors—often in collaboration with civil society organizations and social enterprises—mitigate the spatial exclusion or “dislocation” (Burridge and Gill 2017) of asylum seekers and refugees. This spatial exclusion, in turn, results from bordering processes that involve centralized reception authorities (in both countries) or that are shaped by national regulations, notably in Greece. They also resonate with recent work on “institutional border politics” that foregrounds the involvement of local political representatives in bordering (Fernández-Bessa 2019). Debates on residency requirements in German municipal councils and on access to the beach in the Turkish municipality of Gazipaşa, conversely, show how bordering processes are contested locally between different municipal actors or between state actors and civil society groups. Next, the cases show the degree to which bordering practices involve negotiation, interpretation, or even formulation of specific rights and their normative content in the context of legal pluralism. The legal contestation of national policies by local authorities in Palermo and Berlin are two cases in point, as is the (more informal) provision of accommodation and basic services in Larissa. Common to all these efforts is that they are geared toward foregrounding certain understandings of the freedom of movement, as well as related human rights and the downplaying of others. In this context, bordering practices are also linked to broader urban processes, as is illustrated by programs that couple migrant-welcoming to urban regeneration or hamper migrant mobility to maintain tourism.

Relatedly, our analysis points toward different “urban border spaces” (Fauser 2019) and their link to broader political and economic urban processes. Our examples of the contestation of bordering in and around asylum seeker centers in Greece and the Netherlands resonates with typologies of urban border

spaces and empirical work on peri-urban camps of transit and detention and inner-city asylum and removal centers (Isin and Rygiel 2007). However, the example from Gazipaşa of bordering on Antalya's beaches and, to some degree, Utrecht's Plan Einstein shelter do not fit into categorizations of "urban border spaces" (Fauser 2019; Isin and Rygiel 2007). They point toward the need to broaden the scope to bordering in everyday spaces (see Yuval-Davis et al. 2019) and to investigate further if "narrower" multiscale perspectives, such as that of Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2018), are more productive to analyze how bordering practices are shaped by broader urban processes and politics. Our analysis identified instances in which local efforts to mitigate bordering effects were linked to the restructuring of stigmatized neighborhoods (Utrecht) or urban restructuring in a tourist city (Antalya).

The fourth characteristic of these local practices is that they are not usually about erecting borders as such but about filtering between those deemed worthy of a local welcome and those who are undeserving. The community sponsorship programs and humanitarian corridors that have gained momentum in Europe have predominantly resulted in the arrival of families and vulnerable refugees. The German example of the residence restriction for recognized refugees favored those who easily find employment. The Turkish discussion was exclusively about Syrians and desired and undesired forms of mobility in a tourism hub. While these instances point toward meritocratic and even neoliberal understandings of deservingness, a suggestion for future research is to investigate how this filtering may interact with processes of gendering and racialization in bordering practices.

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Correspondence: Professor Barbara Oomen, Utrecht University School of Law and University College Roosevelt, Simpelhuisstraat 12, 4331 PH, Middelburg, Netherlands. b.oomen@ucr.nl

¹ It is also laid down in article 2 of protocol no. 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which was not ratified by Greece, Switzerland, and Turkey.

² See Judgement 186 of the Italian Constitutional Court from 9 July 2020 (ECLI:IT:COST:2020:186) https://www.cortecostituzionale.it/actionSchedaPronuncia.do?param_ecli=ECLI:IT:COST:2020:186.

³ Example provided by a lawyer, March 2018

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