

# Defining Key Terms: Integration

## Literature Review: Refugee Urban Integration

A FEINSTEIN INTERNATIONAL CENTER BRIEF 

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This is a section of a broad literature review on refugee urban integration that was conducted by the Refugees in Towns Project (RIT) at Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University beginning in December 2017 and being continually updated with new publications. It was conducted to inform the public, academics, and policymakers about the state of refugee urban integration, and to prepare the RIT project for analysis of original data on refugee integration collected from towns around the world.

All references that are available online have a URL link provided in text. Full citations are in the Works Cited document.

It is widely recognized that the terms “refugee,” “urban,” and “integration” are not clear-cut or universally defined.<sup>1</sup> There are ongoing debates and inconsistent definitions found in the literature as well as among policymakers and practitioners. The following section will discuss the contested definition of “integration” in the literature and in practice.

The definition of “integration” as it relates to migration is contested and “chaotic;”<sup>2</sup> “however, integration remains significant both as a stated policy goal and as a targeted outcome for projects working with refugees.”<sup>3</sup> While the term is “frequently used in the refugee context, [it] ...lacks any formal definition in international refugee law.”<sup>4</sup> From as early as the 1800s, Durkheim defined “social integration” as familial, religious, or moral bonds grown out of a collective consciousness shared by a society and often based on shared rituals.<sup>5</sup> The definition of integration has been debated and evolving ever since.

The question of who is involved in integration is equally loosely defined, although conceptualizations tend to include host and migrant communities, civil society, local, national, and international governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with the latter three being emphasized in formal resettlement, as opposed to self-settlement, in which the former four actors are emphasized.<sup>6</sup>

For the purposes of this literature review, “integration” is differentiated from “local integration,” the former being a general process, and the latter being a policy prescription, one of the “durable solutions” as defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and some host governments.<sup>7</sup> This distinction can be described as *de jure* integration—i.e., integration through formal institutions and processes, sponsored by local, national, and international governments as a “durable solution” as conceptualized by the UN—versus *de facto* integration that occurs largely through informal systems with tacit acceptance, or passive or active resistance on the part of governments. *De facto* integration may be labeled development work, community empowerment, or other related terms by international onlookers.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Council of Europe 2000](#)

<sup>2</sup> Robinson 1998: 118

<sup>3</sup> [Ager and Strang 2008](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Crisp 2004](#): 1-2

<sup>5</sup> [Emile Durkheim](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Crisp 2004](#): 1-2; [Jacobsen 2001](#): 2

<sup>7</sup> [Fielden 2008](#); Hovil 2014; UNHCR 2004

<sup>8</sup> Hovil 2014; [Jacobsen 2001](#); [Kaiser 2005](#)

## Differentiating Integration, Assimilation, Enculturation, and Acculturation

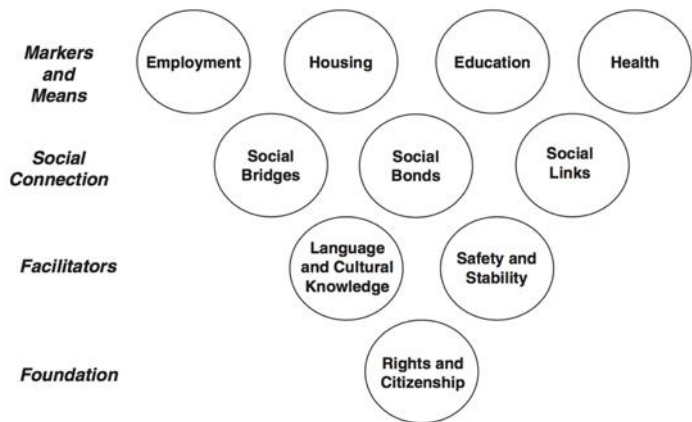
The term “integration,” is differentiated from *enculturation* (“the extent to which individuals adhere to their heritage cultural values and practices”) and *acculturation* (“the process of adjusting to the influences of two or more cultures”).<sup>9</sup> Integration is also differentiated from *assimilation*, which is a one-way process in which migrant arrivals take on all of the qualities of a host population, while the host population maintains their original conditions without change.<sup>10</sup> Integration, as opposed to assimilation, is a two-way or multidirectional process where both migrant and host populations make changes to incorporate the other.<sup>11</sup>

### The Domains of Integration

Integration is typically conceptualized as encapsulating several domains. The original 20th century definitions of migrant integration were rudimentary and included only four domains: “the cultural...the normative...the communicative...and the functional...[i.e.] division of labor.”<sup>12</sup> These early conceptualizations had neither clear definitions of each domain nor measures or indicators for evaluating integration. Some examples of early measure or indicators for these domains included “attitudes towards displacement,” “ideological-national orientation at exile,” and “host related factors” such as “cultural compatibility,” including “language, values, traditions, religion, politics, food,” “population policies,” and “social receptiveness.”<sup>13</sup> Throughout the Cold War, the ultimate end goal and the primary measure of integration was attainment of citizenship, at which point integration was considered completed.<sup>14</sup>

By the 1990s, refugee integration research—led by the Chicago School—<sup>15</sup>refocused toward economic integration both as a domain and a series of measures and indicators.<sup>16</sup> From the 2000s to present, definitions of integration have become more complex and more ordered, building on the greater availability of data and adding more domains, measures, and indicators. Typically, current models of integration include at least six domains. The most widely cited model by [Ager and Strang](#) (2008: 170) includes ten domains in four clusters, as illustrated in the “Conceptual Framework” to the right.

**A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration**



<sup>9</sup> David 2013: 124-125; see also [Berry 1994](#); Phillimore and Goodson 2008; Young 1996

<sup>10</sup> David 2013: 124-125

<sup>11</sup> Ager and Strang 2008; see “The Process of Integration” document for more discussion

<sup>12</sup> Landecker 1951

<sup>13</sup> Kunz 1981

<sup>14</sup> [Crisp 2004](#); Hovil 2014; [Jacobsen 2001](#)

<sup>15</sup> A group of sociologists centered around the University of Chicago.

<sup>16</sup> [Ott 2013](#)



Other researchers, practitioners, and policymakers tend to include at least five of these domains in various combinations. For example, the Global Cities model from [Juzwiak, McGregor and Siegel 2014](#) presents five domains, as illustrated to the left.

The most commonly used domains in the literature are healthcare, housing, employment, education, and community or social connections,<sup>17</sup> but often researchers will include security and political participation as two additional domains.<sup>18</sup> Below is another example of a five domain model with a series of indicators for each domain by [Schibel et al. 2002](#): 5.

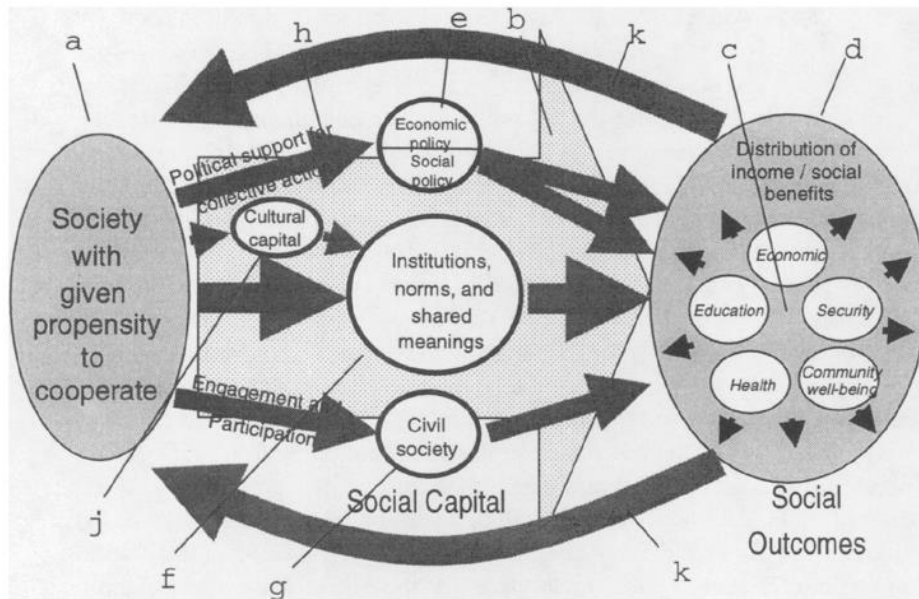
**Table 1.2 Examples of potentially relevant interventions, their outcomes and any potentially harmful effects**

Area	Intervention	Problem being addressed	Aims	Activities	Intermediate outcomes	Main outcomes	Potential harms
Health	Telephone helpline	Social isolation; reactive stress	Reduce stress; reduce suicide	Multilingual/refugee staffed helplines giving advice and referrals	Number of calls, number of referrals	Positive outcomes as judged by refugees at follow-up	Nil
Housing	Rent deposit guarantee schemes	No money to find own housing	To help refugees obtain private rented housing	NGO or government provide rent in advance or act as guarantor	Number of flats rented out	Number of long-term tenancies	Selected landlords participate
Employment	Mentoring scheme	Unemployment	To help refugees find employment	Advice and contacts from retired businessmen	Number of interviews, number of jobs	Job retention	Paternalistic attitudes
Community development	Community centres	Social isolation	Community development and interaction	Meeting space, social worker staff, childcare	Number of refugee/local users	Networks, interaction	Limited use of mainstream facilities
Education	Orientation courses	Access barriers to public services	Full use of entitlements	Courses about British institutions and authorities	Number of participants	Additional use of public services	Unrealistic expectations

<sup>17</sup> [Schibel et al. 2002](#): 5

<sup>18</sup> [Stanley 2003](#): 12

Other models get more complicated, such as the following eight domain model, with social, cultural, and political domains influencing five other domains by [Stanley 2003](#): 12.



**FIGURE 1**  
**A causal model of social cohesion. The lower case letters are keys to the explanation of the model's parts in the text.**

In sum, this literature review identified 13 domains of integration:

1. Economic: Integration to the local economy, interrelated with “employment,” “livelihoods,” and “assets”
2. Social and communal: Migrants and hosts share groups and networks
3. Cultural: Interrelated with social integration; migrants and hosts shared values and culture
4. Linguistic: Interrelated with cultural integration; migrants and hosts share languages and have access to language learning services
5. Psychological: Migrants and hosts share ways of thinking about their world, have similar rates of behavioral health symptoms, and have similar psychological coping mechanisms
6. Political: Migrants and hosts have similar rights, pathways to citizenship, political representation, and political participation
7. Security: Migrants and hosts have similar levels of risk from safety and security hazards, have similar levels of stability, and are equally protected by security institutions
8. Informational: Migrants and hosts both have equal access to information about their environment and about each other
9. Spatial: Migrants and hosts have equal access to places, overlapping physical use of space, and shared ownership of urban areas
10. Housing: Migrants and hosts share and have equal access to the housing stock of an urban space
11. Infrastructural: Migrants and hosts have equal access and use of urban infrastructures such as public transit, water, or electricity
12. Educational: Levels of educational attainment are comparable between migrants and hosts, and both groups have equal access to educational services
13. Health: Health indicators are comparable between migrants and hosts, and both groups have equal access to healthcare services

The following sections provide a brief overview of each domain: additional discussion on each domain can be found in the “Measuring Integration in Theory,” “Measuring Integration in Practice,” and “Methods for Measuring Integration” documents of this literature review.

### The Economic Domain

The economic domain of integration is perhaps the most studied and best defined. “Livelihoods” is one component of economic integration, defined as “the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a person to make a living.”<sup>19</sup> This is interrelated with “labor market integration,” which is measured by UNHCR with nine metrics: labor market participation and employment rates, earnings, poverty, occupational status, employment commensurate with experience and qualifications, diversity of occupations, job retention, job advancement, and employment satisfaction.<sup>20</sup> Economic integration from a government perspective typically considers the economic self-sufficiency of migrants.<sup>21</sup>

### Social and Cultural Domains

The domains of social and cultural integration are widely discussed, but definitionally blurry. The clearest and most concise working definition for social integration comes from [Crisp \(2004: 1-2\)](#), who describes it as a condition in which refugees “maintain their own identity, yet become part of the host society to the extent that host population and refugees can live together in an acceptable way.” However, much of the literature on social integration uses terms from anthropology such as “social inclusion,” “social capital,” “collective wellbeing,” or even “happiness.”<sup>22</sup>

There are two main conflicting theories on social integration: conflict hypothesis and constrict theory. Conflict hypothesis poses that as groups come into contact with each other prejudice or discrimination between the two groups decreases, while constrict theory, as described by Putnam (2007), maintains that as different groups come into contact and diversity increases in a society it reduces social cohesion between differing groups.<sup>23</sup> [McPherson \(2010\)](#) and [Marston \(2004\)](#) problematize the conflict hypothesis for representing “resettled refugees as innately problematic against dominant, normative values.”

### The Linguistic Domain

Language is a subdomain of social and cultural integration and has been researched in depth.<sup>24</sup> Linguistic integration is not only sharing of a language between migrant and host populations but also having access to language learning services. While programming and policy often focus on migrants learning host languages, the multidirectional model of integration<sup>25</sup> would emphasize foreign language learning by hosts, which would be demonstrated in foreign language course availability in education systems, foreign language capacity in government offices, and multilingual plurality in the host population. Capacity for linguistic integration may be impacted by the degree of difference between host and migrant population languages, the age of language learners, economic and political incentives, and individual cognitive ability and motivation.<sup>26</sup> Linguistic integration is linearly causally related with economic and political integration,<sup>27</sup> and mutually causally connected to social integration.<sup>28</sup>

### The Psychological Domain

Psychological integration overlaps with the domain of social integration but looks more deeply at individual or collective attitudes, behaviors, and choices pertaining to integration, including the extent to which migrants decide to settle in a place,<sup>29</sup> their subjective feelings about integrating or belonging,<sup>30</sup> and their motivations or

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<sup>19</sup> Hill et al. 2006

<sup>20</sup> [Ott 2013](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Halpern 2008](#)

<sup>22</sup> See “Defining Related Terms” document.

<sup>23</sup> [Fonseka and McGarrigle 2012](#)

<sup>24</sup> Mallows 2008

<sup>25</sup> As is the case in the integration model offered by Ager and Strang 2008

<sup>26</sup> [Isphording 2015](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Lochmann, Rapoport and Speciale 2018](#); [Isphording 2015](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Isphording 2015](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2011](#); Gonzalez Lozano and Orozco Alemany 2013

<sup>30</sup> [Dantzer 2017](#)



psychological resistance to adapting to a new environment.<sup>31</sup> With regard to hosts, the literature explores perceptions toward Others and collective imaginings of separateness and borders.<sup>32</sup> The psychological domain also explores differences in experiences with trauma, psychological pathologies, and behavioral health indicators between migrant and host groups,<sup>33</sup> as well as measures differences in access and utilization of behavioral healthcare services.<sup>34</sup> The domain might also overlap with educational integration when discussing vocational psychology.<sup>35</sup>

### The Political Domain

The domain of political integration is not clearly defined<sup>36</sup> but is related to pathways to citizenship and often includes naturalization.<sup>37</sup> Political integration research is also interested in rates of political participation between host and migrant populations, to include “voting or standing for election, referenda, participation in advisory councils and arenas of dialogue, membership in political parties, pressure groups, and NGOs and lobbying activities... non-conventional and extra-parliamentary forms of political participation, e.g. protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, political strikes, hunger strikes, civil disobedience and boycotts... electoral policy, parliamentary policy and consultative policy... [and] non-state political participation embraces political parties involvement, union politics, other pressure groups, ethnic and communitarian mobilisations, etc.”<sup>38</sup>

### The Security Domain

Refugees are integrated to security systems at a country or international level through background investigations and interviews by national security and intelligence organizations,<sup>39</sup> and at the city level through police and neighborhood safety activists.<sup>40</sup> The security domain tends to think more about assimilation than integration and studies to what degree, if at all, refugees represent potential risks to host populations<sup>41</sup> or other migrants. Research widely examines rates of radicalization,<sup>42</sup> militantism,<sup>43</sup> and criminal behavior<sup>44</sup> among refugee populations. Fewer studies explore the other direction of how host populations might pose security risks to migrants<sup>45</sup> or how risk is redistributed from host populations and security services onto migrants.<sup>46</sup> Practitioners explore the intersections between humanitarian actors and security organizations in the field, while policymakers discuss whether there is a tradeoff between humanitarian and security goals.<sup>47</sup>

### The Informational Domain

Informational integration looks at how access to information necessary for daily life affects how integrated a migrant can become.<sup>48</sup> In a multidirectional model of integration, host populations would also be measured by the amount of information they have about migrant populations. The types of information relevant to integration might include social and cultural knowledge; skill-based knowledge; knowledge about services including education, healthcare, employment, driving, and housing; navigational information; political information; information for

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<sup>31</sup> Chan et al. 2015; Joly 2002: 7; Miller et al. 2018; Montgomery 2008; [Varvin 1998](#)

<sup>32</sup> Jusionyte 2018; Volkan 2017

<sup>33</sup> [Silove, Ventevogel and Rees 2017](#); [Giacco and Priebe 2015](#); Volkan 2017

<sup>34</sup> Slewa-Younan et al. 2017

<sup>35</sup> Diemer and Ali 2009

<sup>36</sup> [Bijl and Verweij 2012](#); Givens and Maxwell 2012: 88

<sup>37</sup> [Kuhlman 2002](#)

<sup>38</sup> [Zapata-Barrero 2013](#)

<sup>39</sup> [Felter and McBride 2018](#)

<sup>40</sup> [National Crime Prevention Council 1994](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Byman 2015](#)

<sup>42</sup> Bhui, Warfa and Jones 2014; Sude, Stebbins and Weillant 2015

<sup>43</sup> Lebson 2013; Lischer 2000

<sup>44</sup> Masterson and Yassenov 2019

<sup>45</sup> [Rigoni 2014](#)

<sup>46</sup> [Mandić and Simpson 2017](#)

<sup>47</sup> [Pilch 2000](#)

<sup>48</sup> [Fisher, Durrance and Hinton 2004](#)

access such as digital communications systems or libraries; awareness of places like parks, shops, or garages; and awareness of social networks like religious groups or community sports leagues.<sup>49</sup>

### The Spatial Domain

Spatial integration describes how segregated, clustered, or distributed migrant populations are within the built environment<sup>50</sup> and gives spatial context to the integration process.<sup>51</sup> This domain considers ethnic diversity in space;<sup>52</sup> degrees of physical access to spaces by different groups;<sup>53</sup> appropriation of public spaces and how they are used, or not, by various groups;<sup>54</sup> how groups move through spaces;<sup>55</sup> and who owns what places in cities.<sup>56</sup>

### The Housing Domain

International humanitarian organizations tend to think of housing as temporary shelters,<sup>57</sup> while resettlement organizations tend to think in terms of the housing market, particularly affordable housing,<sup>58</sup> cities discuss housing refugees as one part of a wider challenge of housing stocks, zoning, and types of accommodation for a range of urbanites,<sup>59</sup> and urban theorists think about access to residential space.<sup>60</sup>

### The Infrastructural Domain

As new residents of cities, migrants become integrated to the infrastructural systems of urban spaces. This may include as many as 16 infrastructure sectors<sup>61</sup> but typically covers communications systems, energy, transportation, and water/waste water. Research in this domain may explore unequal access to these infrastructures between migrant and host populations,<sup>62</sup> as well as the impact on the city's infrastructures by changes in demand for infrastructure use by population migration.<sup>63</sup>

### The Educational Domain

The educational integration domain looks at differences in educational attainment between refugees, hosts, and other migrant groups<sup>64</sup> and documents approaches for reducing educational gaps.<sup>65</sup> There is also research on "lost generations"<sup>66</sup> of refugee youths' educational process being disrupted during displacement and needing to be recovered from during integration.<sup>67</sup> The domain is also concerned with unequal access to educational systems for school-aged refugees<sup>68</sup> and with availability of adult education programs for language,<sup>69</sup> vocational training,<sup>70</sup> and life skills.<sup>71</sup> From national and municipal governments, grey literature tends to focus on the impact of refugee arrivals on the capacity of a city's educational systems, such as class student-teacher ratios from before and after the arrival of large numbers of refugees, and the availability of language instruction.<sup>72</sup> In policy

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<sup>49</sup> [Fisher, Durrance and Hinton 2004](#); Foth, Brynskov and Ojala 2015; Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson and Qayyum 2013; [Oduntan and Ruthven 2017](#); Silvio 2006; [Shoham and Strauss 2008](#)

<sup>50</sup> Fong and Chan 2010

<sup>51</sup> [Higgins, Bird and Harris 2010](#)

<sup>52</sup> Lieberman 1969

<sup>53</sup> [Rode, Kandt and Baker 2016](#)

<sup>54</sup> Ostermann and Timpf 2009

<sup>55</sup> Low 2014

<sup>56</sup> Sassen 2014

<sup>57</sup> [UNHCR 2019](#)

<sup>58</sup> For example, [The Refugee Center 2019](#); [ICMC Europe 2011](#)

<sup>59</sup> [WEF 2017: 116-119](#)

<sup>60</sup> For example, van Gent and Musterd 2016

<sup>61</sup> [DHS 2019](#)

<sup>62</sup> For example, refugee access to transportation; see Rode, Kandt and Baker 2016 or [Bose 2011](#)

<sup>63</sup> For example, [NRC 2009](#)

<sup>64</sup> For example, Capps et al. 2015; Diemer et al. 2014

<sup>65</sup> [Anderson and Brandt 2018](#); [Erasmus 2016](#); [Save the Children and UNHCR 2017](#)

<sup>66</sup> For example [UNICEF 2014](#); [Watkins 2016](#)

<sup>67</sup> Dryden-Peterson 2015

<sup>68</sup> [Anderson and Brandt 2018](#)

<sup>69</sup> Mallows 2008

<sup>70</sup> For example, [Holzaepfel and Tadesse 2015](#); [Lyby 2003](#)

<sup>71</sup> Sommers 2001

<sup>72</sup> [UNESCO 2019](#)

and practice, educational integration is typically based on the longer-term goal of achieving economic integration,<sup>73</sup> usually measured by states as economic self-sufficiency.

### The Health Domain

Similar to the educational domain, the health domain is primarily concerned with differences in health indicators between refugees, hosts, and other migrant groups, and documents approaches for reducing any negative health-quality differences between hosts and refugees.<sup>74</sup> Access to healthcare is also a major concern, as lack of knowledge about how to access healthcare or fears of seeking treatment due to irregular migration status may limit refugees' engagement with healthcare systems.<sup>75</sup> Cities apply research to examine how the capacity of municipal healthcare systems are impacted by arrivals of migrants, such as longer wait times in clinics or new demands for translators and multilingual healthcare professionals.<sup>76</sup> Researchers may also look at the inverse relationship: how industrial urban environments have detrimental health effects on refugees.<sup>77</sup> The policy sphere focuses on providing a continuum of care from pre-departure, through travel, all the way through return.<sup>78</sup> The health domain overlaps with the social/cultural integration domain as refugees may have different norms around accessing healthcare, particularly behavioral healthcare, or different gender norms around the provision of healthcare.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Lochmann, Rapoport and Speciale 2018

<sup>74</sup> Toole and Waldman 1993

<sup>75</sup> Hilfinger Messias, McEwen and Clark 2015

<sup>76</sup> For example, [Hunter 2016](#); [Kotsiou 2018](#); [Profili 2018](#)

<sup>77</sup> Kearns et al. 2016

<sup>78</sup> [Zimmerman, Kiss and Hossain 2011](#)

<sup>79</sup> [O'Donnell 2018](#)



## Integration's Interacting Domains

While the domains are conceptualized as distinct, all of them are in some way interdependent. For example, [Ballard](#) (2002) notes how successful economic integration is dependent on “the capacity to produce and generate income,” but is also dependent on “individual attributes,” “community circumstances,” “protection of citizenship rights ...[and] the socio-economic and political policies of the State.” In other words, there are linkages between the economic domain and the social, communal, and political domains. Similarly, economic integration is linked to the legal protections, political integration,<sup>80</sup> and language acquisition.<sup>81</sup> “Decent work” is causally connected with a “culture of peace,”<sup>82</sup> political opportunities, and access to resources,<sup>83</sup> meaning economic integration<sup>84</sup> is interconnected with political and cultural integration. However, while they are interlinked, each domain may integrate at a unique pace: for example, the Little Italys and Chinatowns in the United States may remain ethnically, socially, linguistically, and spatially segregated from hosts over generations but are rapidly integrated economically and linguistically to the rest of the city.<sup>85</sup>

Within the policy and practitioner community, there is a tendency to focus on the “practical” or “functional” domains that include economic integration, integration to government-related services like healthcare and security, and political integration. Among practitioners and policymakers therefore, social, cultural, communal, and linguistic integration are often given less attention and considered more difficult to measure.<sup>86</sup>

Within academia, none of these domains has been effectively merged with the broader bodies of literature on that domain. For example, humanitarian discussions on refugee shelter have not been synthesized with the literature on housing access in urban development studies.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> [De Haas 2010](#)

<sup>81</sup> [Isphording 2015](#)

<sup>82</sup> [Date-Bah 2001](#)

<sup>83</sup> [Lebson 2013](#)

<sup>84</sup> [Jacobsen 2003](#)

<sup>85</sup> [Terzano 2014](#); [Xie and Gough 2012](#)

<sup>86</sup> [Phillimore and Goodson 2008](#); see also [Zetter et al. 2002](#); [Baubock 1994](#); [Portes 1997, 1998](#); [Korac 2003](#); [Coussey 2000](#); [Mestheneos and Ioannidi 2002](#)

<sup>87</sup> [Bürkin and Chindea 2012](#)