



MEDITERRANEAN CITY-TO-CITY MIGRATION

CITY CASE STUDY

LYON

GABRIEL PÉRI SQUARE: MEDIATION ACTIVITIES FOR
SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN LYON

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

PUBLIC SPACE

MEDIATION

PREVENTION

SOCIAL COHESION

LYON

TURIN

VIENNA

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This case study was developed in the framework of the Mediterranean City-to-City Migration Project (MC2CM), a project coordinated by ICMPD and funded by the European Union and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The MC2CM project has been working since 2015 with Amman, Beirut, Lisbon, Lyon, Madrid, Tangiers, Tunis, Turin and Vienna to increase the knowledge base on urban migration. Additionally the

project has sought to nurture a peer-to-peer dialogue and mutual learning on specific urban challenges such as social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, employment and provision of basic services for migrants, among others. This case study was selected by the Municipality of Lyon in order to showcase a practice that contributes to social inclusion of migrants at the local level.

SUPPORT OF MEDIATION ACTIVITIES IN LYON TO SECURE THE PUBLIC SPACE AT GABRIEL PÉRI SQUARE AND TO FACILITATE LONG-TERM SOCIAL COHESION

ABSTRACT

The city of Lyon has a rich migratory history and new arrivals often find their way to Gabriel Péri square. This location acts as an important landing place for migrants, playing an important role in the reception, accommodation and integration of Lyon's diverse populations. However, in recent years, social tensions have increased at Gabriel Péri square. In particular, the intensification of a daily informal market run by migrants, along with activities in and around the area's asylum seeker and homeless shelters, have combined to create an atmosphere of insecurity for local residents and shopkeepers.

In order to mitigate these challenges, the City of Lyon first invested heavily in exclusionary planning measures aiming to

secure the public space. However, this approach did not produce satisfactory results. On the contrary, draconian measures only served to heighten the sense of unease within the neighbourhood. More recently, the City has adopted a more integrated approach, as can be seen within the pilot project **Agence Lyon Tranquillité Médiation (ALTM)**. This initiative, designed to maintain a secure and peaceful environment Gabriel Péri square, deploys uniformed mediators to promote long-term social cohesion in a specific and 'problematic' area of the city. This state-led intervention exemplifies how social cohesion can be strengthened through a collective, holistic approach that aims at building bridges rather than promoting exclusionary security measures.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Lyon is the third largest city in France, after Paris and Marseille. Located on the transit route between the Mediterranean Sea and Northern Europe, Lyon has a rich migratory history. In 2012, the city's share of foreign born migrants rose to 13.6%, surpassing the national average of 11.4%. In Lyon, foreign-born migrants typically reside in inner-city or close suburban districts.

Although in France migration falls within the mandate of national government, local governments are responsible for the provision of social services to all local residents – including foreign-born migrants. In this regard, Lyon has pursued a number of inclusive policies, targeting the provision of adequate shelter, education and employment for all residents, whilst also moving to challenge discrimination. Despite these efforts, difficulties persist and social inclusion remains a major challenge.

The Gabriel Péri square is located in the Guillotière area of Lyon, a neighbourhood appointed as a priority in the frame of the city policy. Situated at the intersection of several major traffic routes, Gabriel Péri square is a central transport and mobility hub. For a long time, the square has played an important role for the reception, accommodation and integration of vulnerable populations in the city of Lyon due to its good transport connections, proximity to the Prefecture and the offer of key social services (accommodation, a social restaurant project, point of contact for assistance, various ethnic markets etc.). Such socially vulnera-

ble groups include internal and international migrants as well as homeless, asylum seekers and rejected asylum seekers who fall through any social support system.

The following case study looks at the initiative known as **ALTM (Agence Lyon Tranquillité Médiation)**, which was initiated in 2014 and focuses on mediation activities in and around the Gabriel Péri square in Lyon.

IMPLEMENTATION

In recent years, Gabriel Péri square has been the scene of increasing social tension resulting from a mix of overlapping processes. The square also hosts a number of informal economic survival activities, most visible amongst these being a daily informal market. Other informal activities in the square include hawking, begging and prostitution. Specific problems related to these informal economies have compounded existing social tensions in and around the area's shelters for asylum seekers and homeless people. Considered in combination, these developments have created an atmosphere of insecurity and tension for residents and shopkeepers in the neighbourhood. Meanwhile, insufficient funding and a lack of coordination have hampered the efficiency of social services provided at Gabriel Péri square, along with their capacity to address the diverse needs presented by all users.

In order to address the sense of insecurity at Gabriel Péri square, the City of Lyon ini-

tially implemented a strict programme of security measures. This included removing street furniture from the area to dissuade people from loitering; the installation of surveillance cameras; and amplifying police operations such as seizing goods, issuing fines and making arrests. However, this approach proved unsatisfactory: it required extensive financial and human resources without leading to significant improvements.

Faced with these unjustified costs, the City of Lyon sought alternative and complementary measures to alleviate the tensions experienced at Gabriel Péri square. The use of social mediation approaches being more efficient in social prevention contexts, the City of Lyon decided to adopt a similar approach in a more conflictual setting of the Gabriel Péri square. A pilot project was instituted in September 2014 and is known as **Agence Lyon Tranquillité Médiation (ALTM)**. In contrast to the earlier punitive actions, the ALTM project, deploys uniformed mediators to work towards long-term social cohesion objectives. The mediators are positioned in the square during business hours from Monday to Friday and to the end of preventing and managing conflict. The physical presence, the visibility and the proximity of the social services make possible to bring solutions, both to the needs of the inhabitants and the ones of the migrants who frequent the place. Activities include awareness raising, reassurance of people living and working in the area around Gabriel Péri square, easing tensions, providing security and orientating people to access their rights.

The ALTM pilot is nested within a multi-stakeholder approach. Indeed, the design and implementation of project activities are followed through by the Lyon municipality in partnership with the State, the Lyon Metropolis, public bodies that provide social housing (Grand Lyon Habitat, OPAC du Rhône, ALLIADE Habitat, SACVL, Immobilière Rhône-Alpes and Lyon Métropole Habitat), public transport companies (SNCF, KEOLIS Lyon) and public utility companies (ERDF-GRDF, Eau du grand Lyon and La poste – electricity, water and post office). The operational implementation of the project is coordinated by the safety and prevention services of the City of Lyon, under the direction of the Deputy Mayor responsible for security and public order.

On the back of its ‘success’ – the intervention has contributed to the easing of tensions and the overall improvement of the atmosphere around Gabriel Péri square – the ALTM initiative has been scaled up and is currently running in eight public places (as of October 2017).

FINANCING AND RESOURCES

ALTM is supported by financial contributions from various partners (local authorities/social housing companies/transporters/private stakeholders) on the basis of territorial projects. The annual costs for the ALTM initiative is around 200,000 euros, which covers all eight public places where the mediation operation is currently running.

The City of Lyon has a strong coordinating role, facilitating the partnership between financial partners, implementing partners and other involved stakeholders.

RESULTS AND IMPACTS

The ALTM intervention introduced in 2014 follows an integrated approach and focuses on aspects of social prevention and social cohesion. Main activities executed at the square include the presence of uniformed mediators; awareness raising activities; interventions to remind people of applicable regulations in public spaces (regulation related to alcohol consumption or illegal narcotic substances); and access to information (related to social services and welfare offers targeting mainly for people living in poverty and/or distress).

Referral to Public Services is a key process to meet the needs of users of Gabriel Péri's square. Such an approach, nonetheless, requires close monitoring and the close collaboration with the responsible authorities. The mediation team at Gabriel Péri square consists of four mediators and one manager. Their weekly reports are regularly shared and discussed with all project stakeholders (although protocols are not made publicly available). This allows the close monitoring and observation of the situation and can trigger informed adjustments, if necessary.

In the period from 1 January to 15 September 2017, the ALTM team has intervened in 4,157 cases, of which 1,361 at the Gabriel Péri square (32.7% of all the interventions), which demonstrates the high continue priority of the project. Overall, the effects of the ALTM initiative at Gabriel Péri Square are manifest in positive changes in the area, including the reduction of social tensions and an improvement to the sense of safety and security, as users of the Gabriel Péri square reported. The mediation approach has, in particular, allowed local residents and shopkeepers to reclaim the public space. Testimony to this fact, from 2015 onwards, the square has hosted local events and entertainment related to theatre or music.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Throughout the project, the ALTM has been confronted with three types of challenges:

- Access to financial resources
- Unforeseen changes in the social fabric of the square (e.g. changing migration and demographic patterns)
- Know-how related to the functioning of different institutions

The ALTM intervention requires a deepened understanding of the work and structures of partner organisations (both associative and institutional) in order to 'heal' the public

space in a sustainable manner and respond proactively to demands on the ground.

The social context at play within the square is diverse and complex and it is critical that interventions respect and reflect this. Many issues can only be resolved with the support of emergency services and/or other professional organisations that provide assistance to vulnerable people. While the ALTM intervention focuses heavily on social cohesion and reclaiming the public space for citizens, its social mediation approach is accompanied by offers targeting specific vulnerable groups. This implies in particular contacting with organizations that provide support to specific groups such as prostitutes.

This said, such support is not provided equally to all users of the square. ALTM mediators are, for instance, instructed to ask hawkers to pick up and remove their vending goods; in some cases, the police have been called in to intervene. This response severely limits opportunities for the inclusion of groups / individuals unable to act within official channels, such as individuals engaged in informal economic activities and foreign migrants who lack recognition as having rights (e.g. rejected asylum seekers or people without official documents).

LESSONS LEARNED

Overall, the intervention ALTM has proven to be successful and contributed to the alleviation of social tensions in public

spaces with complex social dynamics. The mediation approach allows for social interactions in a more secure environment and thereby fosters social cohesion. By providing guidance and facilitating the referral among public and private institutions, ALTM furthermore contributes to a dialogue between various stakeholders and thus to more sustainable social integration. However, the multi-stakeholder partnership needs some clear guiding principles to mitigate the trade-off between the public interest and the assurance of everyone's rights within a human rights approach (e.g. rights of hawkers, rejected asylum seekers or people without official documents).

In order to provide a holistic approach, the initiative builds on a collective of stakeholders. Working with various partners requires a well-established partner network with frequent exchange and coordination meetings to allow engagements to be refined in practice. The establishment of weekly monitoring reports shared amongst all stakeholders is an important element to keep track of unforeseen developments that emerge on the ground. An intervention like the ALTM requires flexibility to respond to the external factors that might influence the setting on the ground (e.g. changing migration and demographic patterns, new/ changes policies and political messages etc.).

The ALTM initiative does communicate an emerging awareness about the needs and rights of certain groups living precariously in Lyon. However, there remains an unresolved tension regarding the balance to be reached between security and mediation

interventions. In order to address the needs of all inhabitants, the human rights based approaches piloted by the ALTM require strengthening and democratising. This includes the offer of social support to the full diversity of Lyon's public space users. Such an approach would further ease tensions in the area and strengthen social cohesion by recognising the right of all inhabitants to urban life.

REFERENCES

The presented case study builds on information provided by the Municipality of Lyon. This includes oral information from skype calls as well as written, unpublished information on the initiatives and the MC2CM City Migration Profile on Lyon. The case study furthermore draws on information from:

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No interviews with the mediators, project beneficiaries or local civil society actors have been conducted.

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