

Alliance

AUTORITÉS LOCALES
SOCIÉTÉ CIVILE POUR UNE
AUTRE GOUVERNANCE DES
Migrations

PANORAMAS OF ALLIANCES BETWEEN LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY : TOWARDS A COMMON BASE OF TERRITORIES

The Migration Alliance is a project founded and run by :



For an unconditional welcome and universal citizenship

Towards a common base for territories

While States persist in their policies of closing borders and restricting access to rights, territories are in the front line of the non-reception that is the consequence. Local authorities and civil society actors respond to the emergencies linked to the precariousness of the population, while seeking to promote sustainable political changes. Constrained legally by the regalian nature of migration management, financially by the lack of means allocated to local authorities to take care of new arrivals and politically by the predominance of xenophobic and racist discourses conveyed by extreme right-wing groups, local actors strive to act in accordance with the values of hospitality, solidarity and living together.

Migration, like many global issues, is a fact that transcends national boundaries. It cannot be considered separately by each State or group of States, as it is a global, natural and timeless phenomenon, which contributes to the economy, diversity and social cohesion of both sending and receiving societies. Cities do not know borders between them within the same country. Together with the actors of civil society in their territory, many of them are demanding a dignified welcome, beyond any political color. Aware of the cross-border nature of the challenges of reception, they are coming together in national, regional or international networks, creating alliances to collectively put forward a different political discourse, based on the realities on the ground and co-constructed with civil society.

This is how the **Alliance Migrations was initiated by the National Association of Welcoming Cities and Territories (ANVITA) and the Organization for Universal Citizenship (OCU)**, founded by Emmaus International, CCFD-Terre solidaire, Mouvement Utopia and the Espacio Sin Fronteras network. Within this dynamic, local authorities and civil society actors are organizing to build an unconditional dignity net and promote another society project, based on 3 fundamental and interdependent pillars, which make up the Common Base of the territories:

- **The guarantee of a local citizenship that allows each inhabitant to participate in the political life of their city**
- **The promotion of interculturality as a vector of inclusion and social cohesion**
- **The guarantee of unconditional access to rights**

This common base was built through a process of identifying initiatives implemented in 8 territories, through volunteer missions between 2020 and 2022: Barcelona, Grenoble, Lisbon, Palermo, Montreuil, Le Vigan, Liège and Berlin. Through the common base, we show that the promotion of an alternative governance of migrations emerges from the local level and is only possible through a strong and assumed political will on the part of the cities, based on a vision that another reception of exiled people is possible and necessary. Finally, the common base shows that it is often the existence and the dynamism of a protean associative fabric that explains the success of initiatives in favor of a dignified reception of migrants.

Enabling political participation and the exercise of citizenship by foreign residents: promoting « power to act »

This first axis is the cornerstone of a welcoming policy, in the sense that it is the sine qua non condition for the respect of the other two pillars of the common base. Indeed, in order to promote a different vision of migration and implement an effective policy of unconditional access to rights, it is necessary to include migrants in the process of building public policies and reception systems. Recognizing the place of people with a migratory background in our societies, beyond the status of "welcomed", implies recognizing their "power to act" and their de facto participation in the life of the territories, but also opening up rights and spaces for participation and political representation. Thus, political participation and citizenship of residence are two fundamental elements to go beyond a welfare approach and recognize the active role of migrants in the city.

Municipal policies that promote the participation of foreign residents can be divided into three approaches.

Firstly, public institutions must open up participatory democracy bodies dedicated to foreign residents through consultative councils, participatory budgets, etc.

Secondly, we insist on the importance of taking into account the political self-organization of the people concerned. It is necessary to recognize the multiplicity of forms of participation in which people are actually involved, whatever their administrative status: cultural, social, economic and political activities. The associative and militant fabric plays a primordial role in the access to these participatory levers. In Liège, the union of undocumented residents within the collective "La Voix des Sans-papiers de Liège" (Voice of undocumented migrants in Liège) allows them to lead a political and militant fight for regularization, through occupation actions, the implementation of a social security system based on solidarity and the maintenance of a dialogue with the Mayor of Liège.

Finally, more and more territories, like the commune of Le Vigan, are considering a residence citizenship card, as a lever for access to rights and social and political recognition. Depending on the modalities, these cards have the power to officialize the recognition of the belonging of foreign residents to the territory and to serve as a symbolic and political lever with the national authorities for the right to stay and the regularization of undocumented persons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Enabling exiled people to participate in the life of the city by expressing themselves not only on the issues that affect them specifically but also by making local democratic bodies accessible to them in order to strengthen the city's policies from their perspective in a transversal manner:** support for cultural and solidarity associations, dissemination of information on participation tools, linguistic mediation, adapting participation spaces to the financial, material, geographical, temporal and mental possibilities of foreign residents.
- **Establishing a wider communication with the population, beyond the activist circles,** to deepen the understanding of the issues and adhesion to the projects;
- **Perpetuating a dialogue and an exchange between civil society and the municipality** for the elaboration of policies;
- **Initiating a reflection on the residence citizenship card** through a dialogue between institutional actors and civil society, in particular the first concerned;
- **Promoting the right to vote and eligibility of foreigners in local elections.**

Promoting a vision of migration based on interculturality for the recognition of the rights of all

An essential step in guaranteeing a dignified reception and inclusion of migrants is the promotion of a different discourse on migration, which values diversity as a richness, fights against discrimination and favors social cohesion between people of different social and cultural origins. This approach is concretized both by a work of historicization and construction of a collective memory around migrations and by initiatives that aim at promoting spaces of intercultural and inclusive exchanges between the inhabitants.

Indeed, the co-construction, with local authorities and civil society actors, of a collective memory including the history of the exiles is necessary to carry an anti-racist narrative and to be aware of the historical and current dynamics linked to colonization, to claim the pride of a territory built thanks to its migratory history and to assert the belonging of all to the same territory. In Lisbon, it is at the initiative of an association of Afrodescendants, Djass, that the construction of a memorial in homage to the victims of slavery was proposed to the citizen vote through the participative budget.

Furthermore, in order to fight against the dynamics of exclusion and segregation, it is necessary to work on strengthening social cohesion by opening meeting spaces and organizing events and intercultural activities between residents of different social and cultural origins.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Reconstructing the migratory narrative in an anti-racist, solidarity-based and international perspective, in collaboration with representatives of communities, in particular oppressed, racialized or colonized populations:** promoting cycles of meetings and debates in schools, universities, municipal services ;
- In the face of political changes, **carrying out a work of historicization and memory**, in order to generalize and perpetuate an intercultural and inclusive approach to social cohesion;
- Perpetuating these policies, **establishing a dialogue with civil society and city organizations such as libraries and museums, but also work at the internal level of the municipality** by finding consensus on the historical, cultural, social, statistical and economic reality of migration in the territory;
- **Fighting against stigmatization and discrimination through training and awareness-raising of public service staff** on the history and current issues of migration and reception (training, non-discrimination charter, etc.);
- **Adopting a transversal and intercultural approach to migration and living together in public policies, social centers and associative spaces:** include skills related to cultural mediation in the recruitment criteria for public agents, encourage spaces for intercultural meetings and exchanges (within schools, cultural and memory spaces, festivals, etc.)

Promoting universal access to rights through cross-cutting and sustainable collaboration between local actors

Finally, welcoming with dignity implies respecting the fundamental rights of each person, whatever their migratory path, but also facilitating access to social, economic and political rights for all residents, in a global and sustainable way. It is therefore necessary to rethink access to rights beyond the categories introduced by sorting policies, which tend to exclude or keep certain people on the margins of common law, according to their administrative situation or the length of their stay in the country. Beyond an emergency, humanitarian perspective, based on the assistance of a few and the guarantee of a minimum threshold of protection for the most precarious, it is a question of promoting and anchoring an approach in terms of rights and emancipation of all, in a universal way.

Defending access to rights for all people living in the territory, and in particular for those who are often excluded, requires that we think together and in a transversal way about the actions of institutional and associative actors in the different fields of access to rights. When the dialogue between institutional and associative actors is not established, it is important that civil society coordinates and organizes itself within the same territory, in order to put forward its proposals and resources. In Liège, associations, unions, collectives and citizens have formed a collective and have conducted a dialogue with the City, which resulted in the vote of a motion in November 2017 including about fifty commitments from the municipality, aiming to make the territory of Liège more welcoming and to guarantee effective access to people's rights.

However, it is certain that the territories' commitment to universal access to rights, however strong it may be, will always come up against state policies restricting access to regularization and nationality, due to the current system of shared responsibility for reception. Thus, it is necessary to rethink another model of migration governance, which imposes both the responsibility of the State related to the dignified and unconditional protection of all persons present on the national territory, and allows for a dialogue and a better sharing of competences between the State and local territories regarding the sustainable settlement of migrants and access to legal residence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Multiplying and reinforcing the spaces of access to information, to reinforce the accessibility and the training to the digital tools** to facilitate the steps of access to the rights;
- **Working on the inclusiveness of access to rights spaces** by taking into account gender, age, language, mobility of people and the dimensions of the territory;
- **Strengthening measures to access rights for people in an irregular administrative situation** who are often placed in the blind spot of the law: "outreach" measures, the fight against non-recourse, measures to protect against identity checks, support for citizen initiatives that provide unconditional assistance, etc...
- Creating coordination positions within municipalities to **strengthen the links between associative and institutional actors involved in access to rights and support**, and promote complementarities (coordination of solidarity spaces, public writer's offices, socio-linguistic workshops, etc.);
- **Promoting the financial independence of associations and projects** beyond the short-term financing linked to calls for projects, in order to give them a longer-term perspective, to be able to respond appropriately to the issues at stake and to limit situations where the rights of the

Conclusion

The need to commit to a better model of migration governance, which imposes both the responsibility of the State for the unconditional care of migrants, and allows for better dialogue and sharing of responsibilities between the State and the territories.

The common base demonstrates that a welcoming policy towards exiles is not only possible but already exists in a number of territories. Through the initiatives identified, local authorities are working together, according to their resources, to guarantee a dignified welcome to all. In this way, the territories are asserting their capacity to welcome people, often beyond the competences assigned to them. However, this assumed commitment of the territories meets a major limit: the obstacles to regularization and the set of state competences that create differentiated rights between nationals, immigrants of different statuses and illegal immigrants. Thus, it is essential that the different actors of civil society and local authorities cooperate within networks and local, regional and international alliances such as the Migration Alliance, and share their

political levers to jointly advocate with other levels of governance. Finally, in order to bring about a sustainable change in migration policies, it is necessary to rethink the relationship between local territories and the State and thus promote another model of migration governance. This model should both impose the responsibility of the State for the unconditional care of all persons present in the territory and recognize local territories as legitimate stakeholders in the reception and access to residence and citizenship, through a better dialogue and sharing of responsibilities with the State. Within the Alliance Migrations, local actors aspire to give themselves the means to bring about this change in governance together.