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Immigration, international mobilization and local
governance in post-industrial cities:
Turin and Saint-Etienne compared

Tiziana Caponio and Anthony Clément

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Abstract

This working paper addresses the topic of cities' trajectories of participation in Transnational City Networks (TCNs) on migration-related issues to identify factors and mechanisms of mobilisation. We present the results of a qualitative study on Turin (Italy) and Saint-Etienne (France). Both cities started to mobilise internationally in the 1990s on the initiative of entrepreneurial mayors. Yet, throughout the 2000s, they took opposite paths. In Turin, intense participation until 2014 was followed by partial dis-involvement and then, since 2018, by renewed activism. Saint-Etienne started to distance itself in 2008 and has not actively participated since then. We show how in the case of Turin, internationalisation has been driven by the engagement of network professionals' personal relations in boundary-spanning work, i.e. in establishing connections between public and non-public actors and between the local and international spheres. Such dynamics are absent in the case of Saint-Etienne, where mobilisation in TCNs on migration has always been mayors-centred.

Keywords

Transnational city networks; French and Italian cities comparison; immigrant integration; mayors; local networks.

Introduction

The internationalisation of cities and involvement in transnational networks is considered a positive turn in the governance of contemporary global challenges, immigration included. Scholars and political analysts like Benjamin Barber (2013) have no doubts that if mayors ruled the world, pragmatism would prevail over ideology. This argument resonates with the emerging literature on cities' international involvement on migration issues, which emphasises the cities' quest for knowledge and pragmatic solutions (Penninx 2015; Oomen 2019).

However, empirical evidence is still scarce. The few available studies tend to concentrate on processes of initial mobilisation. While analyses of trajectories of participation in TCNs on migration over longer periods of time are still lacking (for a partial exception see: Caponio 2018). Yet, such a 'longue durée' perspective would enrich our knowledge on the factors that favour or constrain activism in international networking initiatives, on migration and in other areas.

To this end, in this article we present an explorative study of Turin (Italy) and Saint-Etienne (France). These cities underwent a similar path of international mobilisation at the beginning of the 1990s, on the initiative of two mayors, Valentino Castellani and Michel Thiollière respectively. Yet, throughout the 2000s, the two cities followed opposite trajectories: in Turin, intense participation until 2014 was followed by a phase of partial dis-involvement and then, since 2018, by renewed activism. Saint-Etienne, on the other hand, started to distance itself in 2008 and has not actively participated since then. Through an in-depth, qualitative analysis of the two cities' modes of participation in the main TCNs on migration in the last three decades, we aim to identify the key factors and mechanisms which account for their different trajectories. Our findings question the thesis of the primacy of mayors' political leadership while drawing attention to different modes of mobilisation in TCNs on migration. This includes a more mayor-oriented approach in Saint-Etienne, and a more open and outward-oriented approach in Turin. Contrary to Saint-Etienne, since the early 1990s, mobilisation on migration in Turin has relied upon a strong coalition between the local government and non-public stakeholders. This includes both Catholic organisations providing basic assistance and more entrepreneurial civil society movements supporting internationalisation projects on the issue (Davico, Pastore and Ronca 1998; Caponio, Ponzio and Ricucci 2016). This latter configuration seems to have enabled the emergence of networks' professionals on migration. They engaged their personal relations in boundary-spanning work by establishing connections between public and non-public actors and between the local and international policy spheres. Boundary-spanning work (William 2002; Agranoff 2012, 2018) emerges as a key mechanism in accounting for Turin's participation in the main TCNs on migration, even in the lack of strong political leadership on the matter.

The article is organised as follows. In the first section, we briefly review the literature on the link between cities' international mobilisation on migration and mayoral leadership. As we shall see, there is still a lack of proper understanding of the factors and mechanisms which account for trajectories of (non)participation beyond the phase of initial mobilisation. In the second section, we present our case studies and provide methodological details. Hence, the third section is dedicated to the analytical reconstruction of the trajectories of participation in TCNs on migration of the cities of Turin and Saint-Etienne. In the fourth section, we discuss the research findings in terms of similarities and differences in the trajectories of the two cities. In the conclusion, we identify possible future research paths on cities' transnational engagement on the contentious migration issue and further elaborate on the importance of networks' professionals and boundary-spanning.

'Entrepreneurial' mayors, TCNs and the migration challenge. A critical review

Since the late 1980s and throughout the following decades, the internationalisation of local politics has drawn increasing interest from scholars in different disciplines. Political geographers and economists

have looked at this emerging paradiplomacy (Aldecoa and Keating 1999; Tavares 2016) as reflecting cities' increased investments in international relations in the context of economic globalisation and processes of rescaling of political power (Brenner 2004; Leitner 2004). In the EU context, cities' international activities have been linked to reform of the EC structural funds and the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 (Hooghe and Marks 2001; Dossi 2017).

Such mobilisation on the international scene has been reinforced by institutional reforms devolving powers and competence to subnational authorities (Goldsmith 1993). This is sometimes in combination with the direct election of mayors, as is the case in Italy (Artioli 2016). Local government scholars have emphasised the emergence of so called 'entrepreneurial mayors', embodying a new conception of local policy centred on economic development and strategic urban planning rather than on the management of public services (Harvey 1989). Studies have been carried out in different cities such as Lyon (Bardet and Jouve 1999), Saint-Etienne (Béal and Pinson 2014), Manchester (Quilley 1999; Pinson 2007), Baltimore (Ponzini and Rossi 2010), Barcelona (Marshall 1996), and Turin and Venice (Pinson 2002, 2007). For Béal and Pinson (2014), entrepreneurial mayors build political legitimacy primarily through the mobilisation of resources and the structuring of coalitions of stakeholders for the realisation of urban projects, rather than through the mobilisation of their electoral constituency. This detachment from the contingencies of local politics is contested by authors who focus more on local relations of power (see e.g. Douillet and Lefebvre 2017). However, the idealised image of mayors as pragmatic 'problem-solvers' seems to prevail in policy analysts' accounts of 'cosmopolitan or global mayors'. According to Barber (2013), these leaders are more interested in finding solutions to cities' global challenges than in just debating them.

As is clear, existing literature and expert debates regard city activism at an international level as a positive development for at least three reasons. Firstly, it increases the economic competitiveness of the city, attracting new investments and opportunities of development. It opens up access to new resources in terms of funding, knowledge exchange and policy learning. Finally, it contributes to the emergence of a pragmatic view on global challenges contrasting nation-states' ideological inconclusiveness.

The few existing studies on cities' participation in TCNs on migration-related issues somehow echo these three theses. First of all, economic strategies of city branding and marketing of diversity have been shown to underlie the international mobilisation on migration in different cities such as Copenhagen (Bak Jørgensen 2012), Amsterdam, Antwerp and Leeds (Schiller 2016), Barcelona, Dublin and Vienna (Hadj-Abdou and Geddes 2017). Secondly, scholars point out how TCNs enable cities to join forces in order to get access to European funding and learn from each other on how to better deal with the complexity of the migration issue (Penninx 2015). Last but not least, regarding local pragmatism, scholars have drawn attention to how local political leaders in different countries, either aldermen or mayors, have mobilised on the European (Scholten et al. 2018) and/or international scene (Oomen 2019) to denounce and downplay the ideological inconclusiveness of national governments.

However, if these lines of interpretation clearly point out the benefits of engaging in the international arena, they do not help us to understand why all cities do not show the same interest and level of participation (see in this SI by the contribution of Fourot, Flamant and Healy). Literature on local migration policy provides some hints in this respect. First of all, not all mayors show a problem-solving attitude on migration, and politicisation is also likely to occur (see e.g. Mahnig 2004; Ambrosini and Boccagni 2015; Ambrosini 2020; Filomeno 2017 for a review on the USA). Secondly, mayors, even when positively oriented towards internationalisation, are likely to face various constraints. With respect to Lyon and Marseille, Downing (2015 and 2016) shows that participation to European initiatives like the Intercultural Cities network can contribute to cities' efforts to redefine, bottom-up, the contested notion of difference. Yet, contradictory messages of exclusion and austerity policies at a national level considerably limit the impact of such a mobilisation. In the case of Italian cities, it has been pointed out that there is a more general lack of familiarity and unpreparedness to European policymaking in the traditional bureaucratic apparatus (Caponio 2018).

Building on these insights, in this article we aim to develop our understanding of the mechanisms that account for participation in TCNs in the migration policy field. We challenge the thesis of mayors' entrepreneurial agency, since this can be flawed by electoral considerations. We argue instead that the mobilisation of internationalisation resources and the establishment of stakeholders coalitions on migration are more likely to happen when local administrations can rely upon networks' professionals. Stakeholder coalitions can be seen as cooperative networks between the public and non-public actors mobilised on a specific issue. However, such local networks, while representing a key resource for local administrations' integration policies, do not necessarily go international. To this end, network professionals, who also have a background of activism in locally based NGOs and solid relations with international institutions and organisations mobilising on migration, are of key importance.

Following William (2002), they are people who use their personal relations in 'spanning-boundaries' between levels and types of organisations, i.e. local-international and public-private. Public administration scholars (William 2002; Agranoff 2012) have conceptualised boundary-spanning work as an adaptive response of public administrations to deal with new challenges. This includes migration and emerging social needs in the context of changing modes of public intervention, from government to governance. Establishing close collaborations with nongovernmental actors with an expertise in specific topics and contacts at a grassroots level is regarded as crucial. It ensures satisfactory levels of service provision and promotes policy innovation. Most research has focused on local systems of governance and relations between public and non-public actors (for a review see: Agranoff 2018, 177-181). With respect to the migration policy field for instance, Schiller (2016) notes how 'diversity officers... act as brokers between the state and civil society' (8). In this article we take a broader, multilevel perspective, and conceive boundary-spanning as taking place not only on the horizontal dimension of state-society relations, but also on the vertical dimension of local/international relations.

In contrast to public management scholars though, we do not assume any spontaneous or inevitable evolution of public officials into boundary-spanning managers. Rather, we contend that it is necessary to understand the factors that account for the emergence of such figures. Through an in-depth analysis of trajectories of participation in TCNs on migration in two European cities, in the following sections, we aim to unravel these factors. We will also advance our knowledge on the mechanisms that drive cities' international participation even when there is no strong political leadership which is interested in taking action in the migration policy field.

Comparing two 'internationalized' post-industrial cities: case selection and methods

To develop our understanding of trajectories of cities participation in TCNs on migration, this article focuses on the experience of two European cities: Saint-Etienne, in the South-East of France, and Turin, in the North-West of Italy. The two cities cannot be considered as representative of the respective countries, nor of European cities more generally. Nevertheless, Turin and Saint-Etienne represent critical or crucial cases (Eckstein 1975; Gerring 2017) since they provide 'crucial insights into the phenomenon or causal configuration of interest' (Krehl and Weck 2019, 11), i.e. municipalities' internationalisation strategies on migration-related issues.

In fact, the two cities present both similarities and differences under various respects. With respect to the latter, Table 1 shows the key differences in terms of demography and migration background. French industrial cities like Saint-Etienne already welcomed foreign workers mainly from Northern Africa during WW1, and then from Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 2000s. In contrast, the arrival of the first migrants in Turin dates back only to the end of the 1970s and early 1980s. In the beginning, migrants arrived primarily from Morocco, followed in the 1990s by Latin Americans and in the last two decades by Eastern Europeans, mainly Romanians. In more recent years though, both cities show a similar ratio of foreigners within the resident population. [Table 1 near here]

However, notwithstanding these differences, Saint-Etienne and Turin show remarkable similarities in terms of trajectories from the secondary to the tertiary sector. This was a transition characterising them both as post-industrial cities. Both cities based their economy on industrial activities during the 19th and first 20th centuries, i.e. coal and manufacturing in Saint-Etienne, and the car industry in Turin. The crisis of the 1970s and 1980s led to a dramatic downsizing of industrial production and the restructuring of economic structures in both cities. It is in this context that in the early 1990s the two cities underwent similar processes of urban renovation and development on the initiative of two entrepreneurial mayors, i.e. Valentino Castellani, elected mayor in Turin in 1993, and Michel Thiollière, elected in Saint-Etienne in 1995.

It is in this context that migration became a topic of international mobilisation. Since the 1990s, both local governments had been promoting various types of actions aimed at favouring migrants' integration, e.g. housing, employment, social policies (on Saint-Etienne see: Bencharif 2002; on Turin: Davico, Pastore and Ronca 1998). In an attempt to raise the city profile at an international level and favour a smooth post-industrial recovery, both cities sought to engage positively with migrants' diversity. To this end, they started to participate in various transnational networks on the issue, as we shall see below. However, in contrast to the striking similarity in the process of initial mobilisation, divergent trajectories of development followed. This raises unanswered questions on the factors and mechanisms which account for cities' international mobilisation on the politically sensitive migration issue.

In fact, as we shall see below, Turin has always showed a high level of engagement in multiple TCNs related to migration, especially under the two successors of Castellani, i.e. Sergio Chiamparino (2001-2011) and Piero Fassino (2011-2016) who both represented centre-left political majorities. In contrast, Saint-Etienne already started to disengage in 2008. To make sense of these different paths, we carried out two in-depth case studies based on the triangulation of different sources: qualitative interviews; official documents (see the list in the Appendix); websites; social networks (notably Facebook pages) when they are frequently used by mayors and their communication staff; and local newspapers etc. We conducted 20 semi-structured interviews between February 2018 and May 2019, including with current and former local elected representatives; municipal civil servants in social affairs and international relations departments; and representatives from NGOs.¹ All the interviews were transcribed and qualitative content analysis has been used to identify the most relevant quotes for the reconstruction of the trajectories of cities' participation in TCNs on migration, from genesis to present. In the case of Turin, we also rely upon research which had been previously published on the city's participation in TCNs on migration related issues (Caponio 2018).

Urban mobilizations in TCNs on migration: objectives, strategies and trajectories

Keeping a European stature on migration issues: local networks and internationalisation in Turin

In 1993, Valentino Castellani, Professor of Engineering and Deputy Dean of the *Politecnico di Torino*, became mayor of Turin with the support of a centre-left coalition. As a novice politician, he was successful in promoting internationalisation through the mobilisation of a composite local network, including the chamber of commerce, catholic organisations, NGOs, academics and the main banking foundations (Pinson 2002; Dente, Bobbio and Spada 2005). Since then, the trajectory of participation of

¹ More specifically, 13 interviews were carried out in Saint-Etienne and 10 in Turin. The majority of the interviews (18) in the two cities have been conducted between February and June 2018 by Anthony Clément for his MA thesis titled "Les politiques municipales d'accueil et d'intégration au prisme des réseaux de villes européens. Une comparaison entre Saint-Etienne et Turin (2000-2018)". The fieldwork in Turin has been completed by Tiziana Caponio in January-June 2019 and has included participant observation to a Thematic Event of the network Intercultural Cities, held in Turin on June 18-19th 2019.

the city in TCNs on migration has developed in five phases: 1) initial activation through the building of infrastructure on international relations (1993-1997); 2) consolidation and investment in TCNs on matters of urban regeneration (1998-2006); 3) fragmentation of participation in TCN on migration-related issues (2007-2014); 4) partial dis-engagement (2015-2016); and 5) new engagement (2017-ongoing).

As described elsewhere (Caponio 2018, 2062), to build an infrastructure on international relations, mayor Castellani renovated the International Relations staff by recruiting young officers and advisors with an expertise on European projects and funding, and of stakeholder mobilisation in the private sector and civil society. The roundtables launched in 1997 to prepare the ‘Strategic Plan for the Promotion of International Turin’ in view of the candidacy for the 2006 Winter Olympic Games, gathered together the two main banking foundations of the city the CRT (Cassa di Risparmio di Torino, Turin Savings Bank) and the Compagnia di San Paolo (Intesa-San Paolo Bank). It also included the Chamber of Commerce, the trade unions, entrepreneurial associations, cultural associations, and NGOs etc. (document TO1). In this initial phase, mobilisation in TCNs focused on urban development and only indirectly on migration. Between 1993 and 1997 Turin took presidency of the network ‘Quartier-en-crise’, to which the city had contributed as founding member in 1989 (document TO2, 29).

The second phase is marked by the consolidation of the international relations infrastructure and by an increased activism in urban regeneration networks. On the first point, in 2000 the municipality contributed to the founding of the association ‘International Turin’ (*Torino Internazionale*), which institutionalised the broad coalition of actors mobilised by Castellani (document TO4, 3). With respect to TCNs, in this period urban regeneration represented the top priority, as was highlighted by its participation in the Economic Development and Urban Regeneration Committee of Eurocities; in the European Forum for Urban Security; and in Quartier-en-crise (document TO2, 28-36). This mobilisation had been encouraged by the EU funded Urban Pilot Project ‘The Gate’ (2,500,000 Euros) since 1998, which targeted the Porta Palazzo area, a traditional migration neighbourhood.² Furthermore, in 1999 mayor Valentino Castellani joined the Euromed Working Group of Eurocities, with the goal of lobbying EU institutions on the role of cities in the Mediterranean Area. This became a major topic of the city’s international engagement during the mayorship of Sergio Chiamparino (2001-2011), who chaired Euromed in 2005-2006.³

Starting from 2006, mobilisation of the city around migration expanded and became more fragmented. Urban regeneration remained high on the agenda. For example, in November 2006 (and until 2009), the city took again the presidency of Quartier-en-Crise, and was constantly involved in various projects linked to the EU Urbact programme like Regenera (document TO5, 51-52). At the same time, the Social Policy Department also became increasingly involved. The Foreigners and Immigrants Office became the main referent of the Roma Group of Eurocities and of the Cities for Local Integration Policy (CLIP) network, coordinated by Stuttgart and funded by Eurofund (Caponio 2018, 2063). However, these initiatives were poorly coordinated with each other. In fact, international mobilisation responded to two different logics of action. The Social Policy Department engaged upon the request of the International Relations Department even though officials, primarily social workers, always showed scepticism on the ‘usefulness’ of international initiatives. As for urban regeneration, a key role was played by the Urban Affairs and Integration Deputy Mayor, Ilda Curti, who was appointed in June 2006 (Caponio 2018, 2065). Curti was previously Officer at the European Parliament and then Chair of the Steering Committee, ‘The Gate’, which was the project she had actively contributed to draft as member of Castellani’s International Relations’ staff. She emerged as a key example of network professional. In fact, she was able to use her experience in an international institution, like the European Parliament, to promote the internationalisation of the extended civil society organisations’ network which supported

² The project was co-funded by the municipality, the national government, the CRT and Compagnia di San Paolo foundations (these latter with a grant of 250,000 Euros each: document TO2, 32).

³ City of Turin website, <http://www.comune.torino.it/relint/euromed/euromed.shtml> (last access: October 2019).

the regeneration of the Porta Palazzo area. In this process, she was able to connect the city to European debates on intercultural policies. In 2009, Turin joined the Italian network of the Intercultural City Programme (ICC) of the Council of Europe.

The expansion of the city's international agenda came to a halt in 2015, towards the end of Mayor Fassino's administration. After the presentation of the Third Strategic Plan of Urban Development (document TO6), the association 'International Turin' was discontinued.⁴ With respect to TCNs, the International Relations department undertook a process of 'spending review' to check for the economic value of membership,⁵ and on this basis, affiliation with Quartier-en-Crise (renamed LUDEN) was revoked. This 'rationalisation' was completed by the Five Star Movement's Executive, elected in June 2016, which had always had a critical attitude towards the costs of internationalisation.⁶ Yet the process clearly started before and was made compelling by increasing constraints on the city budget as well as by the negative impact of the global financial crisis on the local banking foundations (document TO7).

In 2018 though, the municipality started to mobilise again in the main European networks on migration, following logics similar to those described above during the centre-left period. In fact, also under the new Executive, competence over migration was split between the Social Policy department, which is responsible for matters of social assistance such as Roma camps and asylum seekers' reception; and the Rights and Citizenship department, which covers a broad spectrum of issues, including the coordination of policies for 'multiculturality and integration of new citizens'.⁷ Remarkably, each department shows a different attitude towards participation in international initiatives, i.e. sceptical in the first case, and more open and pro-active in the second.

'Good Practices are always good and, as he [the Head of the Immigrants and Foreigners' Office] has just said, it is interesting to participate in such exchanges... Yet, often the presented practices can be hardly transferred elsewhere because of budget shortages, different contexts etc. All this considered, I prefer to focus on concretely solving problems. In this city we have the fortune of having partners, such as the banking foundations, that provide key resources in order to face the main issues on the ground' (interview with the Social Policy Deputy Mayor, June 23rd, 2018).

'At the beginning I was a bit sceptical... But then I got convinced: international exchanges can make a difference. I conceive intercultural policies as an instrument for strengthening participation in the public sphere, eliminating racism and creating an inclusive local community... we have strong personal relations and networks that can help us in pursuing such a strategy, and this is good... I have relations with civil rights organisations especially at a national and local level, while my staff has more relations at a European level with Enar, United etc.' (interview with the Citizenship and Rights Deputy Mayor, January 9th, 2019)

Currently, the Department on Citizenship and Rights represents the main point of contact for TCNs on migration. In March 2018, the Deputy Mayor Marco Giusta presented the new intercultural strategy of the Municipality (document TO8), emphasising, as mentioned in the quote, equal rights and civic participation. This stance appears all the more consistent with the more general human rights-centred approach which underlies the political programme of the Deputy Mayor since 2016 (document TO9). In this perspective, a key line of action has always been represented by anti-racism. In 2017-2019, the

⁴ See the press release of the Assembly of the Association International Turin published on http://www.torinostrategica.it/_associazione/ (last access: October 2019).

⁵ Interview with the International Relations Department, June 28th, 2018.

⁶ In the electoral manifesto of the list 'Five Stars Movement - Chiara Appendino for mayor' (<https://www.chiaraappendino.it/programma/>) it is stressed that the promotion of big international events (like the Olympic Games and similar) will be undertaken only on the basis of a preliminary costs-benefits evaluation, 'to assess the real economic, touristic and employment benefits' (section Culture and tourism/Big Events. Last access October 2019).

⁷ See the division of competence between the two departments according to the municipal executive website: <http://www.comune.torino.it/giunta/composiz.shtml> (last access: October 2019).

Department on Citizenship and Rights led the project ‘Good Practice Plus Project Reloaded’ which was based on a partnership with an NGO; the Finnish Ministry of the Interior; and the Migration Centre of Northern Ireland; and was funded by the DJ Justice (Rights Equality and Citizenship Programme). The project’s goal was to develop training modules for policy officers on hate crime prevention; establish trust with minority groups; and provide support to victims. On this basis, in February 2019 the Municipal Executive approved the ‘City Action Plan Against Racist Hate Crimes’. This was followed in March 2020 by the establishment of the ‘Pact for collaboration to build an anti-racist city’, which was a process of co-production of anti-racist policies with NGOs, civil society organisations and individual citizens.(see document TO9).

These initiatives reflect the personal networks and affiliations of the Deputy Mayor and of young advisors in his staff, who emerge as key figures of network professionals, playing a key role in bringing in contacts with European NGOs and organisations like the Council of Europe. In June 2019, the Citizenship and Rights department organised a thematic event of the Intercultural City Programme on ‘Fighting discrimination and hate speech: is interculturalism the solution?’,⁸ even though the city is officially only a member of the Italian network. Furthermore, staff officers of this department have played a key role in the initiatives of the Eurocities Migration and Integration Working Group, like the EU funded project Values,⁹ even though formally it is the Social Policy Deputy Mayor who signed the Integrating City Charter in November 2018.¹⁰

Making Saint-Etienne a European city based on migrations tradition? Mayoral leadership and hesitations

Michel Thiollière was designated Mayor of Saint-Etienne in 1994 after his predecessor resigned, and was elected the next year by a centre-right coalition. His political career in the city began in the early 1980s as Deputy Mayor in charge of urban planning. He actively sought to attract foreign architects to lead urban renewal operations and change the city’s image (Béal and Pinson 2014). In this context, the trajectory of participation of the city in TCNs on migration has developed through four phases: 1) construction of the intercommunal authority and generalist international involvement (1995-1999); 2) collaboration with Mediterranean cities and participation in Euromed (1999-2001); 3) reinforcement of the municipal staff on European affairs and participation in TCNs on urban regeneration including migration issues (2002-2007); 4) dis-involvement (since 2008).

A few months after his election, Michel Thiollière became the president of the new *Saint-Etienne Métropole* intercommunal authority, which comprised of twenty-two cities in the Saint-Etienne metropolitan area. The new institution dealt with multiple issues, including waste treatment and urban planning and economic development, on which cities had to comprise notwithstanding their different views (Vant and Gay 1997). International activities, such as study exchanges abroad and membership of TCNs like Eurocities, were considered by Thiollière as a means of strengthening the unity of the new metropolitan institution. According to our interviewees, his personal engagement contrasted with the critical attitude of other elected representatives toward TCNs. Besides, the creation of such an intercommunal institution allowed Saint-Etienne to become a member of Eurocities, as the demographic limit was set at 250,000 inhabitants.¹¹

‘The idea was a sharing of experiences, to be recognized at a European level. It is always interesting to be in a club where you can find good economic level cities. And exchanging experiences to learn, to

⁸ http://www.comune.torino.it/ucstampa/comunicati/article_382.shtml (last access: October 2019).

⁹ <http://www.comune.torino.it/relint/progetti/programmi1420/values.shtml> (last access: October 2019).

¹⁰ Signature followed a proposal presented by the International Relations Department to the Mayor and the executive (Interview with officials of the International Relations Department, June 28th, 2018).

¹¹ In 1999, the municipal population was only 180,000.

understand what we can do. What we call today *benchmark*' (interview with Michel Thiollière, 1994-2008 mayor of Saint-Etienne, March 13th, 2018)

In 1999, Thiollière decided to join the Euromed Working Group (document SE1). According to official documents, given the migratory history of Saint-Etienne, engagement in TCNs on the Mediterranean issue was important "to work to a better understanding of societies, religions and traditions on the both sides of the area" (document SE2). The engagement of Saint-Etienne in this network was justified by a pre-existing cooperation with Northern African cities on urban planning issues. The 1995-2001 International Relations Deputy Mayor was personally engaged in Euromed, describing himself as having "a long practice of Northern African countries" and getting the support of local experts (document SE3). This involvement in Euromed brutally stopped in 2001, when the Deputy Mayor was replaced and the agenda of the working group was perceived as too politically sensitive to the situation of African and Middle-Eastern States (document SE3).

Notwithstanding disengagement from Euromed, a new phase started to take place in 2001, which focused on reinforcing the EU expertise of city administration in order to take a more active role in urban regeneration programmes. In addition to the Mayor himself, a Deputy Mayor on European affairs was appointed during the 2001-2008 mandate. She was a professional of the European scene as a member of the European parliament in the period 1994-2019. However, political leadership in TCNs faced a very critical municipal administration, which was not familiar with European procedures. In 2001, the European Affairs Deputy Mayor denounced municipal civil servants' "lack of interest" and declared her willingness to promote a new, more European-oriented, "state of mind" (document SE4). Hence, a policy officer expert on European funding was recruited to reinforce the municipal staff. In this respect, Thiollière presented the Mayor's role and responsibility as crucial in attempting to turn a small city like Saint-Etienne, "not spontaneously" attracted by TCNs, into a real European one¹².

This process of internal reorganisation enabled the city to mobilise in the 2002 Urbact programme. Strongly interested in urban planning issues, Thiollière looked at the Regenera network¹³, chaired by the close city of Lyon, as an instrument to further support urban renewal operations launched in social housing neighbourhoods (document SE5). During the city participation in Regenera, a horizontal network which involved elected representatives, civil servants (working in Urban Planning, European and Social Affairs Departments) and citizens was established to prepare for the visit of the foreign delegation in Saint-Etienne in 2005. Social housing renovation, economic development policies and associative actions were presented to illustrate the "integrated approach" of urban renovation, including the inclusion of immigrants. Participation in Regenera represented a step forward in the city's trajectory of European mobilisation, since financial engagement was quite important. In 2006, the European affairs unit dedicated one third of its budget to this project, that is 10,000 Euros (50% reimbursed by Urbact; see document SE6). Besides, municipal civil servants participated in professional trainings in European countries, within the framework of Regenera, which were related to urban renovation of immigration districts (document SE7).

The Regenera project came to an end in 2007. A new phase of gradual dis-involvement started in 2008, following the local elections which brought a left-wing majority to power. According to our interviews, international relations were not the new Executive's political priority and the city's participation in European projects was discontinued. Maurice Vincent, the 2008-2014 socialist Mayor of Saint-Etienne, was very sceptical of the city participation in TCNs and benefits for urban policies.

"Mayors and presidents of intercommunal authorities don't have to imagine themselves as *bis* ministers of international relations. International relations are a State prerogative"

(interview with Maurice Vincent, 2008-2014 mayor of Saint-Etienne, March 29th, 2018).

¹² Interview with Michel Thiollière, 1994-2008 mayor of Saint-Etienne, March 13th, 2018.

¹³ Regenera (2004-2007) was funded by Urbact and the ERDF with the goal of favouring the exchange of good practices on urban regeneration. It involved fourteen cities from nine European countries, including Saint-Etienne and Turin.

Even if the *Saint-Etienne Métropole* continued to remain as a formal member of Eurocities, political representatives and civil servants were no longer involved in the working groups. According to the socialist Mayor, one of the main reasons for disengagement from TCNs was the 2007 Economic Crisis and cuts made to national funding for municipal budgets. Immigration is no longer a topic of international mobilisation, even in traditional bilateral cooperation programmes with Eastern European and Northern African cities, where many foreigners came from.

“During my term, we were no longer on immigration topics at all. We started with Katowice [Poland] and Annaba [Algeria]. Obviously, these cities were chosen because there was an important local population. But today, even for these twinning programmes, we are clearly on another basis” (interview with Maurice Vincent, 2008-2014 mayor of Saint-Etienne, March 29th, 2018).

In this respect, decentralised cooperation was favoured - rather than TCNs - for its concrete goals and projects (e.g. economic development, transportation, water use). On the other hand, TCNs and their working groups were regarded as an opportunity to keep some “*intellectual openness*” without any real output¹⁴.

The right-wing majority which has been in power since 2014 has been following the same positioning concerning TCNs. Elected representatives seem very critical towards benchmarking and policy learning to face immigration issues in Saint-Etienne. They instead emphasise the importance of local civil society mobilisation, especially NGOs and citizens networks, in providing services for immigrants like housing, French language courses, or social support.

‘To all those who want to give us lessons on the way to do, I tell them ‘we started a hundred years ago with Polish, Italians, Algerians, Tunisians, Moroccans, now we have Eastern Europeans, and Africans who came at the same time’. So, we know all this very well because we live it every day’ (interview with the 2014-2020 Deputy Mayor in charge of International Relations, March 16th, 2018).

When Syrian and Iraqi refugees started to come to Saint-Etienne in 2015, with the agreement of the right-wing municipality (document SE8), the City did not participate in TCNs with an objective of improving their settlement, contrary to other French cities like Paris, Strasbourg and Nantes for instance (Hombert and Bonn, 2020; Fourot, Flamant and Healy, 2020). As mentioned in our interview with the centrist Deputy Mayor in charge of international relations, TCNs are not perceived as an opportunity to learn new practices or policies that could be eventually replicated in Saint-Etienne. A Civil Servant in charge of social cohesion confirmed that the combination of ‘common law’ municipal policies (e.g. emergency support and access to education) and civil society’s actions towards immigrants were considered sufficient.

“The caritative network was already in capacity to include these [refugees] families. There was no need to do benchmarking. The local network was already very well structured for that”

(interview with the head of social cohesion department, April 26th, 2018).

The attitude of the right-wing Mayor elected in 2014, Gaël Perdriau, on immigration and participation in TCS is contradictory. In November 2015, he was one of the first right-wing mayors in France to encourage refugees’ welcome, arguing that welcoming refugees was a “moral duty” and “Saint-Etienne was built with immigration waves”¹⁵. Between 2015 and 2018, less than 50 refugees settled in Saint-Etienne, strongly contrasting with the reality of migration flows described by a municipal civil servant:

“Today, migration flows come from Eastern countries: Romania, Chechnya, countries with major social difficulties. We have entire buildings with these people. But it’s off, it’s smugglers. And refugees add to this” (interview with the head of social cohesion department, April 26th, 2018).

¹⁴ Interview with Maurice Vincent, 2008-2014 mayor of Saint-Etienne, March 29th, 2018

¹⁵ Saint-Etienne city council, September 14th, 2015

While institutional municipal policies are implemented to take in charge refugees, the mayor takes a very critical view of Roma people and rejected asylum seekers living in Saint-Etienne. These latter constitute “a problem” from which the mayor is “intransigent”¹⁶. Thus, Perdriau’s 2015 position statement about Syrian and Iraqi refugees was a parenthesis in a broader critical attitude towards migration. This partly explains the absence of Saint-Etienne in major European city-networks on migration during his term. Local activists involved in immigrants’ settlement are also very sceptical about the 2015 declaration, considering it only as a “political message”¹⁷.

In December 2019, Gaël Perdriau and the Deputy Mayor for Culture announced that Saint-Etienne had been labelled by UNESCO in Barcelona as an “inclusive and sustainable city”¹⁸. This actually corresponds to the adhesion of Saint-Etienne to the International Coalition of Cities against Racism (ICCAR), its first TCN participation on migration since 2007. This “label” is presented as an award for the policies taken by the city during the so called “refugees’ crisis”, to fight LGBT discrimination, xenophobia and to promote citizens equality¹⁹.

“This label represents the openness and tolerance values linked to the history of our city and which made its identity. Saint-Etienne has this in its genes... In terms of openness and tolerance, Saint-Etienne is a particular city. It is very good to say that between us. But when an International Organization says that, it is better!” (Gaël Perdriau, mayor of Saint-Etienne, December 6th, 2019)²⁰

According to elected representatives, the city’s new competences in social and equality fields give the municipal authorities a “crucial role” in fighting discrimination (document SE9). Locally, the Mayor showcases participation in an international city-network to legitimate anti-discrimination and equality municipal policies. He re-uses a discursive strategy based on solidarity and tolerance. In this respect, the ICCAR “label” was cited during the 2020 municipal campaign as a success for Gaël Perdriau and his team, in collaborating with local NGOs networks with the objective of being re-elected²¹. Evocations of history and tradition are frequent in the municipal discourse on migration in Saint-Etienne. Notably, to remember when immigrant workers came after World War II to support the economic urban development²². These historical references fit with a broader dynamic of “mythification” of old work migrations in Saint-Etienne, where ethnic social relations still constitute “a major urban fact” in social and political life (Béal *et al*, 2020, p.25). On the contrary, the most recent migration flows, notably rejected asylum seekers and Roma people, are passed over in silence from this collective memory. Citizen networks involved with these migrants are extremely critical *vis-à-vis* the mayor’s emphasis on ICCAR adhesion, as Roma families still live in very hard conditions in Saint-Etienne²³.

¹⁶ Saint-Etienne city council, September 14th, 2015

¹⁷ Interview with a local activist involved with Roma people and illegals living in Saint-Etienne, May 2nd, 2018

¹⁸ Declaration published on Gaël Perdriau’s Facebook page on December 7th, 2019 [last access May 2020]

¹⁹ The main municipal initiatives consist in organizing consultation committees (for young people, foreigners, caritative networks etc.), improving access to work for disable and unskilled people, and supporting associative actions through animations programmes (« Ville en partage », « Les semaines de l’égalité »)

²⁰ « La Ville de Saint-Etienne reconnue pour son action contre les discriminations », *Le Progrès*, December 6th, 2019

²¹ Post on « Gaël Perdriau 2020 » Facebook page, January 24th, 2020 [last access May 2020]

In June 2020, Gaël Perdriau was re-elected mayor of Saint-Etienne, for a six-year term. He designated a city councillor to lead the ICCAR involvement (<http://www.saint-etienne.fr/mairie/conseil-municipal-20202026>, last access July 2020)

²² In 2015-2016, the « Cosmopolitan Saint-Etienne. Migrations in the city » (« *Saint-Etienne cosmopolitaine. Des migrations dans la ville* ») exhibition was organized by the Municipal Archives service, highlighting the « industrial and working adventure » of migrations. The exhibition was inaugurated few days after Perdriau’s 2015 declaration on refugees. Even though the idea was older, new elected representatives in power were extremely interested in this project, especially the deputy-mayor for Culture and members of the Mayor’s Cabinet, who controlled the event press coverage (Longin, 2018).

²³ See for example a citizen’s testimony published on

<https://blogs.mediapart.fr/yvesscanugmailcom/blog/071219/saint-etienne-ville-inclusive-et-durable-selon-lunesco-quel-scandale> (last access June 2020)

Participation in the ICCAR network is also presented as following the municipal international strategy, ten years after Saint-Etienne was the first French city to join the UNESCO creative cities network in 2009. According to the Deputy Mayor for Culture, who defended the city's application in Barcelona, to become a member of ICCAR was important in order to bolster the city's image abroad and to benchmark municipal policies on equality.

“Belonging to ICCAR will offer a visibility to our actions and will permit us to share our experiences with other city members” (deputy mayor in charge of cultural affairs, December 6th, 2019)²⁴

Such a political discourse reminds us of Thiollière's 1990s international strategy, when TCNs were used as marketing tools to promote Saint-Etienne after deindustrialization. The current involvement in ICCAR links strategic international goals with a (partial) political recognition of migrations heritage. As in the past, this appears to be primarily a move from above. It is only mildly sustained by NGOs and civil society organisation, and appears more focused on grassroots mobilisation to provide immigrants with access to local services.

Comparative discussion: two urban trajectories in TCNs on migration

In the early 1990s, Turin and Saint-Etienne represented relevant cases of internationalisation strategies promoted by different entrepreneurial mayors, i.e. an outsider supported by centre-left parties in Turin, and a centre-right experienced politician in Saint-Etienne. Despite these differences, both undertook similar policies ‘to go Europe’. They built a new administrative infrastructure and invested in urban development policies that indirectly dealt with migration. Almost three decades later though, the two cities could not be more distant. While Saint-Etienne does not show any interest in TCNs on migration, Turin is still actively involved in the main European ones.

What accounts for such divergent trajectories? The in-depth reconstruction carried out above highlights key differences in the modes of international mobilisation around migration issues (see Table 3). In Saint-Etienne, where the internationalisation agenda has always been highly mayor-centred, migration was never an explicit topic of city engagement. Rather, it was tackled in an indirect way: first in the context of Mediterranean relations, and then through the urban regeneration project Regenera. Indeed, the latter represented an opportunity for the municipality to link with civil society actors, such as the NGOs and immigrant associations based in the target neighbourhoods. Some of these collaborations seem to have lasted even after the change in political majority occurred in 2008. Yet, this was in the context of framing migration policy as a local affair, with no projection in international or EU networks whatsoever.

Also in the case of Turin, migration was not initially a matter of international mobilisation. Yet, contrary to Saint-Etienne, the Mayor never articulated a dominant vision of international relations, but rather favoured the establishment of a broad constellation of actors in support of international initiatives. This outward-oriented mode of conceiving internationalisation led to the mobilisation of different actors around migration issues. First of all, the Deputy Mayor on Integration and Urban Regeneration was able to bring together her expertise and contacts at the EU level with her personal relations with NGOs and civil society associations at a local level to promote participation in networks emphasising the urban dimension of migrants integration. Secondly, the officers of the International Relations department solicited the engagement of the Social Policy Department in CLIP and in the Roma group of Eurocities. However, this second type of mobilisation, which essentially followed a more internal bureaucratic route, was met with low enthusiasm by the Social Policy Department and was perceived of as yet another burden by its officials.

Like Saint-Etienne in 2008, Turin also went through a phase of disenchantment with internationalisation in 2015. However, only two years later, and notwithstanding the electoral success

²⁴ « La Ville de Saint-Etienne reconnue pour son action contre les discriminations », *Le Progrès*, December 6th, 2019

in June 2016 of the not particularly immigrant-friendly Five Star Movement, the city started to mobilise again in the main European TCNs on migration. This new cycle of participation clearly seemed to rely upon some of the civil society actors that had already collaborated in the integration policies of the previous administration. Yet, as also shown by the case of Saint-Etienne, activism at the grassroots level does not automatically lead to international mobilisation. Again, what seemed to make a difference in Turin was the lack of a clear mayoral agenda on either internationalisation or migration. This seemed to enable autonomous mobilisation by different actors within the municipal apparatus, such as the Officers of the International Relations department and the staff officers of the Citizenship and Rights department. The latter in particular, like Ilda Curti, seemed to act as prototypical networks' professionals (William 2002), spanning-boundaries between public and non-public actors, and engaging actively both in the local and international arena of migration policies.

Hence, from the analysis carried out above, it emerges that cities' participation in TCNs on migration do not follow automatically from the internationalisation endeavour of an entrepreneurial mayor. Paradoxically, the lack of a hegemonic mayoral vision in the case of Turin and, more recently, even of an internationalisation agenda, seems to have favoured the emergence of networks' professionals on the politically sensitive migration issue. This includes advisors or contract officers with experience in migration-related issues, both in local activist networks and in international or European organisations and/or institutions.

These networks professionals, who act as drivers of multi-level governance relations, appear to be almost absent in the case of Saint-Etienne, where the will of the mayor catalysed the, more fragile, system of international relations built between 1995 and 2008.

The comparison also shows some remarkable similarities in the obstacles that the two cities faced in their attempts to become more international. The first similarity includes the resistance of the administrative apparatus towards internationalisation, that in both cities led to the recruitment of new officers with an expertise on European/international matters. Secondly, both cities faced a reduced budget and financial constraints (on French cities see also: Downing 2015). This was partially buffered in the case of Turin by the resources conveyed by banking foundations, even though these have been substantially reduced since 2016. These two factors, i.e. bureaucratic resistance and budget limitations, suggest caution on cities' capacity to go international and effectively benefit from transnational networking, especially on such a politically charged issue as migration. This is clearly highlighted by Saint-Etienne's Socialist Mayor's critical view towards policy learning in 2008, and even more so by the right-wing majority that has been in power since 2014. More generally, migration networks' professionals cannot do alone but need at least a receptive political context, i.e. one which is mostly favourable towards migration. On the other hand, private actors like banking foundations in the case of Turin seem to have been important in supporting the initial internationalisation of the city's urban development policies in the 1990s. Yet, they have remained quite marginal in the process of Europeanization on migration-related issues.

Conclusion

While not representative of European cities, the analyses of Turin and Saint-Etienne's trajectories of participation in TCNs on migration contributes to sharpen our understanding of cities' modes of internationalisation on the politically sensitive issue of migration in at least two ways. On the one hand, it helps to put the enthusiasm underlying recent accounts of mayoral leadership in international migration policy into perspective (see e.g. Barber 2013) which risk overlooking the political sensitivity of the migration issue. As shown above, mayors are not naturally pragmatic, and for different reasons they may well prefer not to take leadership on the issue. As emphasised by recent immigrant policies in the case of Saint-Etienne, internationalisation is just as likely as withdrawal to the local sphere.

On the other hand, this study draws attention to the concrete mechanisms of internationalisation of migration policies. These often take place at the fringes of complex municipal bureaucratic machines through the engagement of emerging figures of migration networks' professionals, who work as advisors and constantly move in and out the public sector. More research is needed to understand how the boundary-spanning work carried out by these new types of officers can change the attitudes and perceptions of 'insiders'. For example, in the case of permanent officers and how to better deal with the complexity of the migration challenge (see also: Schiller 2016). Our findings are mixed in this respect: the resistance to change routine and practices as highlighted in Saint-Etienne and in the social policy department of the city of Turin is contrasted by the pro-active attitude of International Relations officers in Turin.

The research presented also speaks to the ongoing debate on the multilevel governance of migration (see e.g. Caponio and Correa 2018). It shows how this is concretely built by flesh and blood actors through their professional careers and personal relations. Evidence from this study suggests a link between the configuration of the local politics of internationalisation; mayor-centred versus open to external influences; and the emergence of multilevel networks' professionals on migration (which seems more likely to occur in the second scenario). However, more research is needed if we are to understand the conditions that favour the mobilisation of such key multilevel 'agents' in the governance of migration issues.

Important insights in this respect could be provided by research considering cities' internationalisation in different policy sectors. Furthermore, it could more specifically compare an emergent and contentious issue like migration with a more established matter of cities' transnational collaboration, such as environment and climate-change mitigation. Unravelling the dynamics, factors and actors driving international mobilisation on such different topics would contribute to a better understanding of whether and to what extent politicisation, which seems to be a specific trait of the migration policy issue, influences cities' approach to participation in the international sphere. Furthermore, we could also expect non-negligible differences between activation at an EU level, where cities can aim at returns in terms of participation into EU-funded projects, and in the emerging networks at a global level, such as the Mayoral Migration Forum, where benefits are more difficult to establish. Answers to all of these still unanswered questions would require boundaries-spanning dialogue and exchange between specialists in different policy fields. This is a task that, as is the case in the making of public policy, is not easy to fulfil in scientific research.

Disclosure statement

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Appendix. List of official documentation in chronological order

Turin

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Table 1. Main features of the immigrant population in Turin and Saint-Etienne (2017)

	Turin	Saint-Etienne
Municipal population	875 000	172 500
Ratio of foreign residents on the total population	15.0% Italy: 8.6 %	14.0% France: 7.0%

Sources: our elaboration on INSEE, ISTAT and *Città di Torino* data.

Table 2. Electoral context of the two case studies since the 1990s

Turin

1993-2001	2001-2011	2011-2016	2016-
Valentino Castellani	Sergio Chiamparino	Piero Fassino	Chiara Appendino
Centre-Left coalition			5 Stars Movement

Saint-Etienne

1994-2008	2008-2014	2014-2020 (re-elected in 2020)
Michel Thiollière	Maurice Vincent	Gaël Perdriau
Centre-Right coalition	Left-wing coalition	Centre-Right coalition

Table 3. Turin and Saint-Etienne, two urban trajectories in TCNs on migration

	Turin	Saint-Etienne
Involvements in TCNs on migration	Quartiers-en-crise (1989-2015) Euromed (1999-2006) Regenera (2004-2007) Eurocities Roma WG (2006-) Cities for Local Integration Policy (2006-2015) Intercultural Cities (2009-) Eurocities Migration & Integration WG (2018-)	Euromed (1999-2001) Regenera (2004-2007) ICCAR/ECCAR (2019-)
Mode of internationalisation	Local network of international initiatives (elected representatives, civil servants, NGOs, banking foundations)	Highly mayor-centred No collaboration with civil society

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