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Local Collaborative Governance in Reception and Integration Policies for LGBTQI+ Migrants: A Comparative Study between Barcelona and Rotterdam

Master's Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis examines the extent of collaboration between local governments and non-state actors in governing reception and integration policies for LGBTQI+ migrants, focusing on the cases of Barcelona and Rotterdam. It contributes to the literature on the "local turn" in migration policy, urban governance, and LGBTQI+ studies, and advances Multilevel Governance (MLG) theory by addressing the underexplored case of LGBTQI+ migrants. Using collaborative governance as an analytical framework, the study analyses collaborative activities between local governments and non-state actors on LGBTQI+ migration-related issues in both cities.

The results show that full collaboration, as the goal of collaborative governance, was not achieved in either city during the studied period (around and after the 2015 migration crisis) due to various factors. These include the political climate, the involvement of non-state actors, and the relationship between local actors and higher levels of governance, all of which hindered full collaboration. Local governments in both Rotterdam and Barcelona maintain significant power, relegating non-state actors to a secondary role in collaborative activities. Consequently, the potential of this collaboration remains unrealized, and non-state actors have yet to make a substantial contribution to LGBTQI+ migration policies.

By establishing the significance of the "local turn" in migration policy-making and collaborative governance for vulnerable migrant populations, this study contributes to our understanding of the intricate dynamics of migration governance at multiple levels.

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1.0 Introduction

Nowadays, the role of cities in policymaking is exponentially increasing specifically in the areas of migration and integration (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). In migration studies, scholars have historically adopted "methodological nationalism", focusing on the nation-state as the primary unit of analysis (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002). However, this approach overlooks the diversity within nations and the regional factors influencing migration (Scholten & Pysarevskaya, 2022). The difficulties nation-states encounter in managing migratory flows have led to a shift in responsibility towards non-governmental organizations, international bodies, and local authorities. Consequently, civil society organizations and local government officials have advocated for greater autonomy and control over immigration policies (Caponio, 2017).

Indeed, migration and integration policies are becoming dispersed over different levels of government. Complex relations have emerged between different levels, especially in global, gateway or large cities such as Rotterdam, London, Milan, and Barcelona which have adopted different migration-related policy approaches than their respective national governments (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). In favor of this perspective, Zapata-Barrero (et al. 2017) have spoken about a recent "local turn" within a Multilevel Governance framework, as cities and regions are increasingly active in shaping their agendas to accomplish integration and diversity accommodation (ibid.).

Within the literature on the "local turn" in immigration and integration, many studies have been conducted on cooperation and conflict among various levels of governance and actors. However, these studies have treated migrants as a homogeneous category, failing to explicitly address the unique challenges faced by vulnerable migrant populations (e.g. women, undocumented migrants, and LGBTQI+ individuals).

The literature shows that LGBTQI+ migrants face substantial obstacles due to intersecting discrimination related to their sexual orientation, gender identity, and socio-economic background, making them particularly vulnerable (e.g., Alessi et al., 2020; Lewis, 2014). National laws criminalizing same-sex relationships and certain gender expressions in numerous countries intensify these challenges (Human Rights Watch, 2020). LGBTQI+ migrants often encounter similar discrimination and trauma in host countries, including difficulties proving

asylum eligibility based on persecution due to their sexual orientation or gender identity (Akin, 2017).

Thus, this thesis seeks to understand and discuss how local governments and non-state actors have collaborated in addressing reception and integration policies for vulnerable migrants, especially (forced) LGBTQI+ migrants. By addressing the under-theorization of MLG in this context and applying the theoretical framework to local policymaking for LGBTQI+ migrants, the study aims to provide insights into the collaborative governance of integration and immigration policies for vulnerable migrants at the local level within the MLG framework.

I operationalise this research by asking the following question:
To what extent have local governments and non-state actors in Barcelona and Rotterdam collaborated on governing reception and integration policies for (forced) LGBTQI+ migrants? What are the reasons for their (lack of) collaboration?

By answering the aforementioned questions, this research bridges two significant theoretical and empirical gaps in the literature. The theoretical gap addresses the insufficient theorization of Multilevel Governance (MLG) in explaining how cities respond to vulnerable migrant groups such as women, undocumented migrants, and LGBTQI+ individuals. Current theories fall short in detailing how local governments and non-state actors have governed integration policies concerning these groups. The empirical gap involves collecting data by applying this theoretical model to local policy-making for LGBTQI+ migrants, conducting research to understand how local governments and non-state actors have collaborated in governing policies and programs for this group.

To answer the research questions, I adopt the lenses of *collaborative governance*, a concept used to describe decision-making focused on agreement that involves state and non-state actors in group activities (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Drawing on the work of Triviño-Salazar (2023), I operationalise this concept by analysing collaborative activities between local governments and non-state actors on LGBTQI+ migration-related issues in Barcelona and Rotterdam. These two cities, along with Birmingham, Frankfurt, Milan, and Lyon founded "Eurocities" which is the largest network of European cities. Moreover, both cities played a key role in the establishment of the Working Group (WG) on Migration and Integration, a more specific network that tackles migration-related issues (Triviño-Salazar, 2023). Their involvement in these transnational

networks underlines the pioneering role that both cities play in migration-related issues within the urban context, making them optimal candidates for this comparative study (ibid.). Likewise, Barcelona and Rotterdam are leading cities in advocating for and safeguarding sexual and gender diversity, being crucial members of the Rainbow Cities Network.

Applying collaborative governance at the horizontal level builds the empirical expectation that local governments will collaborate with non-state actors to enact local policy initiatives (e.g. Bazurli, 2019). However, my findings indicate that *full collaboration* between local governments and non-state actors on LGBTQI+ migration and integration policies was not achieved in either city, each for different reasons. Among them, I find that the political climate, the involvement of non-state actors, and the relationship between local actors and higher levels of governance do not contribute to such collaboration.

This research relies primarily on qualitative data from two different sources: (1) migration and LGBTQ-related policy documents, academic literature on the strategy of both cities in migration and reception policies for migrants, policy documents and articles related to LGBTQI+ and migration produced by non-state actors; (2) semi-structured interviews with knowledgeable actors from NGOs and civil society organization working on migration and/or LGBTQI+ rights, professors working in diversity and migration and two municipal officers. The interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. I analyzed this data by adopting an abductive approach through thematic content analysis.

The research is organized as follows: first, I present a detailed literature review on local governance in immigration policies within the context of a Multilevel Governance (MLG) framework, along with the intersectionality of LGBTQI+ migration. Then, I delve into the methodology, data selection, and data collection. I present the results and analysis of the collaboration between local governments and non-state actors in the reception and integration policies for LGBTQI+ migrants in Barcelona and Rotterdam and discuss the factors influencing this (lack of) collaboration. Lastly, this study will provide concluding remarks on the empirical findings and analysis, as well as the limitations of the study, suggesting potential avenues for further research.

2.0 Literature Review

In this section, I engage with the literature to which this thesis seeks to contribute: the local governance in immigration policies within the context of a Multilevel Governance (MLG) framework. I then intersect this body of research with the one on LGBTQI+ migration, which refers to the focus of this study. From here, I present the gaps in the literature and how I seek to contribute by introducing the latter. Following these two, I present the theoretical framework of *collaborative governance* and its relevance to this research.

2.1 Local Governance

The notion of "national models of integration" has historically influenced our understanding of migrant integration policies (Favell, 1998). In migration studies, scholars have frequently embraced a viewpoint known as "methodological nationalism," emphasising the nation-state as the main analytical unit (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002). However, this strategy ignores national diversity and the regional factors that affect migration (Scholten & Pysarevskaya, 2022). The challenges faced by nation-states in managing migratory flows have resulted in a reallocation of accountability towards non-governmental organisations, international organisations, and local authorities. As a result, civil society organisations and local government officials have pushed for more autonomy and control over immigration laws (Caponio, 2017).

Zapato-Barrero (et al., 2017) defend the existence of a local perspective in a multilevel governance framework. Accordingly, cities are protagonists in their own right of policymaking dynamics shaping migration and integration policies. In this regard, the authors state that different policy priorities, agendas, and the influence of diverse cultures explain how cities and regions adopt various approaches to integration. By offering local-based policy responses to migration issues, cities may shape and contest state-based models of immigration management (ibid.).

According to the authors, two dimensions of the local turn must be considered from a MLG perspective (ibid.).

The *horizontal dimension* delves into how local governments engage with different actors such as NGOs, and immigrant associations to implement immigration and integration policies at the local level. Within the literature, it has been discussed whether there is a unique local framework for immigration policies at the local level (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017).

Some pointed out that local governments collaborate with NGOs engaged in migration issues to gain insights into immigrant populations and sometimes instrumentalise these organisations to enact local policy initiatives (e.g. Bazurli, 2019; Vermeulen & Stotjn, 2010). For instance, Bazurli (2019) examines the important role of urban social movements and municipal governments in the formulation of migration and integration policies. Particularly, in the aftermath of the migration crisis of 2015, cities are no longer passive recipients of migrants, but they play a crucial role in migration policymaking due to inadequate national asylum procedures, restrictive immigration management, and a lack of inter-state collaboration. Therefore, the author pointed out that municipal governments and social movements are motivated to collaborate when they have some ideological similarities to address the issue of migration at the local level. Local governments and social organisations with similar beliefs are encouraged to create alliances to confront enormous societal changes such as the so-called migration crisis and national governments' failures. Similarly, Triviño-Salazar's work (2023) contributes to the local turn within the migration scholarship, by shedding light on how collaboration between local governments and nonstate actors impacts migration governance. By looking at the cases of Barcelona and Rotterdam, the author examines the degree to which local governments and nonstate actors in member cities collaborate through migration and integration of Transnational City Networks (TCN). According to the final results, it was underlined that local governments are likely to interact with nonstate actors only whenever they need to support their positions within TCNs and migration governance strategies. Regardless of the differences between the two cities, a significant power imbalance in the relations between local governments and nonstate actors was highlighted in the study (ibid.).

On the other hand, a few scholars have interpreted the local sphere of migration as significantly controversial in which different actors such as civil society organisations and municipalities with opposing goals are likely to engage (e.g. Ambrosini, 2012; Manhig, 2004). According to this perspective, some Italian scholars argued that local governments have implemented restrictive and exclusionary measures targeting migrants. This has created a contested battlefield between non-state actors such as advocacy groups, immigrant associations (etc…), and local governments in Northern Italy. Indeed, in the face of the local governments' restrictive policies, non-state actors have actively responded through protests, interviews, and press releases to oppose these measures (Ambrosini, 2012; Caneva 2014).

The *vertical dimension*, which is also referred to as the center-periphery component, looks at how the decisions at the local level affect and are affected by the relations with higher levels of governance (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017).

While the "centralised model", called also the "national model" (Dekker & Scholten, 2015), remains prevalent in countries like France, the Netherlands, and Denmark, where local governments primarily implement national programs, many other countries and cities are departing from this traditional top-down approach. Instead, they are advocating for greater autonomy in shaping their immigration and integration policies. In favor of this argument, many scholars have explained this trend by identifying a "local dimension of migrant integration policies". According to this model, local governments are more likely than national governments to adopt more inclusive approaches toward cultural diversity and be more pragmatic and efficient at the urban level (e.g. Borkert & Bosswick, 2007; Vermeulen & Stotijn, 2010; Zapata Barrero, 2015). Particularly when issues are characterized as "local" issues that require obvious "local" solutions, local governments are no longer policy-making followers of national repertoires, but they are policy-making actors themselves (Caponio & Borkert, 2010). This phenomenon is also called "pragmatic problem-coping" and it has been used to explain national-local variations. (Dekker & Scholten, 2015) While this model of integration is more likely to result in divergence between local and national policies, it is most likely to lead to convergence between policies in various localities (Scholten, 2015).

Other scholars have rejected this "local model of integration policies" by pointing out the significant differences among cities and regions, which makes the existence of such a model very unlikely. These differences, which can stem from diverse political settings, economic circumstances, or unique migration histories, result in different local policy responses (Alexander, 2007). For instance, In his comparative analysis of Berlin, Paris, and Zurich, Mahnig (2004) noted that the local integration policies in these cities have advocated for varied approaches and results in integration, due to their distinct political, social, and economic contexts. Similarly, a study examining Rotterdam and Amsterdam highlighted the contrasting immigration policy decisions despite the notable similarities between these two cities (Scholten, 2013).

Building on Scholten's work (2016), from a Multilevel governance perspective, the shift towards local control in immigration and integration policies has significantly impacted the dynamics between national and local governance structures.

In some cities, this local turn in migration has resulted in decoupling, which occurs specifically when multiple levels of government work on the same policy issue, but they have quite different definitions of the underlying policy issue (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008). This can be seen in the differences between national governments and local governments in Europe that have dealt with immigration and integration policies. Particularly in the aftermath of the

so-called migration crisis of 2015, while national governments have pursued restrictive and security-oriented integration policies, many cities have adopted welcoming and integrative measures toward migrants (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2020). Within this context, numerous municipal governments have attempted to go above and beyond federal requirements to help immigrant integration more effectively and to give them better access to housing and employment opportunities (Oomen, 2019).

In other cities, localist forms of relationships have been observed (Scholten, 2016). Local governments have been exponentially implementing the strategy of "vertical venue shopping" (Sapotichne & Smith, 2011). This strategy consists of targeting higher and lower levels of government to bypass uncooperative political environments or political decisions (Bazurli, 2019). For instance, according to Scholten (2013), the City of Rotterdam, through lobbying and pressure on the central government, was successful in getting a special ordinance passed at the national level. With the help of this ordinance, Rotterdam was able to impose more stringent regulations aimed at distributing migrants around the city.

The expansion of the multi-level governance (MLG) approach to cities has overlooked a crucial aspect: the underexploration of specific groups beyond migrants and refugees. This includes LGBTQI+ individuals who migrate and settle at the local level. To address this gap, we will delve into a body of literature that has not been typically linked to the local context.

2.1 LGBTQI+ Migration

In the last ten years, particularly after the so-called "migration crisis" of 2015, there has been a significant body of literature focusing on the experiences of LGBTQ+ migrants and refugees (e.g. Akin, 2016; Mole, 2021). When reviewing this body of research on LGBTQI+ migration, four main themes emerge: legal implications concerning the asylum process (e.g. Akin, 2016), the traumatic experiences and intersectional discrimination faced by LGBTQI+ migrants (e.g. Lewis, 2014), and the discourse around forced migration (e.g. Berg & Millbank, 2009).

Different sexual and gender expressions and identities continue to be accepted to different degrees by the law and society both within and between communities, states, and regions. (Ou Jin Lee, 2019) Indeed, despite the emphasis on LGBTQI+ rights as a universal principle within International and European Conventions, it is noteworthy that as of March 2019, 70 UN members had criminalized homosexuality (C M. Mole, 2021). Even though international and European frameworks prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity,

many LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees face other barriers in their host countries (e.g. Beetar, 2020; Marnell, 2023). While Europe is often perceived as a safe haven for LGBTQI+ migrants due to its promotion of gender equality and tolerance for sexual orientation diversity, the reality is undeniably different. Once in Europe, LGBTQ+ migrants often experience marginalization as members of the host society's ethnic minority as well as sexual minorities within their diaspora group (C M. Mole, 2021).

Historically the scholarship on forced migration has adopted a heteronormative framework, overlooking the experiences and needs of LGBTQI+ migrants (Luibeid, 2008). However, in the last decades, a newly emerging body of literature has challenged these heteronormative norms by highlighting how individuals may face persecution and be obliged to migrate due to gender identity and sexual orientation (Berg & Millbank, 2009). Queer refugees can face multiple layers of discrimination based at least on two dimensions of their identities: their status as foreigners and their sexual orientation or gender identity (Bhagat, 2018). Some studies have deeply analysed LGBTQI+ migration through the lens of oppression, underlying how the lives of LGBTQI+ people are shaped by these intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination (Berg & Millbank, 2009). This perspective has been further analysed by various studies on LGBTQI+ communities coming to Europe after the so-called migration crisis of 2015. These studies have emphasised the prevalence of intersectional discrimination experienced by LGBTQI+ due to factors such as gender identity, sexual orientation, and economic background (e.g. Alessi, 2016; A. Lewis, 2014; Dhoest, 2019).

From a psychological standpoint, studies have shown that LGBTQI+ migrants often bear traumatic experiences before fleeing to host countries, such as extortion, forced conversion therapy, physical and sexual violence, psychological abuse, corrective rape, and public humiliation (Alessi et al. 2017; Hopkinson et al., 2017).

Finally, the last main issue discussed in the literature around LGBTQI+ migration is related to the challenges of determining eligibility for asylum based on the persecution of LGBTQI+ individuals (e.g. Akin, 2017; Jansen, 2013; Vitikainen, 2020). Indeed, particularly after the migration crisis of 2015, it has been debated whether the existence of an anti-gay criminal code in an LGBT individual's home country is sufficient to prove the "fear of persecution" established by the Geneva Convention of 1949 (Vitikainen, 2020). Even though many countries that grant asylum now consider sexual orientation as a basis for asylum (e.g. Berg and Millbank, 2009; Jansen, 2013), the interpretations of sexuality provided by different countries present unique challenges for LGBTQI+ asylum seekers. Due to the lack of a universally accepted definition and criteria to determine genuine sexual orientation, judges across Europe

have used different techniques to evaluate the credibility and authenticity of LGBTQI+ asylum seekers. For instance, in the Czech Republic, the Czech authorities conducted sexual arousal tests in 2010, exposing some gay men to pornographic material to measure their arousal levels. Similarly, Danish and British authorities have interrogated LGBTQI+ asylum applicants about their sexual activities and intimate intercourses (Akin, 2017).

Considering the rise of studies examining the local dimension of migration within a multilevel governance setting, scholars (e.g. Alexander, 2007; Caponio & Borkert, 2010; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017) have effectively explored the vertical and horizontal dimensions of this local turn, looking at cooperation and conflict among various levels of governance and actors. Nevertheless, they have treated migrants as a homogeneous category, failing to explicitly address the unique challenges faced by vulnerable migrant populations. This is especially visible in local settings that constitute the proximity context where immigrants arrive and reside.

This thesis aims to address two significant gaps: theoretical and empirical. Given that current theories do not adequately explain how different actors at the local level interact and influence policies concerning vulnerable migrant groups, the theoretical gap aims at targeting at the *horizontal* level the under-theorization of MLG as a framework for understanding how cities respond to vulnerable categories of migrants (women, undocumented, LGBTQI+, etc..).

The second gap aims at gathering empirical data by applying this theoretical model to the specific case of local policy-making regarding LGBTQI+ migrants. This entails conducting empirical research to understand how local governments and non-state actors have collaborated in implementing immigration policies and programs concerning LGBTQI+ migrants. The academic literature has demonstrated that LGBTQI+ migrants face a multitude of obstacles coming from intersecting discrimination related to their sexual orientation, gender identity, and socio-economic background, making them particularly vulnerable (e.g. Alessi et al., 2016; A. Lewis, 2014).

Therefore, this research seeks to fill these crucial theoretical and empirical gaps in the understanding of how cities address reception and integration policies for vulnerable migrants, particularly focusing on LGBTQI+ migrants. By addressing the under-theorization of Multilevel Governance (MLG) at the *horizontal* level in the context of vulnerable migrants and applying this theoretical framework to the case of local policymaking concerning LGBTQI+ migrants, this study seeks to provide important insights into the challenges faced by LGBTQI+

migrants and the extent to which local governments and non-state actors have collaborated on integration policies within the framework of Multilevel Governance.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Taking into account the aim of this thesis, I operationalise my research by adopting the collaborative governance framework.

Building upon Zapata-Barrero's analysis (et al., 2017), this research aims at analysing the "local turn" in reception and integration policies for LGBTQI+ migration, considering the *horizontal* dimension from an MLG perspective. The *horizontal* component, also called the state-society dimension (Piattoni, 2009), examines how local governments collaborate with other entities, including non-governmental organisations and immigrant associations, to carry out immigration and integration strategies on a local scale (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017).

Through the horizontal dimension, I will explore the management of reception and integration policies for LGBTQI+ migrants at the local level, looking into the relations of *collaborative governance* between the local government and various public and private actors such as NGOs and immigrant associations.

The term *"collaborative governance"* refers to the process of assembling public and private stakeholders with government bodies to facilitate consensus-driven decision-making (Ansell & Gash, 2008). The aim of collaborative governance is achieving *full collaboration* between state and non-state actors. *Full collaboration* is the result of the collaborative interactions between state and non-state actors throughout the policy-making process to accomplish shared objectives (e.g. providing a service, fostering local development, or addressing social issues) (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001). Moreover, two main elements need to be taken into consideration when looking at collaborative governance between state and non-state actors: 1) the level of commitment needed from nonstate actors to engage in a particular activity; 2) the (non) hierarchical interactions between state and non-state players in that particular activity (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Drawing inspiration from Triviño-Salazar (2023), I operationalise the concept of *collaborative governance* between the local government with various public and private actors working for reception and integration policies for LGBTQI+ migrants by considering 4 different types of activities that involve non-state actors in the LGBTQI+ migration policy-making process.

1) *Informative activities*: at the local level, the interactions between state and non-state actors primarily follow a vertical dynamic, with very low commitment from non-state actors. Local governments typically inform non-state actors about decisions that have already been made, without engaging with them in the decision-making process.

2) *Consultative activities*: non-state actors are consulted by local governments throughout the process of proposing, designing, and implementing actions or policies. However, their involvement in consultations is irregular and often involves non-binding talks.

3) *Incorporative activities*: These activities are characterised by a high level of commitment of non-state actors. Nevertheless, the initiatives that non-state actors are carrying out have been previously suggested and developed by local governments.

4) *Co-productive activities*: These initiatives are the result of a high commitment of non-state actors and are based on horizontal ties between state and non-state actors. At the local level, non-state actors propose, develop, and carry out actions and policies collaborating with local governments. According to Triviño-Salazar (2023), co-productive activities are the only necessary condition to reach *full collaboration* between state and non-state actors.

Cooperation between local actors and non-state actors on Reception and Integration Policies for LGBTQI+ migrants

	Vertical Relationship	**Horizontal Relationship**
High Commitment	Incorporative activities	Co-productive activities
Low Commitment	Informative activities	Consultative activities

4.0 Methodology

This work investigates the extent to which local governments and non-state actors have collaborated on governing reception and integration policies for (forced) LGBTQI+ migrants and the reasons behind this (lack of) collaboration. Considering the theoretical and empirical gap within the literature on this topic, opting for an explanatory research design is crucial. The study compares the cases of two highly pioneering cities: Barcelona and Rotterdam.

The design of this research is twofold. Firstly, policy documents addressing migration and LGBTQI+ at the local level will be deeply analysed. Secondly, through the use of semistructured interviews, this research aims to elucidate the extent to which local governments and non-state actors have collaborated on the reception and integration policies for (forced) LGBTQI+ migrants, examining the horizontal dimension, from an MLG perspective. Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews will be inductively used to understand the reasons behind the (lack of) collaboration between local governments and non-state actors on LGBTQI+ migration issues. Both sets of sources will be analysed using thematic analysis. This dual approach will provide important insights into the strategies and motivations driving each city's collaborative approach to LGBTQI+ migration and integration.

4.1 Case Selection

This research work takes the form of a comparative study by exploring the extent to which local governments in Rotterdam and Barcelona have collaborated with non-state actors on reception and integration policies for (forced) LGBTQI+ migrants (around and after the migration crisis of 2015).

These two cities were chosen for multiple reasons. Firstly, Barcelona and Rotterdam have been considered in the literature as "pioneer municipalities" leading the way in establishing European migration and integration networks. These two cities, along with Birmingham, Frankfurt, Milan, and Lyon have founded "Eurocities" which is the largest network of European cities. Moreover, both cities played a key role in establishing the Working Group (WG) on Migration and Integration, a more specific network that tackles migration-related issues. Additionally, in 2006, Rotterdam established Eurocities' Integrating Cities, an initiative for integrating immigrants, which Barcelona also joined (Triviño-Salazar, 2023). Their involvement in these transnational networks underlines the pioneering role that both cities play in migration-related issues within the urban context, making them optimal candidates for this

comparative study. Secondly, Barcelona and Rotterdam are pioneer cities in the defense and protection of sexual and gender diversity. Both cities are part of the Rainbow Cities Network, which aims to protect an individual's sexual rights by encouraging member cities to implement creative public policies that support LGBTQI+ individuals' freedom to express their sexual identity and sexual orientation (Rainbow Cities Network).

On one hand, Barcelona was among the first European towns to formally embrace an intercultural lens within its policies in 1997, before the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Programme which was launched in 2008 (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). During the so-called migration crisis, Barcelona not only had a conflicted relationship with European institutions but also began to deviate from national repertoires on migration issues. In September 2015, Barcelona launched a policy programme called *"Barcelona Ciutat Refugi"* (BCR, Barcelona Refugee City) which aimed to bridge the gaps in supralocal institutions at the local level. This policy sought to establish a reception system, independent from the central state while enhancing already existing integration and service systems for migrants. Additionally, it aimed at involving non-state actors like social movements and NGOs in the decision-making process and collaborating with other cities creating transnational networks (Bazurli, 2019). The municipality of Barcelona has maintained a progressive and coherent approach to migration and integration under various political leaderships: the centre-left Socialist Party of Catalonia (1978–2011), the centre-right Catalan nationalist Convergence and Union (2011–2015), and the radical-left political platform Barcelona en Comú (2015-2023) (Triviño-Salazar, 2023). Currently, the centre-left Socialist Party of Catalonia led by Jaume Collboni has been in power since 2023.

In LGBTQI+ matter, Barcelona has been the first city to host a protest for LGBTQI+ rights, just two years after the overthrow of Francisco Franco's dictatorship. Barcelona is recognised as a pioneer in advocating for LGBTQI+ rights. Notably, the city has implemented a "Municipal Plan for Sexual and Gender Diversity (2016-2020)," which specifies important steps for its LGBTQI+ policy. For instance, the city also hosts the *LGTBI Municipal Council*, a consultative body focused on problems of sexual and gender diversity. Lastly, Barcelona has an *LGBT Centre*, which offers many cultural programs on gender diversity and support services for LGBTQI+ people (Ayuntament de Barcelona).

On the other hand, Rotterdam is considered a "minority-majority" city, with 632,000 residents, of which 50.3% are first- or second-generation immigrants, mostly Surinamese (8%), Turks (8%), and Moroccans (7%) (Scholten et al., 2019).

While the national government has provided local integration guidelines since the 1980s, cities in the country have formulated and implemented their integration plans since the 1990s because of the decentralised national system (Dekker & Scholten, 2015). Rotterdam's integration strategies from 1998 to 2002 adopted a multicultural perspective, aimed at addressing the socioeconomic disadvantages of minorities while also advocating for cultural diversity (Dekker, 2016). Specifically, in 2002, the anti-immigrant right-wing party 'Leefbaar Rotterdam' ('Liveable Rotterdam') won the election and formed a coalition government. Subsequently, the Labor Party (FvdA) led two coalitions and governed from 2006 to 2014. However, Liveable Rotterdam returned to power in 2014 to form another coalition government, followed by the Liberal Party assuming leadership from 2018 to 2022 (Triviño-Salazar, 2023). In 2022, the right-wing populist party Liveable Rotterdam won the elections again and led a coalition government with center-right- wing parties.

Furthermore, Rotterdam is recognised as a prominent LGBTQI+ city for several reasons. Firstly, even though Rotterdam joined the Rainbow City Network in 2017, the municipality has long prioritized LGBTQI+ emancipation policies, dating back to before 2007. These short- and long-term policies aim at strengthening the resilience of LGBTQI+ people, especially within migratory and religious groups, and improve social safety and acceptance of LGBTI people particularly in education, health, and sports (Rainbow City Network). Rotterdam hosts one of the oldest existing active LGBTQI+ organisation in the world, COC. Established in October 1947, COC Rotterdam continues to serve as an advocacy group, advocating for LGBTQI+ interests in policy-making, legislation, and regulations (COC, Rotterdam). Through these initiatives, Rotterdam has become a major centre for the LGBTQI+ community, promoting tolerance and emancipation for people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

4.2 Data Collection

This study relies on qualitative data and methods to address the research question. Information has been gathered from two main sources: 1) policy documents and strategies related to LGBTQI+ migration and integration from Barcelona and Rotterdam; 2) semi-structured interviews with individuals knowledgeable about LGBTQI+ migration issues and policies.

Firstly, policy documents and programs on LGBTQI+ and integration at the local level have been deeply analyzed to comprehend how Barcelona and Rotterdam have addressed this issue. The selection of these documents was guided by a targeted search using terms such as "LGBT" and "Migration". The goal was to identify documents that have specifically addressed the issue of LGBTQI+ migration.

Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted to assess the degree of collaboration between local governments and non-state actors in Barcelona and Rotterdam, as well as to examine the political, social, and/or economic factors influencing the degree of collaboration on this issue.

Semi-structured interviews allow for "a certain degree of standardisation of interview questions, and a certain degree of openness of response by the interviewer". Their purpose makes them particularly useful for interviewing civil society organizations. Indeed, they allow researchers to investigate the organizational structures, actions, and strategies of civil society organisations, uncovering hidden decisions or problems that are not directly available within the literature (Belina, 2022). For this study, I conducted interviews with nine experts in the field, including members of civil society organizations, two municipal officers, a PhD student, representatives from NGOs, and members of pro-immigrant and LGBTQI+ associations. In the analysis of this work, interviews are identified by the initials of the city and a number that indicates the order in which they were done sequentially (e.g. BCN03; ROT04). The interviewees were selected through snowball sampling, due to the limited presence of organizations engaged in the intersectionality of LGBTQI+ migration and migration policy (e.g. Acathi in Barcelona). Therefore, a limited number of organisations and scholars specialising in migration and/or LGBTQI+ were initially contacted. Through the recommendations of these initial contacts, I conducted further interviews with people recommended to be knowledgeable about the topic.

4.3 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a technique for finding, identifying, evaluating, and summarising patterns (themes) within a data set. By applying this method, themes can be identified in two different ways: bottom-up (inductive) approach and top-down (deductive) approach. This is using an abductive logic. On one hand, when using an inductive technique, the themes found are extracted from the actual data. Thus, inductive analysis entails coding the data without making any attempt to push it into predefined categories or theoretical viewpoints. On the other hand, a top-down approach tends to be more analyst-driven as it is typically motivated by the researcher's theoretical or analytical interest in the subject. In this way, only data pertaining to the researcher's theoretical interest and research question will be considered throughout the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Given that this research aims to address both theoretical and empirical gaps, using thematic analysis methods aligns with the scope of this study. Firstly, a deductive approach is used to address the under-theorization of MLG concerning vulnerable migrants, as this framework offers established categories and insights for analysis. The majority of policy documents on migration and LGBTQI+ issues were also analyzed using a deductive approach, focusing only on those sections relevant to LGBTQI+ migration matters. Conversely, in tackling the significant empirical gap surrounding local policymaking for LGBTQI+ migrants, an inductive approach was adopted due to the limited literature available on the subject.

Lastly, to address the initial part of the research question–"*To what extent have local governments and non-state actors in Barcelona and Rotterdam collaborated on governing reception and integration policies for (forced) LGBTQI+ migrants?"*– I operationalised my research using a deductive approach, extracting the information from the policy-documents and semi-structured interviews through the lenses of collaborative governance. Secondly, to address the subsequent part of the question– "*What are the reasons for their (lack of) collaboration?"*– I used an inductive approach, gathering the data from the semi-structured interviews.

5.0 Analysis

In this chapter, the analysis and findings of the interviews and policy documents will be presented and discussed.

Firstly, in addressing the initial part of the research question–*"To what extent have local governments and non-state actors in Barcelona and Rotterdam collaborated on governing reception and integration policies for LGBTQI+ migrants?"*– I conducted separate analyses of the two cases. Secondly, to address the subsequent part of the question–*"What are the reasons for their (lack of) collaboration?"*—I delved into the outcomes in a distinct section. Here, I examined the factors extracted from the interviews influencing the collaboration between local governments and non-state actors on governing these policies, comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences between the two cities.

5.1 Barcelona

Barcelona has welcomed LGBTQI+ migrants mainly because of the crucial role of NGOs and civil society organisations, who support their inclusion and advocate for their rights in the city. Indeed, civil society organisations have pushed to ensure a more receptive and supportive reception system for LGBTQI+ migrants, which ensures that the intersectionality of their socio-economic background and their gender identity are taken into account (BCN02; BCN03).

According to all the interviewees, the establishment of the NGO ACATHI (Catalan Association for the Integration of Immigrant Homosexuals, Bisexuals, and Transsexuals) in December 2002 marked the beginning of support for LGBTQI+ migrants in Barcelona, under the centre-left Socialist Party of Catalonia (1978–2011) (BCN01; BCN02; BCN03).

This initiative arose from the founders' observation that it was necessary to create an environment where representatives of immigrant sexual minorities could address their problems through mutual aid, and legal advice ranging from residency to issues on guaranteeing equality of rights in the workplace (Ajuntament de Barcelona).

After the so-called migration crisis of 2015, Barcelona adopted a more progressive stance on LGTQI+ migration following the radical-left political leadership of Ada Colau (2015-2023). Under this left-wing government, Ada Colau launched different policies on LGBTQI+ and migration issues, shedding light on the complexities of their intersectionality (BCN02). The Barcelona's City Council, for instance, adopted the *Plan for Sexual and Gender Diversity* (2016-2020), building upon previous municipal work. This Plan's measures advocate for the inclusion of a gender perspective into all City Council initiatives, contributing to the implementation of an intersectional perspective in different fields such as migration. The plan recognises the importance of considering the vulnerabilities of forced LGBTQI+ migrants *who have left their country due to persecution because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.* (Plan for Sexual and Gender Diversity 2016-2020) Additionally*, it underscores* the City Council's responsibility, *within the scope of its competencies* to advocate for the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals seeking international protection. This commitment to an intersectional perspective was reaffirmed in the *"Gender Justice Plan"* (2021-2025).

Similarly, migration and integration policies in Barcelona have also tackled the intersectional case of LGBTQI+ migrants. The "Nausica"'s programme is an example of a strategy addressing this intersectionality. In early 2016, Nausica was launched by the Municipality and civil society organizations as a supplementary assistance programme for asylum seekers and refugees. Indeed, this programme was implemented as the municipal government of Barcelona assessed that the "State assistance programme" (Programa Estatal de Acogida) did not adequately consider conditions of vulnerability for at-risk populations (Barcelona Ciutat Refugi, 2016).

Particularly, after 2015, as the number of asylum applicants increased dramatically, the centralised framework for asylum became evidently inadequate (Bazurli, 2019).
Thus, Nausica aims at protecting individuals and implementing a solid and permanent structure of social care at the local level and support while reinforcing processes of social integration. It provides different kinds of assistance such as short-term housing accommodations, particularly for people who have sought asylum and/or are beneficiaries of international protection and who are still in vulnerable or marginalised social settings. In 2016, Acathi joined the programme intending to offer specific attention to the LGBTQI+ migrant community. Nausica has acknowledged the need for differentiated treatment for LGBTQI+ migrants, given that these individuals are particularly vulnerable to discrimination. This vulnerability is evident not only throughout the application process, where they often face challenges in "proving" their gender

identity and/or sexual orientation but also within reception centers, where they may encounter discrimination based on their identity (Barcelona Ciutat refugi, 2015-2019).

Furthermore, the "City of Barcelona's Citizenship and Immigration Plan" (2018-2021) also demonstrates a commitment to addressing the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants by recognizing their vulnerability to discrimination and exclusion. According to the plan, Barcelona is strongly committed to fighting all types of discrimination, including those based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Overall, all these initiatives of the left-wing government of Ada Colau sought to position Barcelona as a model for accepting refugees throughout Europe. However, due to the issue's high politicisation, her government clashed with the conservative Spanish government of the time, headed by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, who adopted the country's centralist refugee reception policy, weakening the authority of cities on these issues (Triviño-Salazar, 2023). Under the Socialist Party of Catalonia (2023), Barcelona's priorities have shifted towards economic development. This focus has overshadowed social policies such as initiatives to combat racism, which were more prominent in the previous Government. According to one of the interviewees, this shift suggests that the new Government is pursuing its own strategy while moving away from those of civil society organisations working in Barcelona on these social issues (BCN03).

Considering the aforementioned, it can be observed that LGBTQI+ and migration policies at the local level have tackled the intersectionality of the case of LGBTQI+ migrants, acknowledging their "double" vulnerability and the necessity of differentiated treatment. However, in practice, despite some progress, existing legislation and efforts have been insufficient to fully address the needs and challenges of LGBTQI+ migrants in Barcelona (BCN03).

The next section will discuss how, in practice, the local government and non-state actors have collaborated on LGBTQI+ migration reception and integration policies, considering the different types of activities involving non-state actors in the LGBTQI+ migration policy-making process.

Collaborative Governance in Barcelona

Even though Barcelona has been implementing many projects, activities, and policies on LGBTQI+ migration, *full collaboration* between local governments and non-state actors was not achieved. Overall, the role of non-state actors has been crucial throughout all the projects and initiatives on LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees that have been carried out. However, vertical relationships have been prevalent between the local government and non-state actors in these projects, particularly since the current government coalition took office last year (2023) (BCN01).

The interviews revealed a significant shift in the collaboration between the local government and non-state actors, mostly influenced by the political leadership. Under the administration led by Ada Colau (2015-2023), this collaboration primarily involved more *incorporative activities*, emphasizing a strong commitment of non-state actors and shared decision-making. An example would be the aforementioned programme *Nausica*, part of the city policy *"Barcelona, Ciutat Refugi"*. This program involved the organisation ACATHI in 2016 to incorporate specific places for LGBTQI+ individuals. The elaboration of Nausica was the result of strong collaboration between the municipality of Barcelona and non-state actors for different reasons. Firstly, this collaboration resulted in the elaboration of the strategic objectives of the program: to promote the autonomy and socio-labor integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection; to ensure comprehensive and personalized care with professional support; to promote coordination and complementarity between services (Barcelona Ciutat Refugi, 2015-2019). In the case of LGBTQI+ individuals, the crucial role of ACATHI allowed for the protection of LGBTQI+ asylum seekers and beneficiaries of social protection, by introducing an intersectional approach to the program. (BCN02) Similarly, *"Asil.Cat"* is another example of incorporative initiative by the local government and non-state actors. *Asil.Cat Network* is a group of various organizations aiming to protect asylum seekers' rights in Catalonia and raise public awareness through lobbying, legal aid, socio-labor assistance, and psychological support. Through the funding of its strategic plans, the municipality has aided in the process of uniting this informal grouping of entities so that it can acquire its legal personality. In November 2010, with the support of the municipality, Asil.Cat organised a conference to foster a dialogue among European organizations specialized in the reception of minors and LGBTI individuals seeking international protection. During the conference, many organizations, such as ACATHI, sought to raise awareness of this issue and explore strategies for implementing more effective reception policies for these individuals.

However, despite the strong commitment of non-state actors resulting from the aforementioned activities, the local government remained in control of their execution. It was also emphasized that the City Council has claimed credit for these activities, even though the primary commitment has came from civil society organizations, which are the ones driving change and raising awareness on this issue (BCN02). As one member of a civil society organisation stated:

"I remember when we created the LGBTQI+ sheltered centers within the asylum center, the city council presented it as if they had made an investment in these housing units, but the reality is that we have generated the entire process". (BCN03)

Following the leadership transition to PSC in 2023, the collaboration shifted its focus to a few numbers of *consultative activities* (BCN02; BCN03). These activities included NGOs participating in working groups, submitting proposals to the Consell Municipal d'Immigració de Barcelona (CMIB), and providing guidance on policy development. (BCN03) An additional incorporative activity was identified, the event *"Trobada BCN Ciutat Diversa,"* which encompassed a session called *"Living Library"* organized by ACATHI and specifically dedicated to raising awareness about LGBTQI+ migration.

As the preceding discussion shows, even though different incorporative activities between the local government and non-state actors have been identified during the government of Barcelona en Comú, they have not fully realized the potential for *full collaboration*. The crucial involvement of non-state organizations has often been overlooked, with the local government maintaining control over execution and occasionally attributing credit to initiatives mainly implemented by civil society organizations. Especially notable is the decline in collaboration since the socialist party of Cataluña assumed power last year, with efforts shifting towards primarily consultative activities involving to a smaller degree non-state actors.

5.2 Rotterdam

In contrast to Barcelona, opinions among interviewees contacted for the case study on Rotterdam vary regarding the city's inclusivity towards LGBTQI+ migrants. While some members of organizations perceive Rotterdam as very LGBTQI+ migrants-friendly due to initiatives like *EuroPride*, the majority suggests that the extent of inclusivity depends on one's background. For instance, LGBTQI+ economic migrants from Europe or expatriates have different experiences than refugees and asylum seekers (ROT02; ROT03; ROT06).

In this regard, one interviewee brought attention to the issue of LGBTQI+ Rotterdam having a predominantly white-gay Dutch culture, which presents challenges for integration. This cultural dynamic emerged during the era of the politician Pym Fortuyn in the 1990s, who openly identified as gay and supported gay rights, yet held anti-immigration and strongly Islamophobic views. His followers, such as the *Pink Lion Foundation*, have perpetuated a predominantly white and right-wing perspective within the LGBTQI+ community in Rotterdam over the past two decades. Despite efforts by NGOs and civil society organizations to promote diversity, interculturality, and inclusivity within this culture, the Dutch LGBTQI+ culture in Rotterdam remains to some extent unwelcoming towards migrants and refugees (ROT01).

This perspective can also be perceived in the migration and integration policies, particularly within the predominately right-wing political climate of the last twenty years.
In the early 21st century, Rotterdam's migration and integration policies transitioned from a multicultural stance to a more assimilationist approach, especially following *Leefbaar*'s rise to power in 2002 (Scholten et al., 2017).
Under the leadership of the right-wing coalition headed by Leefbaar, in 2006 the municipality implemented the "Rotterdam Citizenship Code," which reflects an assimilationist approach to integration. This initiative by the City Council prioritized fostering uniformity among citizens over promoting diversity and inclusion. (Scholten et al., 2019) Within the "Rotterdam Citizenship Code," there was a rule that could be interpreted as anti-immigrant: *"Treat homosexuals equal to heterosexuals and treat them with respect."* This particular rule perpetuates a prejudiced assumption that migrants and refugees hold homophobic attitudes due to their cultural and national backgrounds. According to one interviewee, this reflects the rhetoric that has been instrumentalised by far-right parties, who have exploited LGBTQI+ discourse for these last two decades to justify their anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic positions. A

member of a civil society organization in Rotterdam stated: *"Far right-wing and anti-migration rhetoric reinforces the wrong assumption that queer people are fleeing from Muslims or homophobic countries and that those homophobic people are coming here too and are a danger for the LGBTQ+ community [in Rotterdam]"* (ROT03).

Since the end of the social democrats' second government mandate in 2012, there has been a shift in policy from specifically targeting immigrants to including immigration and integration policies within social inclusion policies aimed at all citizens. This policy change has resulted in decreased funding for many pro-immigrant organizations and smaller civil society groups dedicated to integration and diversity initiatives. Instead, Rotterdam has begun subsidizing and collaborating with mainly four newly established 'expertise centers'. These centers are dedicated to addressing four main issues: diversity, discrimination, women's emancipation, and LGBTQ+ emancipation (Dekker & van Breugel, 2019).

In the aftermath of the so-called migration crisis of 2015, a new wave of anti-refugee and anti-immigrant policies emerged under a far-right coalition led by *Leefbaar*. One notable example is the "*Integration 010 Memorandum,"* which seeks to differentiate between migrants who embrace Dutch culture, adhere to societal norms, and take responsibility for their integration, and those who do not. According to the memorandum, the municipality's role is to encourage participation and explain the rules, making individuals responsible for managing their integration process. These policies reflect a shift towards more repressive measures post-crisis and a diminished role for the municipality in safeguarding the rights of refugees and migrants. Unexpectedly, over this period, policies on integration and inclusion began addressing, to some extent, the intersectionality of LGBTQI+ migrants. Two main integration policies were implemented: *"Full Participation"* (2016-2018) and the aforementioned *"Integration 010"* plan. One of the goals of these two plans was to increase the social acceptance and inclusion of LGBTQI+ individuals, with a specific focus on groups with a migration background. Nevertheless, it is crucial to underline that while the case of LGBTQI+ migrants was taken into account for the first time, these policies continued to favor only migrants who conform to Dutch cultural rules, thereby reinforcing a more assimilationist approach to integration.

During the coalition government ruled by the *Liberal Party* (2018-2022), a new plan entitled *"Relax, This is Rotterdam"* was introduced in 2019, aiming at addressing different social

issues. The shift from an assimilationist to a multicultural approach was evident, pursuing the safety, protection, and emancipation of all citizens despite their different social backgrounds. Despite this, migration and LGBTQ issues were tackled as separate issues, without any recognition of their interconnectedness. On one hand, there was a focus on ensuring the safety of LGBTQI+ individuals in public spaces. On the other hand, efforts were underlined to combat racism and promote acceptance of cultural differences.

Conversely, the approach taken by the municipality of Rotterdam under the last right-wing government led once again by the *Leefbaar* party seems to have reaffirmed its commitment to an intersectional approach. This can be seen in the comprehensive content of the action plan *"Living together in one city"*, which acknowledges factors such as *race, origin, age, religion, socioeconomic status, political preference, gender identity, sexuality, disabilities, chronic illnesses, social status, immigration status, and all unique combinations of these characteristics."* Through this policy plan, the municipality aims to create an environment, where everyone is welcomed, encouraged to express themselves authentically, and respects each other's differences. While the plan seems to support a multicultural approach, it is notable for highlighting that the discussion of migration mainly focuses on economic migrants, without making any reference to asylum seekers and refugees.

In this regard, a few interviewees pointed out that LGBTQI+ refugees in Rotterdam do not receive differential treatment and attention based on their intersectional discrimination and vulnerability. For instance, regarding healthcare, there is a lack of available information in the different administrative sectors and asylum centers about the procedures for managing HIV infection. Furthermore, cultural sensitivity towards non-European cultures appears to be limited within these spaces. LGBTQI+ migrants face safety risks and discrimination from other fellow residents within refugee and asylum centers. This occurs as the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) and the municipality of Rotterdam lack consideration for individual backgrounds, resulting in LGBTQ migrants being housed with individuals from cultures that may not accept queer identities (ROT03).

On the other hand, LGBTQI+ economic migrants and ex-pats who have determined skills have a completely different experience upon their arrival in Rotterdam. For instance, one

interviewee, a student who is a queer migrant from another EU country, reported: *"I think a lot of the governing entities believe that they treat everyone equally and fairly, but I think in practice that's not really the case. I think European citizenship is the goal standard here and they make it very difficult for anyone who doesn't have that to feel welcomed and stay [in Rotterdam]"* (ROT06).

Taking the aforementioned into account, it can be inferred, as supported by the majority of the interviewees, that Rotterdam primarily welcomes European LGBTQI+ migrants who possess skills and capabilities to a greater extent, rather than LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers coming outside of Europe.

In the next section it will be discussed how, in practice, the local government and non-state actors have collaborated on LGBTQI+ migration reception and integration policies, considering the different types of activities involving non-state actors in the LGBTQI+ migration policy-making process.

Collaborative Governance in Rotterdam

In contrast to Barcelona, where non-state actors have been actively engaged in numerous activities related to the integration of LGBTQI+ migrants, the municipality in Rotterdam has collaborated with only a few organizations on this topic over the past decade.

C*ollaboration* on LGBTQI+ migration activities has primarily involved three organisations: SKIN (Network of International Christian Communities), DonaDaria (focused on gender matters), and COC Rotterdam (advocating for LGBTQ rights).

I identified some *incorporative* activities such as the 2021 initiative *"Building Bridges,"* which focused on fostering understanding and connection among diverse communities and perspectives. Supported by local government funding, this initiative has delegated the responsibility to two main organizations, Dona Daria and SKIN, to propose projects aimed at bridging differences among communities. An interviewee emphasised the importance of this project in highlighting the case of LGBTQI+ migrants which has created a lot of conflict within communities coming from their specific cultural backgrounds (ROT02).

Similarly, I identified the *EuroPride* as an incorporative activity. Indeed, the local government has delegated the organization of this event to the Rotterdam Pride Foundation for many years. According to one interviewee, smaller organisations had the opportunity in previous years to request funding from the Rotterdam Pride Foundation. This funding was intended for carrying out their initiatives, which included addressing the case of LGBTQI+ migrants during Pride events (ROT03).

Even though the involvement of some non-state actors was crucial in both of these projects, the relationship between the local government and non-state actors has been strongly vertical. In this regard, a participant pointed out: *"The Municipality hires [non-state actors] to work out their policies; you [civil society organisations] have to adjust everything to their criteria; if you do not want that, you cannot receive the funding. They look for informal partners to help them. You need to adjust to what they want to achieve." (ROT02)*

Moreover, I found some minor *co-productive* activities, including an outdoor exhibition at Kruisplein named *'Intersex 1 in 90'*. This topic was further explored in various activities hosted at De Bakkerij theater such as theater performances, film screenings, lectures, and discussions about the intersex condition in which the interconnection with the migrant community was strongly present. Another significant activity is *"Cocktails"*, an evening event that has been ongoing since 2023. This activity is not only a social occasion but it also provides information and support for LGBTQI+ individuals with a migrant background, particularly those living in asylum centers. COC Rotterdam has carried out both of the activities above in collaboration with the local government. In contrast to the *"incorporative activities,"* COC enjoyed greater autonomy in ruling these projects with municipal funding, without encountering stringent restrictions (ROT05).

Considering the aforementioned, we can observe how the engagement of non-state entities in activities concerning the reception and integration of LGBTQI+ migrants was limited to a handful of established organizations, characterized by vertical relationships between non-state actors and local authorities for the majority of these activities. Once more, *full collaboration* was exclusively observed with a single established organization (COC) for minor initiatives focusing partially on the significance of LGBTQI+ migrants. Lastly, it was noted that the significance of LGBTQI+ migrants has been marginalized in activities and projects in Rotterdam, especially in the current political context. One of the interviewees brought attention

to this matter: *"In general, the municipality likes to see queer events or events dedicated to migrants, but I have not yet found enough questions or interests at the intersection of the two."* (ROT03)

5.3 Comparative Discussion

In this section, I will answer the second part of the research question- *"What are the reasons behind this (lack of) collaboration?"*, by comparing the cases of Barcelona and Rotterdam to point out the factors that have influenced the collaboration between local governments and non-state actors on reception and integration policies for LGBTQI+ migrants. These factors are the political climate, the involvement of non-state actors, and the relationship between local actors and higher levels of governance.

Firstly, the political climate has affected how local governments and non-state actors in Barcelona and Rotterdam have collaborated on these policies in different ways. In Barcelona, the current center-left government has implemented its political strategy on integration without significantly collaborating with non-state actors. This approach marks a shift in the city's management of LGBTQI+ migration policies, as previous governments in Barcelona had more closely followed the work of organizations in this field. According to one interviewee, the variance in relationships between the local government and non-state actors concerning LGBTQI+ migration policies can be attributed to two primary factors. Firstly, during the leadership of the center-right Catalan Nationalist Convergence and Union (2011–2015) and Barcelona en Comú (2015-2023), the municipality of Barcelona followed to a greater extent strategies and plans of civil society organizations (BCN02). Thus, the local government actively involved these actors in decision-making processes and initiatives concerning LGBTQI+ and migration issues. However, the current government has pursued its strategy and policies, partially due to limited governmental resources and time constraints, limiting its engagement with non-state actors. Secondly, it was highlighted that the Catalan elections (May 2024) and the upcoming European elections (June 2024) present an additional challenge for politicians working in Barcelona. Hence, especially during election time, politicians tend to tackle intersectional issues, such as the one of LGBTQI+ migrants, in a linear rather than an intersectional manner. This implies that the complexity of the case of LGBTQI+ migration,

which should take into account overlapping identities and experiences, is not addressed in the current political discourse and thus in the political agenda (BCN03).

Conversely, over the last two decades, Rotterdam has been dominated by a strongly right-wing political environment. This political landscape, dominated by anti-immigrant and anti-Islamophobic parties, has led to restrictive migration policies and initiatives that have negatively impacted LGBTQI+ migrants. Over the past decade, despite integration policies addressing the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants to some extent, the focus of local governments has primarily been only on welcoming and protecting skilled economic- migrants rather than refugees regardless of their queer identity. LGBTQI+ migration issues have not been prioritized on the political agenda, being interpreted as individual issues rather than systemic ones. (ROT03) Thus, as non-state actors have been compelled to adhere to the municipality's directives and strategies to receive funding, a strong collaboration between local governments and non-state actors on reception and integration policies for LGBTQI+ migrants was absent.

  My second explanation for the lack of *full collaboration* between local governments and non-state actors is related to how non-state actors have been involved in projects and activities on LGBTQI+ migration. Overall, interviewees in both Barcelona and Rotterdam stated that local governments have tended to overlook LGBTQI+ migration issues due to their lack of consideration for intersectionality. In both cities, the role of non-state actors in addressing this intersectionality was highlighted. In this regard, one interviewee in Barcelona explained that, unlike politicians, civil society organizations are "in *touch with the realities on the ground"* and are aware of the intersectionality of LGBTQI+ migrants, and "*thus they should be followed in this regard"* (BCN03). In Barcelona, non-state actors were deeply involved in these initiatives until the last government of Barcelona en Comú (2023). However, since the Socialist Party of Catalonia took office in 2023, this involvement has significantly decreased.

In Rotterdam, the participation of non-state actors has significantly declined as policymaking has transitioned from migration-specific to a broader approach to integration (Triviño-Salazar, 2023). This shift has also resulted in reduced funding for smaller pro-immigrant and civil society organisations working on integration, which are the ones that tend to advocate for a more intersectional approach to LGBTQI+ migrant issues. My research findings have shown how the selective involvement of non-state actors in Rotterdam has limited the collaboration between non-state actors and local governments in governing integration policies for LGBTQI+ migrants.

Thirdly, it was noted that the relationship between local actors and the national government has significantly impacted the relationship between local governments and non-state actors at the local level. Projects and policies on LGBTQI+ migration are economically and politically dependent on national government funding, which influences the effectiveness of local initiatives. In the current anti-immigrant, right-wing political environment of the Netherlands, the strong dependency on national directives has limited the local autonomy of Rotterdam on projects on LGBTQI+ migration and thus the collaboration between local governments and non-state actors in this regard.

In the case of Barcelona, the city has historically maintained a degree of independence due to its historical and political relationship with the Spanish government. Under previous administrations, Barcelona's local government significantly collaborated with pro-immigration NGOs and organizations focused on LGBTQ+ migration, such as ACATHI. However, with the new Socialist Party of Cataluña administration, Barcelona has started to align more with the national government's directives (PSOE). This shift has reduced focus on projects specifically targeting LGBTQ+ migration and consequently, the collaboration with non-state actors working on this intersectionality.

Overall, the emerging picture of my findings indicates that local governments in both cities formed vertical relationships with non-state actors which did not turn into *full cooperation* on the implementation of policies on LGBTQI+ migration. The initiatives concerning LGBTQI+ migration policies have originated from non-state actors, primarily due to the local government's failure to address these issues. In a political climate characterized by a more left-wing orientation and greater independence from the national government, such as under Barcelona en Comú (2015-2023), collaboration between non-state actors and local governments on LGBTQI+ migration initiatives was significantly evident. However, whenever local governments have opted to pursue their strategies in integration, as in the case of Rotterdam and the last center-left government in Barcelona, they have not incorporated the intersectional complexities of LGBTQI+ migration issues within their agendas. This omission has consequently led to a reduction in collaboration with non-state actors on LGBTQI+ migration initiatives.

6.0 Conclusion

This thesis examined the extent to which local governments and non-state actors have collaborated in governing reception and integration policies for LGBTQI+ migrants and the factors that have influenced their (lack of) collaboration through the comparison of two pioneering cities: Barcelona and Rotterdam. My results showed that *full collaboration*, as the goal of *collaborative governance*, was not achieved in both cities in the studied period (i.e. around and after the migration crisis of 2015).

The two cities have shown notable differences. In Barcelona, under the leadership of Barcelona en Comú, there was significant collaboration between non-state actors and the local government on LGBTQI+ migration initiatives, despite the vertical relationship established by the local government with these actors. However, since the new center-left government (PSC) took office, the intersectionality of LGBTQI+ migration policies and initiatives has been significantly depoliticized, and the collaboration between the local government and non-state actors on this issue has notably decreased. The reasons for the decline in collaboration between local governments and non-state actors can be attributed to several factors: dependence on the national government and political alignment with the PSOE, reduced involvement of non-state actors in initiatives, and the government's political strategy, which does no longer follow the approaches of civil society organisations. In contrast, in Rotterdam, the selective involvement of non-state actors, the anti-immigrant far-right political environment, and strong dependence on the national government have limited the collaboration between local governments and non-state actors on LGBTQI+ migration policies and initiatives.

Within the context of the increasing role of cities in policymaking, this research contributes to the existing literature on the "local turn" in migration and further advances MLG theory. Considering that previous studies on the local turn in migration policy have not explicitly addressed the case of vulnerable migrants, this study fills an empirical gap by specifically examining the case of LGBTQI+ migrants, providing valuable insights into how cities navigate the complexities of governing integration policies for this marginalized group.

Moreover, this research significantly contributes to the development of Multilevel Governance (MLG) theory by examining the collaboration between local governments and non-state actors in governing integration policies for vulnerable migrants (LGBTQI+ individuals). By shedding light on how cities govern these policies for vulnerable migrants at the horizontal level, the

study enhances our understanding of the intricate dynamics of governance at multiple levels, thereby enriching MLG theory.

By employing collaborative governance as an analytical framework, my findings have shown that *co-production* is not central to local migration policymaking. Local governments in both Rotterdam and Barcelona continue to hold significant power, with non-state actors playing a secondary role in these collaborative activities. Since this collaboration has not fully realized its potential, non-state actors remain distant from contributing significantly to LGBTQI+ migration policies. Nevertheless, my results showed that non-state actors should play a crucial role due to their direct contact with people and their specific vulnerabilities.

Establishing the significance of the "local turn" in migration policy-making and *collaborative governance* for vulnerable migrant populations suggests the need for deeper exploration of the impact of regional dynamics on urban areas. Future research could broaden the scope by increasing the number of interviews conducted, particularly including more municipal officers. Additionally, broadening the sample size to encompass a greater variety of cities would enable the generalization of findings to a wider context. Similarly, exploring other vulnerable migrant groups such as migrant women and undocumented migrants would offer insights into the applicability of the Multilevel Governance (MLG) framework to a broader spectrum of vulnerable populations. Moreover, there is potential for further investigation into the vertical dimension of collaborative governance, focusing on interactions between local actors and higher levels of governance. This would provide a comprehensive understanding of governance dynamics across different levels of government in addressing the needs of vulnerable migrants. Addressing these points would contribute to a more complex and comprehensive picture of the exponential role of cities in governing reception and integration policies for vulnerable migrants.

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Annex

Further Reading on the psychological challenges faced by LGBTQI+ migrants

According to estimates of mistreatment ranging from 3% to 35%, asylum seekers get frequently tortured in their home countries. Those who suffer such harm, are more likely than other people to experience mental health issues such as major depressive disorder, PTSD, feelings of guilt, shame, mistrust, and helplessness (e.g. Hopkins, 2016; Longacre, 2012). Particularly, many LGBTQI+ asylum seekers have gone through an exhausting childhood marked by verbal, and physical abuse at home from parents and at school from classmates and other staff (Alessi & Chatterji, 2015; Briere, 2008). These traumas are more likely to occur in countries where legal rights and societal acceptance for LGBTQ people are absent, leaving these vulnerable individuals without protection from intersecting forms of discrimination. Some migrants who identify as LGBTQI+ not only experience prejudice because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, but they also seek to flee conflict and unstable political environments (Alessi & Kahn, 2018).