Spatial capital as a perspective on the integration of newcomers in small and medium-sized towns.

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ABSTRACT

As for other international contexts, in Flanders, small and medium-sized cities and towns are becoming increasingly important gateways for newcomers (Vandekerckhove *et al.* 2022). Flemish Integration policies aim to ensure autonomous and equal participation, and accessibility of all facilities and services. However, this research shows that these goals are being challenged by the Flemish urban-rural dispersed landscape, the diverse local institutional and political contexts, and the mismatch experienced by newcomers in the validation of resources and skills (Erel, Ryan 2018). To illustrate this, the concept of 'spatial capital' of newcomers is used. Spatial capital includes the resources actors use to exploit the spatial dimensions of their living environment (Lévy 1994). In-depth interviews and time-space diagrams reveal that newcomers experience a discrepancy between the 'old' spatial context, in their country of origin, where resources and skills were developed and formed, and the 'new' spatial context in which they must validate them as spatial capital. This raises questions about how local governments can influence the

spatial capital to facilitate integration and belonging. Our time-space research highlights, for example, different needs and demands in relation to public space, and points to opportunities for equal participation of newcomers at the local level through synergies with spatial planning policies.

Keywords: small and medium sized towns, integration, accessibility, spatial capital

Introduction

For much of the 20th century, the majority of immigrants concentrated in a small number of (metropolitan) gateways. Today, diverse opportunities outside these traditional gateways attract newcomers to suburban and more rural environments, as well as to urban areas with little or no recent history of immigration (Lichter, Johnson 2009; Saunders 2011; Erenhalt 2012; El Moussawi, Shuermans 2021; Vandekerckhove et al. 2022). That so-called 'changing geography of arrival' towards medium and small cities and towns increasingly engages these municipalities in processes of globalization (Barberis, Pavolini 2015). This is caused by the combination of spatial dispersal during the asylum procedure on the one hand, and a structure-agency duality on the other hand. The latter consists of a mix of anti-urban housing preferences in society, structural barriers to access the housing market, and practices and strategies of refugees and local intermediaries (other migrants and civil-society organizations) to overcome exclusion (Weidinger, Kordel 2020; Wyckaert, Leinfelder, De Decker 2021).

This contribution is part of a research on the residential behaviour of recent newcomers/refugees in Flanders (Northern part of Belgium)). It not only includes their settlement in new gateways but also their daily use of space in a context of urban sprawl and at different scales in relation to their (new) place of residence. The assessment

of the daily use of space allows us to gain insights into socio-spatial inclusion of newcomers, including movements between different locations according to livelihoods and social networks. It also illustrates the ability of newcomers to engage with the local and regional context, especially with (metropolitan) cities offering specific services they are highly dependent of. Geographic/spatial mobility is seen as an important source of social mobility (Reed-Danahay 2020), but what does it mean specifically for newcomers? How do opportunities and constraints, as well as strategies in the everyday use of space, influence newcomers' participation in society?

We did so by mapping the daily use of space by newcomers and then, in line with Riano et al. (2022), by questioning and analysing the use of space in terms of the role of/and the relationship between the individual's social position, its geographical location or place of residence and its mastery of the (wider) living environment. The latter including activities in other places, physical movements between places as well as strategies related to mobility and immobility. At the end of the contribution, we formulate some recommendations that enable (local) governments to improve and/or extend newcomers' social and spatial position within new gateways.
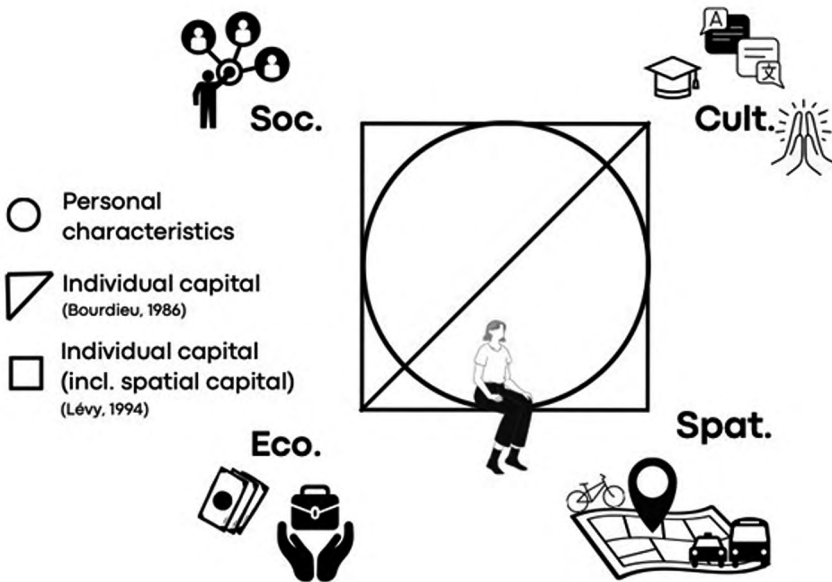
1. Individual's capital

Individuals accumulate different forms of capital throughout their lives - resources they can rely on in pursuit of their goals. Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes three forms of capital: economic, cultural, and social. But, as the quote at the start of the book 'Bourdieu and social space' (Reed-Danahay 2020, p.9) states, an individual's position in social space is inherently related to its position in physical space:

> "As a body and biological individual, I am, in the way that things are, situated in a place: I occupy a position in physical space and social space." -Pascalian Meditations (1997/2000c, 131)

Indeed, geographers such as Hess (2004) and Robinson (2010) emphasize the use of a spatial lens when considering people's embeddedness in society. This means that the position of an individual (or agent) in social space/different social fields also has a spatial dimension in the form of one's presence in physical places in relation to where one lives, goes to school, has a job, practices sports, and gets food (Reed-Danahay 2020). Depending on the (local) context in which one lives, and the place(s) one occupies, or can occupy, individuals have access to different resources (Félouzis, Perroton 2007; Hickman, Mai, Crowley 2012).

The three types of capital mentioned determine, next to personal characteristics such as gender, family situation, citizenship status and health, an individual's position in social space. But, we assume, like for instance Lévy (1994), Lussault (2003) and Réra and Lees (2011), a fourth type of capital: the 'spatial capital'.

Figure 1. Four components of individual capital

Source: drawn up by author (Wyckaert, 2023)

We argue that the spatial dimension of society and the actual functioning of newcomers in a spatial context, as part of their 'spatial capital', are given little consideration in the design and implementation of integration policies. It is not because policy documents focus on autonomous and equal participation and on accessibility of facilities and services for newcomers, that this is really implemented at the level of everyday practices in a city or municipality.

Before delving into the precise meaning of 'spatial capital' and then illustrating it through the everyday use of space by newcomers in Flemish small and medium-sized cities and towns, we will first discuss the importance of 'place' for integration policies in Flanders (Northern part of Belgium).

2. The importance of 'place' within integration policies
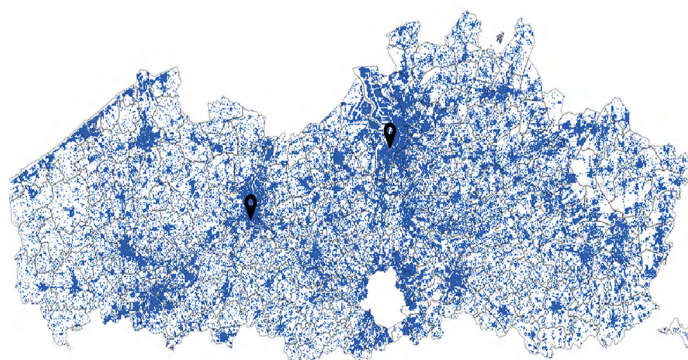
Flemish integration policies are defined as follows:

"Policies that respond, through coordinated initiatives, to the situations and dynamics related to the consequences of migration, with the aim of ensuring 1. autonomous and equal participation, 2. accessibility to all facilities and services, 3. active and shared citizenship for all, and 4. the achievement of social cohesion." (Vandermeerschen et al. 2020 a)

In the field of integration, participation is linked to specific sub-areas such as education, the labour market and housing, as well as to what is known as "social participation". The latter includes socio-cultural participation which refers to both social contacts and membership of associations. It emphasises that participation is the

result of interactions between individuals and institutions (or the host society in general). Increasing participation therefore means, on the one hand, empowering individuals and, on the other hand, improving the accessibility of services and facilities. Accessibility of facilities is thus closely linked to and a prerequisite for participation (Vandermeerschen *et al.* 2020 b). In Flanders, local authorities (municipalities) are largely responsible for implementing these integration policies. However, the transfer of policies from the Flemish to the local level, risks overlooking two important observations related to the specificity of 'place'.

Firstly, the fact that a growing number of newcomers live in Flanders' highly dispersed urban-rural landscape is ignored (figure 2). Thereby, the local implementation of integration policies depends on very different and specific institutional and political contexts. This results in an uneven distribution and accessibility of facilities and services for newcomers between locations (Pisman *et al.* 2021), which means that people have to (be able to) move around in this urban sprawl context in order to use these facilities and services properly.

Figure 2. Land use in Flanders 2019

Source: Illustration based on Poelmans et al. (2021).
Notes: Brussels and the Flemish metropoles Antwerp and Ghent are marked by the author

Secondly, migrants experience in their everyday lives a mismatch between the spatial contexts in between the 'old' spatial context, in their country of origin, where resources and skills were developed and formed, and the 'new' spatial context in which they must validate them as a form of capital on the other hand (Erel, Ryan 2018). A very concrete example is not (or no longer) being able/ allowed to drive a car to travel to spatially spread-out facilities and services because of a non-recognized driving licence (cultural capital) or a lack of financial means to buy a car (economic capital). Both observations bring us to (a loss or lack of) spatial capital.

3. Spatial capital: an overview

It was probably Lévy who first applied the concept of 'capital' directly in relation to the use of space in his 1994 work. Later, Lévy and Lussault (2003) defined the concept as follows: *"all the resources accumulated by an actor that enable him to exploit the spatial dimension of society according to his own strategy and capacities"* (p. 124).
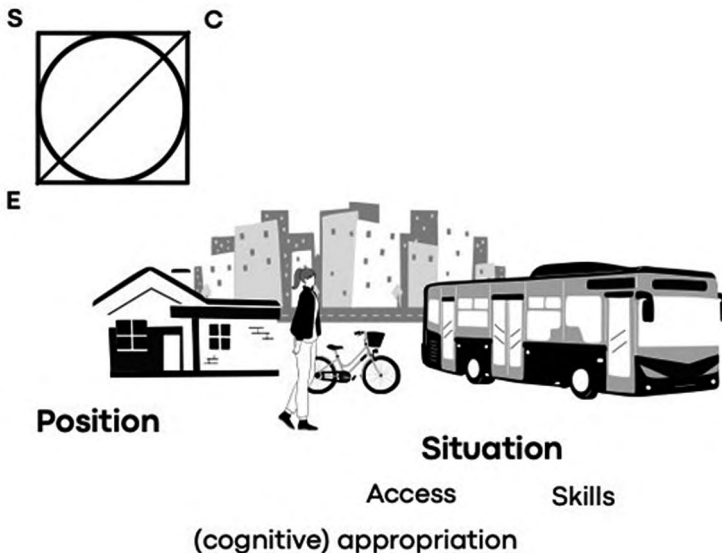
Over the past two decades, other research has increasingly related the concept of capital to mobility. In this way, 'spatial' capital, although limited in its interpretation, has gained visibility in academic research (Flamm, Kaufmann 2006; Kaufmann 2002; Kaufmann *et al.* 2004; Riano *et al.* 2022). However, spatial capital is more than merely mobility, although mobility is of course an important part of it (Forsberg 2017). According to Lévy (1994), spatial capital consists of both "position capital" and "situation capital" (figure 3). In essence, we can link these concepts to what we refer to in planning analysis as 'proximity' and 'accessibility'.

Position capital is related to 'proximity' and concerns the environment in which a person lives and the resources available there, such as shops, people, facilities, parks, and social organisations. An

individual's position capital can be defined at different scales, rang-ing from the home (e.g., size of the house), the immediate neigh-bourhood of the house and the (lack of) amenities and infrastructure (roads, bus stops, etc.), to the municipality or even the region (work, health care, leisure, shops, etc.).

Situation capital concerns the ability of actors to effectively use the resources available in space. It is about the appropriation of resources, but also about mobility and thus 'accessibility': can peo-ple get to shops, parks, etc.? It is about the governance of space by individuals, so it differs from individual to individual and from situa-tion to situation. Besides, it is also a question of scale as it is linked to bridging distances between home and services and facilities. Af-ter all, if individuals are or can be mobile, they can compensate for or mitigate the shortcomings in their position capital – for example, living in an environment with few amenities.

Figure 3. Components of spatial capital

Source: drawn up by author (2023)

Places are no abstract notions, but realities in which individuals are able or unable to use their own spatial capital. It requires competences or skills. The ability to mobilize resources is not only about knowledge and skills, but also about access and (cognitive) appropriation. These are variables of what Kaufmann et al. call "motility" - the conversion of mobility into capital (Kaufmann et al. 2004, Jorritsma 2018). These variables show that the appropriation of facilities (including transport), or people's spatial capital, not only relates to their availability/proximity/accommodation and accessibility/approachability, i.e., "potential access" as we look at it from a spatial planning point of view. But that it also depends on "realised access" or whether these facilities are affordable, acceptable, and appropriate (e.g., preference for Arabic shops, ability to cycle or not), understandable (e.g., language) and reliable (Levesque *et al.* 2013 in Vandermeerschen *et al.* 2020 b). It illustrates how spatial capital is interchangeable and intertwined with economic, social, and cultural capital.

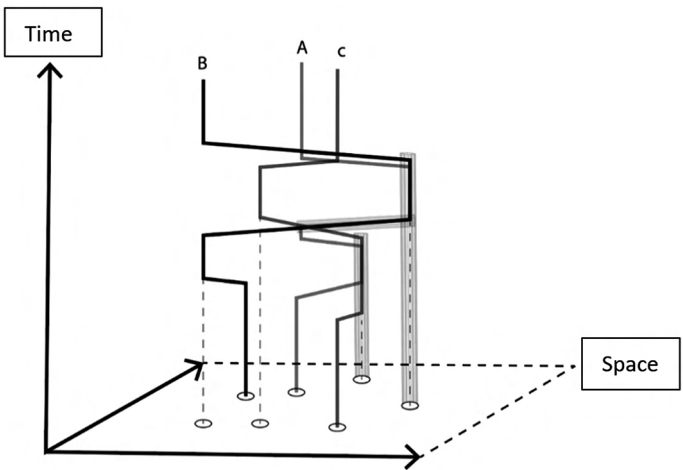# 4. Data and methods to assess daily use of space

4.1 Approach through time-space research

Authors such as Hoelzel and Scheiner (2022), Erel and Ryan (2019) argue that it is inadequate to study and describe the links between spatial and social mobility merely in terms of macro processes. It is therefore necessary to map also so-called "geographies of opportunity" in the form of meaningful places in life courses at the micro level (Houston et al. 2005 in Hoelzel, Scheiner 2022). Mapping everyday mobility and use of space provides a picture of different meaningful places and the "action space"; the spatial entity in which all activities, undertaken by an individual (or group of individuals) in a given period,

are located (Dijst 1995). It appears to be a valuable starting point for mapping 'opportunities' (Hoelzel, Scheiner 2022) and the relationship between geographic/spatial mobility and social mobility.

The concepts of "action space" and "stations" as meaningful places can also be found within time-space geography. The basic principle of time-space geography, first developed by Hägerstrand in 1970, is that each individual travels paths in time and space. The scale of space and time can vary, allowing us to speak of daily paths as well as life paths. Our starting point are the day-to-day paths of individuals who make up the network through which society functions (Heringa, Bolt, Dijst 2018).

Figure 4. Representation time-space diagram

Source: drawn up by author (2022) based on Heringa, Bolt & Dijst (2018)

Figure 4 shows a time-space diagram showing the paths of individuals A, B and C. The axes x & y (the spatial dimensions within which activities take place) and z (the temporal dimension) provide the time-space context for these paths. The tubes are locations

where individual paths converge and can be considered as places of encounter or "geographies of opportunity" due to the collective presence of individuals. These tubes can be both bundles through which individuals move on their way to another destination, or the destinations themselves, so-called stations, or action spaces, where individuals are stationed in one place for a longer period of time.

In preparation for in-depth interviews with newcomers focusing on their everyday use of space starting from their place of residence in a small or medium-sized city or town, we asked our respondents (15) (table 1) to keep an activity diary. In this diary, for two days during the week (Wednesday/Thursday) and over the weekend, they listed all the places they visited, the activities they did and the people they met at these locations.
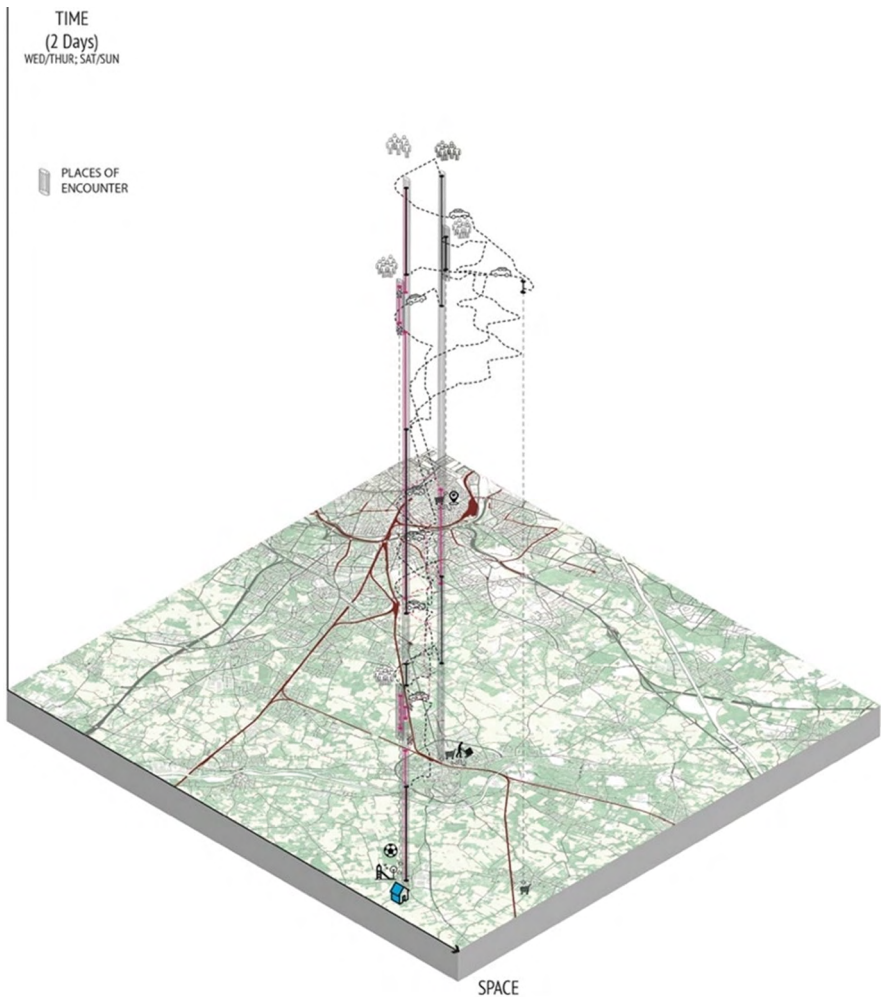
Table 1. Respondents

Country of origin	Gender	Family situation	Housing typology	Housing location
R1. Syria	V	Family (5)	House	Small city (37. 000)
R2. Syria	M	Family (5)	House	Small city (37. 000)
R3. Eritrea	M	Single	Studio	Medium-sized town (13.000)
R4. Eritrea	V	Family (5)	Appartement	Medium-sized town (13.000)
R5. Eritrea	M	Family (5)	Appartement	Medium-sized town (13.000)
R6. Syria	V	Family (5)	Appartement	Medium-sized town (11.000)
R7. Afghanistan	M	Single	Studio	Medium-sized town (13.000)
R8. Afghanistan	M	Single	Studio	Small city (37. 000)
R9. Syria	M	Family (6)	House	Small town (4.300)
R10. Iraq	V	Family (6)	House	Medium sized town (13.000)
R11. Syria	V	Family (5)	House	Small city (37. 000)
R12. Afghanistan	M	Single	Studio	Medium-sized city (80.000)
R13. Syria	V	Family (5)	House	Small city (37. 000)
R14. Syria	M	Family (5)	Appartement	Small city (37. 000)
R15. Syria	V	Family (5)	Appartement	Small city (37. 000)

Source: drawn up by author (2023)

During a subsequent semi-structured interview, the respondents' daily journeys were reconstructed (example figure 5), with additional attention paid to the means of transport and the choices/motivations, skills and strategies involved.

Figure 5. Time-space path interviewee

Additionally, in line with the study of Heringa, Bolt & Dijst (2018), we asked our respondents about the (3) most important people outside of their own household and the (3) most important places other than their own home. This allowed us to explore the composition of the social network and the value of interethnic contacts. Of course, it is

possible that some of these places and/or people were not addressed in the refugees' daily time-space paths, e.g., because they were inaccessible on those days (time, distance). The interviews were recorded and then transcribed to facilitate analysis using Nvivo. The time-space diagrams were drawn simultaneously with the transcription.

5. Results

In this section we discuss respondents' position capital, starting from their place of residence, at the scale of the house itself, the neighbourhood, and the wider residential environment in relation to other cities and towns. As we have argued, scale is key to understanding spatial capital. In addition, the findings can be related to elements of access (affordability, availability, etc.), skills and knowledge, and cognitive appropriation, and therefore include the relationship to other forms of capital (social, economic, cultural). Situation capital is approached in the same way.

5.1 Position capital

The following sections describe the formation of 'position capital' at the level of the dwelling a), the residential environment b) and in relation to other (metropolitan) cities c).

The structure of the housing market: housing quality and location

A place to live is much more than an address or a location on a map. It is not only a gateway to society, but also an assembly of 'resources' (or lack thereof) - and this has consequences for the life and well-being of the inhabitants (De Decker, Wyckaert, 2023). How people end up in a particular area or type of neighborhood is (partly)

related to the functioning of the housing market. The market not only determines where housing is available, but also what type of housing at which price. The house itself is part of position capital. The quality, including its size, of the houses affordable for the majority of our respondents, tends to be inadequate for family life, especially for entertaining guests and for children's play and study space, as the quotes below illustrate.

> On weekends … then I try to go to the park with my children. We use a lot of the park because the kids have more space there and they can play a lot of games there. Here in the house no … we have no space for kids (R2, Syria).

> For us, we know some families here and usually we see each other Saturday or Sunday in the park because our house here is a bit small for many people … Lier is also small, we see each other in the shop, in the park or at school. Because our children go to the same school (R13, Syria).
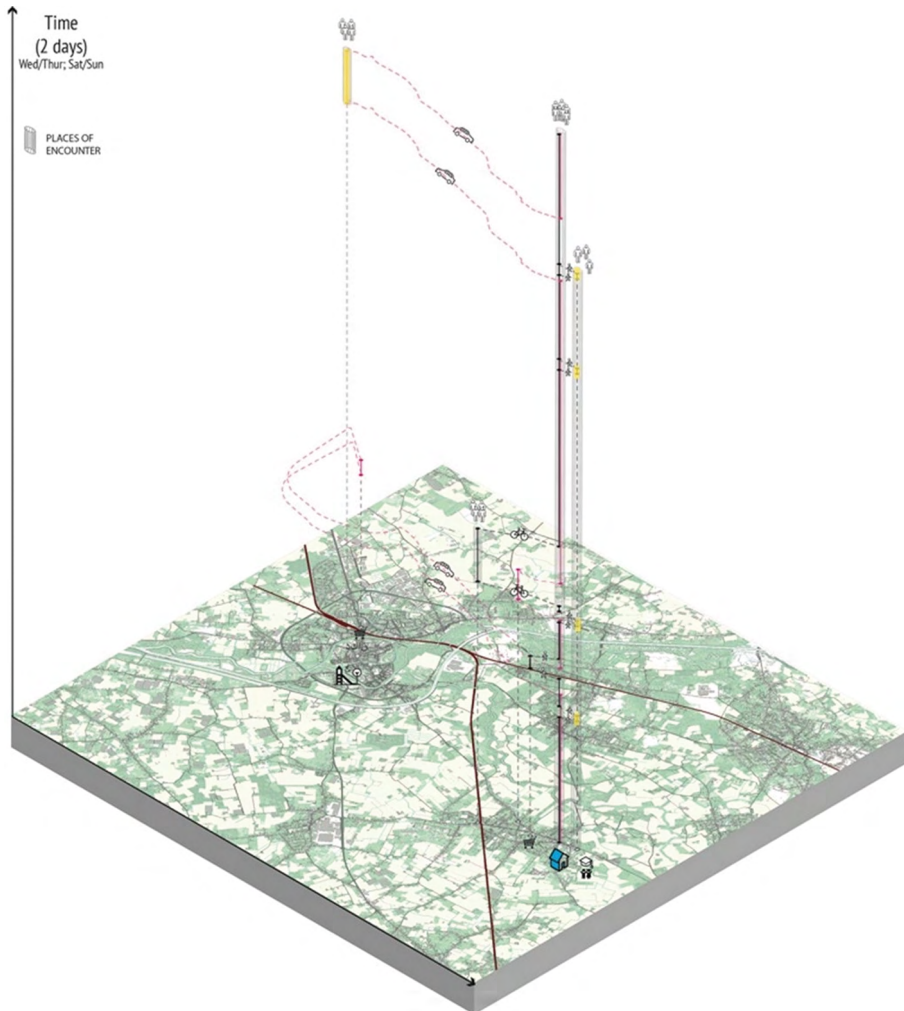
Parks, school environments and (bus)stations as places of encounter at the scale of the neighbourhood

The previous quotes also refer to parks as places of encounter. They appear as tubes/stations within the time-space paths of almost all respondents. Parks are thus important facilities in the position capital of these newcomers. However, research by Vandekerkchove et al. (2022) shows that the neighborhoods where newcomers live often have less or lack public green space. In addition to parks, one quote also refers to the school environment as a meeting place.

An individual's action space depends not only on their position and mobility in space, but is also influenced by their social position (cultural, social, economic capital), personal characteristics (gender, position in the family, ethnicity) and role-related obligations that are relatively fixed in time and space (Dijst, 1999). Although parks and school environments are the main and sometimes only places of encounter in the female respondents' diagrams (Figure 5), we can consider them, as Erel and Ryan (2018) do, as "geographies of oppor-

tunity" in terms of social mobility and argue that childcare can help migrant women to build wider social networks, knowledge and skills.

Figure 6. Time-space paths of female interviewee

Individuals are not entirely free to choose their activities and time-space locations and are constrained in their daily use of space

(Hägerstrand 1970). There are coupling constraints (Hägerstrand 1970), as the previous paragraph shows, when people have to couple themselves together in time-space in order to transfer information or responsibility (for children) from one to another (Ellegård 2019). In addition, there are also capacity constraints which concern individual's skills, knowledge, material assets and tools. This will be discussed later on. A final form are authority constraints including laws, regulations and agreements that restrict actors in their actions. In daily life, opening and closing times of shops or timetables for public transport are good examples (Hägerstrand 1970 in Ellegård, Svedin 2012).

In relation to the latter, the time-space paths of most respondents show places of transit, such as train stations and bus stops, as important stations in time and space. Like parks, streets but also train and bus stops are routinely engaged with multicultural public spaces and can serve as places of encounter (Wilson, 2011). They are particularly relevant for newcomers, including our respondents, whose lives (work, leisure, shopping) unfold at the scale of the region and not just close to the house they live.

Searching for diversity and affordability in the (metropolitan) city

In search for affordable facilities which are useful in relation to cultural preferences, a number of metropolitan arrival neighborhoods emerge in nearly all of our respondents' time-space paths. Ethnic background and differences in cultural as well as economic capital are important when selecting facilities and activity locations (Dekker, Bolt 2005). Regular supermarkets are present in the vicinity of residential locations, but as one of our respondents points out, they tend to lack the desired variety and are more expensive.

To Antwerp we go for shopping and especially for Turkish shop at Handel and Elisabeth [arrival neighborhoods]. We take groceries and go to the hairdresser also. It's only 10 euros there (R10, Iraq).

Arab shops are not only perceived as affordable and useful but also as a places of encounter. As one of our respondents states:

> I don't know why but... in the Arab shop everyone talks to everyone. That's normal that you do that. After shopping you have five new friends. It's completely different from Aldi or Lidl [regular supermarkets] (R9, Syria).

5.1 Situation capital

Findings related to respondents' formation of situation capital are linked to elements of access (affordability, availability, etc.) a), skills and knowledge b), and cognitive appropriation c).

Accessibility of work (locations)

Certain (shopping) facilities in metropolitan areas may be accessible to our respondents, but job (locations) are not always. When migrants arrive in a new country, they experience how resources are valued differently (Kelly, Lusis 2006). For example, access to the labor market or skilled professions (economic capital) are differentiated according to access to information and social capital as well as the valuation of cultural capital (Kaufman et al. 2004).

For refugees, recognition of their qualifications/diplomas (incl. driving licence) is either not forthcoming or long overdue. As one of our respondents says:

> My degree is recognized but not for work, I have a general certificate. I think if I want to work, I have to take a course or something, but I don't know actually... but I understand that in Arabic language that is not easy and that is different material and different books. But it is still difficult (R14, Syria).
>
> The lack of validation of their diploma leads many of our (male) respondents to rely on temporary jobs, often in factories or ware-

houses located in industrial areas. These locations are not accessible by public transport, especially during late working hours. The problem in Belgium for refugees is to get work. It is very difficult. That is why whether you like or not you must have a car. Otherwise without car the opportunities or the probabilities to get work is very small. The first question they ask is do you have a car... Because as you know all the company and the workplace is a little bit outside from the city. So, they don't have transport access to a lot of these companies. That's why they ask this question and that's why refugees they prefer to have a car. In order to live in Belgium (R5, Eritrea).

Affordability as part of accessibility

It is not only physical access to public transport that is important, but also affordability also holds significance. Newcomers with limited income (economic capital) have no or less access to certain (transport) options because of price, and vice versa, newcomers with access to a car have faster access to work (e.g., temporary work).

By tram and bus, not by train, then you have to pay. I have a temporary driving licence but it's about to expire and I don't have a car to practice. I have to do everything again because I don't have a car, and it's going to cost me a lot of money. If I don't have a job and I have to pay for everything, that will not work (R3, Eritrea).

Cultural capital enhancing familiarity, utility, and accessibility of (mobility) facilities

Lifestyles based on certain habits, norms and values (Coppens, Oosterlynck 2009), but also knowledge and skills as part of cultural capital (e.g., knowledge of Dutch, being able to drive a car or bicycle), tend to influence the mobility or immobility of respondents.

The problem for me and not special for me but for Eritrean refugees, we are not familiar with a bike. I: Are you afraid to ride a bike? Yeah, I can ride it, even in Eritrea but it is not used as a real transport means. Yes, that is it. Just for playing or for sports (R5, Eritrea).

> Sometimes it takes almost two years because Dutch language is not good. The last exam was in January 2017 for theory of driving in Arabic. I go to theory in Arabic, but now no. And then a bit difficult driving practice because you needed Dutch. Right and left … I don't know… then five times, six times and then have driving licence… (R14, Syria).

In addition, for several of the interviewees, the help of civil society organizations was crucial in directly accessing spatial capital in terms of position capital (finding a place to live or a place to meet) or situation capital (cycling lessons, driving lessons).

> I learnt to ride a bike here in Belgium. F. taught me the first time he also volunteered for an organization to teach people how to ride a bike (R13, Syria).

6. Discussion & conclusion

6.1 Spatial capital and structure-agency

The results show that the use and accumulation of (spatial) capital among newcomers in a new context is conditioned by an interplay between the agency and strategies of newcomers and of civil society organisations and local administrations on the one hand, and structural barriers at different levels (macro, meso, micro) on the other hand (Figure 6).
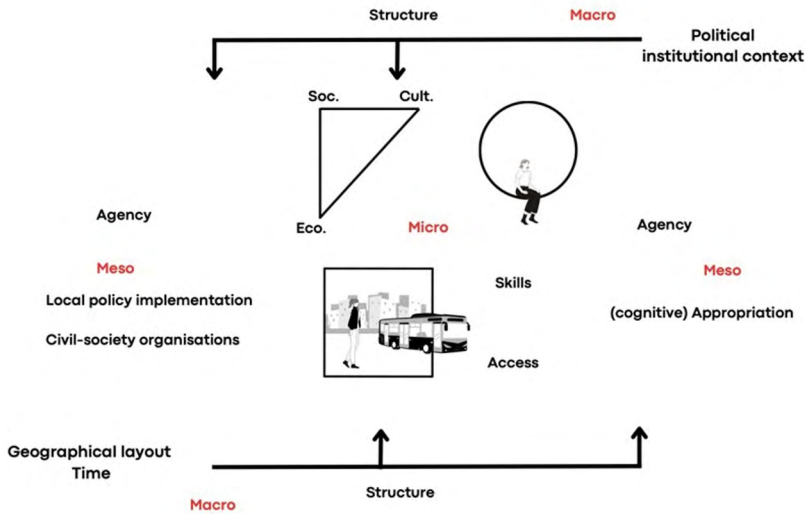
First of all, not only the geographical layout and the temporal dimension, but also the economic, political and institutional context can be seen as constraints or structures for the deployment of capital by newcomers, but also for the acquisition of new capital in a different context (macro) (Jorritsma 2018). The recognition of qualifications/diplomas (including driving licences) is a good example.

> Our data show not only the barriers, but also the agency or strategies of newcomers in terms of mastering space and mobility, such as the use of parks as additional living space. Furthermore, lifestyles, aspirations and specific cultural and normative ideas and attitudes within families and other (social) networks influence these strategies, in addition to (micro) personal characteristics such as gender and family situation. As a result, spatial capital and the use of space by individuals living in the same place also differ (Kaufmann et al. 2004; Halberstam 2005). For example, time spent caring for children affects women's use of space and daily mobility (spatial capital), as well as their access to paid work (economic capital) (Erel, Ryan, 2018).

In addition to the newcomers' agency, we also see that volunteers' agency, for example in the form of NGO's organising cycling classes and housing clubs or providing meeting places, in response to a retreating government, can be important for the accumulation and transformation of (spatial) capital among refugees.

The decentralisation of regional integration policies shifts the responsibility for implementing integration policies to the local level of cities and municipalities. Refugees are therefore dependent on the (freedom of) choices (agency) that may or may not be made within a specific local political and institutional context. Recently, the regional (Flemish) government has developed an action plan "plan samenleven" (plan cohabitation) to support and steer cities and municipalities in the implementation of integration policies. However, actions focusing on the spatial capital of newcomers or on strengthening or expanding their spatial position are very limited.

Figure 7. Levels of structure and agency in the mobilization and accumulation of (spatial) capital

6.2 Integration (policy) is spatial (policy)

The lack of attention for spatial capital in integration policies is unfortunate, as newcomers settle in particular locations or places. Therefore, the integration of newcomers is to a large extent also a 'spatial' issue. We have shown that integration policies in Flanders, and the decision to implement them mainly at the local level, largely ignore the importance of 'place', including not only the geographical layout, but also the specific local political and institutional contexts. As a result, integration policies assume that all facilities, necessary services, and support are available everywhere to the same extent and with the same quality. Nothing could be further from the truth. First and foremost, resources; facilities such as shops and green public spaces, but also (social) services, are spatially unevenly distributed. In addition, local (political) decisions determine the access to certain facilities and services for newcomers. This implies that ongoing processes of

regionalisation in diverse domains (health care, education, …) affect spatial capital (Thissen, Linseele 2001).

This contribution has shown that in order to achieve the objectives of participation and accessibility of facilities, integration policies must go hand in hand not only with other social policies, but certainly as well with spatial and housing policies. The question, however, is whether all this can be achieved solely at the local level.

It may be true that the very logic of integration policies should lead primarily to local and decentralised policy-making and implementation, since most individual and group interactions take place at the local level (Penninx 2009). However, can we leave it solely to local (political) decisions whether integration policies remain dead letter, or should there be a clearer supportive and/or regulatory framework with more attention to spatial aspects at regional or national level (Rommel 2023)? Moreover, it is a fact that living, working, leisure and shopping for newcomers in small and medium-sized towns and cities take place at a regional level. Services such as public transport are also organised at this level.

Furthermore, based on the residential behaviour and housing preferences of our respondents (Wyckaert 2020), but taking into account the secondary movements of increasing numbers of migrants (Vandekerckhove et al. 2022), it is crucial to work on the supply of affordable and appropriately sized housing with good connections to metropolitan areas. The time-space paths of our respondents as well as research by Schillebeeckx (2019), show that usable and affordable facilities or arrival infrastructure are prominent in these larger cities. But also the housing market is functioning at a regional level.

It likewise poses challenges for local spatial policy makers, as the settlement of newcomers has an impact on the required facilities. Accordingly, time-space research reveals different needs and demands in relation to public space. There are also opportunities for equal participation of newcomers at the local level through synergies with planning policies. Indeed, it is important to focus on parks, school environments and transport hubs (bus and

train stations) as 'geographies of opportunity' for social contacts, knowledge and skills. These facilities deserve additional space or can be designed differently to accommodate meaningful contact (Valentine 2008).

Those who also focus on skills, meaningful contact and encounters are self-organisations and civil society organisations (Schillebeeck 2019; Weidinger, Kordel 2020; Wyckaert 2021). They have an important integration function both in terms of access to facilities and participation in society, as they offer newcomers a network, knowledge and/or resources, for example in finding housing (position capital), a job or learning to drive and cycle (situation capital). The (potential) unwillingness of local authorities to provide this support, or to organise it themselves, will be disadvantageous to the implementation of an integration policy aimed at equal participation and accessibility of facilities.

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