Urban asylum policy in openly conflicting, decoupled migration governance: the case of Barcelona

Abstract

This paper uses Barcelona's Nausica asylum seeker integration program to understand 1) what leads local governments to diverge from national policy on migration issues within decoupled, openly conflicting governance arrangements, and 2) what can result at the local level from cities' and national actors' diverging policy perspectives. Based on interviews with policy elites and the nonprofits managing Nausica, this paper argues that differing state and local logics of care can lead municipalities to utilize devolved competencies to address migration-related needs. Adding to the literature that examines municipal engagement on migration policy issues, the article focuses on city-level governance and definitions of citizenship, which works to combat methodological nationalism in migration studies and relates to migrant cosmopolitanism. The paper's results also raise additional questions on how these insights can be applied by cities currently responding to the outpouring of refugees from Ukraine.

Keywords

Migration governance, local asylum regimes, integration, Barcelona

Authors' biographical note

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Introduction

The so-called 2015 European refugee crisis led to a sharp increase in the number of migrants applying for asylum in Spain—from 2,500 in 2012 to 14,600 in 2015 and 115,000 in 2019 (Eurostat, n.d.-a). Prior to this influx, asylum seekers had not posed many political problems for Spain's highly centralized asylum governance (Spanish Constitution Art. 149 (1) (2); Act 12/2009). The crisis led Spain to expect an increase in the number of asylum seekers arriving from Italy and Greece through the European Union (EU) relocation quota, yet it did not proportionately expand the asylum system for the expected arrival.

Politicians, scholars, and civilians alike criticized the state reception system, pointing to potential family separations, unrealistically expedited timelines to achieve autonomy, rigidity and exclusivity in application acceptance, multi-year backlogs to enter the system,[1] and timing out of the system before an asylum decision has been made as numerous shortcomings (Garcés Mascareñas & Moreno Amador, 2019).

The known gaps in the state reception program, in combination with the expected arrival of refugees through the EU relocation quota and Catalonia's longstanding identity-based conflict with the Spanish state, led the Barcelona City Council (*Ajuntament de Barcelona)* to create the "Refuge City" (*Ciutat Refugi*) plan. Through this plan, the city created local reception and integration policies that sought to remedy the issues of a dysfunctional and inefficient state asylum reception system, undemocratic decision-making that excluded cities, and a lack of commitment towards human rights and international regulations (i.e. the EU relocation plan) (Garcés Mascareñas & Gebhardt, 2020). This led to the creation of Nausica, a local program tasked with addressing the integration needs of the most vulnerable migrants.

As a "bridge" program between existing municipal reception (SAIER) and state asylum reception, Nausica provides a variety of interventions for asylum applicants, those denied asylum (>95% of all applicants (AIDA, 2021)), and those receiving protection but who have emerged from the state support program without full autonomy. The interventions are meant to decrease vulnerability and increase long-term autonomy in the city by focusing on three priorities: 1) basic needs (temporary accommodation, food, transportation, clothing, etc); 2)

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[1] For example, in 2018 there were 68,000 pending applications, 53,000 new applications, and only 10,000 application decisions (AIDA, 2018).

personal and family social support (community activities, promoting women's autonomy, school placements, legal support, psychological support, etc); and 3) labor insertion (including language trainings).

This paper seeks to explore: 1) what leads local governments to diverge from national policy on migration issues within decoupled, openly conflicting governance arrangements, and 2) what can result at the local level from cities and national actors' diverging policy perspectives. First, I develop a framework for analysis based on the existing literature on multilevel governance, migration policy frames, and integration policy. I then use the Nausica program to understand why and how Barcelona created and implemented city-level integration policy within a centralized migration regime. The results show that Barcelona utilized both a local-based definition of citizenship and a pro-Nausica economic perspective to define its approach to reception and integration policy, which it then implemented by positioning migrant services within the already devolved legal competence of social services.

Theoretical framework

2.1 Defining conflicting, decoupled multilevel governance

Barcelona's Refuge City plan resulted partially out of criticism for the state asylum reception system, exemplifying the roles of different actors within a multilevel governance (MLG) structure. Scholten and Penninx (2016) distinguish between four different types of national and local migration governance arrangements: top-down (or centralist); bottom-up (localist); de-hierarchized (multilevel); and decoupled (isolated), with decoupled and bottom-up being most common in migration governance. Within this typology is the additional consideration of supranational and devolved interactions (vertical governance) and the influence of non-state actors (horizontal governance).

However, MLG has its limitation in providing a comprehensive typology for analysis. Alcantara and Nelles (2014) point out that MLG considers governance to be a "negotiated order." Campomori and Ambrosini (2020) build on this by arguing that MLG emphasizes coordination between government actors, whereas in reality migration governance sees more conflicting processes than cooperation. This creates a "battleground" (Ambrosini, 2018) of actors engaging "with their own interests, values, and frames" (Campomori & Ambrosini, 2020, p. 3).

Campomori and Ambrosini (2020) emphasize the limitations of MLG through the example of localities actively resisting state policies due to political and institutional differences rather than traditional decoupled relationships (where the state and sub-state actions are different). They also note that MLG is limited to interactions between government levels and is not sufficient to understand the horizontal relationship between state and non-state actors that are often present in policymaking.

Given that not all municipalities and states agree on approaches to migration governance, there can at times be conflict within MLG. Decoupled relationships, or relationships where differing levels of government share responsibility for an issue yet lack a shared framing or coordination effort, are associated with diverging problem framing (Spencer, 2020). This then limits "the development of coherent and consistent immigration integration policies" (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008, p. 337), as we will see from Spain's decoupled governance structure. Illustrating this scenario with the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, Poppelaars and Scholten argue that policymakers from different levels of government that utilize different problem frames coordinate in different "tongues," and thus policy is not successfully translated between levels.

The resulting tension from decoupled arrangements can manifest itself in different ways. Localities can align or diverge with the policies of their central government, either becoming more liberal or exclusive than the national rhetoric (Ambrosini, 2021). While exclusive policies can lead to anti-immigration ordinances (see HoSang, 2014), progressive policy stances can look like the American sanctuary cities policies that center on local policing non-compliance with national policies or the British Cities of Sanctuary and Spanish refuge city networks that focus on creating a welcoming environment for migrants. Thus, these networks provide insight into conflicting MLG arrangements that "attempt to rescale migration and refugee policies and practices from national to urban scales" (Bauder, 2016, p. 8). Sometimes this means maneuvering within the state-defined limits by negotiating, enhancing, or questioning legal norms and regulations "according to specific local problem definitions not anticipated by or included in state regulations" (Hinger et al., 2016). Barcelona at first attempted to work within state bounds by asking Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy for increased funds to address the migration issues manifesting locally, the state refused to comply, insisting in its executive competence within said policy arena. This then led to what Bazurli and Verhoeven (forthcoming) refer to as

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contentious governance: the Ajuntament and civil society organizations took steps to diverge from national policy and "challenge the national monopoly over immigration" (p. 1).

2.2 Migration policy frames: what leads to conflict within decoupled migration governance?

It is now critical to understand the factors contributing to tension between governance levels so that we can analyze Barcelona's actions within this framework. Migration scholars often use a mix of three policy frames to understand actors' perspectives: an economic perspective, a traditional communities perspective, and an individual rights perspective (Skrentny, 2013). Recently, politicians and scholars alike have utilized an economic growth perspective to argue for policies that increase the common good, often in relation to labor force supply. The traditional communities perspective also emphasizes collective good by protecting the host community and/or immigrants' culture through either exclusionary or cultural assimilation policies. Similarly, the individual rights perspective can be also used to argue for either more inclusive or restrictive policies by emphasizing the human rights of migrants or the rights of citizens in the host state.

Mirroring both the rights and traditional communities perspectives, cities become involved in local reception and integration policymaking because migrants needs and societal contributions are most visible at the local level (Spencer, 2020) and to help maintain social cohesion (Zapata-Barrero, 2021). This alludes to the concept of citizenship based on inhabitance rather than the narrow state-defined legal status (Lefebvre et al., 1996). Henri Lefebvre's "right to the city" is based on the idea that only those who inhabit and create the urban space have the right to that space (1991). Hombert (2021) builds on this concept by borrowing from the sociology of gender (Flanagan & Jackson, 1987; Gilligan, 1982) to claim that city-based citizenship demonstrates how localities are oriented towards a "morality of care" or a "morality of justice" in welcoming migrants.

However, these frames do not take into account the geopolitical concerns of national actors. For example, many state governments prioritize "hard" issues such as sovereignty, bordering, and legal citizenship status (Bauder, 2016). This "citizenship approach" emphasizes the host country's norms, values, and languages (Favell, 1998) and implies that no policies specifically

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addressing certain groups of migrants should exist at the (local) implementation level (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008).

To analyze Barcelona' Nausica program creation and execution, I will compare motivations at both the state and local level using a combination of the aforementioned policy frames. First, I will consider any geopolitical motivations at varying levels of government. Then, I will consider the logics of support that lead to Skrentny's three policy frames. Ultimately, examining state and local logics of support will help us to understand at what point the two actors diverged from each other in the policymaking process.

2.3 How can localities address migrant reception and integration needs?

Cities' logic of care towards migrants is in line with the "local turn" in migration governance, which emphasizes the importance of the local setting (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). As Zapata-Barrero et al. argues, cities can address their lack of formal immigration competencies (which are often held by the state) by claiming a larger role in migrant reception and integration.

When we attempt to understand how Barcelona executed the Refuge City reception and integration plan within a centralized migration system, we must first consider the goals and characteristics of local integration policy. Lidén and Nyhlén (2022) distinguish between local immigration and local integration policy: the first concerns migrant regulation and geographical distribution by government entities. Meanwhile, local integration policy is comprised of the social integration of migrants into their host societies (Hammar, 1985). It is in this policy area that local concepts of citizenship can factor into policymaking that differs from the national level.

As Broadhead (2020) claims, integration policy centers "the local level but is often at the whim of national policymaking on migration…it has few policy parameters and little dedicated resources." Spencer & Charsley (2016) define integration as 1) requiring a two-way approach between newcomers and receiving communities; 2) occurring not just through public services but throughout society (thus requiring a variety of actors); and 3) occurring across multiple spheres of life (such as economic, social, cultural, civic participation, and mutual belonging). Local integration policy often focuses on socioeconomic factors (Alexander, 2007), addressed through devolved competencies such as education and labor.

I will focus my analysis of policies resulting from the conflicting, decoupled Spanish state-Barcelona relationship on the devolved competencies that the city uses to act within a de-jure centralized system. This is because though decoupling means local actors develop policies apart from national policies (Scholten & Penninx, 2016), cities are still "largely subservient to the nation-state," meaning cities may diverge from national rhetoric while remaining within the state-defined limits (de Graauw & Vermeulen, 2016, p. 990). Local approaches to immigrant integration are also often characterized by their pragmatic approach (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008) and based on their logics of support toward migrants and the fact that cities are often much closer to the realities of integration than national policymakers.

2.4 The case of Barcelona

In order to understand how conflict between local and national framing of immigrant integration issues leads to local integration policy, I focus on one decoupled relationship that goes beyond Scholten and Penninx's typology to include conflict as a necessary prerequisite for analysis. I use Nausica, Barcelona's asylum seeker integration program, as the policy vehicle with which to conduct my analysis. As discussed above, Nausica resulted from a decoupled and openly conflicting relationship with the Spanish government in regard to the centralized asylum reception system. This can be explained by a variety of factors often cited as central to local integration policy development, including the presence of left-leaning (local) government (de Graauw & Vermeulen, 2016), strong community-based or advocacy organizations that represent migrants' needs (ibid; Schammann et al., 2021), decentralization (Hepburn, 2014), urbanization (Buhr, 2017), and municipal autonomy (Schammann et al., 2021). These traits provide an excellent basis to examine the various factors influencing Barcelona's approach to migrant integration when in conflict with the state. Barcelona also presents a useful case study because it illustrates the capacity of a city to bring the debate of the role of cities in refugee reception to the national and global levels, which it has done as a member of multiple forums and organizations.

The paper adds to the literature that uses interviews to provide an insider's understanding of Barcelona's Refuge City policy and resulting programs (see Garcés Mascareñas & Gebhardt, 2020; Garcés Mascareñas & Moreno Amador, 2019; Irgil, 2016; Schweitzer, 2022). It specifically adds to the recent focus on conflict and local leadership across multilevel

governance. The paper also focuses on city-level governance and definitions of citizenship, which helps combat methodological nationalism in migration studies and relates to migrant cosmopolitanism.

Methodology

This research combines semi-structured interviews with policy elites and nonprofit experts closely associated with the Nausica program with document analysis of external Nausica yearly evaluations to understand the program both from a qualitative "perspective and priorities" approach and a quantitative "impact and effects" approach.

Over the course of four months, 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders in Barcelona's municipal migration services (see Appendix A for interview list). The stakeholder interviews consisted of conversations with informants belonging to two main categories: current and former Ajuntament political and executive staff[2] as well as representatives of the social entities that oversee Nausica's day-to-day programming and execution. Each interview focused on topics such as Nausica's governance structure, the motivation behind and creation of Nausica, and challenges and successes with the pilot program. Given that Nausica is a closed program that interfaces directly with the state asylum program to receive participants, I was unable to gain access to program participants, who could have contributed a new perspective on program successes, challenges, and ability to fill the gaps of the state reception system. It was also not possible to collect a random sample of interviewees given the limited access to program leadership, leading the final data compilation to be based on interviewee availability and responsiveness.

The semi-structured interviews are complimented by document analysis of city-commissioned Nausica evaluations from 2018-2020 to understand how the city has thus far evaluated and responded to evaluation results. My analysis was also informed by Nausica's technical and administrative contract specifications and municipal SAIER reports between 2016 and 2020, given that SAIER manages and coordinates Nausica.

Before each interview, participants were given an informed consent form and authorized interview recording. Interviews were transcribed via Trint and shared with interviewees if

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[2] Barcelona City Council divides its structure into two spheres: the political and the executive. The political represents and makes decisions for the residents of Barcelona, while the executive sphere executes these policies. SAIER is located within the executive sphere.

requested to confirm the information before analysis. The transcribed interviews were then uploaded, anonymized, coded, and analyzed in the software program NVivo.

First, I inductively coded the interview transcriptions to identify recurring themes such as Nausica program structure, creation, successes, challenges, policy justification, and the Ajuntament governance and political context. I then reviewed the codes to identify themes persisting across interviews that answered the two research questions.

How does a city respond to conflicting, decoupled migration governance?

4.1 The rationale behind conflict: different logics of care

In order to understand how local migration regimes emerge from conflicting, decoupled governance arrangements, we must first understand what leads localities to be in conflict with national governments on this front. Using the case of Barcelona's Nausica program, we can identify the origin point of conflict: differing logics of care for migrants, which, as stated previously, can lead to different policy frames and resulting policies.

Even though the realities of migration largely manifest locally, the Spanish asylum system does not coordinate with municipalities and sees no need to change this approach. In fact, in September 2015 Barcelona mayor Ada Colau wrote to Prime Minister Rajoy asking for increased funds and transparency on how existing funds were distributed. The state's response emphasized that asylum is an exclusive competence of the state, arguing that city-led relocation was "a threat to territorial cohesion" (Garcés Mascareñas & Gebhardt, 2020). This security-based logic towards migrants emphasizes regional "Europeanism," mirroring the geopolitical goals of the EU. The European Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas, who is responsible for migration and asylum, actively encourages the "fortress Europe" perspective through rhetoric promoting a "European way of life." This message of control and suppression through fortress Europe is emphasized in Spain, a southern European border state that is jointly responsible for European border control throughout the waters between Spain and Northern Africa. In this sense the Spanish state clearly prioritizes its own and the EU's geopolitical citizenship approach to migration policies.

Barcelona has positioned itself in stark contrast to the state by utilizing two main perspectives to define its approach to migration policies: a city-based identity perspective and an economic perspective. First, Barcelona utilizes a city-based identity perspective to emphasize "city-zenship" in place of legally defined citizenship (Barak, 2020). The Ajuntament considers migrants to be "neighbors" just as any other city resident, worthy of the minimum "right to have rights" (Arendt, 1951). Interviewee 8 aptly explains this perspective: "[Nausica] was initially designed for people who left the state program without autonomy, which meant they'd already been in [Barcelona] for two years. This makes them a neighbor who has the right that the Ajuntament should help them." Schweitzer (2022) also found the "right to the city" justification for policymaking was reinforced during extensive interviews with policymakers and nonprofits in Barcelona, where policy stances such as "refuge cities" allow irregular migrants to participate in the city as members of the community. This solidarity can be seen further in city policy documents that shift from discussing generalized "refugees" to discussing "communities and neighborhoods" (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019).

Rooted in Catalonia's historical experience with immigration (contrary to Spain as a whole, which was an emigrant state until the 1990s), the region's "public philosophy of immigration" informs policy decisions (Zapata-Barrero, 2006, p. 200).[3] For example, the Catalan 2005-2008 Citizenship and Immigration Plan's developed a local-based definition of citizenship that further emphasizes the city's focus on rights, equality, and equal access rather than the state-based, exclusionary legal definition (Zapata-Barrero, 2006). This emphasis on individual rights was clearly applied to the design of Nausica. Interviewee 8 explains, "if you're thrown out of the state program, it means you've already been [in Barcelona] for a while, and you'll likely then ask for help from municipal social services.[4] [This vulnerability] will have a large negative impact on your life, so the Ajuntament is responsible for working to reverse this exclusion and help[ing] you reach autonomy." Similarly, interviewee 7 points out that when 95% of asylum applicants are denied, they are unlikely to return to the state they fled from, meaning the asylum seekers will likely remain in Spain. In this way, Barcelona uses the individual rights perspective to contrast state governance, which violates migrants' right to have rights by providing no choice in relocation placement, political power, or work permit until month six of the state

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[3] One of the clearest examples of this perspective is that the municipal migration service SAIER has been in operation in Catalonia since the late 1980s, years before immigration became a state concern.

[4] In section 4.1, "social services" is used to denote all devolved competencies that Barcelona administers for residents, including access to healthcare, education, etc. Section 4.2 will distinguish between each type of social service.

program—especially considering that program participants have often been in Spain much longer than six months by the time they reach the program's six-month mark.

The Spanish requirement of municipal registration is key to Barcelona's urban citizenship. The Spanish Host Law (*Ley de Acogida*) requires anyone residing in Spanish territory for over three months to register with the municipal registry and receive a registry certificate (*padrón*). All residents regardless of citizenship status must be *empadronado,* partially because the padrón permits access to social services.[5] In this sense, Barcelona is "seeing like a city" in that it acknowledges migrants' city-based identity and subsequently addresses their needs as residents through social services (Magnusson, 2011). Determining social service priorities based on an urban citizenship definition that includes asylum seekers, those with international protection, and those denied protection means the city should be especially responsive to the vulnerability and needs of migrant residents in irregular situations. Including migrants in social services also partially negates asylum seekers' loss of political status (Arendt, 1951) by recognizing them as individuals who are entitled to the city and thus who the Ajuntament is responsive to in developing and providing social services. The resulting access to services such as healthcare and education is a basic human right that the city is recognizing for each migrant.

While Barcelona's focus on local identity helps the city to create more inclusive, progressive policy, it is important to note limits to its usefulness. "City-zenship" can be used as an argument to reduce multiculturalism in place of integration and assimilation policies attempting to emphasize one identity. The concept can also increase identity-based tensions because it decouples national citizenship from state-based rights and instead links rights to personhood rather than citizenship. This creates a dual nationality with the potential for future conflict between one's regional and state identity (Soysal, 2012). In the case of Barcelona, this has the potential to heighten the tension between Catalonia and Madrid. Yet despite these critical points, Barcelona thus far has embraced its rights-based perspective as an inclusionary asset.

The second perspective shaping Barcelona's approach to integration policy is an economic argument: the cost-benefit analysis of caring for migrants in the city. Interviewee 9 explains, "the Ajuntament spends a lot of money supporting people by pension before they enter the

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[5] Padrón registration is not associated with immigration control and enforcement for undocumented residents, so the city registry is relatively trusted and used by Spaniards and foreign nationals alike.

state program and again when they exit the state program and find themselves without a place to live. Therefore, it is better to optimize all of that money spent on pensions [into Nausica]." In fact, Nausica costs the city €36 per day per person, whereas a pension costs the city €55 per day per person, despite being a less comprehensive intervention (interview 2). The public money spent on Nausica ultimately costs the city less and provides more thorough support and individual plans beyond putting a roof over peoples' heads, meaning it is more beneficial for the city to spend money on Nausica (interviews 4, 5 & 8).

4.2 Utilizing devolved competencies to adapt to the local realities of immigration

Barcelona and the state's logics of care set a clear stage for conflict on policy framing, which leads to the question: what can emerge from these diverging perspectives? For Barcelona, reframing political capabilities initiates the action that provides support not offered by the state.

It is generally thought that cities must adapt to the realities of immigration in centralized migration regimes such as Spain, as cities are the first level of government to feel and react to new immigration trends despite no citizenship competencies nor state funding for reception or integration. However, Barcelona has reframed this perspective, and its resulting approach to migrant reception and integration policies argues that the city *does* have the competencies and power to care for its migrant residents and thus has developed policies within devolved policy areas to address migrant needs. The key to Barcelona's policies resulting from tension with national decision-making in Madrid is that the city has shifted how it addresses migration trends by investing in and maximizing services through policy areas already in its wheelhouse.

Law 4/2000 grants equal access to social services, a decentralized competency, to Spanish nationals and non-nationals alike. Interviewee 10 explains, "it's not true that the city doesn't have competencies. It's always said, but it's not true because from the moment a person arrives and receives their padrón, they area recipient of city social services, and according to the Ley de Acogida, cities are obligated to include this group of people. Social services are a local competency and oblige the city to act to include migrants in the reality of the city." Interviewee 8 further explains the logic of using devolved competencies: "It's true that Barcelona has a large population of currently pending and denied asylum applicants. You have to be able to give some type of response because if they are neighbors, it's a competence [to support them]."

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Even if asylum is a centralized competency, migrant care is a city competency when migrants use social services, and it should be addressed in this way (interview 3). One example of this is that pending and denied asylum applicants typically leave the state program without housing or employment, meaning there is no way for them to survive in Barcelona without additional support.

Barcelona's reframing of legal competencies is also influenced by regional attempts to increase competencies relating to migrant reception and integration since the early 2000s. Catalan law 6/2006 gave the Catalan government (*Generalitat de Catalunya)* exclusive powers in initial immigrant reception and social integration policies, which the Constitutional Court upheld as constitutional against right-wing challenges in 2010. However, it provided an interpretation that immigration remains an executive competence of the state, meaning that "regional competencies on this matter are to be interpreted as mere application of already existing [devolved] competencies on social assistance and employment to immigration" (Marano, 2020, p. 16). Similarly, Catalonia received a favorable ruling when the Spanish High Court of Justice rejected the Spanish government's 2016 attempt to reclaim competencies related to migrant integration. Finding that that autonomous communities should have control over reception "devices," the court differentiated between legal asylum procedures (the state's responsibility) and reception and integration services (the autonomous communities' responsibility) that should be managed with existing competencies in social areas such as education and health (Garcés Mascareñas & Moreno Amador, 2019). However, this ruling has not resulted in any changed policies or actions.

Despite these favorable rulings, cities typically do not wait for clear legal competencies to act. Instead, they act if there is enough perceived public commitment to the issue. In this case, the Ajuntament did not wait for the 2018 ruling and instead utilized its social service competencies in education and employment to build out support programs in 2015-2016 for migrants and to address facets of integration not addressed in the state program.[6]

Barcelona receives its education competency from immigration law stipulating free access to

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[6] This paper will not discuss the housing or healthcare aspects of Nausica, though they are decentralized competencies, because those aspects of the program are outsourced. Nausica flats are owned or rented by the managing entities rather than the Ajuntament, meaning they do not fall within city social services. Healthcare is often outsourced from the program after técnicas help participants obtain health cards (the TSI, or *tarjeta sanitaria individual*) in their first months that permit access to primary and secondary care.

education for foreign residents under age 18, which is then administered at the regional level. A social worker (*técnica*) from one of Nausica's managing entities helps facilitate school registration once program users are assigned a flat, working with families to navigate the local school system and register based on their neighborhood. Given that children under 18 are the second largest age group participating in Nausica (mainly due to the number of children per family), facilitating education access is a key service for program participants. Primary education is not addressed in the state program, meaning that Barcelona utilizes this decentralized competency to address a critical aspect of integration not considered in the supposed integration-focused state program. Child placement within the local school system is considered a success of the Nausica program (interview 6).

In contrast with local control over education, Spanish law considers employment to be a national competence where autonomous communities act as regulators and provide related support, such as training and education. Nausica addresses this responsibility by providing job placement support (if practical), language trainings to improve employability, and skill identification and marketability workshops oriented toward sectors with the most capacity for employment (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2018b).

By prioritizing devolved competencies to manage migration in Barcelona, the city council is able to address gaps in the national system without actively integrating with it (Garcés Mascareñas & Gebhardt, 2020). However, despite a reframing that enables the Ajuntament to build out migrant support by emphasizing existing devolved competencies, the city still acknowledges that the state holds legal power in asylum decisions and the city thus has insufficient competencies to fully address migrants' needs. In this sense Barcelona is "seeing like a state" by acknowledging that devolved policies are contingent on the rights determined by the state (Scott, 1998). Essentially, Barcelona focuses on available competencies to address the needs resulting from policy gaps related to centralized competencies. As interviewee 4 said, "[the city] operate[s] within an environment that legally is what it is and doesn't allow us to do the full extent of what we would like."

Conclusion

This paper uses the Nausica asylum seeker integration program to identify how divergent integration policy emerges from tension between local and national migration regimes. It finds that Barcelona's Refuge City plan is an example of how city preparation and response to immigrant arrival and integration can determine how the global phenomenon of migration manifests itself locally. By utilizing diverging logics of care and thus problem framings between the state and Barcelona leaders, the city is then able to reframe its devolved competencies to ultimately provide tailored local services that address migrant needs.

The divergence in responses between levels of Spanish migration MLG originates from differing logics of care between local and national policymakers. At the state level, Spain's emphasis as a southern border state of "fortress Europe" leads to policy rhetoric and realization that prioritizes bordering and citizenship approaches to migration issues. In contrast, Barcelona's policy responses to migration issues are led by two pragmatic logics of care—a city-based identity perspective and an economic perspective. The first, a city-zenship perspective, emphasizes regional identity rather than legally defined citizenship, viewing migrants as "neighbors" similar to any other resident group. The economic perspective shaping Barcelona's policies argues that it is more cost-effective to care for migrant residents through a specific, holistic program such as Nausica rather than pensions or the state program.

Barcelona policymakers then reframe the common belief that migration competencies lie with the central government by using Law 4/2000, which grants equal access to the decentralized competency of social services, to form the basis of local interventions. Given that Barcelona municipal services have assisted 16,739 asylum seekers between 2013 and 2018 (Bazurli & Kaufmann, 2022), migrants form a notable, especially vulnerable resident group that the city must be responsive to. They do this through two main social services that fall within city control: education and employment, which are then incorporated into Nausica programming.

In addition to identifying how cities can act in the face of conflict and conflicting values with other levels of MLG, Nausica offers insight into the difference that holistic, long-term support can make for migrants. In the past seven years, Barcelona has built out a program that has contributed to significant rises in autonomy levels for many program participants: in 2020,

59% of program exits were considered "successful" in that they achieved autonomy, with 73% of departing participants having secured housing, 52% departing as employed or self-employed, and 63% exiting with written Spanish skills (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020). However, the 2018 city-commissioned program evaluation found Nausica's coverage rate to be below 9% of all asylum seekers in the city, which was estimated to be 2,400 in 2016 (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2018a). One year later, Nausica served 69 individuals, or less than 1% of the eligible 11,800 asylum applicants residing within Barcelona (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019; Ribera Almandoz et al., 2020).

Yet limited reach does not equate to ineffective policy. Nausica managers view the program as a success, saying that "it provides a reality of integration possibilities for people who would otherwise not end up integrated into the society of Barcelona" (interview 4). As Bazurli and Kaufmann (2022, p. 2) state, "supplementing state services for refugees through municipal welfare, for example, is very different than supporting migrants who are even denied legal status by nation-states," yet Nausica does both. It is this unique mandate that has made Nausica notable not only as a local policy response but as a model (as part of the Refuge City plan) for migrant integration throughout Europe.

The results from this case study lead to a number of ongoing questions. Additional research into the factors leading cities to engage in and develop asylum reception policies (such as Triviño, 2021) will continue to increase our understanding of how and why cities take public stances on MLG. The article also touches on the MLG relationship between Barcelona and Catalonia, which has nuances and tensions that deserve further exploration. Additionally, a high number of asylum applicants—65,000 in 2021—remain in Spain, meaning that reception and integration issues remain ongoing and there may be further need to build and/or expand local policy (AIDA, 2021). With the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and the resulting migrant outflows, this paper's insights may also help cities respond to the outpouring of refugees from Ukraine.

Finally, it is important to note that the interviews forming this analysis did not include individuals outside of policymaking or Nausica program delivery, which could have offered the critical perspective of an outsider, program participant, or a representative from a different level of MLG. Because Nausica is notable for addressing all aspects of autonomy, thus viewing program participants as whole people with complex needs, this study also invites future

research into incorporating migrant voices in policy evaluation. This would connect personal experiences to policy realization, making policy more responsive and thus effective for both residents and city government.

Funding Statement

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Appendix A: Interviews

1. Current Ajuntament political staffer working on migration issues
2. Former director of Ajuntament migration services
3. Former director of municipal migration service
4. Current leadership of municipal migration service
5. Current employee of municipal migration service
6. Representative of social entity managing Nausica
7. Representative of social entity managing Nausica
8. Representative of social entity managing Nausica
9. Representative of social entity managing Nausica
10. Representative of social entity managing Nausica