Migration and Social Transformation through the Lens of Locality: A Multi-Sited Study of Experiences of Neighbourhood Transformation

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Abstract

Starting from Castles' argument that contemporary international migration is part of 'step-change' transformations brought about by neoliberal globalisation, this article analyses the local impacts of global transformations by undertaking a comparative analysis of the myriad ways migration shapes three urban localities in South Korea, Turkey and Australia. The article explores how migrants and non-migrants in each locality make meaning about social transformation from everyday material and social changes around them. Urban social change is examined as engaging processes and actors across multiple scales to illuminate the often obscured entanglements of government (dis)investment in infrastructure, national migrant incorporation policies, and migration histories. The article argues that analysing local responses to migration through this lens provides insights into the complex nexus of social transformation, place and global mobility.

Keywords

Migration, social transformation, urban diversity, Australia, South Korea, Turkey

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Introduction

This article takes as its starting point Castles' (2010) argument that contemporary international migration is part and parcel of the transformations brought about by neoliberal globalisation, which, he argues, affects virtually all forms of social interaction, and all individuals and communities simultaneously. This includes, for example, profound cultural transformations in family life, individual and group identities, intergroup relationships, as well as changing material landscapes of cities, industries and neighbourhoods. In this article, we contend that social transformations associated with international migration and neoliberal restructuring are often most readily perceived at the local level. While national debates tend to focus on macro themes of migration numbers, the 'success' and 'failure' of multiculturalism or border security, in this article we contribute to scholarly debates that have sought to understand how migrants live their lives and shape—and are shaped by—their immediate environments.

This discussion draws on the Social Transformation and International Migration in the 21st Century (STIM) project undertaken between 2010 and 2016. The project examined the nexus of migration, social transformation and neoliberal globalisation at the local, regional and national scales in four localities: Ansan (South Korea), Kumkapı (Turkey), Fairfield (Australia) and Casa Blanca (Mexico). The project scaled up Karl Polanyi's thesis on social transformation by analysing how processes of global neoliberalism represent the most recent 'great transformation' to affect all levels of society (Castles et al 2011). Polanyi theorised the societal transformations resulting from the Industrial Revolution to argue that markets have historically been accessories to social life, and that, rather than being separated from or subordinating the 'social system,' the 'economic system' was always embedded in society and nature (Castles et al 2011, Polanyi 2001, 60-70). Polanyi argued that through a 'double movement'—i.e. protective counter-movements that blunt the destructive impacts of the commodification of labour, land and money—society would inevitably react to protect itself against the process of commodification, whether through 'progressive' or other means (2001, 79).

In this article, we examine how people perceived processes of social and urban transformations associated with international migration and neoliberal globalisation by analysing commonalities (and differences) in everyday meaning-making across different localities. Focusing our analysis on transformations in the streetscape and everyday encounters with cultural difference, we found that individual perceptions of change privileged symbolic and material changes in everyday landscapes. Where transformations were perceived as disruptions to the habits of familiar urban life, migrants were often scapegoated as the cause of deleterious change. The entanglements between perceptions of local changes and attitudes to migrants (or migrants' attitudes to the host society), enfold multiple temporalities based on individual, local and national histories of migration (Fincher et al, 2019). We investigate some of the connections between local transformations in each locality and national, regional or city-level processes, such as government (dis)investment in infrastructure, urban regeneration policies and national migration policies. In doing so, we argue that the understanding the symbolic and physical emplacement of migrants in contemporary cities is always embedded in multiscalar dynamics.

Migration, neoliberal globalisation and place

We theorise social transformation through an analysis of how neoliberal processes shape social institutions and everyday life. Neoliberal globalisation refers to the diffusion of ideologies of economic rationalisation through practices and networks of neoliberal restructuring at multiple scales—including, urban, regional, national and global. Specific iterations of 'actually existing' neoliberalisms (Peck and Tickell 2002, 380) are shaped in 'local contexts defined by the legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles' (Brenner & Theodore 2002, 249). That is, neoliberal processes touch down differently in different contexts, while also shaped by neoliberal transformations at other scales (or 'extralocal' forces).

Contemporary neoliberal globalisation takes many forms: the commodification of land, labour and money, and the increasing economic interdependence of all areas of the globe. It also transforms everyday life and local geographies, including 'the dynamics of local governance, the nature and quantity of jobs, the way culture is represented and marketed, and the availability of public spaces' (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009, 189). Thus, neoliberal approaches can simultaneously commodify migration-led cultural diversity to attract investment and tourism, while promoting disinvestment in social supports and aggressive forms of gentrification, which can displace existing poor and racialised populations (Fincher et al 2019, 27). Economic rationalisation of everyday life has profound impacts on social equity, and on spatial patterns of social life in both urban and rural contexts (Harvey 2006, Cid Aguayo 2008, Woods 2007). However, as Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009) argue, insufficient attention has been paid to the way the processes of international migration are interwoven with localised neoliberal transformations. In tandem with processes of neoliberal globalisation are political ideologies that associate globalisation and international migration with cosmopolitanism: a vision which, as Castles (2012, 1) argues, sees 'increasingly mobile people develop a global consciousness and move freely across borders to use their skills wherever the rewards are highest'. As Castles and many others (for example, Skrbis and Woodward 2007) point out, globalisation has not resulted in universal cosmopolitan practices nor in significant reductions in social inequality; quite the reverse.

The interaction between place, migration and social transformation has long been an interest of social scientists. The Chicago School of sociology examined how the very nature of urban processes shaped social life during a period significant economic transformation, and sought to study these processes in relation to immigrant neighbourhoods and community formation. Scholars have examined how global migration transforms localised belonging and identity (for example, Wimmer 2004, Bauman 2011), while Appadurai (1995) asked how locality and belonging is produced in a world of global flows. Yet, the fine-grained transformations of place have historically been under-researched in migration studies and is partly attributed to the traditional preoccupation of migration studies with ethnicity (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2013). This bias is also linked to the broader issue of methodological nationalism—the 'container model' of migration—where the nation-state is taken as the predominant spatial scale for analysis (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002), assuming a fixed spatial gaze that denies the dynamic nature of boundary-making and the relational nature of place and space in the context of migration processes (Massey 2005). In addition, there is a pervasive bias towards urban, rather than rural, places of destination (Woods 2007).

Against this background, scholars have recently reasserted the importance of locality or place in shaping migratory, transnational and settlement experiences. This shift has been conceived as part of a 'diversity turn' in migration research focusing on new forms of urban diversity (beyond a single ethnic group), intercultural interaction, and how different kinds of local

spaces shape social encounters (Biehl 2020, 2237). In her study of migrant belonging and neighbourhoods in East London and Birmingham for example, Wessendorf (2019, 131) argues that it is 'the neighbourhood, the immediate locality in which migrants live and the nature of social interactions… which crucially impacts on their sense of inclusion or exclusion'. Studies have also increasingly considered the multiplicity of places and temporalities that shape migratory pathways—including transnational identities and migrants' previous experiences of diversity—which influence migrants' place-making practices (for example, Hall & Datta 2010, Wessendorf 2019, Pemberton & Phillimore 2018).

Some of this scholarship addresses the emergence of 'super-diversity' recognising the 'diversification of diversity' that shapes urban contexts of migrant arrival. This work includes the relationship between 'old ("established") and new ("more recently") arrived immigrants from multiple countries of origin, as well as long-standing non-migrant populations' (Pemberton and Phillimore 2018, 734, also see Biehl 2015). Other scholars have focused on lived expressions and spaces of urban diversity and their transformational potential for breaking down racialised inequalities and prejudice. Theorised through concepts such as 'everyday multiculturalism' (Wise 2009) and 'commonplace diversity' (Wessendorf 2010), they examine the conditions that give rise to forms of civility based on 'indifference to difference' (Amin, 2012). While recognising the possibility of generative interactions, the potential for relations of ambivalence and exclusion have also been noted (Valentine 2008, Skrbis and Woodward 2007). In this body of work, the socio-material dimensions of places—as part of an assemblage of human and non-human elements that make up the city—feature strongly in the analysis of intercultural encounters in ordinary contact zones or other transversal places (for example, public libraries, sports fields or backyards) (Amin 2012, Neal et al 2019, Wise 2009, Fincher and Iveson 2008, Aquino et al 2020).

As Ehrkamp (2005, 349) argues, 'place provides the tools for considering the multiple scales that impinge on immigrants' lives, while simultaneously enabling us to consider how immigrants use such ties to create places for themselves'. In other words, this scholarship considers how place is embedded in other scalar practices, politics and flows: it is necessarily multisited and multiscalar (Fincher et al 2019, Williamson 2015). Multiscalar approaches frame migration as mutually constituted by political regimes, institutions and policies at multiple geographical scales. For example, Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009, 2013, 2021) engage cities as an important scale for understanding migrant pathways of incorporation, arguing that (2011, 2), 'migration, when considered locally, is a part of [the] global restructuring and reimagining of urban life', but 'the impact of migration varies and must be assessed in relation to specific localities'.

Our investigation of the interrelated ways migration has transformed three urban localities draws inspiration from the approaches above. From the narratives of migrants and long-term residents we consider how place-making practices are played out in specific localities. We also consider what these narratives might tell us about the prevailing 'intercultural ethos' in each locality, and how this is shaped by multiscalar processes. Our approach differs from past studies that have focused on urban sites within one national context (e.g. Fincher et al 2019, Wessendorf 2019, Pemberton and Phillimore 2018) or multisitedness in relation to an individual's transnational pathways (Hage 2005). Rather, we follow more experimental approaches to relational comparative urban analysis across difference (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2021) by examining localised transformations across three highly diverse contexts of migration (see Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2021 for an overview of the comparative relational studies from a geographical perspective). The three case studies we present here are necessarily concise snapshots of urban localities whose complex political-economic histories

make them emblematic of the affordances and discontents that emerge at the nexus of neoliberalisation, migration and social transformation (see Kim 2015, Koleth 2015, Ozkul 2015 for more in-depth studies). In recognition of the inevitable challenges of balancing 'the impulse for methodological harmony' with 'the need for locally sensitive method' in comparative work (Dunn and Kamp 2015, 43), our relational analysis offers a series of situated comparisons, focusing on comparing commonalities (and differences) across these sites in a way that is sensitive to local historical and structural conditions.

Methods

The [name of project anonymised] project explored how *global* and *national* transformations were perceived and experienced *locally* by the people affected in specific neighbourhoods or villages in four case study countries: South Korea, Mexico, Australia and Turkey. The case studies were selected to enable comparison across diverse regional migration contexts that had been significantly impacted by neoliberal globalisation and migration. Selection of research sites was also informed by the expertise of research teams composed of local migration specialists in each country and research assistants with relevant language and local-level knowledge. The project utilised a multiscalar, mixed-methods approach to deeply examine the complex political, economic, religious and social histories of each place, while analysing how global, national and regional level processes touch down and transform dimensions of everyday life in the chosen localities.

The current paper draws only on three of the case study localities, namely, Kumkapı in Istanbul, Turkey, Ansan in the Capital Area of South Korea and Fairfield in Sydney, Australia. These sites were chosen because they succinctly show the impacts of immigration on urban place making, as well as the impacts of struggles over urban belonging on immigrants (transformations associated with emigration and neoliberal globalisation in the fourth case study locality, Casa Blanca, a rural town in Mexico, are addressed in Arias Cubas (2015))..

The qualitative research conducted in each locality by the principal investigator and research assistants included semi-structured interviews and participant observation. In total, we conducted 141 semi-structured interviews with three core groups of interviewees: 1) residents who identified as being from migratory backgrounds ('migrants') or long-term residents or members of the 'host' society ('non-migrants'), 2) local decision-makers (including municipal and public service representatives and policy makers, community and ethnic/migrant group organisers, and other local leaders), and 3) decision-makers working in national and state migration policy. This included 30 interviews in Korea, 39 in Mexico, 35 in Australia and 37 in Turkey. The interviews lasted approximately an hour and explored experiences, beliefs and decisions regarding migration and everyday experiences of their neighbourhood, and collected key individual attributes such as migration and employment status, age, education and gender. We recruited respondents through personal networks and those of the local specialists, and through migrant-serving organisations and representatives, as well as through snowball sampling. Research in all sites received full ethics approval from the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (approval no. 14789).

A systematic analysis of the interviews was conducted using NVivo. Utilising an iterative approach, thematic nodes were collaboratively identified, hierarchically structured and consolidated to analyse common and discrete themes, with interviews being coded by the researchers specialising in the respective localities. Additional thematic nodes emerging from the data were then discussed and introduced into the hierarchy before a final coding revision.

Finally, matrix queries were run to facilitate comparative analysis, paying particular attention to respondents' perceptions and experiences of migration by country of origin and migration status.

Case study localities

In this section, we provide a brief overview of the historical and ongoing interactions between international migration and neoliberal globalisation in the localities of Kumkapı (Istanbul, Turkey), Ansan (the Capital Area, South Korea), and Fairfield (Sydney, Australia), each of which is discussed in greater detail elsewhere (see Castles et al. 2015).

Kumkapı, Turkey

Turkey has long been home to multi-ethnic and multi-religious populations. Between the 1950s and the late 1970s, the Turkish state followed a policy of import-substitution industrialisation, which was characterised by a manufacturing-industry led expansion with disproportionate investment in large cities. The resulting concentration of jobs in cities like Istanbul stimulated internal migration from rural communities. Neoliberal restructuring of the economy became significant after the coup d'état in 1980, which repressed all dissident and largely left-wing groups. From the early 1980s, the Turkish economy rapidly opened up to international markets without having adequate institutional infrastructure (see Öniş 2004). This period also saw growing conflicts with Kurdish citizens of the country and their forced internal displacement. After a phase of economic crises in 1994 and 2000–01, pro-privatisation policies were accompanied by growing income inequality, increasing violence between ethnicised and sectarianised groups, and police atrocities in response to growing civilian protest. The last decade also witnessed gentrification of urban centres that further led to processes of displacement in the new urban geography.

Kumkapı, located at the centre, adjacent to Istanbul's old town, is one of the oldest districts of the city and a witness to these changes. In the first decades of the Republic, Armenians, Greeks and Turks populated the neighbourhood, later leaving their houses to growing numbers of low-income internal migrants in the 1950s–70s and later internally displaced Kurds in the 1980s–90s. These internal migrants were all attracted by the proximity to the city centre and opportunities for work. Since the 1990s, Kumkapı has witnessed the emergence of a new transnational textile business between Turkey and post-Soviet countries. It then became the main residential area for post-Soviet female workers who facilitated this trade (Eder 2015). Due to its proximity to night clubs, the area also became associated with sex work and trafficking. The last two decades saw the arrival of African migrants and asylum seekers who needed to stay near the Kumkapı Foreigners Branch Office and have access to daily job opportunities in the area. Many residents are positioned on the lower tiers of the social hierarchy due to their lack of financial capital and often precarious legal status.

Ansan, South Korea

The South Korean economy and society have also seen a series of dramatic transformations, from post-war industrialisation driven by its authoritarian developmental state to the neoliberalisation imposed by international financial institutions and internalised by a state-*chaebol* (family-owned conglomerate) nexus. Like the crises in Turkey, the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 accelerated the restructuring of the financial and labour market, which proliferated over non-economic sectors, including education, culture and human relations. A significant impact of neoliberal globalisation was population change, which resulted from the rapid increase in arrivals of precarious workers from East and Southeast Asian countries for flexibilised low-income jobs. The central government's policies relating to managing

ethnocultural diversity have been explicitly oriented toward maintaining low wages on one side and cultural hegemony on the other (Lee 2015, Kim 2015).

Ansan, just 30 km from central Seoul, has been transformed from a quiet fishing and agricultural village into a national industrial complex over the last 40 years. Somewhat similar to Kumkapı, internal migration was replaced by increasing international arrivals, as neoliberal transformations in the 1990s' South Korean economy put pressure on the local economy of small- and medium-sized manufacturing to rely on low-wages and poor working conditions (Kim 2015, Castles 2017). Over this period, the needs of international migrants have transformed the streetscape of the old downtown of Ansan, increasingly reputed as a dirty and dangerous place. The prejudice, however, has been overlaid by local government investment in urban renewal projects, which marked the old area as a 'multicultural village special zone' in an attempt to attract tourists. Established in 2008, this rebranding inserted the local area more firmly into national, transnational and translocal circuits of capital and transformed them under a rhetoric of 'safe' ethnocultural difference and consumerism. This has precipitated further transformations: migrants moving out to suburban areas in search of affordable housing, while the old town has become a commercial area targeting migrants for shopping and entertainment on the weekends (Kim 2015).

Fairfield, Australia

One of the 'classical countries of immigration', Australia is a settler-colonial nation built on the colonial dispossession of Indigenous populations and successive waves of large-scale immigration (Castles et al 2014). The restructuring and neoliberalisation of the Australian economy from the late 1960s set the context for major migration policy changes including the abandonment of the White Australia Policy and the introduction of multiculturalism from the 1970s, which diversified migration intakes from the post-WWII patterns of European settlement to increased intakes from Asia, and the privileging of skilled migration (Jupp 2007). The shift from a manufacturing to a service-based economy in this time saw the emergence of Sydney as a global city by the 1990s and a concomitant increase in urban socio-spatial inequality, as wealth became concentrated in Sydney's East and socio-economic disadvantage became concentrated in its western peripheries, where Fairfield is located, some 23 km from central Sydney (Koleth 2015).

Unlike Ansan, Fairfield has long been a settlement destination for international migrants, particularly humanitarian entrants, including from Europe, post-WWII, Latin America and Indo-China from the 1970s, Lebanon from the 1980s and 90s, and more recently from Iraq and African countries. Across its commercial and industrial centres, suburbs and semi-rural fringes, Fairfield was significantly impacted by the neoliberal transformations of the national and state economies, and of Sydney's urban development. In the aftermath of the recession in the 1990s, the concentration of urban socio-economic disadvantage resulted in the racialisation and criminalisation of parts of Fairfield, which (similar to Ansan) then underwent significant urban renewal by the late 1990s, notably through the commodification of multicultural diversity as a neoliberal asset and the promotion of ethnic entrepreneurialism (Markus et al 2009; Koleth 2015). The mobile phone and money transfer shops, ethnic grocery stores, cafes and restaurants, among other small businesses on local streets, reflect Fairfield's changing demography and its socio-economic position at the edges of global Sydney's service and knowledge economies. Significant local municipal investments in celebrating and supporting local multiculturalism, through infrastructures for cultural events, such as the annual Muslim Eid festival, and arts programs, foster a strong sense of localised belonging, while also serving as marketable and easily consumable forms of localised globality (Hage 1997).

Perceptions of change: streetscapes

Kumkapı

In Kumkapı, perceptions of local change in the streetscape were largely negative in interviews with Turkish residents and tended to be articulated through dominant themes of disorder: cleanliness, disruptions to the soundscape and familiar rhythms of the street, or overcrowding in residential buildings:

> For the last 10 to 15 years, the Kurds have arrived. Also, foreigners! That beautiful old Istanbul doesn't exist anymore. The streets are dirty; insides of the houses are messy. There is always some smell coming out of the flats. When my neighbour opens her door, I can't even smell. I lose my ability to sense. I have to close my door and escape as soon as possible. (Turkish, female, self–employed, 55+).

This resident evokes changes in her homely sensory environment as well as the street, and her perception of disorder is so overwhelming that it forecloses any opportunity to engage with her neighbours. The resident also associates degeneration of the local area with Kurdish migrants; this is not surprising as internal migrations of rural Turkish and Kurdish migrants have long been scapegoats for negative urban transformation and associated social disorder (Ozkul 2015, Saraçoğlu 2010). These changes were also linked to the transformation in the local economy, where shift work has generated an after-hours economy. These negative perceptions resonate with research that suggests that social contact and trust among residents decreases when deprivation increases in a neighbourhood (Havekes et al 2014) and that issues around civility and order can become a major source of criticism towards newcomers (see Wessendorf 2016).

In Kumkapı, changes to the streetscape were less likely to be discussed in terms of changes to the local economy such as new migrant businesses, products or signs. Instead, issues like changing public cultures in the street were foregrounded as indicative of wider processes of social transformation. Another long-term resident perceived local-level transformations through the lens of increased visible diversity, street-based informal retail and unfamiliar modes of public comportment which she associated with a lack of social order and morality.

> All our neighbours have changed. In the past, these houses were immaculate. There was a big difference. When people went out, they would take care of what they wore. That was important. People wore clean and decent clothes. Everyone was cultured. They had education and knew how to talk, how to walk… (Turkish, female, self-employed, 55+).

As other research has shown, associations between order, cleanliness, sexuality and morality are a common theme structuring social relations with 'foreigners', and cannot be separated from a complex history of migration and the emergence of particular industries that challenge prevailing gendered norms of interaction (see Biehl 2020, 2246).

Notably, for some residents, the municipality and its projects of urban regeneration also constituted a threat to local order. Against a backdrop of planned gentrification, perceived changes associated with migration are intertwined with the equally threatening, vested politics of local government. As one respondent noted, the lack of government intervention in the upkeep of the neighbourhood was, in his view, part of a broader urban strategy:

> This area used to be much cleaner, more ordered. […] We hear they are prepared to sacrifice this place. The municipality has some plans for this area. They say this area needs to be changed. [...] I mean the owners of this area need to be changed. They will undertake urban transformation (*kentsel dönüşüm*) here. That is why they think it is better if here is neglected, disordered. (Turkish, male, small business owner, 35-44).

Here, the interviewee points to the inseparability of neighbourhood change, migration and citywide strategies of neoliberal urban transformation focused on attracting investment and touristic capital, often at the expense of those with little money, mainly migrants with a precarious foothold in the city.

Ansan

In contrast to Kumkapı, changes to the streetscape in Ansan were more likely to be discussed in terms of new migrant businesses, products or signs that emerged amid top-down urban renewal programs. At first, this included international phone call shops, video rental shops and travel agencies; more recently, they were replaced by smartphone shops, 'Asian' shops and restaurants, and many signs for international telecommunication companies (Kim 2015). As one long-term resident describes:

> There were not this many people here. […] It used to be just a residential area, but shops increased amazingly. So, new buildings are built, and things are all changed to commercial shops. Chinese people increased, and now almost 90% are Chinese. So, this area changed to mobile shops and Chinese businesses. […] All foreigners come to Ansan to buy mobile phones, computers and so on. (Sri Lankan, male restaurant owner, 35–44).

At the centre of Ansan's old downtown is a 'Multicultural Street' and public square. This public space is often used for folk dance parties of Chinese migrants, or Eid al-Fitr prayers of Southeast Asian migrants:

> On a summer night in 2012, the 'Meeting Plaza' […] was full of people dancing an old-fashioned jitterbug or performing a *Yangko* dance (a north-eastern Chinese group dance) to loud music. Passers-by stopped and watched the unusual scene with curiosity; others walked straight on by, as this is a daily occurrence. […] 'Multicultural Street', next to the square, was alive with street-vendors selling raw meat and fish, tropical fruits and different types of bread, display stands advertising brand new smartphones, and exhausted workers coming back late from their hard jobs. The next morning […] the square was again filled with people saying prayers to celebrate the end of Ramadan. Across the road from this solemn ceremony, another group of devout people gathered in a small church, praying for 'Gospels for Muslims' (Researcher's Fieldnotes).

Such examples of non-hegemonic public culture and religion are important place-making practices for migrants. While still characterised by a degree of 'newness' and 'visibility' vis-à-vis more 'ideal' place-making in super-diverse neighbourhoods (Pemberton and Phillimore, 2018), for recent arrivals to the area, the accommodation of their diverse cultural practices and collective identity enabled them to feel more at home. As one respondent of Southeast Asian-background noted, everyday acts such as attending a mosque or buying halal meat were highly symbolic of positive transformations in Ansan, where 'these used to be stopped by immigration crackdowns in the past' (Myanmarese, male, factory worker, 45–54). For this worker, these material changes indicate a transformation from exclusive immigration regimes

to more inclusive integration policies that are given prominence through symbolic (albeit highly commercialised) spaces such as the 'Multicultural Village Special Zone'.

Long-term residents' and migrants' perceptions of these changes were mixed and tended to focus on visible demographic changes. Similarly to Kumkapı, different practices of public comportment were also taken as evidence of the changes brought about by incoming migrant groups, who were identified as the cause of disorder in the neighbourhood:

> All Koreans keep the rules, but they don't; they throw away cigarette butts and spit on the street. They lack courtesy in another's country. How dare they do that in other peoples' country? They are making a mess. (Korean, male, real estate agent, 55+).

South Korea's history of cultural homogeneity makes any 'different' or 'foreign' cultural practices highly salient. The interview data revealed an explicit construction of migrants as foreigners who were responsible for disorder in the local landscape, as opposed to conscientious and rule-abiding local South Korean residents. While urban renewal projects such as in the old downtown of Ansan, are an attempt to manage pockets of multicultural diversity, these transformations must be understood in relation to the speed of the city's creation as a state-sponsored new industrial zone. In this accelerated process, there is little sense that international migrants have become fully integrated into the urban fabric. Creating a special multicultural zone provides some state-sanctioned tolerance of difference (in addition to economic benefits), but also reinforces an outsider status.

Fairfield

In contrast to Kumkapı, perceptions of changes in the streetscapes of Fairfield celebrated the history of migrant economic activity and cultural identities, to the extent that the associated built environment is now regarded as 'heritage' and is seen as a positive, marketable multicultural 'asset' by residents and the local council:

> You just have to look at the landscape, the buildings, the design of the buildings, everything looks different; every house looks different. The area has amazing assets, buildings and temples, mosques and churches… It's famous for their temples and the mosque and really old churches. So there's a lot of heritage—the whole love for soccer, with the Italian and Serbian and Croatian community…. Food, the fashion, all of it. (Australian, female, community arts practitioner, 25–34).

As in Ansan, perceptions of transformation in Fairfield were also articulated through the changing use of public space. Many commented on the spatial practices of migrant groups in commercial centres, such as the congregation of Arabic-speaking males in coffee houses. Many residents actively celebrated this kind of diversity in business types and public life as positive indicators of a 'vibrant' and inclusive local place identity, noting the emergence and gradual acceptance of such developments over time.

> The use of public places has changed over time. Public parks accommodate different types of sports; people playing badminton, doing tai chi… marching on the street, markets, festivals on the streets, use of fireworks during celebrations, dragon dances, decorations in churches and temples have changed. Signs displayed around the area are in different languages… This is different to the early days. These kinds of things make migrants feel at home. Now public spaces belong to everyone... (Vietnamese-Australian, male, religious leader, 35–44).

Yet, as with Ansan and Kumkapı, there were also negative perceptions of some migrants in relation to urban change. Given Fairfield's historical and ongoing reception of high proportions of humanitarian migrants, who arrive with minimal resources and struggle to integrate into the labour market, some residents drew causal associations between recently arrived migrants and urban decline resulting from state disinvestment and rising unemployment. A local business owner and mother reflected on local transformations since her childhood:

> Now, none of these people work... They just sit there all day, so it kind of brings down the reputation of the community. Things have changed. The stores have changed, there are no high-end stores anymore, there's a lot of cheap two-dollar shops, cheap material shops, lots of coffee shops. Now you've got a lot of Fijian and Asian grocery stores, whereas before there were like three or four banks, really nice dress stores […]... It's drawing a different kind of community. (Italian-Australian, female, business owner/childcare worker, 35–44 years).

Such temporal distinctions between an imagined past of affluence and order and contemporary urban decay associated with racialised migrants, often evoked by older residents through registers of nostalgia, abjection and discomfort, signalled anxieties about increasing ethno-cultural and racial diversity. This finding resonates with other studies of multicultural neighbourhoods in Sydney (Wise 2011) and may highlight lack of experience with, or aversion to intercultural interactions among some residents (Wessendorf 2019, 138, Noble 2009).

Transformations in neighbourly relations and encounters with difference

Kumkapı

A second theme shared across all case studies was the perception that neighbourly relations had significantly changed in the context of international migration. In Kumkapı, the everyday proximity of ethnic and migrant groups in the locality necessitates practices of co-habitation in public spaces: residents share common spaces in cafés, call centres and the street, though racial inequalities become visible when one takes into account the complex social differentiations between older and more recent social constructions of 'foreigners', 'natives', 'blacks' and internal migrants (Biehl 2020). Intra-group perceptions were neither homogenous nor rigid. Some participants expressed sensibilities of tolerance and empathy for recent international migrants and their marginal conditions in Kumkapı—as long as they remained quiet and peaceful:

> God shall be beside them. Their situation is tough. Nobody would leave their homeland, their families and their parents of their own will. When we look at them, we become uncomfortable. Our conscience is not comfortable. We hear that they live in one house with 7–8 people. That is a pity. Otherwise, they don't cause us any problem. (Turkish, male, small business owner, 35–44).

However, an influx of international migrants also represented a loss of social connectedness in the neighbourhood, as one interviewee commented, 'everyone became a foreigner [to each other]' (Turkish, male, sales worker, 44–55). Some 'foreigners' were perceived to be innately hostile to community-building and practices of conviviality. This was linked to a perceived racial and social hierarchy of migrants that was prominent amongst residents of Kumkapı

(see Biehl 2020). Intra-group and inter-group misperceptions and prejudice were common. For example, the history of discrimination and racism against Kurds in Turkey led some residents to perceive them in radically dehumanising ways:

> The most important influence has been the arrival of the Kurdish people. That has been really bad. They filled up the houses with dozens of people. They cause so many problems for us in the East. Now they have brought all those problems, and their garbage lives here. These people cannot even speak Turkish! They are like animals! (Turkish, male, small business owner, 25–34).

Racism was a common complaint among international migrants and internal Kurdish migrants, while the earlier settlers of Kumkapı laid the blame for the negative changes in the area directly upon those who had arrived after them. The lack of lived or deep cosmopolitanism is embedded in the historical experience of place and migratory movements, which are patterned by long-standing cultural prejudices, as well as a highly stratified racial hierarchy that underlies Turkish national identity (Ozkul 2015). The often precarious and semi-legal industries that operate in the area also compound these issues, as they attract internal and international migrants who are already facing conditions of impoverishment and precarity. The municipal disinvestment and the lack of public infrastructure to support intercultural and emerging forms of cosmopolitanism only exacerbate these problems.

Ansan

In Ansan, public sentiments valuing local forms of cosmopolitanism were not common. Rather, a sense of discomfort, particularly with new forms of public culture, were compounded by a nostalgic vision of the recent past, and the idealised social relations that characterise an agrarian village context. One participant said:

> People from here used to be farmers. So, you know we used to have a feeling of sympathy as neighbours sharing in Korean rural areas. […] people came from all over the country when the industrial complex was built. […] They are just surviving at the lowest level of society […] So, what can you imagine? They even don't know how to say 'hello' to each other. Neighbours are never friendly to each other. […] Everyday I feel I am in a foreign country. (Korean, male, self-employed, 55+).

The rapidity of the urban transformation of Ansan and the associated inflow of internal and international migrants were articulated as an interruption of close-knit rural social ties; a dislocation complicated by the limited social, economic and cultural capital of the new, incoming population of precarious workers.

While Korean residents tended to emphasise the sense of discomfort and otherness in their encounters with international migrants, migrants in the area expressed a greater range of sentiments in their perception of neighbourly relations. One resident, a refugee originally from Myanmar, associated Ansan with a sense of homeliness:

> I feel comfortable if I come to Ansan. If I stay at home only, I am forced to think a lot, but if I'm here, I don't have to think much. When I come to Ansan, I feel like I'm in a foreign country. Because there are many people from different countries, I think this is a good place. If foreigners don't have such places, I think they'll cause problems. (Myanmarese, male, factory worker, 45–54).

For this migrant, a sense of belonging and homeliness is articulated through the very same ambiguous perception of Ansan disdained by long-term residents. Initially experienced as foreign, the locality became familiar and 'comfortable' precisely because it accommodates diversity and 'foreignness' in a country of relative cultural homogeneity. Freedom of mobility and 'having a place' connotes a sense of belonging and social solidarity, and for this resident, counters isolation.

Fairfield

For many of our interviewees in Fairfield, intercultural encounters were central to the experience of living in a multicultural locale. For most, openness to ethnocultural difference was an ordinary but highly valued part of daily life in Fairfield. A local Iraqi-Australian, who was a small business owner and mother (female, 35–44), noted: 'these days they [local non-migrant residents] just go for it and try different things…. [in the past] I think they were shocked to see people with different dress types, people would stare at you… Now everyone's so used to it'. The mundane multiculturalism that shaped everyday neighbourly relations for most of our informants fostered 'an inclusive expression of genuine openness [as] part of an ethic of communal solidarity in difference' that was a defining characteristic of Fairfield (Koleth 2015, 246, see also Wise 2009, Noble 2009).

Our interviews revealed that perceptions of the proliferating diversity in Fairfield were mediated by intergenerational differences in attitudes. Younger residents more commonly (though not exclusively) demonstrated an enthusiastic embrace of, and quotidian ease with, difference, but were also critical of the persistence of racialised inequalities in broader society (Koleth 2015). A female Anglo-Australian resident and neighbourhood volunteer said:

> You look around, and you just see the different people, different cultures... I wonder about people's lives, and it's nice. I go for a walk in the morning, and I see these two Asian couples…I say 'good morning', and he says 'morning' with this huge smile on his face, I love seeing that. Obviously, they're happy to be here; they're taking advantage of this scenery here, our way of life. I love that. (Australian, female, mother and student, 35–44).

The quote conveys the 'sideways and informal dynamic' of everyday multiculturalism (Gow, 2005: 387), but also alludes to a hegemonic Anglo-Australian 'way of life', redolent of more conservative and historically assimilationist narratives of community harmony. The limits of the socio-spatial norms of neighbourly interaction were also noted by another resident:

> I'll say 'hello' to all my neighbours, and stop and talk to them, but I think there's a limit for me. I still want my privacy. Back at home [in Iraq], when it reaches five o'clock, everybody goes outside… The neighbours mingle. It was a different lifestyle…. People got home from work, showered, got dressed, got out on the streets, in the park. Here it's different; you don't do that. (Iraqi-Australian, female, small business owner, 35–44).

Efforts to ameliorate the recursive racialisation of specific migrant groups that has historically characterised Australia's reception of international migrants were reflected by a young Iraqi-Australian youth worker who had recently moved to a more affluent part of Fairfield:

> Recently our neighbourhood realised we [Iraqi-Australians] are really friendly people. Neighbours realised that we're not as bad as the media portrayed us,

> they're more comfortable. They say they wish more people like you guys would move out here. (Iraqi-Australian, male, youth worker, 18-24).

Such reflections reveal the racial fault-lines of Australian multiculturalism as they function to construct dichotomies of 'un/deserving' and 'un/desirable' migrants, which (as we also found in Kumkapı) are strongly tied to narratives of national belonging and get reproduced through socio-spatial norms (Noble and Poynting 2010). For younger residents, the ethnocultural diversity that they had grown up with and experienced daily fostered a strong sense of place-based belonging in Fairfield (Koleth 2015). However, for others, such as one elderly Anglo-Australian resident who commented that she felt like a stranger in her neighbourhood, nostalgia for community connection grounded in familiarity rather than difference evoked a longing for a past recalled as being more comfortable (see also Wise (2011) for similar findings in other diverse neighbourhoods in Sydney).

Discussion

Transformations associated with international migration manifests at the scale of everyday places and neighbourly relations in the three localities we studied. We found that, for our research participants, narratives of change and migration, including perceptions of migrants and social (un)belonging, were most easily articulated through the materialities and social interactions that were navigated in their everyday environments. In interviews, discussions of familiar local landscapes were more likely to elicit detailed responses about perceived transformations, compared to more abstract questions about neoliberalisation, structural changes or international migration flows. The diversification of streetscapes, changing expressions of public culture, and everyday encounters with difference were common vernaculars used to materialise, make sense of, criticise and celebrate changes in the social life of the neighbourhood associated with migration and with broader processes of neoliberal social transformation. In this way, our findings accord with and contribute to the growing scholarship on migrant place-making that considers how intercultural encounters are shaped by the unique dynamics of particular localities, and to consider how a variety of migrant place-making practices are intimately woven into—and indeed coproduce—diverse neighbourhoods.

Across Fairfield, Ansan and Kumkapı, there was a similar theme of labelling certain accepted groups as 'our' migrants or 'good migrants', who were seen as forces of positive change and holders of desirable attributes. Similarly, other migrants—often those most recently arrived, with perceived low levels of human capital, or who were 'visibly different'—were labelled as undesirable and were most likely to be scapegoated in relation to an array of negatively perceived local changes. In both Kumkapı and Ansan, urban transformation was shaped by several interconnected factors. Firstly, changes in immigration policy, aligned with the needs of the neoliberal economic market, largely determined the kinds of workers that came to shape the area. Secondly, the material and social landscape of each locality were shaped by centrally led urban renewal projects oriented around economic rationalisation, albeit in different stages. This had positive, negative and ambivalent outcomes for both 'native' and migrant residents and their ability to carve out or maintain a sense of belonging in these places. While ambivalence was also evidenced in Fairfield, the extent to which the changes were perceived as negative was somewhat ameliorated by the historical institutionalisation of multicultural policies as nation-building and community building frameworks. However, like the other sites, these policies operate in tandem with everyday cosmopolitanism (Noble 2009;

Wise 2009) as well as everyday exclusions and forms of boundary making (Noble and Poynting 2010, Biehl 2020).

Similar to other studies of neighbourhood relations in contexts of diversity (e.g. Wessendorf 2019, Pemberton and Phillimore 2018), we found across all three localities evidence of perceived community discord as well as more positive community relations and encounters between long-term residents and migrants in all their diversity. While these relations are uniquely and dynamically shaped in relation to each local environment, the conflation of migrants with negative neighbourhood changes needs to be read in relation to broader processes. The impacts of neoliberal economic policy on local economies have significant flow-on effects—for example, people being pushed into informal and precarious work—across all case study localities. These issues are compounded by national political mobilisations of ethno-cultural 'otherness' that place migrants on the lower rungs of the social hierarchy, and punitive/restrictive migration regimes offering little social security for migrants. Moreover, the localised impacts of neoliberal policies (such as the privatisation of public amenities, gentrification, increased housing costs, lack of social infrastructure, withdrawal of, or the reliance on, philanthropic and charity organisations for the provision of social services), exacerbate relations of ambivalence and patterns of scapegoating that migrants encounter when arriving and living in these localities. While perceived increases in demographic diversity in places of migrant arrival are often the most visible face of neoliberal social transformation, the lack of job opportunities and broader concerns over public space, housing, infrastructure, social services and cultural exchange exist in all three localities. Extending this to Polanyi's (2001) work, we argue that these kinds of local responses can be thought of as examples of the micro-level progressive and regressive counter-movements responding to the social transformations associated with profound neoliberal transformation.

Our findings suggest there is significant value in analysing local-level experiences of social transformation in the context of immigration, while recognising their embeddedness in processes of neoliberal transformation. While this paper relies on individual narratives and micro-level neighbourhood transformations to a greater extent than Çağlar and Glick Schiller's (2021) city studies, it concurs with their assertion that relational comparative multiscalar approaches allow the study of global processes that 'are lived within local dimensions' as well as allowing researchers 'to investigate how spatialized similarities and differences arise, are experienced, and transformed'. Comparing similarities and differences between the case study localities also supports Castles' (2010) thesis that there are complex and multi-scalar factors that influence the degree to which social transformation and international migration are intertwined and the degree to which such changes may be framed as ambivalent, socially generative or disruptive. Much depends on the structures of opportunity, histories of migration and settlement politics, and the idiosyncratic ways that economic rationalisation infiltrates everyday life in each of these localities. Through relational multi-sited and multi-scalar comparative research, we hope to demonstrate how human mobility and neoliberal transformation are deeply embedded in lived, material experiences of everyday life, and provide a more nuanced analysis of contemporary entanglements of social transformation, migration and place.

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