The Inclusion of Migrants in Cities: Case Study of St. Petersburg

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Summary

Migration and mobility play a key role in shaping the outlook of modern cities, contributing to their diversity and dynamics. At the same time, cities are faced with the challenge of ensuring good practice concerning migrants and inclusive governance. The present report is aimed at examining the issue of the inclusion of migrants at the local level, with a focus on the case study of St. Petersburg. As one of Russia's largest cities, St. Petersburg offers a broad range of social and economic opportunities for migrants, while migrants in turn contribute to the city's growth and development. Since St. Petersburg attracts both internal and international migration flows, the local population's attitude towards migrants remains important. However, the current trend in Russia is not optimistic: the 'Russia for Russians' rhetoric gains momentum and the level of tolerance among the local population hit its lowest level in 2013. Within this framework, the question remains of how much is being done at the local level in order to better integrate migrants into society and its new realities. Conclusions and recommendations are then presented in order to draw attention to what major achievements have taken place at the local level, what is lacking and what could be improved in the current situation.

Introduction

The world's cities have come under the spotlight, as for the first time in history there are more people living in urban areas than in rural ones. According to a report released by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2014), 54 percent of the world populations today are urban residents, with projections that this number will hit 66 percent by 2050. The most economically vibrant cities are usually the most attractive for migrants, while as a result of increased translocal and transnational migration, urban communities are becoming more diverse in the

aspects of ethnicity, culture and religion. Cities of migration develop as "yesterday's alien villagers and immigrants become today's urban merchants and tomorrow's professionals and political leaders" (Saunders, 2011: 322). The inclusion and adaptation of migrants take place primarily at the local, everyday level, and it is therefore cities and municipalities that play a crucial role in this process. Inclusion represents equality of opportunities, where everyone can take part in city life regardless of their background (UNU-GCM, 2014). Effectively managing the inclusion of newcomers at the municipal level can "make a city prosper", as migrants "bring strength, vitality and innovation" (Cities of Migration, 2014: 11). Sometimes, when federal or national legislation does not offer effective tools to address the aspect of inclusion, it is the cities that come up with initiatives of their own, in which they act in collaboration with civil society groups, non-governmental organizations or local and state departments and welfare organizations to develop and implement strategies. Such strategies can cover various activities: the promotion of language courses, education for migrant children, intercultural dialogue, housing, inclusion in neighbourhoods, provision of spaces for meaningful social interaction between citizens (Open Society Foundations, 2011).

It has been recognized that successful cities view diversity as an essential component of communal identity, which enriches the vibrancy of a city and ensures a sense of belonging for its residents (Cities of Migration, 2014). Moreover, in order to further develop and exchange strategies, such cities have established networks,

which bring innovation, good practices and ideas for change together. Such networks include Cities of Migration Foundation (2014), Open Society Foundations (2011), European City Network for Local Integration Policies for Migrants (CLIP, 2013). Another platform for cities to exchange strategies of inclusion was a Mayoral Forum on Migration and Partnership held in Barcelona in June 2014 and organized by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR, 2014). Successful initiatives address inclusion from different perspectives: some focus on strengthening civil society participation, as in London's programme aimed at training Young Muslim Leaders, with similar strategies in Amsterdam, and Marseille (Open Society Foundations, 2011). Other cities stress the importance of promoting the idea of multiculturalism through campaigns, cultural centers and forums, as in Copenhagen's World Culture Centre and Tenerife's network of community groups "Together, Today in the Same Direction" (Cities of Migration, 2014). Another aspect is boosting economic participation, as some Swedish and German cities have been active in encouraging entrepreneurs among migrants, supporting business start-ups, training and education (Open Society Foundations, 2011). Fighting against discrimination and prejudices is another important aspect of inclusion, which Barcelona successfully implemented in its Anti-Rumour campaign, involving the recruitment and training of anti-rumor agents and fighting stereotypes about newcomers (Cities of Migration, 2014). While there are challenges ahead for local

government, with some more open to addressing migrant inclusion than others, there are nonetheless a growing number of good practices to learn from.

Russia's St. Petersburg is one of the cities which has realized the importance of addressing migrants' inclusion and fighting against discrimination. It is one of Russia's largest economic, scientific, transport and tourist centers as well as the cultural capital of the country. It is therefore important for this city to serve as an example of pluralism, inclusiveness, and ready to meet intercultural challenges. In this report I explore St. Petersburg as a case study in how the Russian Federation adjusts to global challenges, looking at the course of its rapid transformation from the closed Soviet unit into an inclusive international city. At the same time it is vital to keep in mind the discourses and complexity of Russia as a host society. In the conclusions and recommendations section, I stress what has already been successfully implemented and what is lacking in the current initiatives.

Migration in Russia

Nowadays, Russia is one of the countries which has been experiencing a particularly high inflow of migrants into its territory. According to the International Migration Report (UNDESA, 2013), the Russian Federation hosted the second largest number of international migrants in the world after the United States. The number of newcomers in Russia reached about 11 million in 2013, which is about 10 percent of its total population (UNDESA, 2013). Due to a rapid demographic decline in

modern Russia, with some predictions stating that it will downgrade from 9th most populous country to 17[th]in 2050, mass transnational migration directly and indirectly contributes to the ongoing transformation of the nation and its major cities (World Population Review, 2014). The trend it is undergoing reflects shrinking labour resources, and even though immigration does not fully compensate for it, it is one of the means to manage the existing demographic gap. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind the demographic situation in the neighboring countries, where the population primarily experiences opposite trends; in most of the Central Asian countries, as well as in China, the population is growing (Carim East, 2014). This inevitably means closer cooperation between Russia and its neighbors with regard to migration issues.

Russian migration policy twice underwent significant changes: first, it shifted towards a more restrictive policy in 2001 and then moved back to liberalization in 2006 (Focus Migration, 2010). Within the existing quota system for international labour migrants in 2011, the numbers of transnational migrants coming to Russia were as follows: the majority of all migrants were from Uzbekistan (343,000), the second highest number of migrants from Tajikistan (188,000), and third from Kyrgyzstan (58,000). Interestingly, 13% of all international labour migrants came from China (153,000) (Carim East, 2014). However, as it is often pointed out, the quota system and official data do not always reflect the real state of affairs and the size of migration flows, as authorities prefer to refer to approximate figures, given

the high number of irregular migrants entering the country who are not registered at local police offices (Rozanova, 2012).

Inclusion Practices at the National Level

Despite its significant immigrant population, Russia lacks a well-established integration policy (Carim East, 2014). One reason for this is that the majority of migrants come from the former Soviet Union Republics, and these migrants have largely been expected to already know the Russian language (Focus Migration, 2010). Even though the "need to contribute to socio-economic adaptation of migrants in the Russian Federation" was already formulated by Federal Migration Programmes in the 1990s, it was not implemented in practice (Mukomel, 2013). Only few cities at the local level came up with initiatives of their own and started to bridge the gap towards more inclusiveness; St. Petersburg, in particular, launched its programme in 2006, aimed at boosting intercultural tolerance in the society (Rozanova, 2012). At the federal level, up until 2012, the task of inclusion of migrants was reproduced in all legislative acts, but no proper programme of social adaptation was in existence.

The Decree of 2012 became a crucial document in which the "Concept of the State Migration Policy of the Russian Federation through 2025" was outlined. It brought under the spotlight the necessity to articulate the tasks to facilitate adaptation and inclusion of migrants and form a constructive interaction between migrants and the host society (Concept, 2012). Most importantly, through the Concept of 2012, the

Russian government acknowledged, for the first time, that the successful social and cultural integration of migrants, together with the protection of rights of migrants is one of the objectives of national policy (Concept, 2012). An Action Plan which was adopted, contained steps for implementation of the concept and suggested a number of measures in order to ensure what the Russian government understands the 'integration' of migrants. One of the main areas of focus is the prescription of Russian language tests for labour migrants (Action Plan, 2012). Yet the government places little emphasis on encouraging efforts from the host society itself in this process, suggesting a discourse that sees migrant integration in a unidirectional manner. It does not acknowledge, for instance, that the integration of migrants is a two-way process (IOM, 2011). According to surveys, the majority of the population does not welcome migrants.

Table 1. Attitudes Towards Migrants

Answers to the question "What type of migrants does Russia need?"	%
Our country needs only the migrants who decide to stay here permanently.	15,0
Our country needs only temporary labour migrants who then go back to their home-countries	26,0
Our country needs both types of migrants	11,0
Our country does not need migrants	39,0
I cannot answer this question	9,0

Source: FOM (2011).

Another problem for the inclusion of migrants is the growing nationalist and xenophobic trend in Russian society, which is largely seen as consequence of the Chechen wars and acts of terrorism in various cities across Russia. As a result, many Russians fear that migrants from Caucasia and Muslim countries could be potential terrorists (Focus Migration, 2010). Another reason for the growing xenophobia, are reports based on information from local police on rising numbers of crimes committed by migrants across the country (RIA NEWS, 2013). Such reports give formal excuse for nationalist feelings and the idea of "Russia for Russians", which is very dangerous for a multi-ethnic country such as the Russian Federation. The activity of radical nationalistic and neo-Nazi organizations is officially illegal, but the authorities often turn a blind eye to the public demonstrations and also the acts of aggression against non-Russians, including the "native Russian citizens" with non-Slavic appearance (Focus Migration, 2010). Taking into consideration such discourses, it is obvious that one important precondition to inclusion of migrants is fighting against growing nationalist and xenophobic feelings in the society. Given that this issue of migrant inclusion is not properly addressed at the federal level, it is the cities which have to start bridging the gap.

St. Petersburg: Local Initiatives

Being Europe's fourth largest city, St. Petersburg turns out to be Russia's second most popular migrant destination, right after the capital, Moscow. Such a state of affairs has prompted the city to adjust itself to the new reality. According to city statistics, nowadays the majority of migrants are of three types: citizens of other Russian regions, transnational migrants and students from across the country who come to the city to study and stay on after their graduation. The net migration in St. Petersburg in 2012 was over 74,000 people while in 2011 this number was a little over 58,000 (Petrostat, 2013). In 2006, the local government realized the necessity for mechanisms for the inclusion of migrants and launched the so-called "Tolerance-1 Programme", which is aimed at promoting harmonious interethnic and intercultural relations, preventing ultra-nationalist tendencies and strengthening tolerance in St. Petersburg (SPB Tolerance, 2014). A tolerant and diverse society is one which is inclusive not only for those who want to 'fit in' but also the ones which prefer to be 'different', and indeed, where difference is not perceived as 'abnormal' (Legrain, 2007). The programme's main objective was to reduce prejudice against newcomers or 'others', which it effectively promoted under the slogan "St. Petersburg unites people" (SPB Tolerance, 2014).One of the most important aspects of the programme was its comprehensive approach – as it was implemented at different levels, involving representatives of the local government,

civil society and experts as well (Rozanova, 2012). Its principal target was young people and professionals dealing with intercultural issues. Within the course of the programme, the following events and projects took place: festivals, concerts, exhibitions (eg. Multinational St. Petersburg), promotion campaigns across the city (eg. "St. Petersburg: Manners, Customs, Traditions"), workshops and open lectures on tolerance for various professionals, school teachers and students, kindergarten classes (SPB Tolerance, 2014). In the framework of the programme, over 3000 activities were organized annually. Four years after Tolerance-1 was launched positive developments were observed, as about 30 percent of the city's population became aware of its activities and agenda. According to observers, this created increased interest in the culture of "the other" and the necessity for intercultural dialogue (Rozanova, 2012). While it is definitely an important first step, it could be argued that more efforts are needed in order for people to really engage with "the other" and to perceive migrants as friends, neighbors and fellow human beings.

As a result of the positive outcomes of the programme, the authorities of St. Petersburg have approved the second part of the programme "Tolerance-2" for the years 2011-2015, which has the same objectives as its predecessor, but with a higher budget and is aimed at yet more inclusiveness (SPB 2014). New aspects of the programme include interaction with local media, creating the conditions for teaching Russian as a foreign language to transnational migrants, and putting an end to xenophobic ideas among St. Petersburg youth (Rozanova, 2012). At the

same time, despite the obvious positive outcomes of the first part of the programme, there remain some aspects which need improvement. A major criticism is that the public was still not well informed enough about the programme and its activities, as despite a large number of activities being held annually, only few of them were described in detail and provided information for NGOs.

Russia's civil society could potentially play a vital role in the process of inclusion and adaptation of migrants, providing a bottom-up perspective on the issue. However, civil society is generally weak in the Russian Federation, while its initiatives remain marginal and limited (Howard, 2002). At the same time religious organizations are rather active in the country's social life, with the Orthodox Church representing a bridge between the society and the state and a potential platform for the development of functioning civil society (Wallace, 2006). Under the Russian Orthodox Church, special cultural centers for migrants are created, where they can get free assistance for the Russian language test which is obligatory for labour migrants. The Orthodox Church stresses that the religion of migrants is not a limitation as its primary aim is to provide knowledge about Russian cultural life. St. Petersburg was also one of the cities which participated in the conference on migration issues initiated by the Orthodox Church, where potential mechanisms for socialization and adaptation of new arrivals were discussed (St. Petersburg Times, 2013).

Conclusions and Recommendations:

As the world becomes increasingly globalized and urbanized, migration and mobility become even more central to the growth and dynamics of cities across the globe (UNU-GCM, 2014). Modern cities develop differently, but what unites them is that nowadays they become global reference points where transnational and translocal networks – both economic and cultural – converge (Saunders, 2010). Successful cities are those where diversity is managed well and through special policies which help to shape the environment filled with a sense of inclusiveness for all its residents (Cities of Migration, 2014). City governments all over the world are well aware of increased migration flows, therefore it is vital for them to come up with inclusive strategies and mechanisms for the inclusion of migrants. Berlin, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Marseille and many other cities have come up with their own initiatives reflecting their view of inclusiveness. The case study of St. Petersburg has demonstrated by its example that a Russian city can effectively use the experience and practice of European cities. In Russia, it is still an exception given the country's historical and social discourses. Many other local governments, including in the capital, focus on the integration of migrants through the means of the language courses and cultural centers, while forgetting that 'it takes two to tango'. Such measures are not enough, if the very population of a city is not open to migrants and instead views them as a threat to a so-called traditional lifestyle. St.

Petersburg still has a long way to go in order to be an inclusive city, but its tolerance programmes are definitely something that could be used by other Russian cities.

This report recommends:

- By the example of St. Petersburg, it is necessary to promote tolerance on a local level, fight against prejudices and address the issue of xenophobia in society;

- Learn from best practices of other successful cities where diversity is well-managed;

- Russian cities must include migrants themselves in the discussion – e.g. organizing various events featuring migrants, given that many prejudices take place because of lack of contact;

- At the federal level, a comprehensive, coherent policy for the inclusion migrants is needed;

- Media must get involved in the process, given the mostly negative coverage of stories related to migrants, which provokes migrant-phobia in the society;

- Civil society must become more active and come up with its own initiatives and practice on the issue of inclusiveness, given that it has a lot of potential for changing public perceptions through a bottom-up approach.

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