

# Alliance

AUTORITÉS LOCALES  
SOCIÉTÉ CIVILE POUR UNE  
AUTRE GOUVERNANCE DES  
**Migrations**

## PANORAMAS OF ALLIANCES BETWEEN LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY : **MONTREUIL**

The Migration Alliance is a project founded and run by :



**O-C-U**  
ORGANISATION  
POUR UNE CITOYENNETÉ  
UNIVERSELLE



**ANVITA**  
ASSOCIATION NATIONALE  
DES VILLES ET TERRITOIRES ACCUEILLANTS





## PREAMBLE

### **For an unconditional welcome and universal citizenship** **Towards a common base for territories**

The Alliance Migrations<sup>1</sup> aims at a local and global change of course to get out of the dramatic impasse in which the current policies of non-reception lock us. To do so, it works on a French, European and international scale to encourage and promote concrete alternatives led by local authorities in conjunction with civil society in terms of dignified reception, citizenship and respect for fundamental rights.

By relying on inspiring territories, the Alliance Migrations wishes to weave a common thread around 4 main objectives:

- The promotion of alternative policies carried out by the territories
- The multiplication of good practices and cooperation between territories
- The anchoring of the Alliance's project in the field: proof by action!
- In the long term, the support of a common plea for another governance of migrations

This project was initiated in 5 pilot cities: Lisbon, Barcelona, Palermo, Grenoble and Montreuil, where volunteers took part in actions led by local actors and carried out a 5-month analysis.

The work of the volunteers of the Alliance Migrations provides us with an overview of the issues surrounding migration in each of these territories and examples of "good practices" carried out by local authorities in conjunction with civil society. These examples allow us to highlight points of attention, recommendations and prospects for joint projects to strengthen practices in favour of reception and citizenship locally and to build on these concrete alternatives to bring about a change of direction in migration policies.

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<sup>1</sup> The "Alliance Migrations", an alliance between local authorities and civil society for a different kind of migration governance, is a process supported by the National Association of Welcoming Cities and Territories (ANVITA) and the Organisation for Universal Citizenship (O.C.U., made up of Emmaus International, CCFD-Terre Solidaire, the Utopia Movement and the Latin American network Espacio Sin Fronteras)

# MONTREUIL

Between restrictive national policies and multiple social emergency issues, what lessons can be drawn from the commitments for the recognition of and access to rights for migrants in the Montreuil area ?

This panorama was produced and written by Solène Lavigne Delville, on a voluntary mission within the framework of the Alliance Migrations, from October 2020 to March 2021. The mission was supervised by the Maison Ouverte, in collaboration with the city of Montreuil.

May 2021

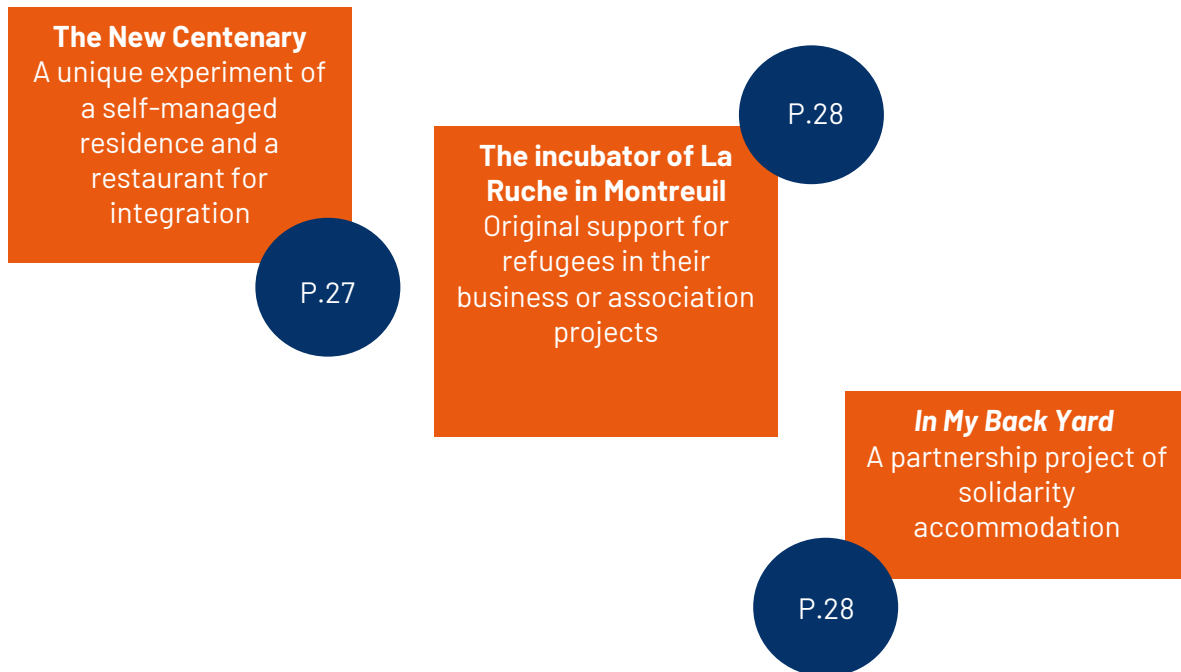


Banner hanging in front of the 138 rue Stalingrad squat, October 2020. Photo credit: Solène LD

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>I) Montreuil : « world city », host city ? .....</b>	<b>6</b>
An anchor territory for networked migrations .....	6
A political history rooted in the left, committed to hospitality and international solidarity .....	10
A long-standing and renewed dynamic of associations and activists .....	14
<b>II) Montreuil, a desire to welcome « differently » through an inclusive and partnership approach ? .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Spaces and coordination of actors in favour of access to rights .....	18
Between social emergencies and the need for inclusive and sustainable reception: the mobilisation of different support levers by the City and the associations .....	23
<b>Conclusion and perspectives .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Références.....</b>	<b>32</b>

## INSPIRING PRACTICES HIGHLIGHTED



## Introduction

Montreuil is a town in Seine-Saint-Denis and the Est-Ensemble public territorial establishment<sup>2</sup>, connected to Paris to the east. It is the fifth largest city in the Ile-de-France region and accounts for 6.5% of the department's population. In 2018, the population of Montreuil, marked by its demographic dynamism and its youth, numbered 109,897 people. The immigrant population represented 26,306 people<sup>3</sup>. With the presence of nearly a hundred nationalities on its territory<sup>4</sup>, Montreuil is presented as a "crossroads city", a "world city", notably by its elected officials<sup>5</sup>. Several testimonies show that this long history of migration has made Montreuil a "welcoming" city, both in the support shown by some of the inhabitants of Montreuil to exiled communities and through the actions carried out by the municipality in recent years.

The study of the dynamics of reception, access to rights and participation of exiled persons in Montreuil is part of a collective research on five "welcoming" cities within the framework of the "Civil Society - Local Authorities Alliance for a different governance of migrations" project<sup>6</sup>. It is based on readings and a field survey conducted between October 2020 and March 2021 with the support of the Maison Ouverte<sup>7</sup> and the city of Montreuil. This document aims to give a non-exhaustive overview of the context and practices of solidarity in the territory and thus propose some perspectives in favour of a dignified reception.

## 1) Montreuil : « world city », host city?

In 2015, one in four inhabitants of Montreuil was born abroad and the population of foreign nationality represented 18% of the population of Montreuil. The immigrant population represents 25.4%, a share slightly lower than the departmental share (27.4%) but well above the regional average (17.6%)<sup>8</sup>. The majority of immigrants come from Africa (60%), in particular from the Maghreb (32%)<sup>9</sup>.

### An anchor territory for networked migrations

#### From the "ghetto" to gentrification, the inclusion of Montreuil in a 'functional complementarity' with Paris

The history of the territory is part of that of Seine-Saint-Denis, marked by industrialisation in a functional complementarity with the capital: this industrial development, and the formation of the "red suburbs" resulting from the relocation of industry outside of Paris,

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<sup>2</sup> Est Ensemble is an intermunicipal structure created on 1 January 2016 as part of the Greater Paris project, succeeding the Communauté d'Agglomération (created in 2010) and bringing together Bagnolet, Bobigny, Bondy, Le Pré-Saint-Gervais, Les Lilas, Montreuil, Noisy-le-Sec, Pantin and Romainville.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.montreuil.fr/la-ville/population>

<sup>4</sup> Meeting with Halima Menhoudj, Montreuil City Hall, 19 October 2020.

<sup>5</sup> MONTREUIL Entretiens de, *Entretiens de Montreuil du 5 février: Discours introductif de Dominique Voynet*, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/les-entretiens-de-montreuil/article/180211/entretiens-de-montreuil-du-5-fevrier-discour>, seen 10 November 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Website : <https://alliance-migrations.fr/>

<sup>7</sup> Our heartfelt thanks go to Claire Nicolas, president of the Maison Ouverte, and Stéphane Lavignotte, coordinator.

<sup>8</sup> City Contract of the Est-Ensemble Agglomeration Community (2015-2020).

<sup>9</sup> Website of the City of Montreuil

corresponds to "an organic vision of the functioning of the agglomeration: that of a hierarchical division of labour, which makes Seine-Saint-Denis the main industrial territory of the Paris region"<sup>10</sup>.

A major horticultural centre and famous for its peach orchards, Montreuil began to industrialise in 1872 and accelerated its metamorphosis at the beginning of the 20th century<sup>11</sup>. As a periphery of Paris, Montreuil and its surroundings have long been a place of anchorage, particularly for the Gypsy population: "Coming from Eastern Europe, Gypsy travellers have quite naturally stopped at the eastern fringes of Paris. The age-old attitude of the sedentary population, which is to keep nomads out of the city, together with the space and opportunities offered by the suburbs, also explain why the Gypsies have stayed there. The industrial activities of eastern Paris, in which the traditional trades of tinning, scrap metal and itinerant trade were integrated, only reinforced this anchorage"<sup>12</sup>. Between 1911 and 1931, Montreuil saw its population increase by 60%, with the gradual arrival of foreign workers: mainly Italians, but also Poles, Belgians and Spaniards<sup>13</sup>. During the second half of the twentieth century, in a context of industrial dynamism, Montreuil saw the installation of workers from North and West Africa and the construction of "migrant workers' homes".

From the end of the 1970s, Montreuil was strongly affected by deindustrialisation: "like other communes in the northern Parisian suburbs, Montreuil was hard hit by deindustrialisation: between 1976 and 1980, it lost 20% of its industrial jobs, and between 1990 and 1999 its unemployment rate increased by 50%<sup>14</sup>". It then experienced marked socio-economic problems (unemployment and poverty rates higher than the regional and national averages). Four of the fourteen districts of Montreuil are classified as priority districts of the city. The city of Montreuil has 36.4% of social rental housing (well above the SRU rate) distributed among some twenty landlords, including the Public Office of Montreuil Housing (OPHM), which accounts for 71% of this housing<sup>15</sup>. Problems of poor housing (substandard housing, unfit housing, over-occupation<sup>16</sup>) are prevalent and particularly affect immigrant populations<sup>17</sup>. The urban space is characterised by a geographical and sociological divide between "Haut-Montreuil" and "Bas-Montreuil", which represents the political, economic and cultural centre of the city. Highly connected to the capital, it concentrates economic activities and in particular the development of the tertiary sector, public services and associative activities (hence the description of Montreuil as the "21st arrondissement" of Paris<sup>18</sup>). For Céline Delacroix, however, gentrification is not the only dynamic marking the Lower Montreuil area, where socio-economic inequalities are most visible<sup>19</sup>. The city, in fact, "combines two functions of reception (...) The function of reception of young Parisian households wishing to access property has increased since the 1990s. The latter find two major attractions: industrial spaces that can be developed and a rich and appropriable social space (neighbourhood sociability, abundance of associations, etc.) [Collet, 2013]. This function is

<sup>10</sup> *La fin du 9-3 ? La Seine-Saint-Denis entre représentations et métropolisations* | Cairn.info, <https://ezproxy.usj.edu.lb:2126/revue-herodote-2016-3-page-143.htm>, seen 10 November 2020.

<sup>11</sup> JAULIN Béatrice, *Les roms de Montreuil 1945-1975*, Autrement, Paris, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p.53.

<sup>13</sup> 1933 of them arrived in 1921, 6823 ten years later: JAULIN Béatrice, *Les roms de Montreuil 1945-1975*, Autrement, Paris, 2000, p. 68.

<sup>14</sup> DELACROIX Céline, « La chute de Montreuil la Rouge », in *Herodote*, n° 4, n° 135, 2009, p. 110-127.

<sup>15</sup> Est Ensemble, City contract2015-2020.

<sup>16</sup> Est Ensemble, City contract2015-2020.

<sup>17</sup> PETIT Clémence, LEHRMANN Justine et BEST Alice, « Le surpeuplement, une forme de mal-logement toujours prégnante et socialement discriminante », in *Recherche sociale*, n° 4, N° 224, 2017, p. 5-134.

<sup>18</sup> COLLET Anaïs, « Montreuil, « le 21e arrondissement de Paris » ? », in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, n° 5, n° 195, 2012, p. 12-37.

<sup>19</sup> C. Delacroix, « La chute de Montreuil la Rouge », art cit, p. 114.

added to (and sometimes replaces) the older function of receiving migrants, which continues to make Montreuil the 'second city of Mali', still called 'Bamako-sous-Bois' [Rustenholz, 2015]<sup>20</sup>. In recent years, new social and urban policies have aimed to 'rebalance' these territorial inequalities and connect the different spaces.

The old housing districts near Paris still play 'a reception and 'transit' function<sup>21</sup>: they are affected by an over-representation of foreign populations, 'in connection with the characteristics of the housing supply in these sectors (run-down housing, 'de facto' social housing and the phenomenon of sleep merchants<sup>22</sup>). Thus, Seine-Saint-Denis "continues to represent an entry point into France and Europe" for "poor recent immigration<sup>23</sup>": after Paris, it is the leading department for arrivals in mainland France between 2010 and 2016<sup>24</sup>.

### A historical settlement of migrant workers from North and West Africa

In the immediate post-war period, exiled populations were first forced to settle in the "shanty towns and other more or less squalid furnished hotels that adorned the Parisian belt<sup>25</sup>". During the "Trente Glorieuses", the "foyers des sans-famille<sup>26</sup>" (hostels for the familyless) were built to accommodate some of the migrant workers requested by industries<sup>27</sup>, particularly in Montreuil. They were designed to house single men who came only to work temporarily, and were managed by state-approved organisations in a way that was, in many respects, paternalistic. Neither accommodation nor housing, the hostels are in fact an exceptional regime for "second-class citizens, born of colonisation<sup>28</sup>". These workers from different countries in North and West Africa are generally joined by members of their families: they welcome their sons, cousins, etc. in the hostels, or settle in flats with their wives, while maintaining a strong link with the hostels. The latter represent places of collective life and organisation that have been appropriated by their residents: people waiting for a job or retired are supported by the rest of the residents; meals are prepared for the community and sold at very low prices; delegates represent each community and residents' associations are sometimes created<sup>29</sup>. The overcrowded and unhealthy hostels have been the subject of "decommissioning plans" for some years, which raise the issue of rehousing some of their residents who have no contract with the manager and sometimes no residence permit. Following the reports by Pierre Pascal in 1994 and Henri Cuq in 1996, a "treatment plan" for migrant workers' hostels was drawn up, the implementation of which accelerated with the 2006 circular and the launch of five-year plans to organise these changes<sup>30</sup>. The protocols signed between the state, the manager and the municipality involve the exclusion of so-called "supernumerary" residents. The "transformation" of hostels into social residences implies a certain number of European Union and State standards: residences for a maximum number of people, with tenure, individual rooms, absence of collective spaces (kitchens, meeting

<sup>20</sup> « La fin du 9-3 ? La Seine-Saint-Denis entre représentations et métropolisations | Cairn.info », art cit..

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Est Ensemble, City contract 2015-2020, p.24.

<sup>23</sup> « La fin du 9-3 ? La Seine-Saint-Denis entre représentations et métropolisations », art cit, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Family and study reasons account for 11% and 64% respectively, while 23% of people admitted to stay in mainland France on the basis of asylum reside in Seine-Saint-Denis. While the population of Seine-Saint-Denis represents only 2% of the population of mainland France, the department alone receives 10% of African nationals living in mainland France and 11% of Asian nationals.

<sup>25</sup> LEVY-VROELANT Claire et SEGAL Jérôme, « Les roms de Montreuil et d'ailleurs, des immigrés européens particuliers », in *Les Temps Modernes*, n° 3, n° 624, 2003, p. 228.

<sup>26</sup> SAYAD Abdelmalek, « Le foyer des sans-famille », in *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, n° 1, vol. 32, 1980, p. 89-103.

<sup>27</sup> HCLPD 2010, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with an elected official and activist from Montreuil, December 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with H.T., New Centenary. See also Michael Hoare's documentaries on the New France struggle.

<sup>30</sup> BERNARD Tiphaine, « Les cantines de foyers : un droit à la ville menacé ? », in *Métropolitiques*, 1 octobre 2020.



rooms, worship rooms) - at the expense of the logic of collective organisation and solidarity. It should also be noted that rents in the new social residences are increasing significantly (around 400 euros). These issues are very topical in Montreuil, which has sixteen migrant workers' hostels and social residences. These places are an integral part of the history of Montreuil, and the territory of the commune and neighbouring towns remain a reference point in the living environments of these people.

### Long-established Roma populations around the 'zone' and in Haut-Montreuil

Since the beginning of the Third Republic, Roma families have been arriving from the East in several waves towards the Paris region and its "zone": *"this 250-metre wide belt surrounding Paris at the foot of the fortifications, which cannot be built on, offers its waste land and its many resources, its improvised shops and its craft activities. During the Occupation, the zone was destroyed (...) The surviving "zoniers", including Gypsies who had escaped deportation, entered Montreuil."*<sup>31</sup> Since the end of the Second World War, Roma families arriving from Eastern Europe, mostly Kalderash from Romania, have been settling in Upper Montreuil, on *"abandoned farmland and horticultural areas where construction is prohibited. In La Boissière, in La Noue, behind the Montreuil park, near the old fishing walls..."*<sup>32</sup>. *"There were other Roma, room for everyone and an understanding town hall"*, according to Béatrice Jaulin<sup>33</sup>, who recalls the contacts between "most" of the Roma families and town hall employees, social workers and school directors to obtain the necessary authorisations to set up their tents or shacks, to pay taxes, to obtain family allowances... In 1961, Matéo Maximoff, a writer and Roma from Montreuil, remembers that a special office was opened in Montreuil for Kalderash families applying for family allowances, run by a member of Gypsy Studies<sup>34</sup>. The author also recalls the links established with some shopkeepers or neighbours in Montreuil, particularly families sharing the precariousness of the barracks. Gradually, these spaces became rarer and the Kalderash of Montreuil dispersed into the surrounding communes. It is also that, 'at the end of the 1960s, urban planning operations in the context of a favourable economic situation signalled the time of a more comfortable installation of the families dislodged from the barracks, whether French or Roma, the latter preferring to acquire houses while the former are rehoused in HLMs (Low-rent housing)<sup>35</sup>. For former mayor Marcel Dufriche, quoted by Jaulin, 'the Roma belonged to the landscape of Montreuil: they were not in the limelight but they were there. Today, there is a trace that remains with these Roma families who continue to live in certain neighbourhoods such as La Boissière'.

The exclusion and misery suffered by Roma populations, particularly since the end of Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime in Romania<sup>36</sup>, have led to new departures and a more recent migratory network has been set up *'as the traffic flows'* between Romania and France, *'supporting the circulation of information for potential migrants, and then the arrival of relatives and allies'*<sup>37</sup>. In 2001, Montreuil saw the settlement of about fifteen Roma families from the Arad region in

<sup>31</sup> LEVY-VROELANT Claire et SEGAL Jérôme, « Les roms de Montreuil et d'ailleurs, des immigrés européens particuliers », in *Les Temps Modernes*, n° 3, n° 624, 2003, p. 223-230, p.225.

<sup>32</sup> B. Jaulin, *Les roms de Montreuil 1945-1975, op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>35</sup> C. Lévy-Vroelant et J. Segal, « Les roms de Montreuil et d'ailleurs, des immigrés européens particuliers », art cit, p. 226.

<sup>36</sup> *Roms : errance à Montreuil*, <https://www.amnesty.fr/discriminations/actualites/roms-errance-a-montreuil>, seen 12 October 2020.

<sup>37</sup> Benarrosh-Orsoni Norah, « Bricoler l'hospitalité publique : réflexions autour du relogement des Roms roumains à Montreuil », in *Géocarrefour*, Vol. 86/1, 14 septembre 2011, p. 55-64.

Romania, fleeing persecution and exploiting the city's "interstices"<sup>38</sup>. With the reunification of families and the arrival of new families, nearly 200 of them settled in an unhealthy building in rue Doumer. The City Council's attempt to evict them in 2002 and the treatment of these families that followed gave rise to a support committee, made up of several associations and activists. From 2003 onwards, several evictions of squats took place, despite the precariousness of these families, the schooling of some of their children in Montreuil and the absence of a re-housing solution. In 2011, Claude Reznik, then deputy in charge of migrant populations, told the *Nouvel Obs*: "*Our Roma have been in the city for more than ten years. They are no less Montreuil residents than the young couple who have just bought a two-room apartment in lower Montreuil.*"<sup>39</sup> This argument of seniority is in fact used to justify an ambitious integration project to which we will return. From 2010 onwards, a camp established on a municipal plot of land on Boulevard de la Boissière was the subject of a precarious lease renewed every year, which was not intended to be permanent. In 2016, the collapse of part of the roof made it necessary to evacuate the premises. The Prefecture then offered the sixteen families rehousing solutions scattered throughout the Ile-de-France region - in contrast to the families' desire to remain in Montreuil or in neighbouring towns. The latter mobilised for several months and a squat was finally opened with the support of the City. Today, about five plots of land or buildings are still occupied by Roma families, some of whom receive support from associations and institutions.

## **A political history rooted in the left, committed to hospitality and international solidarity**

### **Political context of the city: a communist heritage, new political dynamics and a diversity of trajectories within the municipal team**

Montreuil is historically anchored to the left, managed since the first half of the twentieth century and until 2008 by the communist party: "*the taking of the mayor's office in 1935 by Fernand Soupé, which opens the era of communist management of Montreuil, signs the end of that of the great horticultural families*"<sup>40</sup>. If the city of Montreuil presents itself today as welcoming, this position is historically far from obvious. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, elected communist officials, in Montreuil as elsewhere, demanded the reduction of shanty towns, the construction of hostels from the State budget and not from the municipalities, and a "*sharing of responsibilities between municipalities, going so far as to oppose immigration by relying on a "national preference argument (local version)*"<sup>41</sup>. Jean-Pierre Brard, mayor from 1984 to 2008, was thus accused of "hypocrisy"<sup>42</sup> by the residents of the hostels or activists denouncing a contradiction between his policies of "cooperation" and his neglect of the living conditions in the hostels and the demands of their residents. In particular, the abandonment of the former residents of the Léon Gaumont hostel in the barracks of Nouvelle France and their eviction in 1995 were considered a betrayal<sup>43</sup>. An activist from Montreuil described Jean-Pierre Brard's

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Roms à Montreuil: la fin de l'innocence*, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20111201.REG0637/roms-a-montreuil-la-fin-de-l-innocence.html>, consulté le 25 février 2021.

<sup>40</sup> C. Delacroix, « La chute de Montreuil la Rouge », art cit, p. 122.

<sup>41</sup> C. Lévy-Vroelant et J. Segal, « Les roms de Montreuil et d'ailleurs, des immigrés européens particuliers », art cit.

<sup>42</sup> See in particular the testimonies collected by Michael Hoare in two documentary films: Nouvelle France 1995, Un foyer manque à Montreuil (1996) [http://www.avenirvivable.ouvaton.org/films/nouvelle\\_france.html](http://www.avenirvivable.ouvaton.org/films/nouvelle_france.html)

<sup>43</sup> When the project to rebuild the Léon Gaumont hostel, promised by the municipality under Marcel Dufriche, was abandoned by the new mayor, the residents were forced to live in the prefabs of Nouvelle France for fifteen years. Some of the former residents of Nouvelle France

position as "very ambiguous"<sup>44</sup>, and considered the city to be more committed to migrant populations under the mandates of Dominique Voynet and Patrice Bessac. The accession of Dominique Voynet's list (Greens) to the City marked a change in the approach to local development, towards a rebalancing or at least a better connection between the "Upper" and the "Lower" Montreuil, as well as a voluntarism in terms of support and inclusion of migrant people. The group of the current mayor, Patrice Bessac, brings together activists from the French Communist Party, the Left Front and the Coop' ("citizens' initiative collective from all the districts of Montreuil")<sup>45</sup>. Patrice Bessac signed his letter of candidacy for the 2020 elections with these words: "*your mayor, inhabitant of Montreuil, citizen of the world*"<sup>46</sup>. and his list obtained 24 seats. The majority also includes the groups Montreuil insoumise, Montreuil socialiste, EELV - Montreuil écologie and Génération.s Montreuil écologie & solidarité, while the opposition occupies only four seats out of fifty-five on the City Council: Montreuil en commun (2) and Montreuil Libre: union de la droite et du centre (2)<sup>47</sup> (right-wing party).

### What are the city's competences in terms of reception? Policies dependent on institutional and political complexity

Migration and asylum policies remain an essentially state prerogative<sup>48</sup>. Therefore, while cities are in the front line of these reception issues, the municipal institution has no specific competence in the field of migration<sup>49</sup>. The rights to which people arriving in France are entitled, codified in the CESEDA, depend on categories of people and highly complex procedures, and the latest legislative and regulatory reforms have only made their access to rights more restrictive and precarious. "The law on foreigners and its numerous procedures are an obvious obstacle for all those who arrive on our territory," explains Eliane Assassi<sup>50</sup>, Senator for Seine-Saint-Denis. Reception is in fact a cross-cutting issue, inseparable from a plurality of social policies, institutional and decision-making levels. In terms of social action and health, the city leads a general action of prevention and social development on the municipal territory through a municipal or inter-municipal centre for social action. It has municipal police powers in matters of safety and health, as well as certain aspects of housing policy<sup>51</sup>. It can complement certain social policies, access to health and accommodation or housing through the authorisation, implementation or land subsidy of development actions or operations to accommodate accommodation and social reintegration centres (CHRS), reception centres for asylum seekers (CADA), or participate in the reception of so-called "travellers".

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now live in the Nouveau Centenaire residence. Some of them say: "You shouldn't talk about Brard to the elders", "he made us very tired", "he betrayed us".

<sup>44</sup> Interview with an activist and local councillor in Montreuil, 17 December 2020.

<sup>45</sup> <https://montreuil-rassemblee.fr/>

<sup>46</sup> Application letter / Editorial, <https://patricebessac2020.fr/lettre-de-candidature-edito/>, accessed on 10 November 2020

<sup>47</sup> However, it is worth noting the high abstention rate: 66.33% in the 2020 municipal elections.

<sup>48</sup> The main institutions in charge of asylum are national: the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) and the French Office for Protection and Asylum (Ofpra) for the attribution of international protection. The rights to which a foreigner in France is entitled are codified in the CESEDA

<sup>49</sup> *Accueillir des migrant.es – Compétences et responsabilités des Villes, O.C.U.* Lien : <https://o-c-u.org/nos-publications/>, consulté le 20 décembre 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Poinot Marie, « Témoignage : « Le droit des étrangers et ses nombreuses procédures sont un frein évident pour toutes les personnes qui arrivent sur notre territoire ». Interview of Eliane Assassi, sénatrice de Seine-Saint-Denis », in *Hommes & migrations. Revue française de référence sur les dynamiques migratoires*, no 1328, 1 janvier 2020, p. 60-63.

<sup>51</sup> In particular through participation in the financing of housing, the definition of housing priorities in the Local Housing Programme (PLH) and the Departmental Housing Plan, participation in the commissions for the allocation of social rental housing, the inter-municipal collective agreement, the competence to attach public housing offices, etc.

Policies for reception and access to rights in Montreuil are dependent on the institutional complexity of public action on these issues. The City of Montreuil is active in health and social policies through its CCAS, its Local Health Contract and its municipal health centres. Montreuil is part of the Est-Ensemble inter-municipality, an institutional level that is becoming increasingly important and to which the City Contract is notably defined. Municipal reception policies are also dependent on the political context and political relations between the city and the Prefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis, which is known to be particularly inflexible. In April 2019, Georges-François Leclerc was transferred to the Prefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis, succeeding Pierre-André Durand. Previously Prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes, he made a name for himself on the issue of migration at the Franco-Italian border, and was involved in a preliminary investigation into possible infringements by the border police in Menton<sup>52</sup>, and for his complaint against the activist Cédric Herrou. Various actors testify to a breakdown in dialogue, for the past two years, between the Prefecture and the town, as well as between the Prefecture and the collectives and associations<sup>53</sup>. The eviction by the Prefecture of the Afpa premises, requisitioned by the City to temporarily house the residents of the Bara hostel, represented a strong challenge by the State to this initiative by the mayor to respond to the urgency of the situation and accelerate the procedures towards rehousing solutions.

Thus, the city's room for manoeuvre is limited by its institutional competences, its limited budgetary capacities, and political alternations and tensions. We will see which levers are mobilised in this context by the various actors involved in the reception of homeless people in the city of Montreuil.

### **A city involved in several international solidarity initiatives: special links with Mali, decentralised cooperation partnerships and networks of elected representatives**

Montreuil has long had a special relationship with Mali. The Malian community is one of the largest diasporas from sub-Saharan Africa in France, and Montreuil is its first city of welcome, particularly for the nationals of the Kayes region and especially the Yélimané circle. The "long history" between Mali and Montreuil began at the end of the 1950s, with the support of trade union and communist activists for the decolonisation movements, including that of Marcel Dufrique, who was then a town councillor in Montreuil. Through visits, links were established with Mobibo Keita, the future first president of the Malian Republic, and "*a mechanism was created around Montreuil and these activists who were received in Malian families*"<sup>54</sup>. In the post-independence context, a large number of workers were recruited from the former colonies after being enrolled in the French army. This labour migration is also explained by the difficulties encountered in the country and makes it possible to send remittances to families.

In 1985, Jean-Pierre Brard signed a decentralised cooperation agreement with the circle of Yélimané<sup>55</sup>. The cooperation is based on French and Malian associations and institutions:

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<sup>52</sup> Migrants : le parquet ouvre une enquête préliminaire sur de possibles infractions de la police aux frontières à Menton, <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/provence-alpes-cote-d-azur/alpes-maritimes/menton/migrants-parquet-ouvre-enquete-preliminaire-possibles-infractions-police-aux-frontieres-menton-1618993.html>, consulté le 9 décembre 2020.

<sup>53</sup> A member of the Bara residents' association explains that there are no more visits from the prefecture to the hostels. A RESF activist also testifies to changes in relations with the Prefecture: accompanying undocumented migrants and collective meetings are no longer possible at the Prefecture (interview of 16 December 2020).

<sup>54</sup> *Le Mali et Montreuil, une longue histoire*, <https://chantiersdeculture.com/2019/12/16/le-mali-et-montreuil-une-longue-histoire/> 16 décembre 2019, consulté le 11 novembre 2020.

<sup>55</sup> The GRDR is the operator of the twinning.

supported by the Municipality, the Secretariat of State for Cooperation and the European Union, with the Association for the Development of the Circle of Yélimané in France (ADCYF) "which groups together almost all the Malian associations from the Circle of Yélimané" and "the Montreuil Office for International Relations (OMRI), an association under the law of 1901, which is responsible for carrying out the policy of the City of Montreuil in the international field"<sup>56</sup> as its associative partners in Montreuil. A tripartite steering committee brings together these two associations and associations in Mali. The International Exchanges and Decentralised Cooperation Department (EICD) will later replace OMRI. Finally, Montreuil is a member of the "Mali" country group within Unies Cités, as well as of the monitoring group of donor local authorities of the Mali solidarity fund.

Montreuil has also set up cooperation protocols with the cities of Beit Sira in Palestine, Cottbus in Germany and Bismil in Turkey, and with the province of Haiduong in Vietnam. It highlights its commitment to international solidarity through support for local development projects and political positions<sup>57</sup>, as demonstrated by the Montreuil International Solidarity Days<sup>58</sup>. Furthermore, the City is involved in networks of elected representatives and local authorities: Cités Unies France; the National Association of Welcoming Cities and Territories (ANVITA); the Network for Decentralised Cooperation with Palestine (RCDP). The City takes part in a dynamic of "education for global citizenship at the local level", a policy "under construction" through, for example, the National Meetings of Actors of the International Solidarity Week<sup>59</sup>. In 2014, it also supported the creation of the CASIM, Collectif des acteurs de la solidarité internationale de Montreuil. In February 2021, the City joined the platform of local authorities in solidarity with the action of SOS Méditerranée<sup>60</sup>.

### **A long-standing and renewed dynamic of associations and activists**

The associative and political fabric of Montreuil is characterised by its dynamism and diversity. The expression "a breeding ground for civic commitment" is often used to characterise the population of Montreuil, and the City values "an intense associative life" with 2,000 to 3,000 associations known by the Maison des Associations<sup>61</sup>. Several categories of actors - trade unions, associations, militant collectives, etc. - are organised in different fields of activity. - Several categories of actors - trade unions, associations, militant groups, etc. - are organised in different fields of activity, particularly around cultural sharing, access to rights for precarious and exiled populations and the right to the city.

General social action structures are located in Montreuil. This is the case, since 1991, of Emmaus Alternative, a "historic association" offering "a range of actions, from the street to

<sup>56</sup> La coopération de la ville de Montreuil avec le Cercle de Yélimané, <http://base.d-p-h.info/fr/fiches/premierdph/fiche-premierdph-4206.html>, consulté le 10 décembre 2020.

<sup>57</sup> Like the official sponsorship in 2017 of Cemile Eminoglu and Resul Sari, co-mayors of Bismil, arrested and imprisoned in 2016 in the context of repressive operations against the Kurdish opposition in Turkey. During the City Council of 9 December 2020, Halima Menhoudj expressed the wish to request the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to allow Cemile Eminoglu to be welcomed as a political asylum, and to appoint her as an honorary citizen of the City of Montreuil.

<sup>58</sup> Montreuil : De la solidarité locale à la solidarité internationale, <https://www.lecourrierdelatlas.com/societe-montreuil-de-la-solidarite-locale-a-la-solidarite-internationale-21019/>, 20 novembre 2018, consulté le 10 décembre 2020.

<sup>59</sup> « Montreuil, une action en réseau(x) », site de la Ville : <https://www.montreuil.fr/solidarites/solidarite-internationale-et-cooperation/une-action-en-reseaux>.

<sup>60</sup> Communiqué 10 février 2021 : <https://www.montreuil.fr/fil-infos/detail/montreuil-sengage-financierement-aux-cotes-de-sos-mediterranee>

<sup>61</sup> Website of the City of Montreuil

reintegration<sup>62</sup>. The association runs a 35-place CHRS, a day centre (open seven days a week during the winter) and several support services to complement these structures (support for RSA recipients, support for economic integration and opening up rights to state medical aid). Emmaus Alternative is the main domiciliation structure in Montreuil – a fundamental step in access to rights for people without their own accommodation – with around 1000 people currently domiciled. International health access organisations work with people who are far from the mainstream, such as Médecins du Monde in squats and Médecins sans Frontières in hostels.

Among the associations and networks specialising in migration, the GRDR is also an association with a long history in Montreuil. More recently, Cimade has opened several weekly offices in Montreuil, at the Maison Ouverte and at the Point d'accès aux droits, to assist with residence and asylum applications. In addition, the Grand Air social centre has decided to set up collective information sessions with Cimade for foreigners, to complement this approach in terms of individual support. In particular, the social centre has developed a senior axis (via a call for projects from the Cnaf). The associations offer several types of support, sometimes specialising in a particular public. For example, while some structures favour the reception of foreign women and their children, the GRDR develops actions with senior migrants: with two 3-year programmes financed by the FAMI (European Fund for Asylum and Migration) "*on access to rights for elderly immigrants and the networking of actors*" and in particular a work "*with the ARS, the CILPI and the City of Montreuil for a health watch during the first confinement*"<sup>63</sup>. Several associations work in particular with Roma populations, such as Rues et cités, an important specialised prevention association in Seine-Saint-Denis and long-established in Montreuil, or Rom Réussite, founded by Liliana Hristache in 2014. Some associations are characterised by their anchorage in a neighbourhood. The Association des femmes de la Boissière was founded in 1992 to help migrant women learn French, mothers of children enrolled in a local nursery school, who have had little or no schooling in their country of origin: a "*particularly invisible*" group<sup>64</sup>. The association has also set up a "social café" several times a week, a convivial space for isolated people and support in various administrative procedures.

The presence of numerous cultural and co-development associations testifies to the anchoring and civic participation of different communities in Montreuil, as well as to the links of solidarity they maintain with the country of origin. Thus, the Berber association Taferka is very much integrated into the Montreuil associative landscape and is supported by the City in its activities<sup>65</sup>. Similarly, there are many associations in the municipality with Malian and, to a lesser extent, Comorian origins. The creation of associations such as the Association for the Development of the Circle of Yélimané in France (ADCYF) or the Association of Malian Women of Montreuil (AFMM) was supported by the City's political actors in the 1990s. The residents of hostels or squats organise themselves into associations or collectives, such as the Nouvelle France collective, the Sorins collective, the collectives for the rights of undocumented workers in Montreuil, etc. The Collectif Nouvelle France, made up of about 200 Soninke immigrants, became known through a long-term struggle for the construction of a home adapted to a

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Marie-Hélène Le Nedic, 24 February 2021.

<sup>63</sup> Mail exchange with a coordinator of GRDR, 19 February 2021

<sup>64</sup> Interview with two trainers and social workers from the association, 12 March 2021.

<sup>65</sup> Illustration: the association's anniversary party at the town hall and a speech by the mayor, Patrice Bessac, showing his attachment to this historic association in Montreuil.

collective and supportive way of life<sup>66</sup>. A certain renewal can be observed in the representation of the residents of several hostels, particularly in connection with the different demands of the different generations. For example, the residents of Rochebrune have appointed, in addition to the delegates representing their canton, delegates "for the youth", reinforcing "a certain diversity of their council"<sup>67</sup>. The residents of the 138 rue de Stalingrad squat also created their own association in March 2021, whose board of directors is made up of 22 former Bara residents, in order to organise the management of the premises, the collective decision-making processes, and to strengthen their representation with the various interlocutors<sup>68</sup>.

National activist networks with a branch in Seine-Saint-Denis have been very active through their members in Montreuil (and neighbouring towns) in anti-racism and support for migrants, such as MRAP, Attac 93 or the Réseau Education sans frontières. In particular, RESF 93 has set up citizen sponsorships in Montreuil to accommodate and support young people and families without residence permits, in citizen-elector pairs. These sponsorships have brought together several hundred people in the town hall's festival hall<sup>69</sup>. Trade unions such as Solidaires support the mobilisations of undocumented migrants' groups, in conjunction with associations. Neighbours, political activists, trade unions and associations have several times in the history of Montreuil set up support committees<sup>70</sup> for collectives that are wandering or threatened with expulsion, for example the residents expelled from Nouvelle France in 1995. The attempted eviction of a 150-person squat on Paul Doumer Street in 2002 also gave rise to a support committee involving the DAL and the LDH, campaigning for the creation of a rehousing scheme<sup>71</sup>. In 2016, the eviction from Boulevard de la Boissière brought together several supporters around the families who occupied the Place de la Mairie for several months. The Maison Ouverte, dedicated to cultural and activist activities since 1973, has historically been a place of welcome for people and groups who have wandered: the Nouvelle France collective in 1996, Roma families who have been evicted and, in the winter of 2020/2021, a group of sixteen unaccompanied

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<sup>66</sup> In 1980, a building located on rue Léon Gaumont between Paris and Montreuil and occupied since 1969 by some 600 Malian, Senegalese and Mauritanian workers, was closed for insalubrity. 200 of them negotiated with the mayor of the time, Marcel Dufriche, to be rehoused in the hostel that was to be rebuilt in the same place, and then settled, in principle for two years, in rue Nouvelle France, a vacant lot in Haut-Montreuil. This reconstruction project was in fact abandoned when Jean-Pierre Brard became mayor: the residents were left to their own devices in the Nouvelle France barracks, before being violently evicted in 1995. They refused to be rehoused in small groups scattered around the Ile-de-France region, which was out of step with the promises they had been made and with their solidarity system. After four months of wandering, they settled in a former private industrial building on rue du Centenaire. "The dean at the time asked if we wanted to stay together in our struggle, and everyone agreed. So we set up in front of the Post Office, the Town Hall and then the Labour Exchange. The Mayor sent his dogs. The Maison Ouverte took us in for three months, before we found ourselves again in front of the town hall, from where we were evacuated. Many people from Montreuil supported us, even the President of SOS Racism. The support committee was formed at that moment. We went to rue Emile Zola, and the CRS were sent to us. Then we went to Rue de la République. Two people from the support committee finally found this place, rue du Centenaire," Bakary Sissoko recounted in 2015. They then formed the Nouvelle France association and organised themselves to live in this self-managed squat for 10 years: "Dormitories were improvised, freed up in the evening so that the large common room could be used as a restaurant, decisions were taken in a collegial manner, with one delegate for each of the five cantons represented in the hostel, and 30% of the inhabitants were also union members. Newly elected, Dominique Voynet undertook to find a dignified rehousing solution for the residents of the Centenaire, and the association Pour Loger was commissioned to carry out a social diagnosis as part of a call for tenders. In 2016, the members of Nouvelle France were finally able to move into a social residence that respected their expectations in terms of inclusive and collective housing, designed with their participation.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with an activist from Montreuil, December 2020.

<sup>68</sup> Meeting at the Open House with two members of the Baras association of 138 rue de Stalingrad, 2 April 2021.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with José Quazza, RESF, 16 December 2020.

<sup>70</sup> Check the website « Roms de Montreuil » : <http://romsdemontreuil.free.fr/>

<sup>71</sup> N. Benarrosh-Orsoni, « Bricoler l'hospitalité publique », art cit, p.57.

foreign minors accompanied by the association Midis du MIE. It also hosted the Syrian Canteen<sup>72</sup>, another space for conviviality and cultural and militant sharing, now at the A.E.R.I.

A collective for the rights of undocumented migrants existed in the 1990s, with the participation of activists from Montreuil, before being dissolved. The collective was born out of a request from undocumented migrants, with the support of a resident close to a hostel, joined by *"members of the League of Human Rights, there were members of the Catholic Church, there were Protestants, there were people from Besancenot's party... well, there were people from everywhere. Everyone was quite militant at heart. I'm talking about the supporters. And among the undocumented migrants, they were all people who demanded a residence permit, but some of them also had a good political conscience"*<sup>73</sup>. More recently, the installation of the "Bara" without a residence permit and without a solution for rehousing in the vacant premises of the Afpa and then, following a violent eviction, in a shed on rue Stalingrad (for a long time without water or electricity), has given rise to new solidarity. It was around Stalingrad, and following Act 1 of the Solidarity March on 30 May 2020, that a new Montreuil collective for the rights of undocumented migrants was founded. It is made up of residents of the main hostels in Montreuil, initiating a "convergence" between them, whereas exchanges between the hostels were rather rare until then<sup>74</sup>. More than 1000 people have joined the collective<sup>75</sup>, which meets every week in one of the hostels and squats in Montreuil.

A certain militant renewal seems to have been impelled, in the double context of this local emergency and of a social, political and sanitary crisis at the national level. Different collectives participate in common actions: Gilets Jaunes de Montreuil, Brigades de Solidarité populaire Montreuil-Bagnolet, Assemblée contre les CRA, Collectif de Sans-Papiers de Montreuil, canteens, etc. are organised around militant places that also make the identity of Montreuil. The organisation in Montreuil of the arrival of the Eastern axis of the National March of Undocumented Migrants (October 2020) was done by several collectives with the support of the A.E.R.I., the Parole errante and the Maison Ouverte. Another example, an assembly of Montreuil Mouvement social, on 5 December 2020, was an opportunity to discuss the conditions of former Bara residents without papers in the squat on rue Stalingrad and to transmit to an opposition councillor an oral question to be put to the City Council. Such spaces encourage inter-knowledge and the emergence of collective projects, such as the setting up by the local Cimade group of training courses on the regularisation process for people applying for permits, supported in particular by Solidaires. Finally, the Collectif sans-papiers de Montreuil and its various supporters have initiated a reflection on urban residence cards and their relevance in demanding recognition of their rights and citizenship in Montreuil.

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<sup>72</sup> A Montreuil, la cantine syrienne créé des ponts entre les peuples, <https://www.frequenceterre.com/2021/01/25/a-montreuil-la-cantine-syrienne-cree-des-ponts-entre-les-peuples/>, 25 janvier 2021, consulté le 31 mars 2021.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with a RESF activist, December 2020.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with an activist from Montreuil, December 2020.

<sup>75</sup> Exchange with two activists of the Collectif sans-papiers de Montreuil, 30 March 2021.



## II) Montreuil, a desire to welcome "differently"<sup>76</sup> through an inclusive and partnership approach?

While Montreuil's working-class identity was fading, the municipality maintained the memory of successive migrations and "recomposed a local identity" based on the promotion of diversity and welcome<sup>77</sup>. In the cultural field, the City supports associations by making rooms available and organising events (around Mali or Berber culture for example). In May 2019, it will set up a partnership with the National Museum of Immigration History to "deepen awareness-raising actions on the issues of immigration history"<sup>78</sup>. It is also in this perspective that a project to archive the history of the homes is mentioned. Beyond this work of recognising the local history of migration and the richness it represents for the territory, Montreuil is distinguished by the political stance of elected officials committed to the rights of all. In a speech on 5 February 2011, Dominique Voynet pleaded for inclusive migration policies and highlighted the city's actions in terms of solidarity: "we are bravely carrying out segments of solidarity policies aimed at foreign populations or those of immigrant origin. On these segments, however, our constant concern is to avoid the ghetto, to seek the universal beyond the specialised systems, to return to common law whenever possible"; while pointing out the difficulties in implementing such commitments<sup>79</sup>. Patrice Bessac's municipal team has on several occasions taken a stand against the deportation of undocumented people living in Montreuil or in support of mobilisations: a campaign for the regularisation of undocumented workers; support through a vow in the Municipal Council of 30 September 2020 for Act 3 of the Solidarity March (political, logistical and material support from the City and the CCAS). The City has developed numerous partnerships with associations and collectives, and some elected officials are personally involved in solidarity networks, such as the citizen sponsorship supported by RESF.

### Spaces and coordination of actors in favour of access to rights

The dynamics of solidarity that exist in Montreuil seem to have encouraged the Municipality to take a stand in favour of the rights of migrants and, in particular, to develop partnerships between associations and the municipality. The City's actors are indeed seeking to develop inclusive policies for access to rights (administrative, legal, sociolinguistic, health support, etc.), through the establishment of partnerships adapted to different needs throughout the territory. The Integration, Equality and Migrant Populations Department<sup>80</sup>, according to the municipality's website, has the following missions

- *Networking of actors, support and coordination of transversal projects in favour of the integration of people of foreign origin (culture, education, access to rights, citizenship...)*
- *Enhancing the richness of the communities present on its territory*
- *Setting up French courses with territorial coordination*

<sup>76</sup> E. de Montreuil, « Entretiens de Montreuil du 5 février », art cit.

<sup>77</sup> N. Benarrosh-Orsoni, « Bricoler l'hospitalité publique », art cit.

<sup>78</sup> Press release of 5 May 2019:

[https://www.montreuil.fr/actualites/detail/page?tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Bnews%5D=2619&cHash=fc1e4525229831f8c1a42f9d3cb25160](https://www.montreuil.fr/actualites/detail/page?tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=2619&cHash=fc1e4525229831f8c1a42f9d3cb25160)

<sup>79</sup> E. de Montreuil, « Entretiens de Montreuil du 5 février », art cit.

<sup>80</sup> The Anti-Discrimination and Integration Department has recently been renamed Integration, Equality and Migrant Populations, reflecting the desire to adopt a more inclusive approach.

- *Reception, information and orientation of migrants*

Spaces such as the Point d'accès aux droits (PAD) in the city centre and the municipal and associative social centres in the different sectors are all spaces that provide access to information and support. Since 2002 and the opening of the Lounès Matoub social centre, three other municipal social centres and one associative social centre have opened in Montreuil. These reception and orientation spaces, open to everyone, are at the heart of the dynamics of solidarity and allow for interesting complementarities between the city's services and the associations around a "global support". Such a coordination approach seems to be part of a desire to consolidate and perpetuate access to rights, and the links developed between the different actors also allow for a certain reactivity in the face of emergencies, particularly in the context of the health crisis.

### **The network of public writers**

In 2008, the "awareness of the problem of non-access to rights"<sup>81</sup> led the City to mandate the association ISM Interprétariat to open four professional public writers' offices in social centres. Following an inventory and a comparative evaluation, a position was created at the City in 2012 to develop the network of public writers: recruiting volunteers and soliciting different structures (life centres, social centres and associations) in order to cover the whole of the municipal territory and provide the offices with common tools. This coordination is presented as unprecedented on the part of a municipality. Since 2017, it has been based on a Charter of Montreuil's public writers, which emphasises the free service, ethics, commitment to a network with coordination meetings, exchanges of experience, etc. Criteria are set for the opening of an office in a structure, in order to guarantee security and the provision of the necessary working tools for volunteers<sup>82</sup>. Public writers receive various training sessions on the profession of public writer, the rights of foreigners, the rights of pensioners, the missions of the CPAM, the CCAS, the Caf or the Pôle Emploi. Associations specialising in the rights of foreigners, such as Gisti, GRDR and Cimade, have been asked by the city to provide these training sessions. As part of the sessions, each volunteer carries out an overall diagnosis of the people received in order to guide and respond as best as possible to the problems encountered. A statistical tool has also been developed to enable monitoring and to guide the measures to be taken, based on a form to be filled in by the volunteers. The results show that the main requests from migrants relate to foreigners' rights, social assistance, housing and professional integration issues. The opening of offices within structures hosting various activities promotes access to information on different services and interactivity. A project on digital autonomy to fight against the digital divide should be launched: it seems essential to introduce some of the public to online procedures. The Nouveau Centenaire residence is the only residence/home to have a permanent office, in the

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<sup>81</sup> Interview with Sara Ndao, Social Inclusion Officer, 17 February 2021.

<sup>82</sup> "For their safety, it is important to ensure that the volunteer is in an appropriate space and is not isolated: a third person is needed in the space, ideally when there is a receptionist in the structure. Secondly, the space must guarantee the confidentiality of exchanges (we have seen volunteers in a corridor...). Finally, the space must be equipped with computer tools (PC, printer and scanner), a telephone to be able to call the legal actors (CAF, CPAM, etc.) and that this is not at the expense of the volunteers, internet: important as such in the fight against the digital divide. The 2022 agenda includes the dematerialisation of all online procedures, so the internet is necessary in this work of support and research into benefits. Interview with Sara Ndao, 17 February 2021.

absence of a manager. This "expanding" network has made it possible to cover all of Montreuil's neighbourhoods, despite certain closures linked to the health crisis: it has approximately 44 active volunteers (57 in summer 2019), on 23 duty stations (41 in 2019)<sup>83</sup>. The volunteer and professional clinics receive 3000 people per year.

In addition to the office hours as such, the network is involved in various activities, particularly with the residents of Montreuil's hostels: cultural outings and exchanges, clean-up operations around the hostels, or events such as the "living together" evening on 20 March 2019, organised with the New Centenary residents' committee and the volunteer public writers, to which the mayor and residents were invited. Poems were displayed in the restaurant around two themes: the fight against racism and living together.

### Sociolinguistic coordination

Several associations in Montreuil have long been involved in helping people learn French. For example, the Association des femmes de la Boissière, the Association des femmes maliennes de Montreuil and the ADCYF, which have been offering literacy and FLE workshops since the 1990s, in conjunction with the municipality, which provides public facilities. An increase in needs has been observed in the area since 2000, with a diversification of countries of origin: a more marked presence of nationals from Eastern Europe and Asia, as well as new arrivals of exiled populations since 2011<sup>84</sup>. Following a territorial diagnosis carried out between 2009 and 2010, the City's Integration Department decided to set up a sociolinguistic coordination system, based on the networking of various actors in the area. It is financed 70% by the City and 30% by the State via the BOP 147<sup>85</sup>. This coordination is also presented as a Montreuil initiative, which is said to have inspired other territorial linguistic coordinations throughout the Ile-de-France<sup>86</sup>.

Literacy and French language courses from A1.1 to B1 level are offered in different institutional and associative spaces, by professionals and volunteers, for an annual subscription of 25 euros: sixteen municipal training slots, complemented by those of a dozen associations - including the Association des Femmes Maliennes de Montreuil, the Association des Femmes de la Boissière, Vivons notre Quartier<sup>87</sup> or the AALF association active at the Lounès Matoub centre, which are among the "emblematic associations" of the Coordination. The courses given by the City's trainers include 100 to 150 people, provided they live in the city. Learners take a test at the beginning of the session to be assigned to one of the groups. The associations offer their own training courses, as do some social centres. At the AFB, for example, "we build the learning with them, according to their questions, and with the group effect", we start "*from what people say and correct their mistakes, rather than from a grammar book. It doesn't speak to them (...) and it's not useful in everyday life. The whole philosophy of the association is to be as close as possible to what people want*".<sup>88</sup> Le Grand Air and Esperanto offer sociolinguistic workshops that provide personalised support in learning the language: people are received by the trainer for an interview

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Sara Ndao, 17 February 2021.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Laura Benouis, Language Coordination, 10 December 2020.

<sup>85</sup> Operational Programme Budget N°147: State budget reserved for urban policy ("specific credits" because specifically and solely dedicated to priority neighbourhoods).

<sup>86</sup> Like in Ivry-sur-Seine. For more information on different language coordinations in Ile-de-France: <http://www.cdri-idf.ac-versailles.fr/spip.php?article488>

<sup>87</sup> Association created in 2011, with the aim of "developing social links, promoting emancipation, support and access to citizenship, promoting cultural exchanges and access to culture for all as well as the well-being of inhabitants in their daily lives, working in a spirit of cooperation, solidarity and mutual aid".

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Sandra Roulleau and Gladys Lupéron, 12 March 2021.

that allows the method to be oriented according to the individual's project. The La Noue social centre also plans to develop an ASL offer aimed at people in the neighbourhood and therefore more "territorial" and accessible than the City's courses sometimes are<sup>89</sup>.

Coordination allows all the workers to benefit from common resources and training (following a contextualised learning method), and encourages time for exchanging practices. It allows us to get to know other structures and thus to refer people when we cannot respond to the request ourselves<sup>90</sup>. Finally, various activities are organised within the framework of the coordination: cultural visits, film screenings, discovery of the city's libraries, interventions on the role of Family Planning, first aid training, or workshops within the framework of national events such as the week against racism. Moreover, the libraries of Montreuil have in turn committed themselves by setting up conversation workshops twice a month, open to all, to practice French. On the one hand, such a framework allows people of different origins to socialise, to get to know each other and to build trust with people who are sometimes very isolated in other ways. On the other hand, it allows people who may have been distant from it to become familiar with different city services<sup>91</sup>. Finally, although it is not equivalent to a training certificate, the certificate issued by the mayor at a ceremony at the town hall provides symbolic recognition and appreciation by the local authority of the efforts made.

### **A network dynamic to promote access to health and a sustained commitment by the city, associations and residents' groups during the health crisis**

A major health issue is linked to housing conditions, particularly in non-conventional settlements (squats, shanty towns)<sup>92</sup>. In addition, some migrant populations<sup>92</sup> are ageing and therefore more vulnerable. *"Neighbourhoods with migrant workers' hostels [such as the Branly-Boissière neighbourhood in Montreuil] are confronted with a health problem for ageing people (especially as migrants' working conditions have often led to a premature deterioration in their state of health). Local actors point to the unsuitability of the FTM premises for a public with a loss of autonomy, as well as the lack of preventive actions and, more generally, of support within the hostels. Regarding the latter, the problem is also highlighted for residents of the Centres d'Hébergement et de Réinsertion Sociale (housing and social reintegration centres)."*<sup>93</sup> The city has set up municipal health centres, and their workers, like those at the PMI, would be made aware of the vulnerabilities linked to migration. Similarly, the Montreuil Hospital Centre's health care access service (PASS)<sup>94</sup> and the experimentation of an ambulatory PASS, an action supported by the Regional Health Agency (ARS), promote access to health for all. According to the City Contract (Est Ensemble), one of Montreuil's specificities is to develop community health actions<sup>95</sup> and actions of the Local Health Contract for specific groups (action sheet dedicated to migrant people in particular). In addition, institutional and associative actors collaborate on specific issues: an action relating to mental health, financed within the framework of the CUCS in 2013 and carried out by the Solienka association; AIDES mobile clinics, in partnership with other

<sup>89</sup> Interview with the manager and deputy manager of the La Noue social centre, 11 February 2021.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Sandra Roulleau and Gladys Lupéron, 12 March 2021.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Laura Benouis, Language Coordination, 10 December 2020.

<sup>92</sup> Est Ensemble, City contract 2015-2020.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> And specific support for women in distress: STREETPRESS, *À Montreuil, une maternité pour les femmes en détresse*, <https://www.streetpress.com/sujet/1554306197-montreuil-une-maternite-pour-les-femmes-en-detresse>, consulté le 11 décembre 2020.

<sup>95</sup> For example, training women from a neighbourhood to conduct prevention campaigns locally and through them (interview with an activist from Montreuil, December 2020).

associations; Family Planning interventions with learners of the City's French workshops, etc. The Health Department also works with NGOs such as Première Urgence Internationale in squats and shanty towns, and the Dental Bus offers mobile clinics, particularly in hostels. The Précarité santé network links associative and institutional actors to promote such interventions and also facilitates certain types of treatment.

In the context of the health crisis, the municipal health centres have undertaken a preventive action within the hostels and for inclusive access to care: *"We took everyone, we didn't look to see if they were on the list of official tenants (...) who has their papers, who doesn't have their papers, who lives in the hostel, who doesn't live there"*<sup>96</sup>. Medical visits to the hostels were organised by the CMS in partnership with Médecins Sans Frontières<sup>97</sup>. An article in *Le Montreuillois* details the solidarity initiatives set up during the confinement in the various districts of Montreuil, based on partnerships between associations and city institutions via the life antennas<sup>98</sup>. In particular, food collections were organised by the Integration Department for distribution to migrant workers living in the city's hostels (solidarity parcels). It also works with the city's shopkeepers and canteens or social enterprises that show solidarity with exiled populations, for example by joining forces with the Cuistots Migrateurs SAS to prepare and deliver 300 meals a day, financed by the Abbé-Pierre Foundation, to the Sorins, Ruffins and Etienne Marcel hostels<sup>99</sup>. The city also distributes "dignity kits" (with soap, toothpaste, etc.), washable masks and exemption certificates. According to an activist and city councillor, the director of the municipal health centres has been really involved with the residents of the homes since the confinement, especially in terms of prevention. These actions show a capacity to react in a coordinated way to the social emergency.

The inter-knowledge and follow-up provided by these spaces for exchange and coordination facilitate orientation and make it possible to set in motion effective mutual aid dynamics. Thus, the trainers were able to put charitable associations in touch with the homes where some of the learners were living during the confinement, the social centres were able to direct the city's services towards certain particularly vulnerable families, and members of the Sorins collective were able to take part in the distributions organised by the social centre in the Noue district, for example.

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with a local councillor, December 2020.

<sup>97</sup> *Le Montreuillois* du 18 juin au 1<sup>er</sup> juillet 2020, p.12.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, p.12.

<sup>99</sup> Press release from 4 November 2020 : <https://www.montreuil.fr/fil-infos/detail/communiqu%C3%A9-lutte-contre-la-grande-precarite?fbclid=IwAR0KBluWiKORN43vPW4-Jh4UBJnShBiMP5yZkobc1ifCnEKNkNtEIDTP-as>

## Between social emergencies and the need for inclusive and sustainable reception: the mobilisation of different support levers by the City and the associations

### What are the commitments to housing for people who are not covered by the general law?

A central problem in Montreuil is that of housing<sup>100</sup>, especially for people who are deprived of their rights (workers and families without residence permits, young minors in the process of being processed, etc.). Citizen accommodation has developed a lot in Montreuil, notably under the impetus of the Réseau éducation sans frontières. But cultural and militant spaces in Montreuil have also welcomed wandering families and groups several times in the history of the city. A recent example is the accommodation by two theatres and then two militant places in Montreuil of sixteen isolated minors from Guinea, Mali, Ivory Coast and Senegal accompanied by the association Midis du MIE. The City, for its part, has been proactive in seizing certain levers of public action: Montreuil hosts a Reception Centre for asylum seekers (CADA) as well as a C.H.R.S. (Cité Myriam). More recently, the Ibis hotel at the Porte de Montreuil was requisitioned by the Prefecture to house nearly 200 migrants, accompanied by the association Habitat et Humanisme. The Prefecture asked the City to support the association and coordinate the distribution of meals with a network of volunteers<sup>101</sup>. Following the opening of a gymnasium, and in this demonstration of solidarity and reactivity in the face of an emergency, Patrice Bessac stated that *"the City of Montreuil is, to date, the only city in Seine-Saint-Denis to voluntarily organise the reception of homeless people in a municipal gymnasium"*<sup>102</sup>.

Since the 1990s, the city has committed itself through agreements to provide water and electricity to several dozen Gypsy families living around the fishing walls<sup>103</sup>. Precarious occupation agreements have been drawn up on several occasions, such as for the "Sorins" collective, Malian workers without any title who have been living in a municipal building for ten years and who have a "good relationship with the Town Hall"<sup>104</sup>. Such an agreement makes it possible to recognise the settlement of the collective and attempt to improve their living conditions while waiting for rehousing solutions. In November 2018, Patrice Bessac symbolically spent a night at the Bara hostel, before issuing an insalubrity order. The mayor requisitioned the former Afpa premises, which had been unoccupied for several years. If the requisition of vacant housing is a possibility offered to mayors, this requisition of a state property represents a rather unprecedented act. A large number of the residents of the hostel<sup>105</sup>, whom the City accompanies by bus, are then temporarily housed there and are provided with resident cards and daily meals. This mobilisation enabled about fifty of them to be accommodated in hotels, and about sixty others to be offered accommodation solutions within the framework of the asylum procedure or the Child Welfare Office. The former official residents are gradually being rehoused in the

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<sup>100</sup> 4000 people are waiting for social housing in Montreuil according to one of the city's public writers (for about a thousand annual allocations), 6000 according to another respondent.

<sup>101</sup> *Le Montreuillois* juin-Juillet 2020, p.10.

<sup>102</sup> Post on the Facebook page of Patrice Bessac, 16 December 2020.

<sup>103</sup> C. Delacroix, « La chute de Montreuil la Rouge », art cit, p. 123.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with an activist with the households in Montreuil, 17 December 2020.

<sup>105</sup> Some decide to stay, when they are afraid of possible "false promises" and of losing their place in the home.

commune, in several small social residences, which may have disappointed some<sup>106</sup>. But there were still nearly 300 people at the Afpa who were seeking papers and had no solution for rehousing when the Prefecture violently evacuated the premises in November 2019. Following their eviction, they opened a squat on rue Stalingrad, with the support of the city, which provided beds, some sanitary facilities and hygiene products. This support earned them a certain amount of recognition from several Malian workers they met: *"the town hall did its duty"*<sup>107</sup>, but it also crystallised expectations and needs. But it also crystallises expectations and tensions, as the living conditions there are so undignified. Problems such as power cuts and leaks are frequent in this unhealthy and overcrowded space, which is mainly made up of a shed and old offices.

According to Halima Menhoudj, *"irregular migrants are supported by the City Council when the State does not recognise their right to be housed"*<sup>108</sup>. This question reveals a tension over the sharing of competences and resources between the City and the State - in principle responsible for emergency accommodation - and therefore a delicate position of the municipality: *"when we open a gymnasium, the State no longer intervenes"*<sup>109</sup>. Although the city has sometimes made strong commitments, the implementation of permanent solutions comes up against budgetary, institutional and political difficulties: in particular when political changes (at the city or the Prefecture) call them into question and when evictions, which the Prefecture regularly decides on, undermine the efforts made. Within the framework of the policy of "treatment of hostels", which is gradually being replaced by a system of social residences, the City is caught between the need, on the one hand, to renovate insalubrious and over-occupied hostels and, on the other hand, to support the residents in their demands for collective and inclusive housing. For each hostel concerned, it must sign a "Protocole de desserrement" with the Prefecture and the manager, which implies a "social diagnosis" of the hostel and makes it difficult to protect people who have not been granted tenure. How then can a housing solution be guaranteed for people informally accommodated in hostels, without a contract with the managers and sometimes without a residence permit? How can we reconcile the highly standardised framework of social residences with the residents' methods of organising themselves in a spirit of solidarity (reception of people without residence permits and experiencing difficulties in accessing housing, financial solidarity, collective canteens<sup>110</sup>, places of worship, etc.)?

Negotiations are currently underway for several hostels. For Rochebrune, built in 1969 and managed by Coallia, the treatment plan protocol was signed in July 2020. An urban and social project management team was launched in December 2020, with a social diagnosis and rehousing component. *"The rehousing work is based on the residents' wishes. The social diagnosis carried out with all the residents will allow us to deepen our knowledge of the residents' profile, their lifestyle and the social functioning of the current structure in order to refine the social projects of the new social residences and will make it possible to identify their residential wishes between several options; whether it be the new social residence on the historic site, the sites of desertification identified within the framework of the operation, or the wish - linked to the financial capacity - to integrate the social housing stock or any other adapted structure."* According to an

<sup>106</sup> Interview with a member of the Bara Association, residence rue Etienne Marcel, 20 November 2020

<sup>107</sup> Interview with a member of the Bara Association, residence rue Etienne Marcel, 20 November 2020

<sup>108</sup> Meeting on 19 October 2020 at the Montreuil town hall.

<sup>109</sup> Meeting on 19 October 2020 at the Montreuil town hall.

<sup>110</sup> T. Bernard, « Les cantines de foyers », art cit.

article in the Montreuillois, the home, which officially has 430 beds, is to be demolished and rebuilt by 2026<sup>111</sup>. The delegates from the Rochebrune home wanted to be part of the steering committee. On the other hand, among the residents of the hostel, 546 people are in need of papers according to the census of one of them; they are afraid of suffering the same fate as the former residents of Bara without title<sup>112</sup>. Indeed, the agreement signed between the partners on 30 July 2020 indicates a number of 430 housing units to be created in the form of social residences (including 55 places to be mobilised in the social residences resulting from the treatment of the Bara FTM, 345 places to be created on several sites in the municipality and 40 places planned outside Montreuil). For the Branly hostel, the protocol was signed more recently, in November 2020, and "*consultation with the residents on the development/construction project will start at the end of March/beginning of April 2021 and the MOUS will be launched in June 2021*".<sup>113</sup>

Some of the negotiations concern the future of the canteens. A restaurant should be set up in the Lenain de Tillemont hostel, which is to be rebuilt. It would be run by the manager of a local restaurant and former resident of the hostel, would offer attractive prices to residents and would be open to the neighbourhood. The de facto existence, within the hostels, of cooking, craft or commercial activities, considered illegal by the managers and the Prefecture, may encourage these actors to integrate them into a more formal framework. This is a negotiating lever for the residents and for the City, which would like to recognise and support these activities. For example, the City has supported a group of dressmakers who have created an association and obtained premises, and whose activity has thus moved "*from an illegal status from the point of view of the manager and the Prefecture to the status of an activity that enhances the value of the workers*"<sup>114</sup> and is open to a wider public.

In addition, associations, activists, but also the Municipality, accompany undocumented residents in their efforts to regularise their situation. In June 2019, in response to the intensification of police patrols targeted around the Afpa, the City established a partnership agreement with Gisti lawyers to accompany around 250 people. Such an agreement, for 30,000 euros, represents an unprecedented act on the part of a municipality<sup>115</sup>. The city also signed a partnership agreement in January 2021 with the same association to support the "Sorins" in their procedures (with weekly meetings), and to allow the submission of 10 applications per month. The Prefecture then agreed to re-examine the administrative situation of the 150 residents applying for papers, even though these steps could not be completed and several of them received OQTFs - which the lawyers had to have cancelled.

In 2019, a workshop on filing administrative documents was set up at the Grand Air social centre, in conjunction with the social mediator from the neighbouring Adef hostel (Lenain de Tillemont), to enable the hostel's residents to better understand administrative procedures (6 sessions with 4 participants, often elderly and non-French speaking, assisted by 3 or 4 facilitators)<sup>116</sup>. At the request of the Collectif sans-papiers de Montreuil, Cimade now offers group

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<sup>111</sup> *Le Montreuillois* du 1er au 14 avril 2021, p.10.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with a resident of the Rochebrune hostel, member of the Montreuil undocumented migrants collective, 3 April 2021.

<sup>113</sup> E-mail exchange with Halima Menhoudj, March 2021.

<sup>114</sup> Intervention by Halima Menhoudj at a meeting on the Alliance migration, 17 March 2021.

<sup>115</sup> Exchange with Halima Menhoudj, 11 March 2021.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Bérénice Layet, former reception and access to rights officer at Grand Air, 9 March 2021.



training sessions (see above). In the same perspective of training and empowerment, the Bara Association of 138 rue Stalingrad has a project to set up workshops on the preparation of applications for permits, with the support of lawyers and/or activists.

### Comprehensive support projects for homeless Roma families

Between 2009 and 2014, an urban and social project management (MOUS), *'which has now become the main remedy for Roma shanty towns in the Paris region'*<sup>117</sup>, made it possible to support around one hundred Roma families from Romania on the basis of State-local authority co-financing and work with associations and social workers. The families, who have been in Montreuil for about ten years, had experienced various precarious settlements as a result of expulsions. The desire to support these families predates the fire in the squat on rue Dombasle and the humanitarian emergency situation, which nevertheless justifies the project<sup>118</sup>, and the objective set by the town hall is to *"take care of everyone, without "sorting"*<sup>119</sup>. The City first opened a gymnasium and an agreement was established in 2008 with the association Rues et Cités to *"begin a diagnostic process in conjunction with the City's services, as well as the first accompaniment in the integration process (registration with the CCAS, schooling, opening of AME rights, etc.)"*<sup>120</sup>. The families are spread over two main sites (4 in total) housing caravans. On the one hand, on the site at 89 rue Pierre de Montreuil and Place de la Fraternité, three social workers from Rues et Cités provide social monitoring of the families (support for schooling, socio-professional integration, etc.) as part of a project representing 200,000 euros and with an approach that does not consist of "taking charge" but rather of promoting autonomy, according to the principles of specialised prevention (free adhesion, anonymity, non-institutionalisation)<sup>121</sup>. An anthropologist was recruited to raise awareness and educate all the services involved<sup>122</sup>. The Cité Myriam, a partner of Rues et Cités, will be responsible for the rental management of the site from 2011 onwards, as well as assisting the families in finding permanent accommodation. In addition, the City has asked the ALJ 93 to manage an "integration village" to be set up in a second phase on the rue de la Montagne Pierreuse site. This association provides support with strict control of the premises, and the policies of these two operators are therefore *"as opposed as their respective visions of integration"*<sup>123</sup>. Throughout the project, a steering committee is held regularly between the City, the Prefecture, Rues et Cités and ALJ 93. According to Claire Nicolas, the success of the project is due to *"the work of mobilising several actors around the same family in a coordinated manner"*<sup>124</sup>, allowing for guidance according to different needs. It is also due to its long-term nature. This global approach, implemented over the course of the few years of the MOUS, has enabled the progressive rehousing of families in social housing, in residences or in "bridging housing" managed by the Cité Myriam association. However, for the families in the latter case, bridge housing tends to become the norm when they should have already been in permanent housing.

<sup>117</sup> N. Benarrosh-Orsoni, « Bricoler l'hospitalité publique », art cit, p. 56.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *L'insertion réussie de 80 familles roms à Montreuil*, <https://www.lagazettedescommunes.com/454862/linsertion-reussie-de-80-familles-roms-a-montreuil/>, consulté le 31 mars 2021.

<sup>120</sup> <http://www.ruesetcites.fr/montreuil>

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Claire Nicolas, 23 April 2021.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Claire Nicolas, 23 April 2021.

<sup>123</sup> N. Benarrosh-Orsoni, « Bricoler l'hospitalité publique », art cit. p.57.

<sup>124</sup> Interview, 23 avril 2021.

The issue of rehousing Roma families remains topical, particularly for the 25 families of the Néfliers squat. After their eviction from a shanty town established along the Montreuil cemetery in October 2018, supported by the Roma Réussite association, around fifty people took over the disused premises at 28, rue des Néfliers, owned by the Établissement public foncier d'Île-de-France (EPFIF), with which the City negotiated their installation<sup>125</sup>. The City's services (Integration, Public Safety, etc.) then worked in conjunction with various actors: the owner of the land, the 93 prefecture, the DRIHL 93, and several associations, to enable a multi-faceted accompaniment of the families towards re-housing. The CCAS has carried out a new domiciliation. Since April 2019, the Acina association, financed by the State through a call for tenders, has been mandated to provide support in terms of employment and access to healthcare. For a time, Acina held a permanent office in a social centre near the site, and asked the city's agents to raise awareness of the families' situation among the CCAS reception staff. According to the association, progress has been made thanks to partnerships, the involvement of the families and the municipality, but certain difficulties remain: a possible evacuation in the short term, the unhealthy state of the site, and the timeframe for processing social housing applications<sup>126</sup>. To address the precariousness of this settlement, a precarious housing agreement should be signed between the city and the owner, provided that the site is made safe, and the NGO Première urgence has been commissioned to carry out a diagnosis and to initiate work, particularly on access to water. The association École Enchantiée<sup>127</sup> is involved in supporting children's schooling, and is trying to mobilise local residents for this activity through the neighbourhood council. According to the deputy for migrant populations, the families' support for the project needs to be strengthened: dialogue is sometimes difficult, both with the families concerned and with their neighbours. Moreover, the city's budget is limited: 80,000 euros obtained from the State through a call for projects, which is not enough to meet the needs. It is therefore a question of obtaining more resources to continue and strengthen this support: *"Negotiations are continuing with the State for the rehousing of a few families who are solvent and ready to move on to permanent housing. The city is also considering, subject to state funding, the deployment of an MOUS to assist all the families (25) with rehousing, the last stage in the slum clearance process"*<sup>128</sup>. In addition, a public writer's office dedicated to Eastern European populations opened on 27 February 2021 in the city's administrative centre, with an interpreter. Finally, French language courses and a discussion group are planned at the Maison Ouverte, which has been asked to do so by the City, for young women from the Néfliers squat.

### **Collaborative and innovative projects for support towards socio-professional integration and re-housing**

The various actors - citizens, associations and institutions - in Montreuil have on several occasions shown themselves to be precursors, particularly in terms of experimenting with global support and collective and participative accommodation projects. These experiments may be specific to Montreuil's actors or they may involve the use of specific mechanisms and funding, but in both cases they demonstrate a desire on the part of the City and/or the associations to

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<sup>125</sup> *Le Montreuillois* n. 8-21, nov. 2018.

<sup>126</sup> Website of the Acina association.

<sup>127</sup> Website of the association École Enchantiée: <https://ecole-enchantiee.weebly.com/>

<sup>128</sup> E-mail exchange with Halima Menhoudj, 11 March 2021.

mobilise different levers of action and methods of participation in order to increase the autonomy of the "public" concerned.

### **Le Nouveau Centenaire: an unprecedented experiment with a self-managed residence and an associative integration restaurant**

In 2016, the first "concerted and co-managed" social residence was inaugurated between the Office public de l'habitat montreuillois, the project owner and lessor of the residence, the association Pour Loger, the manager, and the association of residents of the Nouvelle France hostel. This participatory housing project was born under the impetus of Pour Loger and the residents, and thanks to the willingness of the City. The residents are involved in the choice of land and the design of the residence with the OPHM architects, the Pour Loger association takes care of the administrative and financial aspects and the Nouvelle France association, whose board of directors is made up of delegates from each canton and represents all the residents<sup>129</sup>. The consultation process, which lasted six years, made it possible to integrate rooms and collective living spaces in a "format that does not comply with the State's directives issued in the treatment plan for migrant workers' hostels, where strictly individual housing is recommended"<sup>130</sup>. The Prefect at the time even agreed to provide extra beds for 76 undocumented residents<sup>131</sup>. A community restaurant was integrated into the self-managed residence project, financed entirely by the city (to the tune of 700,000 euros), despite a "history full of pitfalls"<sup>132</sup>. It is run by the residents organised in an association and has obtained the Atelier et chantier d'insertion (workshop and integration site) approval. According to the OPHLM website, "this recognition of a collective, participatory and supportive lifestyle in housing is an innovation and a first in France"<sup>133</sup>. Two important limits stand out: the financial balance and the exceptional nature of the project. The Prefecture warned from the outset that "there would be no other New Centenary"<sup>134</sup>. Thus, this model of a self-managed residence for migrant workers could only exist because of favourable conditions: a long-term struggle that has become visible and popular, a collective that is united and recognised for its organisational capacity, supported by a diversity of actors. This struggle bears witness to the capacity of collectives to organise themselves, despite very precarious living conditions, to the desire to reappropriate their space and way of living, and to the role that solidarity dynamics can play in this political negotiation. It opens up interesting avenues in terms of recognition and participation of the residents themselves in these housing projects. The Nouveau Centenaire restaurant formalises what has always existed around the hostels by widening its public and the possible encounters: a collective canteen open to the neighbourhood.

### **La Ruche incubator in Montreuil: original support for refugees in their business or association projects**

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<sup>129</sup> *A Montreuil, un foyer en habitat social et solidaire*, <https://www.paperblog.fr/8483944/a-montreuil-un-foyer-en-habitat-social-et-solidaire/>, consulté le 31 mars 2021.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with H.T., New Centenary Association, 20 November 2020.

<sup>132</sup> <sup>132</sup> Interview with H.T., New Centenary Association, 20 November 2020.

<sup>132</sup> T. Bernard, « Les cantines de foyers », art cit.

<sup>133</sup> <http://www.ophmontreuillois.fr/Actualites/Inauguration-NOUVEAU-CENTENAIRE>

<sup>134</sup> Interview with a resident of the New Centenary.

Inaugurated in June 2019, the Incubator is a joint project of La Ruche ("a network of incubators dedicated to social innovation", present in several French cities), the City of Montreuil, the Generali Foundation, The Human Safety Net, BNP Paribas and the Réseau des Entreprises de Montreuil. The Montreuil Incubator's programme consists of offering each class of ten people "a collaborative workspace", "workshops and group training", "individual follow-up and mentoring", "connections with a network of experts"<sup>135</sup>. The benefit of international protection (asylum or subsidiary protection) is a condition, as is a certain command of the French language. The system is limited to being intended only for statutory refugees - many programmes are thus fashionable and funding is available for a category valued as "good migrants" - but the projects that it enables are part of a broader dynamic of solidarity and cultural exchange. Among the projects set up by the programme's beneficiaries is the Cuistots Migrateurs<sup>136</sup>, a kitchen aimed at "integrating refugees through employment" in Montreuil, which is due to open a school awarding vocational qualification certificates in 2021, and which participates in solidarity distributions in Montreuil. Another of these projects, led by an Afghan refugee, aims to work with Eastern European populations on the recovery and recycling of materials.

### **In My Back Yard : a partnership project for solidarity accommodation**

The In My Back Yard project is led by the association Quatorze<sup>137</sup>, which "advocates a social and solidarity-based vision of architecture", and consists of installing small modular houses in the gardens of private individuals to house people who are beneficiaries of international protection. The first two experiments are taking place in Montreuil<sup>138</sup>. In July 2020, the municipality of Montreuil is also offering a plot of land belonging to the city. "*The idea is to host people in difficulty [editor's note: refugees or homeless people] for six months to two years to enable them to access employment and find housing.*"<sup>139</sup> The project thus offers an alternative to shelters, which respond to emergencies but do not allow social links to be re-established. It aims to respond to the problem of a break in rights with a change in status, as asylum seekers accommodated by the State must leave the CADAs once they have obtained asylum, and face major difficulties in finding accommodation. Among the partners, the inter-ministerial delegation for accommodation and access to housing (DIHAL) co-finances the project and the Samu social selects and accompanies the people accommodated. The project is in fact part of "a global programme launched at the end of 2016 by the Ministry of Housing to promote citizen accommodation of refugees in private homes"<sup>140</sup>; this raises the question of "discharge" on the part of the State.

These latest examples show the interest of the City, associations and citizens of Montreuil in "innovative" and supportive measures. These projects to help refugees find employment or housing are part of programmes that bring together several partners (institutional, private, associations) and significant funding. However, they are part of a policy

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<sup>135</sup> <https://la-ruche.net/incubateur-a-montreuil/>

<sup>136</sup> <sup>136</sup> <https://www.lescuisotismigrateurs.com/>

<sup>137</sup> Website: <https://www.imby.fr/>

<sup>138</sup> Financed by the City's participatory budget.

<sup>139</sup> *Montreuil : une maisonnette pour héberger des réfugiés dans son jardin - Le Parisien*, <https://www.leparisien.fr/seine-saint-denis-93/montreuil-93100/montreuil-une-maisonnette-pour-heberger-des-refugies-dans-son-jardin-16-10-2017-7335441.php>, consulté le 16 décembre 2020.

<sup>140</sup> « Accueillir des réfugiés dans son jardin grâce aux « mini-maisons » », in *La Croix*, 30 oct. 2017.

that promotes a certain public - statutory refugees - at the expense of other pathways, which is a major limitation from the perspective of equal access to rights.

## Conclusion and perspectives

In Montreuil, the dynamics of citizens, associations and activists seem to have encouraged policies in favour of the reception of and access to rights for migrants. The projects mentioned testify to several joint or complementary actions between local authorities and "civil society" around cultural events, spaces for access to rights and comprehensive support measures. Certain actors who are multi-positioned in the associative, political and militant fields, sometimes belonging to migrant communities, play an important role in driving these dynamics. Certain limits must also be exposed in order to deepen the reflection on the room for manoeuvre of the different actors and to consider the perspectives to be pursued or concretised.

The confrontation with excluding national policies and limited funding, or targeting certain categories of public, strongly restricts the integration and rehousing solutions for people who are far from common law and forced to live in very precarious conditions. The City's actions towards Roma populations in particular remain constrained by budgetary and political difficulties<sup>141</sup>, and they remain marginalised. Outreach techniques could be used to strengthen support for these people, such as the establishment of mobile social worker offices<sup>142</sup>. It also seems essential to continue and strengthen the dialogue between the actors, and the consultation on the different issues of integration, particularly with the population of Montreuil, beyond the circles that are aware of, or even very committed to, the problems of reception. The proactive policy of elected officials is sometimes perceived as being out of step with the realities on the ground and the demands for autonomy and participation of a part of the population living in Montreuil. The delegates of the hostels with whom the institutional actors dialogue, elected in elections organised by the managers, are not always the representatives recognised by a majority of residents ("*according to the experience of Bara, there were delegates recognised by the municipality, and delegates who are recognised by the hostel (...) I find that these are not conditions that favour real dialogue and a real consideration of problems*")<sup>143</sup>. More inclusive forms of dialogue still need to be considered, in particular through the systematic organisation of meetings between the local authorities and the newly created residents' associations within the hostels (youth associations in some hostels, Association des Baras du Montreuil). Several actors also show that the institutional tools of "participation", such as neighbourhood councils or the participatory budget, are above all mobilised by a privileged population used to Montreuil. They represent spaces that are not very mixed and not very inclusive, a fortiori with regard to Roma populations or residents of hostels: "*we don't involve them enough for them to come. Of course there are posters etc. but there needs to be a voluntary policy to get them to come*"<sup>144</sup>— even if some neighbourhood councils can be involved, by the residents of Branly for example. Within the hostels, the collectives seem to bring their projects directly to the manager or the city. The city's desire to strengthen participation in local policy-making bodies, particularly through communication with the learners of the sociolinguistic coordination, should be pursued, and

<sup>141</sup> C. Lévy-Vroelant and J. Segal return to local policies towards the Roma, through which 'three logics collide': 'those of the State of law with its mission of schooling (...); those that preside over current governmental choices and which are expressed by draconian instructions to the prefectures; and finally, those of local elected officials. The latter have to choose between, on the one hand, the danger of seeing an electorate weakened by the crisis and sensitive to the sirens of the National Front, and, on the other hand, the values of humanity, solidarity and respect for fundamental rights traditionally carried by the French communist movement:

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Claire Nicolas, 23 April 2021.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with an activist in Montreuil, December 2020.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with an activist in Montreuil, December 2020.

work on "reaching out" could be put in place to strengthen exchanges with and the participation of precarious and exiled people. This question of the participation of the people concerned must also be raised in the associative and militant sector. The opening of a social centre in La Noue, in a structure shared with the life antenna, seems to encourage inter-knowledge between different groups, and this type of space opens up interesting prospects for participation in different local and civic activities. In addition, the Integration, Equality and Migrant Populations Department is working on a collaborative "platform" project to centralise information and resources, with the aim of *"responding to the need for guidance, but also to enhance the value of reception, and to change the way in which migrant populations are viewed, by integrating the expertise of the migrants themselves"*<sup>145</sup>.

Beyond the problems of "reception", how can we think of inclusive and sustainable measures, responding to specific needs while facilitating access to common law and to citizen and political participation? The recognition of exiled persons and their rights, spaces for inter-cognition and inter-culturality, and projects for global support towards autonomy are part of the answer. Hence the interest of these dynamics involving local authorities, associative and collective actors or concerned persons and of a collective reflection around the notion of residence citizenship.

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<sup>145</sup> Meeting at Montreuil Town Hall, 19 October 2020.

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