Local Governments Welcoming Immigrants

RICHARD J. SMITH
Assistant Professor
Social Work

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This exploratory study attempts a comprehensive examination of the policies used by local governments to welcome immigrants. The literature has shown how immigrant friendly policies in the United States often follow rather than precede the establishment of immigrant enclaves in response to the electorate. More recently, some scholars have noted a bureaucratic incorporation process initiated by civil servants. Much research has been done on local government initiative to restrict immigration. Other local governments create policies to proactively recruit and incorporate immigrants to stabilize high poverty urban neighborhoods and open businesses. These policies involve direct or indirect incentives for immigrants to enter the community and are not necessarily tied to immigrant integration policies that would facilitate citizenship. What are the characteristics of local governments that pursue these policies? This exploratory study uses a generated from policy scan of every municipality and county with a population above 500 persons in the United States to determine whether a pro-immigrant policy was present by 2010. This scan utilized internet searches to establish a list of municipalities and counties with possible pro-immigrant policies.

Richard Smith is an Assistant Professor at the Wayne State University School of Social Work. His research interests include sustainable community development, migration, and inequality. He currently serves as an advisor for the International Ecocity Standards project of Ecocity Builders, Inc. and Focus:Hope, Inc. of Detroit, MI.