

UGRG Book Review Series urban-geography.org.uk

*Cities and Labour Immigration – Comparing Policy Responses in Amsterdam, Paris, Rome and Tel Aviv.* By Michael Alexander. Hampshire, UK and Burlington, USA: Ashgate, 2007. 242 pages. £55.00 (Hardback)

Outstanding and up-to-date, Michael Alexander fulfils a major gap by comprehensively reviewing one of the most salient policy issues in Europe today - *local policy responses to labour migration*. This book has shown that beyond the particular conditions of any city, municipal policy responses to labour migration are comparable, indeed, are often similar. It is the first book to compare labour migration policies of veteran immigrant cities with newly labour immigrant cities on the basis of a self-created typology of policy attitudes in various issue areas. The author provides readers with admirable synthesis of *Host-Stranger relations* in Amsterdam, Paris, Rome, and Tel Aviv.

This book reflects decades of municipality responses in selected cities, with different experiences in what could be referred to as *management of ethnic diversity*, so as to highlight possibilities and pitfalls open to policymakers in more recent stages of migrant settlement. The policy challenge posed by labour migrant settlement extends beyond the problems of adequate housing, education and so forth. Local authorities must deal with an increasingly diverse population, where ethnicity and religion often parallel socio-economic cleavages. The concentration of labour immigrants in cities, and within cities in particular (usually poor) neighbourhoods, creates specifically local *problems* as well as *opportunities*. Local inhabitants may react to this migrant settlement with acceptance, indifference, fear or hostility. Friendly reactions occur when residents do not feel threatened by the *Otherness* of the newcomers. Hostile reactions occur when residents perceive migrant settlement as an invasion of *Strangers*. I would fully agree with the author's statement, that local responses to the presence of immigrants reveal (often implicit) *expectations* and *attitudes* of municipal policy-makers as well as host societies towards foreign workers, ethnic minorities and other *Strangers*. States based on political and cultural community are often "*assimilationist*" towards newcomers (e.g. France), while states defining themselves as multi-cultural societies (historically, settler states such as the US, Canada and the UK) tend to be "*pluralist*" in regard to immigrants. As it can be clearly understood from the author's message, these *ideal* models of state immigration policies may lead to reproduction of *national stereotypes and assumptions about the national-state* and do not necessarily coincide with real local policy approaches developed on the basis of specific needs. Whether municipalities tend to address specific migrant needs or deliberately ignore them depends principally on phases of labour migration and the Host-Stranger relations expectation of host society with regard to the possible return of labour migrants.

The new era of globalization stimulates the role of local authorities in the increasingly important interfaces of different scales of governance. Decisions taken in city halls affect not only the receiving end of these global movements of people; they may also affect the points of origin, as chain migration links migrants from a particular village in Africa or Asia to a specific neighbourhood in Brussels or Montreuil. Dealing with ethnic diversity is no longer limited to the traditional "*gateway cities*". In Europe alone, hundreds of towns and cities now host a significant proportion of foreign-born and second-generation immigrant populations. That is why for those actively involved in shaping local migrant policies, particularly in new immigrant cities, cross-city

comparison is worth the effort. To operationalize the link between *Host-Stranger relations* and local migrant policies, the author proposes a typology that classifies policies in specific domains and issue areas according to local authority attitudes towards labour migrants. This classification provides readers with a comparative and insightful account of the policy responses across various thematic areas (*Legal-political, Socio-economic, Cultural-religious domain, and Spatial*). I would greatly welcome the author's idea to enrich the proposed classification of policy types (Non-policy, Assimilationist policy, Guestworker policy, and Pluralist policy) with the fifth type of local policy response currently occurring in ever increasing numbers of cities, i.e. Intercultural policy. Intercultural response, as it has been said by the author, represents a reaction to the apparent failings of pluralist policies (that tend to encourage communal-rather than individual-based integration). Recent researchers reveal that it is the best way to contribute to the development of a real social cohesion in the society. Elaboration of the typology of policy types implemented in various issue areas does not only serve to compare local situation in different states, but it may also help policy-makers to elaborate long-term strategies for labour migrant settlement that would be most appropriate in the given period of time. What could already be seen from previous local experience in migration-related issues, effective policies of diversity management, could be achieved by involvement of a wide range of partners into the policy-making process, intensification of inter-cultural dialogue, valorization of the cultural diversity of migrants, and acquisition of *intercultural competence* by migrants as well as representatives of host societies themselves. Acquisition of intercultural competence of representatives of host societies could finally help to deal with diversity management issues without prevailing taboos and stereotypes.

On the basis of the typology made by the author, stakeholders could start to discuss new strategies that would fit in postmodern multicultural societies. These strategies should include the following tasks: reinforcement of the valorization of competences of the target groups; valorization of existing socio-cultural differences between labour migrants and representatives of the majority, which would bring more benefits than a simple compensation for the possible socio-economic disadvantages of migrants; incorporation of intercultural management into political strategies and the development of intercultural competence within local actors; stimulation of exchange of experience with regard to diversity management at local level. The author's typology of local policy reactions in diverse cities makes a stimulating contribution to our understanding of *what, how* and *why* of local responses of local migrant policies. It provokes also a reflection on future strategies of diversity management in veteran labour immigrant cities as well as those that have only recently joined the *club* of labour immigrant destination cities. This book will be essential reading for decision-makers, and it is also important for students of migration of immigrants, and, indeed, anyone who wants to understand one of the *burning issues of our times*.

*Andrea Gerstnerova*  
*Charles University, Prague*

Posted online: 9 August 2007