

URBAN LAB - SYNTHESSES 2025



On the Move: The Impact of Global Migration on Urban Mobility

MASTER GOVERNING THE LARGE
METROPOLIS

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PREFACE

Understanding migration of people means understanding the underlying reasons for their migration, where they are coming from, and why and where they are going if we are to fully understand the impact of that migration.

Right now, we see an ever-growing population. This combined with a range of global Challenges, including, climate, war and natural disaster means that people are moving in numbers never seen before. This presents unplanned pressure on infrastructure, both in the corridors that these people must move through as well as the cities in which they settle.

It is to this seemingly impossible scenario that the teams from the FIA and SciencesPo initiated a research project to examine and better understand the impacts on a city level and what can be learned from migrants, city planners and experts in the field.

The primary challenge was to put aside the emotion and any preconceptions in order to focus on the task at hand. Zoning in on the road safety and urban planning challenges specifically to better determine how cities can benefit from reducing risk and improving inclusivity through access to transport. It is notable that where this is not happening, migrant ecosystems have resolved their own challenges, generating their own unexpected impacts.

This task has been managed with clear guidance from our project sponsor, Luca Pascotto at the FIA and a strong team of students that have remained focused and diligent in their efforts. The students have asked and answered difficult and sometimes painful questions in a professional manner and from this work generated a report that will offer guidance and support to anyone working in this sphere for a long time to come.

Integration of migrants, whether they be high-end economic or poverty-ridden refugees is not easy and requires a wide-range of support. With this paper, direction has been provided to the reality on the ground, the challenges of government and where these two elements meet to make a better world for all.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to support the students through this voyage of discovery.

Thank you,

Philip Purnell.

THE PARTNER



The Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) is a global organization that brings together leading national motoring and sporting organizations. It plays a dual role: as the governing body for world motor sport, including Formula 1 and other championships, and as a key advocate for safe, sustainable, and accessible mobility for all. Through its mobility division, the FIA works with member clubs, international institutions, and civil society to promote road safety, advance innovation in mobility solutions, and support public policies aimed at improving transport systems globally.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study combines qualitative and quantitative analyses to examine migration patterns and their impact on three selected cities: Paris, Athens, and Accra, with input from other relevant cities and countries further contextualizing the intersection of mobility and migration. This entails fieldwork observations in each city, qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, examination of quantitative data, and analysis of academic research conducted on urban transport systems worldwide as well as in these specific cities, including their migration dynamics.

In selecting these cities, we elected to categorize by formal transport infrastructure development. This provides a better comparison of how migration impacts urban transport systems, specifically the coverage of transport infrastructure. For road infrastructure, this includes the physical conditions of the roads and the connectivity of the road network. For public transport systems, this includes the quantity of train and bus lines, whether they are monocentric or not, the quantity of stations, the distance between each station, the reliability of each line. We also identified three factors that can help comparatively analyze Paris, Athens, Accra, and other cities: spatial distribution and built environment, financial constraints, and legal status and documentation.

We conducted formal interviews with members of the public sector, NGOs, universities, and migrants, to get a holistic understanding of challenges in both migration and urban transport. We obtained quantitative data from academic papers, as well as reports from national and municipal governments, and international organizations like the IOM and OECD. Where quantitative data was varied or difficult to obtain, we made it apparent that there were gaps, but also tried to complement it with qualitative data taken from interviews.

Our bibliography is formatted in APA 7th edition and comprises of academic literature on our three case studies and global transport and migration dynamics, as well as official reports and statistics.

FIELDS STUDIED

For this project, we selected Paris, Athens, and Accra as our main case studies. As we categorized these cities based on the level of formal transport infrastructure development, Paris represents the high-developed system, Athens as the medium-developed system, and Accra as the low-level developed system. These cities also receive large quantities of vulnerable migrants, with immigrants in Paris and Accra largely coming for economic reasons, and asylum seekers and refugees coming to Athens. Paris, and Île-de-France more broadly, has a relatively extensive public transport network that allows for people in the suburbs to commute into the city using the heavy rail lines like the RER and Transilien. The city and region also has an extensive bus network that allows for vulnerable populations like the elderly and those with disabilities to commute. As a result, people living in Paris and the rest of Île-de-France don't use cars as much as the rest of France. In Athens, the primary mode of transport remains automobiles, but the rate is lower than the rest of Greece because of the public transport network. However, there are not as many train lines as in Paris, and they also do not run as frequently, which means that people will opt for a car to travel around Athens and the rest of Attica (the metropolitan area of Athens), or aspire to own one. In Accra, the formal public transport network is the least developed of the three cities, which has resulted in an institutionalized informal transport system that low-income locals and migrants use to commute around the city. In all three cities, however, migrants tend to use public (whether informal or formal) transport and also opt for other modes of transportation, such as bicycles, motorcycles, or e-bikes for personal and/or commercial use.

Paris



Source: Photo taken by Iona HADINOTO

Athens



Source: Photo taken by Iona HADINOTO

Accra

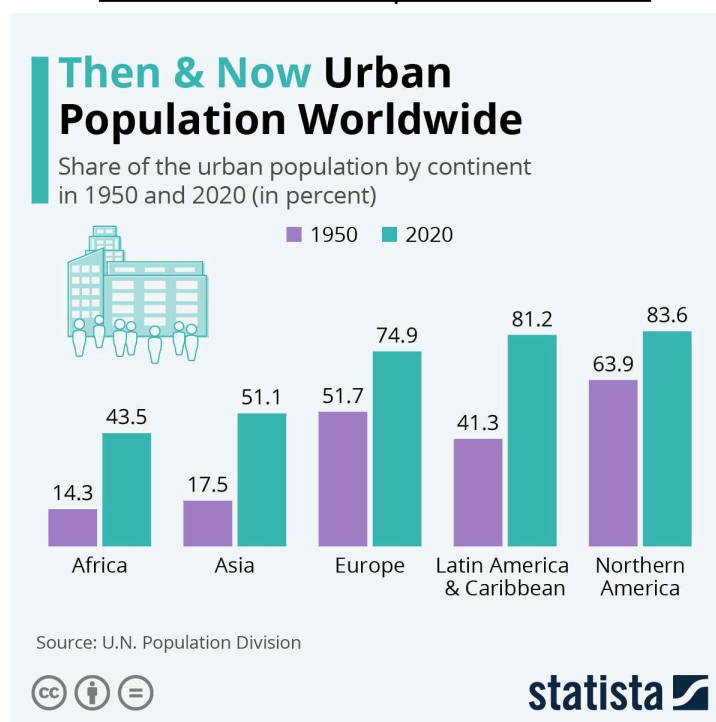


Source: Photo taken by Madeleine MENOUNGA

ISSUES

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2024 report, the global migrant population grew from 221 million to about 243 million between 2010 and 2015, an increase of 9.93% in just five years. In 2024, this number has risen to 304 million, with further growth anticipated given increasing political instabilities, conflicts and climate-related challenges worldwide (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2024). Although these figures are presented in broad terms, the reality is that the presence of migrants today is changing the demographic composition of cities and metropolitan regions. As migrants become a more prominent part of urban populations, their mobility patterns and needs are increasingly shaping and are increasingly shaped by urban transport systems.

“Then & Now Urban Population Worldwide”



Source: U.N. Population Division, taken from *How has the world's urban population changed from 1950 to today?*, World Economic Forum (2020)

As a socially and economically vulnerable demographic, migrants might face challenges or barriers to transport across the city. As a result, city governments face the challenge of integrating migrants to the transportation network – an effort complicated not only by financial barriers, but also by legal and linguistic obstacles in accessing safe and efficient mobility.

Initially, we focused on viewing this issue through migrants' point of view, that is, the challenges they face in urban mobility, how they navigate urban mobility infrastructure. As such, our initial proposed questions were: **“What challenges do migrants face in accessing urban mobility infrastructure?”** and **“How do migrants' adaptations to mobility barriers reveal the limitations to urban mobility infrastructure?”** We also primarily focused on their challenges navigating road safety. However, as we moved along with our research project, we shifted our focus on migration's impact on urban transport

systems, including public transport, cars, and paratransit. This broadened our understanding of the linkages between migration and mobility, and added nuances to how migration dynamics could impact and inform urban planning. Our **final research question** became: **How are urban transport systems impacted by the influx and mobility patterns of international migrants?**

This project necessitated 6 months of research because of the complex linkages between migration and mobility. While there have been studies conducted on the impacts of migration and the housing market, relatively little has been said about its impacts on urban transport systems. Upon initial brainstorming, we looked at how cultural differences between migrants and native-born inhabitants could influence migrants' mobility patterns and preferred modes of transport. However, upon looking at global data and looking deeper into our three case studies, we found that migrant mobility patterns and their impacts on transport systems turned out to depend on much more than cultural factors. That is how we came to the conclusion that variations in spatial distribution, financial constraints, and legal status and documentation would result in different mobility patterns, and thus impacts, on urban transport systems.

In this context, understanding how various forms of exclusion (such as spatial segregation, lack of documentation, and financial constraints) intersect with migrants' ability to access and navigate urban mobility systems is crucial. These factors often compound to limit their freedom of movement, access to services, and overall integration into the urban fabric. At the same time, it is essential to shed light on the adaptive strategies migrants develop in response to these challenges. Recognizing their agency not only offers a more nuanced understanding of urban dynamics but also provides insights for designing inclusive and context-sensitive mobility policies. By capturing both the structural constraints and everyday resilience of migrant populations, this research contributes to building urban governance approaches that are equitable, informed, and responsive to the realities on the ground.

Conducting interviews and fieldwork in Paris, Athens, and Accra was necessary to come to these conclusions. However, preceding interviews and fieldwork, we had to identify key issues and stakeholders through analysis of existing data and literature on migration and transport, which took roughly 1 to 2 months of our research. As the interviews we conducted were designed to fill in knowledge gaps, this initial period of literature review was crucial to understand the landscape on a global scale and in our cities before knowing what to ask interviewees.

This project is relevant to the Urban School because the world is becoming increasingly urbanized, with 4.5 billion people living in urban areas in 2023 (Buchholz, 2020). With the growth in the international migrant population, migrants tend to settle in urban areas, which shifts demographics of urban populations. In our research, we demonstrate that migration, despite the lack of formal recognition or targeted planning, does affect transport demand. Despite this, the intersection between migration, everyday mobility and public infrastructure remains incredibly understudied in literature. There exists a methodological incompatibility between migration, mobility and transport studies. Migration and mobilities scholars, for example, tend to focus on critical and social theories and the meanings and sociopolitical dimensions of movement without much regard for the tangible infrastructures that constrain or enable their movement. Transport planners and geographers, on the other hand, adopt

empirical and highly technical approaches that highly prioritizes efficiency and productivity without incorporating the sociopolitical needs of transport users. The differentiated needs and movements of certain subgroups, such as migrants are thus sidelined as a result. Therefore, our research on this intersection sheds light on the opportunities available for urban policy development.

MAIN RESULTS

The impact of migration on transport systems goes beyond sheer increases in ridership. It also lies in the heterogeneous travel behaviors that migrants introduce which are distinct from the native-born. In Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, migrants are more reliant on public transit and are less inclined to own private vehicles. These patterns, however, are not fixed. Over time, migrants tend to assimilate to their host city's transport culture and system and gradually adopt the travel behaviors of the local population. At this point in time, however, how long this assimilation process takes place is still a matter of debate.

Moreover, treating migrants as a monolithic subgroup conceals intra-group differences. In Spain, migrants from advanced economies tend to demonstrate commuting efficiency on par with or higher than the native-born, which reflects faster assimilation. By contrast, spatially, financially and legally marginalized migrants confront persistent barriers that not only constrain their access to formal mobility options but also lead to distinctive travel strategies such as trip-chaining and reliance on informal modes that generate effects on the transport network's performance.

Spatial constraints reflect and reproduce broader social, economic, and political hierarchies. The way in which space is organized, accessed and navigated play a critical role in determining travel behaviors. In Cape Town, where spatial legacies of apartheid planning continue to shape access to opportunities, migrants and low-income populations often face longer commute times. Similar spatial dynamics are observed across various urban contexts although the historical, legal and infrastructural conditions are different, thereby still producing distinct patterns of movement.

Worldwide, we identify that migration data is often aggregated at the national level which masks spatial disparities at the city and neighborhood scales. This limits the ability of transport planning frameworks in accounting for distinct migrant settlement patterns. In the available data we have analyzed, we observe that some migrants tend to cluster by ethnic enclaves and settle in low-cost areas that are often underserved by transit. More explicitly, many are pushed into the urban peripheries because of exclusionary housing practices and legal barriers. This leads to longer commuting times and distances. Furthermore, as migrant settlement patterns change resident distribution and expand the urban peripheries, migrants also place pressure on transport systems to expand infrastructure and increase transport network coverage.

In Accra, we identify that the porous national borders and weak registration systems complicate efforts to track migrant mobilities. Nonetheless, migrants are very active in the urban space. Although they markedly settle across neighborhoods such as Nima, New Town, and Sabon Zongo, income seems to supersede migrant origin in determining travel behavior. As such, migrants, who proliferate in low-paying jobs, tend to mirror travel behaviors of the low-income, relying on low-cost transport modes like *trotros* and *okadas*. Moreover, as central Accra becomes more expensive, and with employment opportunities remaining concentrated there, migrants are increasingly pushed to the peripheries, which enables long and inefficient journeys to the center. This leads to increased congestion along radial routes and uneven pressures on informal transport networks, which serve as the backbone of mobility in Accra.

In Athens, we identify that most refugee camps are located 12 to 68 kilometers from the Athens center and they have no regular public transport connections. This compels them to rely on costly taxis and private cars or through informal channels and carpooling systems that

are not designed for regular commuting. At the same time, legal barriers to formal housing push many refugees and asylum seekers to settle in transport hubs such as Victoria, Attiki, Exarcheia and Kypseli or in more distant but still transport-accessible areas such as Palaio Faliro. This causes increased ridership on metro lines particularly from Victoria, Omonia, Monastiraki, and Syntagma stations, thereby placing increased pressure on central station and road infrastructure and central network services.

In Paris, we identify that most migrants live in Seine-Saint-Denis, Val-de-Marne, Val-d'Oise, and Hauts-de-Seine or in the 18th, 19th and 20th arrondissements of Paris, which are areas known for affordable housing. These settlement patterns enforce mobility behaviors such as trip chaining between different travel modes due to a lack of direct route from the place of residence and high usage of high-traffic multimodal hubs such as Gare du Nord and Gare Saint-Lazare which connect to transit lines serving migrant-heavy districts. This reflects the impact of migrant mobility on network load. These dynamics also result in sustained demand on outer metro lines, the RER, and the more flexible but capacity-limited bus network.

Financial constraints impact both the affordability of daily mobility and the ability to afford private vehicles. In high-income countries, migrants tend to earn wages lower than the native born and have higher unemployment rates. Income stands as among the most consistent predictors of travel behavior. In Australia and the United Kingdom, we identify an increase in private vehicle ownership with an increase in income and a decrease in public transport reliance. Vulnerable migrants therefore, are likely to have travel behavior similar to the low-income native born. This is especially true in cities where transport expenses represent a significant share of a migrant's daily earnings.

Worldwide, we identify that migrants are drawn to increased public transport usage, active mobility modes such as walking and cycling, or even informal modes such as unregistered minibuses due to relatively lower costs. In contexts where vehicle ownership is completely necessary but unattainable, migrants would often rely on shared car use. In the United States, for example, 54% of migrant trips are completed through carpooling with lower English proficiency being linked to increased carpool use. Additionally, lack of credit history makes high-interest loans such as auto-financing inaccessible for migrants, pushing many towards the used car market. Yet in some cases, particularly where migrants are housed in peripheral or poorly-connected areas, many are still forced into car ownership to access jobs, services, and opportunities.

In Accra, we identify that the high cost of transport makes the impact of migrants easily visible. Most migrants (83%) work in the informal private sector and this sector is characterized by low wages. This therefore skews them towards using trotros and okadas, which are modes unregulated by formal transport authorities, as acquiring a private vehicle is too expensive. Even used cars, and other vehicle-related costs represent up to 1 to 5 months of an individual's income. Despite overcrowding and safety issues, migrants still prefer trotros and okadas simply because they are cheaper, thereby representing the ability of income to supersede other considerations in choosing the mode of transport. Similarly, we also see high migrant representation in the gig economy and delivery services, where travelling fast and often is the norm. This leads to risky behaviors such as speeding or driving while fatigued. Outside of transport modes, we also see migrants engaging in transport-related survival strategies such as vending in intersections, which presents risks for pedestrians and motorists.

In Athens, we identify that used cars dominate private vehicle ownership with average car ages being 17.3 years old. We also observe a rise in the car rental or leasing market due to lower upfront costs. However, both options require valid driver's licenses, which are

unattainable for many non-EU migrants without convertible licenses. Obtaining a Greek driver's license costs approximately €200, which presents a severe barrier. While public transport is relatively affordable (with monthly passes between €27 and €35), migrants who travel infrequently often avoid formal fare systems altogether, sometimes accepting the risk of a €72 fine as a calculated cost. Additionally, we also observe the growth of informal and unregulated modes of transport particularly among refugees who organize carpool systems on their own. Furthermore, with some vulnerable migrants unable to afford driving schools and license fees, some resort to driving without licenses as many migrants still see cars as an absolute need. Still, motorcycles remain the preferred mode for those entering the vehicle market, due to their affordability and compatibility with gig work requirements.

In Paris, we identify that high housing costs lock many migrants in the outer suburbs that leads to longer commute times, multimodal transport, and off-peak travel. This is, however, increasingly offset by large infrastructure projects such as the Grand Paris Express. Additionally, although subsidies exist, many migrants lack the proof of residence and other paperwork they require. This leads some to avoid public transport altogether or engage in fare evasion, weakening revenue models and straining enforcement. Furthermore, many migrants in Paris, being unable to access formal and salaried jobs, turn to gig work like delivery where speed and working long hours are prioritized over safety. This results in increased usage of bikes, scooters and other micro mobility modes, particularly in central areas, but also increased traffic vulnerability as 73% of couriers in Paris report serious risks.

Legal constraints actively produce differentiated relationships with public services and the urban space. In Los Angeles, for example, fear of migration law enforcement inhibits public transit usage among undocumented migrants, thereby continuing to increase reliance on informal transit modes. Across cities, variations in how legal frameworks structure migrant mobility shapes patterns of use, enforcement and adaptation beyond just simply access. These shifts in behavior shows that legality shapes the experience of movement itself and differing frameworks lead to uneven pressures on urban transport systems.

Worldwide, we identify that proof of legal residency and proper visas are constant prerequisites to acquiring driver's licenses. This effectively excludes asylum seekers and refugees from the licensing process. The strong need to mobilize, however, pushes many vulnerable migrants to bypass formal licensing processes altogether with fake licenses being purchased or used fraudulently to gain employment, including within the transport sector. In cities like Vilnius and Moscow, some couriers and drivers are documented to be driving vehicles without valid licenses, raising road safety concerns as licenseless drivers are statistically more likely to be involved in road crashes. But beyond the transport sector, strict legal frameworks lead to ineligibility in other sectors such as housing, like in Vienna where proof of long-residency is required for social housing access. Lack of housing options thus pushes migrants to live in opportunity-poor areas, reinforcing, yet again, reliance on informal and risky mobility options.

In Accra, we identify that many international migrants enter the country informally particularly from Burkina Faso and Togo, bypassing formal registration. Ghana's ECOWAS membership and lax borders means many migrants are able to settle with limited interaction with authorities. The state thus often relies on community reporting or informal channels to monitor entries. This also means that migrants frequently engage in informal employment and mobility systems, facilitated by cultural and linguistic familiarity. This, however, renders a lot of their activities invisible to the authorities, which inhibits accommodation of their needs. Additionally, many do not possess documents such as the Ghana Card, which is increasingly required to access formal transport modes. This decreases reliance on Metro Mass Transit and InterCity STC and more on trotros and okadas. Furthermore, one must also be a

Ghanaian citizen to operate taxis and trotros legally which pushes many migrants towards okada operations. This increases the number of okada operators, with some of them being underage. This also further accelerates the call for okada formalization policies given its increasing centrality in the urban transport system.

In Athens, we identify that obtaining a license requires ID and proof of residence, and foreign licenses from non-EU countries are difficult to convert. There are programs that support migrants such as HELIOS and HELIOS+ but from 2020 to 2024, only 46 individuals were able to get their licenses through this procedure. Barriers also persist in public transport access. Securing an ATH.ENA card, for example, for discounted fares requires a Tax Identification Number (TIN), excluding undocumented migrants and limiting access to benefits for the unemployed. As a result, fare evasion increases, particularly on buses, where enforcement is limited. This places strain on the state as they subsidize, for example, 40% of the operating costs of the tram and train services in Athens. Furthermore, transport inaccessibility in the city is also enabled by structural unemployment and bureaucratic delays particularly for asylum seekers. Labor access exists in theory but this is impeded by red tape and economic conditions. Moreover, many migrants also work as subcontractors for fleet managers and this expands an invisible workforce within the transport system. Urban transport for many migrants in Athens, is a workspace rather than a service.

In Paris, we identify that access to fare reductions such as Navigo Solidarité requires proof of legal presence, domicile and access to welfare programs. As migrants do not have many of the required paperwork, many walk long distances instead. But even eligible migrants face digital exclusion or lack of guidance that leads to non-use of entitlements. This leads to more low-income users using public transport at full-price and increased pressure on social associations to bridge institutional gaps. Like in Athens, many resort to fare evasion for infrequent trips. Over 1 million fines were recorded which means that fare evasion, and by extension, fare evasion enforcement is now a structural part of the transport system.

Variable	(Non-discriminatory) Alternative conditions	Description	Examples of associated mobility patterns and behavior	Examples
Spatial distribution and built environment	→ Ethnic/socioenomic enclaves	→ High-density central locations with diverse land use, connected by public transportation.	→ Less car dependency, with greater reliance on other available transit modes such as public transportation and active mobility.	→ In Offenbach am Main, Germany , 51% of people with migrant backgrounds or migrant parents used public transportation daily or almost daily, compared to 39% of the native-born population.
		→ Low-density, remote locations, mostly residential areas, that are poorly connected.	→ Car-dependency / Forced Car Ownership.	→ Immigrant households are overrepresented among the Forced Car Owners in the United Kingdom .
			→ Possibility of the emergence of informal transportation modes, with carpooling frequently used in cohesive communities.	→ In Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia , informal settlements have expanded along the city's periphery, where public transit is scarce. Migrants rely on whatever transport is available, such as informal shared taxis and minibuses.
	→ Spread across the city	→ No specific description.	→ Average mobility patterns of low-income population.	→ In Australia , buses are the preferred mode of transport among low-income users.
Financial constraints	→ Private vehicle ownership	→ Migrants who choose, or are forced, to own a private vehicle.	→ Migrants are more likely to select more affordable options like motorbikes and second hand automobiles.	→ Mid-2000s projections showed that Hispanics would take up 20% of the American used car market by 2010. Additionally, researched showed that by 2023, the main pathway to automobile ownership for lower-income households in the US was through secondhand car acquisition.
		→ Reliance on the available public transportation	→ Unaffordable public transportation can lead to fare evasion tactics, exploiting free transfers, or sharing individual fare cards	→ In New York , low-income metro users were found to rely on fare evasion tactics regardless of the risk of being apprehended.
	→ Migrants who are unable or unwilling to drive, or who simply lack access to a private car.	→ Active mobility to almost completely eliminate transport costs	→ Walking or biking, even really long distances and regardless of the infrastructure (bad quality sidewalks, no bicycle lanes).	→ In Greater Sydney, Australia , the use of active travel modes is relatively higher for the lowest income population than for the rest of the income segments.
		→ Use of informal transport or paratransit as a cheaper alternative when public transit is limited, overcrowded, or unreliable, and taxis are unaffordable.	→ Unregularized carpooling	→ The US National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) shows that newest arrivals to the United States make over twelve times as many trips by carpool as by transit.
			→ Informal systems like unregistered buses or taxis.	→ In Bangladesh , the para-transit (E-rickshaw), is popular among urban passengers since it involves lower travel cost than other locally available transport modes.
		→ Chain trips using multiple modes when a single option can't cover the full journey.	→ Using public transport for part of the journey, then switching to walking, cycling, or informal transport to reach the final destination.	→ In Bogotá, Colombia , public transport users often rely on informal bicitaxis to complete trips in areas underserved by the formal network. Venezuelan migrants operate part of this system.
Legal status and documentation	→ Strict documentation criteria for driver's licenses and car insurance	→ Migrants risk apprehension like specifically vehicle seizure	→ No driving.	→ In the United Arab Emirates , a UAE residence visa is mandatory, and only licenses issued from one of the countries in their approved list can be converted into a UAE driving license without training or a test.
			→ Reduced driving frequency, leading to avoidance of certain areas, and even encouraging more cautious driving behavior.	→ In Canada , studies show that recent immigrants are less prone to be drivers in serious motor vehicle crashes.
	→ Lax documentation criteria for driver's licenses and car insurance	→ Lower or no risk of apprehension	→ No further barriers or limitations for mobility than non-migrant groups.	→ Average mobility patterns of low-income population.
	→ Strict documentation criteria for vehicle loans	→ Difficulties in securing vehicle loans due to a lack of valid identification, limited financial literacy, or the absence of a credit history.	→ Financial constraints further disincentivize vehicle ownership and reinforce the dynamics already discussed under the financial variable.	→ Migrants in Canada , specially new arrivals, are often impeded from larger credit amounts, like automobile loans, due to insufficient credit history.
	→ Lax documentation criteria for vehicle loans	→ Higher acceptance of vehicle loans.	→ Loans closes short term financial gaps, potentially increasing vehicle ownership.	→ In the San Diego area (US) , due to the lack of credit history, many migrants are pushed into the subprime auto-loan market where lending arrangements have high interest rates and inflexible terms. Despite detrimental effects, demands for subprime auto loans continue to rise.
	→ Strict documentation criteria for personalized public transport passes	→ Due to insufficient documentation, migrants may be excluded from fare reductions available to low-income individuals, the unemployed, or persons with disabilities.	→ No financial relief for unaffordable public transportations, leading dynamics already discussed under the financial variable.	→ In London , asylum seekers are not entitled to public costs subsidies, making them travel less even for vital services like healthcare or asylum claim appointments.
	→ Lax documentation criteria for personalized public transport passes	→ Migrant eligibility to fare reductions.	→ Fare reductions help prevent evasion and encourage public transport use.	→ In Hungary , refugee foreigners are entitled for job seeker allowances, including discounted monthly transport passes.
	→ Lower documentation requirements for transport related jobs	→ Delivery services	→ Usage of bikes and motorcycles to travel faster through traffic to meet time-sensitive demands.	→ Motorcycle couriers are required to perform deliveries as quickly as possible to meet consumers' demands, occurring 595,000 trips per day using motorcycles in São Paulo .
		→ Ride-hailing platforms	→ Usage of cars and motorcycles according to the services offered to users.	→ In Moscow's taxi driving sector many Central Asian taxi drivers work despite not having the required documents.

LEARNINGS

A key learning from this project is the significant knowledge gap at the intersection of migration and mobility both in academic literature and among practitioners. The absence of precedent literature constituted a challenge in identifying and engaging with the right stakeholders. Our experience highlighted the tension between trying to define a clear scope early on and remaining open to emergent insights. This taught us that in projects that seek to uncover interconnections and systemic gaps, a rigid scope can hinder the discovery of unexpected but crucial dynamics.

Building on that, one of the key takeaways from this project is the importance of maintaining open and responsive communication throughout the research process. The openness of the *FIA* in adapting and revisiting the project's direction was invaluable and definitely constitutes a professional best practice. This flexibility allowed us to divide the project into three distinct phases, preparatory, exploratory, and conclusive, which proved to be an effective structure for navigating under-researched and complex topics like ours.

This experience also underscores the importance of field-based research. Our fieldwork in Accra and Athens proved to be one of the most efficient ways to access relevant knowledge and build meaningful connections. Moreover, spontaneous ethnographic conversations and on-site interactions helped us identify knowledge gaps that are often invisible in literature. We were also connected to grassroots stakeholders (like informal traders, taxi drivers or firefighters) whose insights were essential to a grounded understanding of something that we were exploring.

Furthermore, while guidance on framing and direction was extremely helpful, more direct engagement from professional partners on the substance of our research would have enriched the process even further. For students and early-career professionals, the opportunity to exchange ideas with experts not only on form but also on conceptual and empirical insights would have fostered a deeper understanding of the field.

This experience also broadened our understanding of what research can be, beyond academic boundaries. In our academic training, research is often theoretical aimed at contributing to intellectual debates. While essential, this approach can sometimes prove to be disconnected from practical needs. In contrast, this project illustrated how research can be shaped by and adapted to the operational needs of specific actors, such as the *FIA*.

Initially, their interests in migration and mobility may not have seemed obvious. However, the project revealed how diverse stakeholders can benefit from urban governance insights, thus expanding our view of the roles research can play in supporting policy, advocacy, and emerging challenges like sustainable mobility. At the same time, it challenged us to shift from academic language towards more accessible and actionable outputs. This process of translating complex analysis into clear, usable insights was not always easy, but it helped us build essential communication and adaptability skills for the professional world.

Finally, working with a team on a long term project was a formative experience. Unlike short academic group projects, this collaboration allowed us to explore our teammates' strengths in a wider range of contexts. We discovered how different skill sets could complement one

another: some better at structuring ideas, others at managing logistics or drafting content efficiently. Although tasks were divided, all members engaged across multiple responsibilities, from conducting interviews to managing the budget. Finally, we also became more appreciative of working physically together. In-person discussions often helped align our interpretations and decisions more effectively than remote communication. This showed us the value of interpersonal coordination in complex and fast-evolving research settings.

FIND OUT MORE

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