



Mediterranean City-to-City Migration

Dialogue, Knowledge and Action

Regional Peer-Learning Event

Cultural Policies: a vector for migrants' inclusion in urban context

11-12 December 2019, Casablanca, Morocco

Summary of Discussions

Context

This document summarises the results of the fourth regional peer-learning event of the second phase of the Mediterranean City-to-City Migration (MC2CM) project. The event was held under the auspices of the Municipality of Casablanca on 11-12 December 2019. The event convened 63 participants representing 18 city administrations of the region, 3 cities networks, 3 national governments and 10 NGOs. The programme is available [here](#).


The event was held in the framework of the second phase of implementation of the MC2CM project. The peer-learning served as an opportunity in identifying the key concepts, practices and recommendations of municipalities in the Mediterranean region to better use culture for the inclusion of migrants at the local level. The event was held under Chatham House rules so outside of official statements and case studies presented, comments from the discussion and exchanges are not attributed.

Photos of the event are available [here](#).

Official opening and welcoming remarks

Abdelaziz El Omari, Mayor of Casablanca welcomed delegates and participants. He emphasised that migration is a key question for both Casablanca and Morocco and that too frequently this question is dealt in a biased and prejudiced way. He mentioned that the question of the welcoming and inclusion of migrants is crucial and that Casablanca uses cultural and sports policies as a springboard in its path towards social cohesion.

Mouloud El Kamel, Embassy of Switzerland in Morocco highlighted that culture is an entry point in migrant inclusion and integration. When a migrant lost everything, culture is the only thing left. Thus, it is important to see culture as an element of resilience and resistance and as a vector of integration in a new environment. Cities and municipalities are at the heart of this process and should serve as anchor point to develop such policies.



Mohamed Boussraoui, United Cities and Local Governments, pointed out that despite cities and municipalities have less means and resources they are at the core of the integration process, managing migrants' daily needs. UCLG has a Committee of Culture, which can support and nourish the discussion and discourse on migration. Cultural policies are pivotal and will be mainstreamed both in the 12th GFMD Summit (Quito, January 2020) and in the Tenth World Urban Forum (Abu Dhabi, February 2020).

Lamine Abbad, ICMPPD, presented the objectives of the meeting and the methodology of the exchange. He emphasized the key role of dialogue for sharing examples and practices among peers and learning how to replicate or adapt some of them to the own local context.

Key concepts and definitions

Marta Llobet, UCLG Culture Committee, introduced the [reference document](#), its key concepts and definition on cultural policies as vector for migrant's inclusion in urban context, including:

- The relationship between migration, local integration and culture in the Mediterranean region and the vital role of municipalities in formulating policy to initiate the action;
- The interpretation of the “role of art” and “intercultural dialogue” varies from one municipality to another. Such interpretation or some preconceptions of the municipality affect directly the course of its actions and possibilities offered in contributing to migrants' inclusion through cultural policies. Thus, it is essential for municipalities to think and define such concepts, adopting an extensive approach to allow the possibility to intervene in a broad scope of activities;
- The necessity to change migration and human mobility narrative, being negatively portrayed and relayed in the popular imagination, to convey a more emphatic and constructive narrative;
- The use and role of culture to raise people self-esteem and confidence to develop their skills and contribution to the host city, to raise awareness toward the host community, to be a communication channels to discuss and debate about sensitive topics, to involve people in deciding for their future;
- A cultural policy should take into account the following consideration: municipalities and other actors, integration policy regimes, target audience and type of cultural practitioners, challenging preconception;
- A cultural policy should take into account the following six points of intervention to build its strategy:
 1. Reception of newcomers;
 2. Personal development and inclusion;
 3. Community development & public space;
 4. Memory and heritage;
 5. Employment and cultural industries;
 6. New balances narrative on diversity.




Challenges

Among the different sessions held with participants, including **presentations** (available [here](#)), debate and sharing best practices and lessons learnt, many challenges were identified. Some are related to migrants' inclusion in the municipalities, others are challenges faced by entities supporting migrant's integration.

Challenges faced by entities

Many organisations, local authorities or NGOs have a strong will and interest to develop more cultural policies that contribute to enhance migrants' inclusion. However, many challenges arise when translating the concepts into practice:

1. Migrant integration and adaptation process. The main challenge arising is the question **on how to make a city more inclusive through culture** as most public policies lack to have a cultural dimension. **How to coexist in the same space?** (Sousse municipality, Greater Irbid municipality, Nador municipality).
2. Stakeholders' dialogue and collaboration. Another crosscutting challenge is the **lack of collaboration between the various stakeholders** such as municipalities, governmental institutions, ministries, civil society, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and associations (Nador municipality, Ramallah municipality).
3. Capacity building and technical support to municipalities. **The lack of capacities of municipal staff** is also a challenge mentioned in some situations (Greater Amman municipality) that are directly addressing the issue. Municipalities also need to **assess the efficiency of their local policies** and take corrective measures or adopt a different approach when necessary.
4. Initiative' sustainability. **Sustainably and fund securing** is identified as the main challenge (Sousse municipality, Association des coaches territoriaux de la région de l'Oriental, Greater Amman municipality), often coupled with an important **bureaucracy** requiring authorities to prioritise certain topics over culture (Thissaghnasse Association for Culture and Development – ASTICUDE, Greater Amman municipality).
5. Cultural differences. The local context is sometimes the biggest challenge. In some cases, groups with strong resentment feelings create **tensions between host communities and migrants** (Greater Irbid municipality, Association des coaches territoriaux de la région de l'Oriental, Sousse municipality). This is a direct consequence of migration being described using a biased **narrative** that **focuses** only on the **negative aspects**.
6. Legal challenges. **The administrative legal status** is also a burden to the involvement of some individuals or groups (Sousse municipality, Greater Amman municipality).



Challenges faced in migrant integration

Migrants arriving to a new city face many challenges in their day to day. Based on their experience, the participants shared some of the most pressing challenges migrants face in their cities:

1. Migrant integration and adaptation process. Upon arrivals, key challenges met are the **lack of welcoming infrastructures** to allow **guiding the newcomers** through **social insertion**. Migrants are lost in the administrative and social procedures that they have to follow both at the local and national level (Sousse municipality). The **language barrier** is here an important layer that will slow down or speed up the process.
2. Communitarianism and discrimination. Migrants are often discriminated based on language, cultural, religious or ethnic differences with the host country. They have difficulties to be understood and to understand the administrative procedure of the new home. Migrants can face **racial and religious discrimination**. Thus, the entire **migrant capacity of adaptation** is challenged from its arrival (Association des coachs territoriaux de la region de l’Oriental).
3. Access to basic services. Migrants regularly face difficulties in accessing basic services upon their arrival in the city. For example, the lack of introduction and guidance at first lead to challenges in accessing health and medical infrastructures or signing up to benefit from social services. Access to education for children is another challenge. Another key issue would be housing, as it requires a lot of planning from the municipalities, which is difficult to predict (Sousse municipality). Finally **employment**, access to the market or access to **training and workshop** to help the new comers reach the labour market and **support to insert** themselves if another challenge (Greater Irbid municipality, Greater Amman municipality).
4. The lack of infrastructures. Many participants acknowledge the **lack of existing infrastructures** (towns and cities of Cameroon, city of Ramallah) to support new comers on all level (welcoming structure, social one, and cultural one). Housing requires an important planning from the city and is a long-term objective as building and creating new infrastructures takes time and can face many internal issues such as bureaucracy, necessity of political approval, tender with long deadline to respects.
5. Legal challenges. Newcomers are challenged by legal matters such as the **absence of legal status** that would support their inclusion in society and its administrative scheme. Furthermore, **the newcomer identity is constantly changing** – evolving from being a newcomer to not being a migrant anymore in the city without always feeling like a local yet – **providing a legal status and rights** would help them relate in their everyday life as locals (Greater Amman municipality, ASTICUDE).
6. Cultural differences. Integration of newcomers with different cultural background could lead to potential clash of culture and values between the host community and the newcomers. Migrants can face social and cultural unawareness if not introduced to the new society habits and customs and might feel reluctant in getting involved in the city and its social and cultural activities (Ras El Metn municipality).



Opportunities

The challenges mentioned in the above section can be tackled through various means. Participants shared their experience and practices in this frame. Some of them have being listed below:


Challenges faced by entities and opportunities to override them

By having a better understanding of the nexus between culture and its stakeholders, municipalities could develop more inclusive policies using the cultural angle to re-think about how all stakeholders, actors and citizen can coexist in the same space.

1. Migrant integration and adaptation process can be supported by the **promotion of cultural event, workshops, festivals** dedicated to all citizen and new comers (Ramallah municipality, Greater Irbid municipality).
2. Stakeholders' dialogue and collaboration can be overcome through aligning and **creating coherent space between CSOs and the municipalities' cultural agenda**. Participants also advised on defining precisely the role of each stakeholder to ensure effectiveness and **hold them accountable** in their actions. Stakeholders suggested **involving the private sector and research institutes** during all cultural activities as well as joint project initiatives that involve both the municipality and CSOs or NGOs (City of Vienna, Association des Coachs Territoriaux de la Région de l'Oriental). **Creating partnerships with ministries** is a good solution, thus, some participants **included their cultural event into a national one** to get contact and support by the ministries in charge (Association des Coachs Territoriaux de la Région de l'Oriental).
3. Capacity building and technical support to municipalities should be strengthened when municipalities realise shortcomings in terms of skills and knowledge from their staff. They should **request support and training from competent CSOs or NGOs** through **capacity building activities** (Greater Amman Municipality). By increasing the capacity of the city hall staff, projects will be more likely to happen in an efficient way.
4. Initiative' sustainability and legal challenges can be overcome through assessing the efficiency of local policies by **conducting a survey to understand the needs of the community**. For example, in some cases conducted a survey towards migrants lead to understanding that many would not attend school due to the language barrier. In another case, it is by conducting a survey that the municipality understood the training needs of woman migrants and allowed them to shape an adequate programme (Greater Amman Municipality). The use of surveys to assess whether local policies are going in the right direction **can support sustainability** of the project and convince donors to keep supporting initiatives through **funding**.


Challenges faced in migrant integration and opportunities to override them

1. Migrant integration and adaptation process can be supported through: **language schools** creation, **public welcoming and orientation** of migrants in their language of origin upon their



arrival (City of Amsterdam, City of Tangier), the **translation of documents** in their national language to support their **understanding of the legal system**, provide **training for the vulnerable** to help them inserting in the society. In addition, **involving migrants and new comers and letting them the opportunity to propose initiative, to participate in designing new projects** (Greater Irbid Municipality) will contribute to facilitate integration through culture and support heritage and memory. Those initiatives will also fight against communitarianism and discrimination. Other means to override it would be **integration workshops**, support provision to new comers since their arrival, **listen to associations defending their rights** (Moroccan Intercultural Cities Network) and support mixed neighbourhood in migrant's inclusion to reduce tensions with the host community (Association des Coachs Territoriaux de la Région de l'Oriental, Ras El Metn municipality).

2. The lack of access to basic services can be override through the promotion of personal development, **training, capacity building**, learning and **employment** (Greater Amman municipality, Association des Coachs Territoriaux de la Région de l'Oriental) . Migrants can be supported in **applying for social benefits, enrolling their children** to join the **education system**. The provision of services such as **mediation, psychological therapy** will also give them the opportunity to move on and reshape their life in the city new context. However, to avoid tensions with the host community, the access to basic services must be **open to all citizen**, migrants and host to avoid discrimination and affect one of the party. In some cases, **quotas where introduced** (50% migrants 50% host introduced in Jordan) to limit tension. However, rather than limiting tensions, **creating a common space between all parties should be the main driver to develop access to basic services** (ASTICUDE, Ras El Metn municipality).
3. The employment challenged can be addressed through **encourage entrepreneurship** of new comers once they completed trainings and learnt new skills (Greater Amman Municipality supporting women migrants in training which resulted in their financial contribution to the household). Municipalities can support employment through **trainings provision** (City of Amsterdam, Association des Coachs Territoriaux de la Région de l'Oriental) but also through the **facilitation of the legal and administrative procedures** that will allow a new comer **to work** (Greater Amman Municipality). This is interlinked with the legal challenged faced and the difficulty to work for a new comers that is not recognised legally. Thus **providing a legal status to new comers** with help them in their administrative, social and work process (Jordan now provided a legal status to migrants).
4. Cultural differences can be tackle through the **organization of workshops and cultural event to change mentalities** (Ramallah municipality, Greater Irbid municipality). Those activities can be easily replicated, for example music and dance workshops or asking for the support of a famous singer to support changing mentalities through an event. Cultural differences also gives the **opportunity to promote intercultural dialogues** through numerous spaces such as museum, heritage protection, public spaces, and cultural infrastructures (ASTICUDE).

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5. Support narrative construction through sensitisation campaign, promoting citizenship during all events and activities conducted, city branding telling that the city is for everyone (Sousse municipality, Ras El Metn municipality). Involving citizens in shaping the cultural strategy of the city is also a great initiative (Greater Irbid municipality). Municipalities can also use cultural event to showcase the positive side of migration to the economic and employment level and educate the youngest in learning how to accept each other. The role of the media is also crucial in conveying positive message related to migration rather than stigmatising new comers (Association des Coachs Territoriaux de la Région de l’Oriental).

Learnings and recommendations

We can note that each country has a different context and that not every recommendation can be duplicated or applied everywhere. Opportunities need to be adapted to singular contexts. However, culture is a source of contribution and development for every city. Although culture is not mainstreamed yet in key international declarations and agendas, it must be seen as a vector and mean allowing achieving their objectives.

Key learnings and recommendations

1. It is a **necessity to target both host communities and migrants, as well as all type of migrants** (regular and irregular) in municipalities projects and policies to avoid tension and resentment between communities;
2. **Collaboration and coordination between the municipality and stakeholders** (governmental institutions and ministries, CSOs, NGOs, private sector, research institutes, associations) **gives more strength to the message being disseminated** and offers a wide range of means to act and deliver project and activities. Coordination is essential and defining clearly each entity role allows empowering and holding them accountable of their action.
3. **The alignment of the municipality cultural agenda and action plan with the one from other stakeholders allow cohesion and a better coordination** to create synergies and gather means, funds and workforce to delivery cultural events.
4. **The conduction of surveys to assess the needs of communities** (hosts, the vulnerable, women) **allow verifying the relevance of the implemented policies**. It helps understanding better some of the challenges met and allow municipalities to take action.
5. **Convey a new narrative on migration showing the positive aspect of migration combined with cultural event can help reducing tension with the host community**. Such process needs to build the capacity of media to address correctly the issue.
6. **Encourage the creation of a legal status to facilitation integration of migrants in their administrative and social procedures**.
7. **Bottom-up, horizontal and collaborative approach in policy development are good ways to shape policies**.