International Inequalities Institute

Accessing information and resources via arrival infrastructures: Migrant newcomers in London

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Working Paper 57

January 2021

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

LSE International Inequalities Institute

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Abstract

In much public discourse, it is assumed that migrants in Europe settle into contexts populated by national majorities or co-ethnics. However, today, new migrants often move into areas which have already been settled by earlier migrants of various backgrounds. Such areas have also been described as 'arrival areas', often situated within 'arrival cities' which have seen immigration (and emigration) over many decades. They are characterized by a wealth of 'arrival infrastructures', consisting of concentrations of institutions, organisations, social spaces and actors which specifically facilitate arrival. Arrival infrastructures comprise, for example, shops as information hubs, religious sites, language classes, hairdressers etc., often set up by people who themselves have a migration background. This article looks at the interactions and transfer of knowledge and resources between long-established migrants and more recent newcomers through arrival infrastructures. By drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in East London, and using the example of two recently arrived female migrants, it investigates how newcomers access settlement information and the role played by arrival infrastructures in this process. It specifically focuses on newcomers who arrive with few social contacts and for whom physically visible arrival infrastructures like libraries and shops are particularly relevant. The article aims to open up debate about arrival infrastructures, their manifestation in different urban contexts, and their relation to both new forms of solidarity as well as new and ongoing forms of exploitation between long-established residents and newcomers.

Keywords: Arrival infrastructures, integration, newcomers, inclusion, exclusion

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Karel Arnaut, Kristen Biehl, Bruno Meeus, Heike Hahnhörster, Aiko Ikemura Amaral, Mike Savage, Loren Landau, Christopher Shannahan and Esra Kaytaz for their constructive comments on my thinking around arrival infrastructures and an earlier draft of this paper. I would also like to thank Liza Ryan and Sofia Muñoz Gonzalez for their help with interpreting.

1. Introduction

Established paradigms for examining immigration assume that migrants settle in areas populated by national majorities, or that they join their co-ethnics in so called 'ethnic neighbourhoods'. However, patterns of immigration into urban areas have always been characterized by the over-layering of different waves of immigration (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016; Kurtenbach 2013; Vertovec 2007; 2015). Such areas have also been described as 'arrival areas', often situated within 'arrival cities' (Saunders 2011) which have seen immigration (and emigration) over many decades. Over time, many of the earlier migrants, their children and grandchildren have made these areas their homes (Phillimore, Humphris and Khan 2014; Saunders 2011). The long-term functioning of these areas in accommodating ever new and diversifying groups of newcomers has brought with it the emergence of formal and informal 'arrival infrastructures', defined as 'those parts of the urban fabric within which newcomers become entangled on arrival, and where their future local or translocal social mobilities are produced' (Meeus, van Heur and Arnaut 2019:11). The notion of arrival infrastructures builds on Xiang's and Lindquist's concept of 'migration infrastructures', defined as 'the systematically interlinked technologies, institutions, and actors that facilitate and condition mobility' (Xiang & Lindquist, 2014:S124). Arrival infrastructures thus constitute concentrations of institutions, organisations, social spaces and actors which specifically facilitate migrant arrival.

This article investigates the role of arrival infrastructures for the settlement of migrant newcomers in East London. By drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in arrival areas which have seen immigration over many decades, the article advances debates about the relationship between arrival infrastructures and migrant integration. It aims to refocus academic and policy discourse around integration by highlighting informal support structures provided by long-established migrants and ethnic minorities. It uses the arrival infrastructures framework to move beyond the assumption that assistance for settlement comes through formal channels, agencies and programmes. By showing how newcomers draw on a range of arrival resources, the article brings into view a wider constellation of actors and highlights the special role played by long-established migrants in facilitating newcomers' arrival and potentially their social upward mobility.

Research has shown the enormous importance of social networks for both migration and settlement, and few migrants arrive without pre-existing social relations (Cheung and Phillimore 2013; Goodson and Phillimore 2008; Ryan 2011; Wessendorf 2019). An approach

that takes account of arrival infrastructures expands these sociological approaches on social networks and social capital (Portes 1998; Putnam 2007) by also putting the spotlight on the spatial and material dimensions of migrant arrival, building on calls to 'rethink the role of materiality' in social life (Burchardt and Höhne 2015:3; see also Amin 2014).

This article specifically focuses on migrants who have few social contacts upon arrival and cannot draw on existing social networks for support. In earlier work, I have conceptualized these newcomers as 'pioneer migrants' (Wessendorf 2018; see also Bakewell, de Haas and Kubal 2012). This article highlights the specific role of an urban area as *arrival* area, and how the long-term history of immigration, coupled with ongoing immigration, can facilitate the incorporation of newcomers via both social relations and physical arrival infrastructures. It examines the interactions and transfer of knowledge and resources between long-established migrants and more recent newcomers through arrival infrastructures, showing how newcomers draw on a range of arrival resources. More specifically, it looks at two infrastructural realms crucial for initial arrival, namely longer established migrant individuals who act as 'arrival brokers', and physical sites where newcomers attempt to find information about settlement.

The first section of the article summarises current social scientific discussions on arrival infrastructures and migrant integration. This is followed by an overview of the research sites and the methodology. The second part of the article uses two examples of recent newcomers to illustrate how they accessed social and physical arrival infrastructures, and how these facilitated their settlement.

2. Arrival areas and arrival infrastructures as framework for analysing migrant incorporation

Much of the work on 'arrival cities' (Saunders 2011) or 'gateway cities' (Price and Benton-Short 2008) is grounded in long-standing urban research undertaken by the Chicago School of Sociology (Park, Burgess and McKenzie 1968), which showed how certain neighbourhoods functioned as transition zones for newcomers and were better equipped to accommodate newcomers than others because of, for example, concentrated cheaper housing, ethnic support networks and institutions, and access to low-skilled jobs (Park, Burgess and McKenzie 1968; Schillebeeckx, Oosterlynck and De Decker 2019). Current social scientific debates on the role of urban neighbourhoods for migrant arrival are still strongly influenced by the idea of the Chicago school's zones of transition (Schrooten and

Meeus 2019). Schrooten and Meeus (2019) underline that focussing on specific arrival areas helps us turn our analytical lens to how the lived and the built environment intersect.

Since the early inception of the Chicago school's focus on urban transition zones, there have been ongoing debates in the social sciences on the effect of socio-spatial concentration of people with a migration background on social mobility (Bolt, Özüekren and Phillips 2010; Hanhörster 2015; Phillips 2010; Vaughan 2007). While some scholars claim that high numbers of ethnic minorities and immigrants within specific neighbourhoods limit social upward mobility and can lead to social tensions (Casey 2016; Putnam 2007), others have found that both downward as well as upward social mobility can occur within such neighbourhoods (Fajth and Bilgili 2018; Finney and Simpson 2009; Murdie and Ghosh 2010; Zhou 2009).

Social scientific studies on context effects have mainly concentrated on the impact of co-ethnic ties and social disadvantage within neighbourhoods on social mobility and neglected the role of arrival infrastructures and social relations beyond co-ethnic networks. Furthermore, much of this work has conceptualized the neighbourhood as 'container space', assuming that residents form few social relations and thus have limited social capital beyond the neighbourhood, and that it is primarily local resources which determine the social mobility of its residents (Van Kempen and Wissink 2014)[1]. The advantage of an infrastructural approach to arrival is that it takes both locality as well as translocality into account. It acknowledges the importance of particular spatial contexts and the circumstances of particular groups within these contexts, but it also 'expands and refines the geographies of arrival beyond the territorial approach of the neighbourhood to all parts of the fabric of society that matter for newcomers' (Schroten and Meeus 2019:5). For example, a Lithuanian research participant of the project presented here had all arrival specific matters arranged by a friend before moving to London, including housing, work and an English class. Other migrants, however, might not have pre-existing transnational social networks. Resource access beyond the neighbourhood might also be limited for some migrants due to limited funds for transport across the city. A Spanish research participant accounted that initially, he did not have enough money to take public transport in London.

The view of arrival areas as permeable and not always spatially bound also relates to the notion of 'arrival' as a process rather than an end point. For this article, 'arrival' is

[1] See Hans, Hanhörster, Polívka and Beißwenger (2019), Hanhörster and Wessendorf (2020) and van Ham and Manley (2012) for a discussion.

conceptualized as the process in which newcomers find a foothold in a new place, socially, economically and culturally. This includes the possibility that not all newcomers settle where they arrive, and that they might move on to other places. Arrival areas can thus function as 'escalator areas' (Travers, et al. 2007), accommodating and providing substantial support for new migrants when they first arrive (Phillimore, et al. 2008), and often facilitating the on-movement to more permanent places of settlement.

Despite new digital forms of communication, migrants' long-standing embeddedness within transnational networks and the existence of migration specific information hubs on social media (Dekker and Engbersen 2012), physical-spatial infrastructures continue to play a major role in catering for migrants. For more than a decade, the social sciences have seen an increased interest in the role of materiality in urban social life (Simone 2004). This 'infrastructural turn' (Burchardt and Höhne 2015:3) has also inspired migration scholarship, which has expanded its prevailing focus on transnational social networks as main facilitator of migration movements to putting the spotlight on how institutions, organisations and actors within such systems facilitate (or hinder) human mobility (Xiang and Lindquist 2014).

Larkin (2013:328) defines infrastructures as 'built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space'. Within the context of migration-driven urban diversification, Burchardt and Höhne (2015:3) understand infrastructures as 'socio-technical apparatuses and material artefacts that structure, enable and govern circulation – specifically the circulation of energy, information, goods and capital but also of people, practices and images in the urban realm and beyond'. Meeus, Arnaut and van Heur (2019) were among the first to apply the notion of infrastructures to urban contexts of migrant arrival, putting the focus on how arrival infrastructures shape migrant social mobility. Importantly, much of the work on arrival infrastructures not only looks at physical infrastructures facilitating arrival, but also the role of specific actors or groups, conceptualizing the latter as intrinsic part of urban arrival infrastructures, for example as 'people as infrastructures' (Simone 2004), 'migrant infrastructures' (Hall, King and Finlay 2017), 'soft infrastructures' (Boost and Oosterlynck 2019) and 'infrastructures of superdiversity' (Blommaert 2014). Building on Lindquist et al.'s definition of 'migrant brokers' as a 'party who mediates between other parties' (2012:8), such individuals and groups could also be conceptualized as 'arrival brokers' who provide access to settlement information (Hanhörster and Wessendorf 2020). They often operate within physically accessible sites such as

libraries, barbers or religious sites, also conceptualized as 'social infrastructures' (Klinenberg 2018) or 'third places' (Oldenburg and Brissett 1982).[2]

Importantly, accessing one type of arrival infrastructure, for example an informal football club in a park, can facilitate access to another (e.g. a job or advice centre). Shops, cafés, street-corners, parks, mosques or churches can have vital functions as 'information hubs' and places of sociability (Biehl 2015; Costa 2016; Hall, King and Finlay 2017; Özdil 2008; Wise, et al. 2018).

Such physical arrival infrastructures have received little attention in work on migrant integration. 'Integration', used by many states as a framework to analyse migrant incorporation, refers to the socio-economic, political, social and cultural incorporation of newcomers, as well as the emergence of shared social relations, values, and practices, including the adaptation of the long-settled population to newcomers (Ager and Strang 2004; Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas 2016). Research on integration has predominantly focused on formal integration mechanisms and practical outcomes of integration measures, for example in the realm of education, health and access to jobs. To date, little is known about informal integration mechanisms via arrival infrastructures and how migrants access settlement information. An arrival infrastructural lens facilitates a detailed analysis of where and how migrants access information, where they go when they first arrive, whom they ask for information, and the role played by long-established migrants within arrival areas. This focus on the role of long-established migrants in facilitating newcomers' arrival, conceptualized above as 'arrival brokers' (Hanhörster and Wessendorf 2020), also speaks to literature which examines the role of social networks and social capital for migrant integration (Phillimore, Humphris and Khan 2014; Ryan 2011; Ryan et al. 2008; Suter 2012). While much of this research has focused on the role of co-ethnic networks, a recently emerging body of research has shown how newcomers often draw on the settlement expertise of migrants who do not have the same ethnic or national background (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016; Phillimore, Humphris and Khan 2018; Wessendorf 2018). An arrival infrastructural lens strengthens this approach by looking at how long-established migrants who possess 'settlement expertise' can support newcomers of various backgrounds to find a foothold in a new place. As

[2] There exists a range of social scientific and anthropological literature on 'brokers'. See for example Lindquist (2015) and Tuckett (2020) on brokers who facilitate migrant incorporation or access to citizenship, and who operate within organisations (e.g. NGOs) and institutions. In this paper, I refer to brokers who act as individuals and operate in a more informal manner.

exemplified in the empirical section of this article, they often operate within infrastructural sites such as barbers, religious sites, cafés or libraries.

Importantly, however, the presence of long-established migrants can also hinder newcomers' integration and entail exclusionary practices, for example on the housing market (high rent for poor housing, overcrowding, etc.) (Biehl 2019; Hanhörster and Wessendorf 2020). This can also apply to the realm of the labour market, where newcomers with limited knowledge of the majority language and little awareness of their rights can be trapped in exploitative situations (Meeus and Arnaut 2019). Arrival infrastructures can thus be both enabling *and* limiting for newcomers' integration and potential social mobility. The following section presents the urban contexts within which the research took place and the methodologies used.

3. The Research

London has seen immigration from across the world for centuries, ranging from Jews in the Middle Ages, to merchants from Italy, Germany and the Netherlands, to Huguenots from France in the 17th century. During the time of the city's industrialisation, London saw high numbers of Irish and Italian migrants, as well as Jewish refugees from Russia and Poland (German and Rees 2012). In the 20th century, it attracted labour migrants from the previous British colonies in the Caribbean, South Asia and Africa, and more recently, the city has seen the accelerated diversification of countries of origin from all regions of the world (Kershen 2015). This article draws on two research projects based in Hackney and Newham in East London. These areas form part of East London's typical immigrant reception areas where newcomers find their feet (Butler and Hamnett 2011). Both areas saw considerable numbers of postcolonial migrants from the Caribbean, South Asia and Africa especially since the late 1940s, over-layered by ongoing immigration from across the world, especially since the 1980s, for example from Vietnam, Turkey and a range of African countries. More recently, East London has seen newcomers from Eastern and Southern Europe as well as Latin America. These migrants are not only differentiated in terms of countries of origin, but also regarding educational, religious, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds and different legal statuses. Hackney's and Newham's white British population now forms a minority of 36.2% and 16.5% respectively (Hackney Council 2013; London Borough of Newham 2011). Hackney and Newham are amongst the most deprived areas of the UK despite noticeable

gentrification in recent years and despite only being a stone's throw away from London's financial district (Hackney Council 2019; London Borough of Newham 2016).

Many newcomers in these areas find themselves in economically and legally precarious situations, particularly in the context of austerity over several decades and the closing down of many Civil Society Organisations and other support structures. Especially newcomers who lack social support networks and cannot draw on an already established 'migrant community' struggle to find a foothold in the city and find themselves in precarious work and housing situations.

Fieldwork included participant observation in local community groups such as knitting groups, parents' groups at primary schools, community groups and libraries, as well as 50 in-depth interviews and 11 focus groups with local residents, migrants, and key people such as councillors, religious leaders, teachers and social workers. Fieldwork also included various short conversations with people working in arrival infrastructural sites such as shops, cafés and libraries. Importantly, migrants of many different ethnic, national, religious and socio-economic backgrounds formed part of the studies, including migrants of different legal statuses. All names have been changed. In terms of legal status and its relationship to arrival infrastructures, it is worth noting that in the UK context, asylum seekers are more likely than others to find information about institutionalized support structures via the Home Office (London Borough of Hackney 2019).

The empirical part of this paper examines how newcomers gain access to settlement information and investigates the role played by arrival infrastructures in this process.

4. Arrival infrastructures as people and places

With the examples of Andreea from Moldova and Fatima from Morocco, I will here focus on how migrants with limited contacts and knowledge of English access arrival resources. I have identified three arrival infrastructural realms which were crucial for their arrival and which are representative of other migrants' arrival trajectories. These are: 1. social contacts in the form of arrival brokers and 'weak ties'; 2. physical arrival infrastructures and 3. the internet. While acknowledging the importance of online information (Dekker and Engbersen 2012; Georgiou 2019) and smart phones as 'arrival devices' (Felder et al. 2020), this article will focus on the former two. 'Social infrastructuring practices' have also been conceptualized as 'fluid infrastructures', contrasted with 'robust infrastructures' (Bovo 2020) which I here describe as

physical infrastructures. As shown with the examples below, robust and fluid infrastructures are closely connected.

The following section captures Andreea's and Fatima's arrival trajectory through the lens of these realms.

Andreea

Andreea originally comes from Moldova, but she lived in Azerbaijan for many years before moving to the UK in 2018, eight months before I met her. She came to the UK with a Romanian passport due to her Romanian ancestry. In addition to Romanian, she speaks Russian and Azeri, but her English is very limited (the interview was conducted in Russian). Andreea came to East London with her two teenage sons. When first arriving, she stayed with a Moldovan acquaintance who had been living in London for 17 years already. She and her sons slept on the floor in the living room, but had to pay her for it. This acquaintance also helped her get a National Insurance Number, but she charged her £100 for translating during the interview.

While this acquaintance, who acted as arrival broker, provided crucial help at the beginning, Andreea felt exploited financially and moved to a different accommodation, which she found by asking her neighbours. She now shares a house with four other migrant families, each in a room. Through one of her house mates, she found a GP in the area.

Her first job was cleaning rooms at a large hotel. She found it on the internet via an ad in Romanian. Despite it being an established hotel chain, she describes her first employers as 'Romanian mafia', exploiting her and paying her much less than they should have. When becoming desperate about her job situation and sitting on a bench in Newham crying, someone approached her and spoke to her in Russian. He was a fellow Moldovan. When hearing her story, he gave her a phone number of an organisation that tackles unfair work conditions, telling her to show this number to her employers. As soon as she did, they paid her. Nevertheless, she left the job because of back problems, and has now found a job cleaning offices.

Her sons have settled into secondary school well. Fortunately, there is a Turkish-speaking teaching assistant who translates for her, shows her around and explains everything. At the beginning, she did not manage to find any information about an English class. So she decided to walk around the area and look for one. She approached a Sri Lankan community centre where the cleaner told her about a nearby school for English learners. This is where she is

now learning English and getting support relating to job applications and other crucial services.

Fatima

Fatima was born in Morocco, but spent most of her life in Barcelona (Spain), where she had moved with her parents when she was seven years old. When she moved to London in 2019, she had no contacts and hardly spoke any English (the interview was conducted in Spanish three months after her arrival). She initially stayed in a hotel in Newham which she had found on the internet before coming over. Because she wanted to find more permanent accommodation as quickly as possible, she asked in a grocery shop whether they knew a place to stay. The shopkeeper knew another shopkeeper down the road and introduced her to him. This shopkeeper knew a Romanian woman who had a room to sublet.

When she first arrived, she worked in the hotel where she was staying, cash in hand. But she stopped working there soon after, as she felt exploited. At the time of the interview, she was looking for work, but not speaking English made it difficult for her to find something.

Fatima's story of arrival is characterized by a number of chance encounters with individuals who were able to help her because they had arrival expertise. The shopkeeper knew someone who was able to informally let a room on the spot. Similarly, when she wanted to open a bank account, she asked a woman at a bus stop who took her to a bank where she could open her account. For her National Insurance Number, someone back in Spain told her to go to a solicitor's office in Elephant and Castle, an area in London with a large Spanish-speaking community. While waiting there, someone told her to check the price first, and it turned out to be too expensive. That person ended up helping her getting the NI number and went to the appointment with her to translate. He did not charge her. A similarly serendipitous encounter also led to a new friendship. Fatima met a Moroccan woman on the street who had heard her speak Arabic on the phone and approached her. They got chatting and she invited her to a wedding. They are still in contact.

I first met Fatima at the library of one of Newham's high streets. She had come into the library to enquire about English classes. Fatima's story of arrival exemplifies the importance of arrival expertise present among an arrival area's population, as well as the importance of physical infrastructures (shops, the library) for accessing information. The following section delves into theses arrival infrastructural realms more deeply.

4.1. Arrival brokers and weak ties

Boost and Oosterlynck (2019) describe social relations which are crucial for migrant arrival as 'soft urban arrival infrastructures', defining these as 'the local and extra-local social networks that affect migrants' experiences at their place of arrival by providing them with emotional, informational, and instrumental support in both everyday and crisis situations' (Boost and Oosterlynck 2019:158). As noted earlier, there is a range of literature focusing on the role of social networks for migrant settlement and highlighting the importance of existing links to ethnic communities. This paper, however, focuses on migrants with few such connections upon arrival. For the research participants represented in this article, there were three types of contacts which were crucial for arrival and settlement: those with people whom migrants already knew or who had specifically facilitated an individuals' arrival; those made through serendipitous encounters post-arrival; and weak ties (Granovetter 1073), namely contacts with people who one might meet regularly but not know very well, but who are crucial in providing support for arrival and settlement.

The first type of contacts could also be described as 'arrival brokers' (Hanhörster and Wessendorf 2020). Often, these brokers are migrants themselves and therefore have specific settlement expertise (Wessendorf and Phillimore 2018). The notion of **'arrival broker'** draws on Lindquist et al.'s definition of 'migrant brokers' as a 'party who mediates between other parties', for example between a newcomer and employer or a landlord (Xiang and Lindquist 2014; see also Hans & Hanhörster 2020). Andreea's arrival broker was a Moldovan acquaintance who let her sleep on her living room floor for a fee, helped her with her national insurance number and with finding a school for her sons. Many research participants had such an arrival broker, most of whom were crucial in facilitating initial housing. A Kyrgyz research participant stated that without having at least one such contact, she would not have moved to London. As shown with the example of Andreea, relationships with arrival brokers can be both friendly as well as exploitative. Migrants who do not speak the majority language can sometimes become dependent on brokers who might channel them into specific jobs or substandard housing (Meeus and Arnaut 2019). In contrast, friends might act as brokers and help with a range of arrival challenges. Here, I use the term brokers to refer to more instrumental relationships in the absence of already existing and stable social support structures, as is the case with Fatima and Andreea.

Fatima did not have a broker when she first arrived. For her, serendipitous encounters were more important. For both Fatima and Andreea, serendipitous encounters with people who

possess arrival expertise were facilitated by the fact that they found themselves within an arrival area where there were people who had a migration background themselves and/ or who spoke the same language. This is exemplified with Fatima's friendship with a Moroccan woman whom she met on the street, and Andreea's encounter with a Russian speaker who helped her confront her exploitative employers. Serendipitous encounters with people who can help with settlement also take place because of physically present infrastructures such as shops, libraries and Civil Society Organisations discussed further below. Fatima found housing by asking in a shop, and an English class by asking in the library. Andreea found an English class by asking at a Tamil community centre. Drawing on Small (2017), Hans and Hanhörster describe such encounters as fleeting forms of resource transfer (Hans and Hanhörster 2020). Building on Thrift's (2005) work on urban repair, Hall and Smith (2015) have conceptualized these everyday acts of help and kindness as 'infrastructures of kindness', which persist despite or possibly because of an increasingly hostile discursive and policy environment against migrants.

There are other types of social contacts that are crucial for arrival but are slightly different to the serendipitous ones described here. They take place in the context of routine activities, for example during regular visits to a café, or by attending a football club or a mosque, and they could also be described as 'weak ties' with people of differently positioned social groups who do not form part of close friendship networks (Granovetter 1973). Often, such contacts are formed in public or semi-public spaces, and the chances of such contacts is heightened because of the historically present high number of migrants in such areas (Hans and Hanhörster 2020). Hanhörster and Hans (2020) conceptualize the transfer of information at the mosque and other such more institutionalized spaces as 'institutionally embedded resource transfer' (Hans and Hanhörster 2020:84). Angela's relation with a Turkish-speaking teaching assistant who helps her in regards to school-related matters is an example of this type of resource transfer. Often, these weak ties follow on from serendipitous encounters. For example, Angela found an English class through the cleaner at a Tamil community centre. Once she had started the class, the teacher provided her with further information about other types of arrival resources, for example relating to work. Drawing on Bourideu (1986) Ryan et al. (2008) make the important differentiation between horizontal and vertical weak ties to highlight the resources which these ties might generate. The examples here represent vertical weak ties with individuals in stronger social positions then Fatima and Angela. Dominguez (2011) has conceptualized such ties as 'ties that offer leverage' because they

help individuals get ahead, as opposed to social support ties with friends and family who help individuals 'get by'. Angela and Fatima both lack social support ties, but they are highly skilled in leveraging the few weak ties which they create via serendipitous encounters or within social infrastructures such as libraries and schools.

Fatima and Andreea thus made crucial contacts with individuals who were able to help them as a result of the presence of 'hard infrastructures' (Boost and Oosterlynck 2019) in their arrival area, for example the English school, the library, and shops with shopkeepers who had arrival expertise, exemplifying how the material and social are interlinked and part of one another (Amin 2014).

4.2. Physical infrastructures

The presence of publicly accessible sites such as shops, libraries, barbers and religious sites can be crucial especially for migrants who do not have pre-existing social networks upon arrival. Both Andreea and Fatima found English classes by coincidence and by walking around the area and accessing a community centre and a library respectively. Other migrants similarly reported how by walking around, they found important resources. A Hungarian migrant, for example, found a job centre because of walking around. She had heard of job centres before, but only by seeing one in her area did she make use of it and access its services. Other migrants reported going into pharmacies to ask about nearby doctors' surgeries. Fatima found housing through a shopkeeper. Not only did he have the right contact to find her a room, but he was also not surprised about her request, which exemplifies how such sites not only serve to sell goods, but also provide other kinds of resources (We Made That and LSE Cities 2017). Hall, King and Finlay (2017) examined everyday exchanges of goods and services on urban high streets in the UK, describing these as 'migrant infrastructures' and showing the existence of transactions which go beyond selling goods, but also include, for example, support for form-filling. Research undertaken by Hackney Council showed that barbers and fried chicken fast-food chains are important places where migrants seek information (London Borough of Hackney 2019). A research participant who runs a kiosk at a local underground station in Newham confirmed that selling things is only part of his job, and giving information is a huge additional part. He described his kiosk as 'information bank'.[3]

[3] See also We Made That, LSE Cities (2017).

While Hall, King and Finlay (2017) focused on local businesses, many of the research participants presented here also emphasized the importance of social infrastructures such as libraries and religious sites. For example, the library mentioned as part of Fatima's story plays a crucial role for a variety of migrants who have been in London for various lengths of time. At the library, English classes take place several times a week. The majority of learners had found the class just by walking in and asking about information. The library's physical location at a busy high street, and its set-up, with its large shop window, posters about community events, and a continuously busy atmosphere, signal that it is accessible to people of all backgrounds. Pre Covid-19, twice a week, a group of about fifteen women used to gather for their weekly crochet group on a large table by the front window, most of them with a migration background. During the many times I attended the group, women regularly came into the library to ask members of the group about crochet, which sometimes led to conversations about how to find other resources. One of the librarians emphasized that people come in with all kinds of questions. She said that the library was there for everybody and for all kinds of enquiries, emphasising that 'the library is like a mother'. In Hackney, a Senegalese research participant talked about how the local library was her main point of contact whenever she needed information about anything to do with life in London. She originally found out about the library via her son's school.

Another very important type of physical arrival infrastructure are religious sites. For example, many churches have taken on the function of giving newcomers relevant information about services which provide support, including helping migrants find housing or English classes. One of the local pastors in Newham reported that sign-posting was one of his main activities when working with new parishioners. Often, newcomers find churches either online, for example via google maps, or through friends.

The sites listed in this section only represent a small selection of places which newcomers might access to find arrival information and support. They form part of a large tapestry of arrival infrastructures, which will vary according to the specific characteristics of arrival areas and their respective populations.

5. Conclusion: arrival infrastructures as first points of access

The arrival infrastructural approach refocuses work on integration in various ways. In Europe, research on integration has generally focused on migrants themselves and so called

'integration outcomes', for example how they fare in the labour market or in regard to education. Little research has looked at the micro-processes of accessing these realms (but see Phillimore, Humphris and Khan 2018). Integration research also tended to assume the primary responsibility of the state and civil society organisations for facilitating integration. The concept of arrival infrastructures highlights the relevance of formal and informal institutions and places at the local level. This does not exclude the state, but it neither privileges it. Rather, it also takes into account more informal sites such as hairdressers, newsagents, money transfer agencies, and so on, including public spaces which might facilitate spontaneous encounters among both newly arrived and long-established migrants (Bovo 2020; Kleinman 2013). Hence, the arrival infrastructures approach starts with the migrants themselves, following newcomers through urban contexts where they live their lives (sometimes just temporarily), and asking where and how integration occurs. It thereby also refocuses attention on long-established migrants and ethnic minorities and their role in providing arrival expertise to newcomers. The availability of arrival information is often contingent on the presence of these previous migrants who can provide care, solace and support. While the notion of integration has been criticized for putting the responsibility of integration on individual migrants rather than the receiving society and its institutions, an arrival infrastructural approach attempts to take into account all of these aspects of integration, with a particular focus on urban space and the historicity of ongoing immigration within certain areas. It is the characteristics of arrival areas as long-standing areas of immigration which make the availability of arrival resources and information possible. These histories of immigration have brought with them the development of what could also be described as 'care networks' for newcomers, represented in physical and social infrastructures comprised of, for example, medical practices, sanctuary spaces for asylum seekers and refugees, advice centres, crochet groups, fitness classes and informal social networks (Mosselson 2019). If Andreea had not been in an arrival area, she probably would not have bumped into someone speaking her language who was able to help her with her exploitative employer. Andreea's example also shows how these support infrastructures and networks exist within a wider context of a hostile environment towards immigrants in regard to the legal system, hostile housing and work environments (Mosselson 2019).

These social contacts, also conceptualized as 'weak vertical ties' (Ryan 2011), enabled by serendipitous encounters and by the presence of physical arrival infrastructures, can lead to further resources. They can open up access to a range of information networks which help

newcomers settle in various societal realms, or move on to other places. As illustrated with the examples of Andreea and Fatima, breaking into these networks of support is most challenging for unconnected pioneer migrants. Despite language barriers, Fatima and Andreea were both able to put their social skills to work and use such ties as leverage to get ahead with their new lives in London.

Importantly, these processes do not always take place right after arrival, and there are large temporal differences in when and how migrants access resources. For example, a Hassidic Jewish research participant from Yemen only found an English class four years after arrival, resulting from meeting a Jewish midwife who told her about a local class for Jewish women

Importantly, however, arrival infrastructures can also block access to resources or have exploitative characteristics, as exemplified with Andreea's acquaintance who overcharged her for initial accommodation and administrative support. When examining arrival infrastructures, attention also needs to be paid to these inhospitable or 'profit-oriented infrastructures' (Felder et al. 2020:61; see also Simone 2004).

Examining migrant arrival and integration through an arrival infrastructural lens also has practical implications for local authorities. Reaching out to potentially vulnerable residents is one of many local governments' main challenges. This can potentially be addressed by providing information through arrival infrastructures such as religious sites and local businesses, but also enhancing support for already established institutions such as libraries and schools. By identifying where hard to reach migrants go and where information can be shared, information about rights and entitlements, language classes or welfare support services can be distributed more widely, while being aware that especially migrants in insecure legal situations might not wish to be reached.

Looking at migrant integration via arrival infrastructures helps us to reorient research by putting migrants and long-established residents of both migrant and non-migrant background in the centre of our analysis and highlighting what kinds or informal resources already exist in a given area. Conceptually, the arrival infrastructural lens highlights that, despite transnational connections and support networks, and the prevalence of online platforms and social media, everyday realities of migration and settlement continue to be grounded in place and shaped by the material presence of people, buildings and public spaces. It is these local spaces within areas of ongoing immigration, and how they function as spaces of inclusion or exclusion, which require further investigation.

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