INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION 2015: CONFERENCE ON MIGRANTS AND CITIES

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MIGRATION AND LOCAL PLANNING: ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Background Paper

INTRODUCTION

The framework linking migration, urban governance and policy planning is a complex one. For this reason, the present paper, rather than being exhaustive, aims to provide an overview of the main challenges and opportunities – and importance – of linking migration-related policies and initiatives with urban and local governance. It draws on the experience of IOM and the concepts developed in the context of the 2015 World Migration Report, which covers the theme of migrants and cities and will feed into the discussions of the Conference on Migrants and Cities.

More specifically, the paper presents IOM's understanding of migration as a complex issue that affects and is affected by, both positively and negatively, a vast array of policy areas at the local level. Therefore, linking migration with urban policies requires not only the recognition of the complexities inherent to migration, but also coordination between multiple stakeholders, including migrants themselves, and at all levels ranging from the local to the international level.

Migration as a cross-cutting issue in local planning

More than half of the world population (54% in 2014) lives in cities, and this share is expected to increase to 66 per cent by 2050.[1] Almost all the growth in the world population over the next few decades – another 2.7 billion – is expected to take place in urban centres in low- and middle-income countries where poverty reduction is slow and large deficits in the provision of basic services remain.[2] Strong population growth in cities puts enormous pressure on infrastructure, the environment and the social fabric of urban areas.

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[1] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, Highlights* (New York, 2014).

[2] UNDESA, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision* (New York, 2012).

Urbanization is therefore one of the great challenges currently being faced by societies around the globe, and its rapid development makes it important to define effective urban planning strategies that also address the other major issues of the day, such as environmental change, poverty and inequalities.

Among the drivers of rapid urbanization, human mobility is one of the most important, together with other demographic trends such as fertility and longevity. Indeed, for many cities, migration has become a more important determinant of population growth and age structures than fertility and mortality.[3]

Migration is therefore an essential parameter to be taken into account in urban planning. This is true not only for the challenges related to demographic densification, but also in terms of the socioeconomic dynamics that characterize migration. Migrants bring with them networks and values, which, if properly considered, may be turned into valuable opportunities for both host and home territories.

In addition to contributing to demographic trends, through their mobility, migrants also contribute to connecting cities to other cities and territories, in several ways:

- Migrants often stay connected with their home territories, where they keep in touch with their family and friends. This gives rise to a multitude of dynamics across territories which go beyond the transfer of remittances.

- Migrants sometimes return temporarily or permanently and may build on the networks and capacities developed during their stay in the host territory to increase the chances of their return being successful.

- Migrants and migrant associations may contribute to the development of home and host territories, both directly (i.e. through individual or collective initiatives, or trade) and indirectly (through transnational and translocal networks).

- The establishment of migrant communities in specific cities may lead to the creation or consolidation of migration corridors, which in turn may connect host and home territories through trade relations and social and cultural networks, sometimes paving the way for decentralized cooperation.

- People may migrate to different territories in their lifetime, further building and consolidating transnational and translocal networks between different cities and territories.

These dynamics lead to the strengthening of extensive transnational, translocal and multidirectional networks among cities which may constitute great opportunities for development planning in urban centres if they are well understood and taken into account. For this reason, the relationship between migration and urban planning should be considered not only in view of the challenges that migration and quick demographic growth create with respect to infrastructure, housing, provision of services and availability of opportunities, but also in terms of the opportunities that migration may provide if it is well managed and integrated into all levels of policymaking. Indeed, for migration to be integrated into local and urban planning, it must be recognized as a cross-cutting phenomenon, affecting and being affected by most national and local sectoral policies. This also implies recognizing that most territories are at the same time home, host and transit territories and therefore shift from a discourse centred on in-migration and outmigration (or on the oversimplification of considering Southern territories as home countries and Northern territories as host countries) towards the recognition of migration as a transnational or translocal and multidirectional dynamic. The fact that

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3   R. Skeldon, "Global migration: demographic aspects and its relevance for development", UNDESA Technical Paper No. 2013/6 (New York, 2013).

close to half of global urban-dwellers reside in a multitude of relatively small settlements of less than 500,000 inhabitants[4] gives an indication of the density of the transnational and translocal networks potentially created by migrants across cities.

This highlights the importance of sound migration management policies as a prerequisite for inclusive urban development. In this context, the role of local authorities, and more generally of local actors (including civil society and the private sector), is increasingly recognized as key in linking migration with urban planning and development. As proximity actors, local authorities are the best informed about local realities and the most likely to integrate migration into local planning, while taking into account global challenges and opportunities and local particularities. Recent decentralization trends only add to the relevance of local actors as strategic partners in the definition and implementation of migration-related policies and initiatives with a global impact on population dynamics.

Migration as a key element in urban planning

In recent decades, particularly in the global South, poorly managed urban migration has often resulted in the development of informal or ineffective solutions to address basic needs, and the exclusion of migrants from access to land, housing and job markets and health and education services. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) estimates that one out of every three people in cities of the developing world lives in a slum comprising migrants and other urban poor.[5]

At the same time, moving to cities can greatly enhance people's well-being: it can mean escaping the impact of hazards on fragile rural livelihoods and accessing diverse employment opportunities and better health and education. While the promotion of access to basic services and opportunities in rural areas remains a key challenge, well-managed migration towards cities has the potential to increase the well-being of the people who move as well as those who stay behind, while contributing to positive socioeconomic dynamics in the urban areas of destination.

Promoting the socioeconomic inclusion of migrants in their host territory, through the provision of services and opportunities, ensures their integration into local life. This includes participation in the economy (in the labour market and also in support of the fiscal and welfare systems), as well as in the local culture and society as a whole. In this sense, a rights-based approach to migration, supported by the delivery of relevant services, is one of the keys to integration, and recent research highlights strong correlations between effective provision of migrant-inclusive services and urban development in the major emerging economies.[6]

In pursuing more inclusive urban governance, cities today link local urban social cohesion to economic growth and global competitiveness.[7] The participation and inclusion of migrants in their host territories is an essential part of building stable, open and vibrant communities that assure the socioeconomic future of a country. It is also a key element enabling migrants to participate directly or indirectly in the development of their home territory.

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[4]   UNDESA, 2014, op. cit.

[5]   UN-Habitat, *State of the World's Cities 2006/7* (Nairobi, 2006).

[6]   Economic Policy Forum and the China Institute for Reform and Development, Report on the Roundtable Meeting on "Urbanisation and Migration: Creating Equitable Access to Basic Services", 3 November 2013. Haikou, Hainan Province, China.

[7]   Metropolis, *Integrated Urban Governance: The Way Forward,* Commission 3 Manual (2011).

Local authorities must be committed to including migration at all levels of urban policies in order for the role of migrants as local actors to be strengthened. Diverse policies, such as those aiming to fight xenophobia, to provide migrants with access to relevant information and services, to facilitate migrants' access to the labour market, and to foster migrant participation in the social and political life of the territories concerned, are key in promoting social inclusion and cohesion.

Local policymaking must address the complex nature of migration and not limit its scope to remittances or in-migration and outmigration; its vision should also encompass transnational dynamics. Local authorities are in a position to be involved throughout the migration cycle, from the provision of information to prospective migrants to the effective (re)integration of newcomers or returnees, the inclusion of migrants within the socioeconomic life of their territory and the promotion of transnational and translocal linkages. As service providers responsible for decentralized institutions, local authorities are indeed at the forefront of establishing enabling public policies that are beneficial to migrants and the population at large.

Urban management and humanitarian crises

Linking migration management and urban and local planning is also important in the context of humanitarian crises.

Population movements towards, within and between urban areas are an increasingly common feature of humanitarian crises. On the one hand, in times of crisis cities often offer relative safety and protected access to resources and opportunities – and therefore represent an obvious destination for populations moving from affected areas. On the other hand, as conflicts and disasters become increasingly urban, migration crises unfold more and more in urban settings. In addition, most of those on the move (economic migrants, students, displaced persons and refugees) live in urban areas and their special needs and vulnerabilities in times of crisis should be specifically addressed in urban emergency planning and responses.

For those responsible for managing risks and emergencies, the urban landscape poses a different set of challenges: diversity of affected populations, concentration of people and assets, need for coordination among various actors, and continuity among crisis-induced and pre-existing conditions of vulnerability. All of these factors require the relevant actors to rethink and redesign existing preparedness and response models.

Massive, sudden population movements put pressure on cities and challenge local actors, including city authorities, service providers, private companies and host communities. If inadequately managed, they can have long-term effects on people's well-being and security, including by reducing access to employment, public health, education, safe water and sanitation – which in turn can fuel tensions within host communities. City authorities, the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a fundamental role in reducing potential vulnerabilities of forced migrants in cities. Inclusive access to basic services and opportunities is key to successfully addressing displacement, promoting the integration of newcomers into the urban fabric and creating more sustainable human settlements.

Migrants, cities and governance – the importance of partnerships

Despite the progress made in some cities, city and municipal governments do not give priority to including migration in local planning. Inclusive local plans, policies and measures, in particular at the

city level, are critical in defining migrants' well-being and resilience. Effective national and international instruments and institutions also need to be put in place.

Local initiatives developed by local authorities, civil society, diaspora associations or through partnerships among these actors are, however, flourishing in several cities and territories in the global South and the global North, with various levels of impact. Some States have recognized the importance of the local level in the co-development framework since the 1990s, and the international community is increasingly active in engagement with local actors.[8]

Indeed, as local actors are increasingly recognized in the international arena, great opportunities are being created for partnerships at all levels, from the local to the international level, both within States and across borders.

Such partnerships and interaction raise the important question of coordination and policy coherence. From this point of view, the integration of migration into sectoral policies and planning at the national level,[9] together with the development of coordination mechanisms to ensure coherence between local and national policies, is important to establish sound local policies that reflect the specificities of each territory and the national and global challenges and opportunities related to migration.

Similarly, the diversity of the actors potentially involved in such partnerships raises the issue of ownership and participation. Territories – both in the global North and the global South – are increasingly recognizing the importance of these factors, and setting-up mechanisms that facilitate the adoption multi-stakeholder approaches. These approaches include the creation of formal or semi-formal institutions reflecting the position of all stakeholders, including migrant groups, both within the country and abroad.[10]

In particular, considering migration as a transnational dynamic, and international migrants as stakeholders in local policies, also opens up opportunities in terms of decentralized cooperation mechanisms, which link local or regional territories across borders.

Moreover, the number of potential stakeholders is high, the possibilities for partnership are wide, and existing initiatives are diverse. It is therefore useful to set up dialogue structures that take stock of these dynamics to identify and discuss their strengths and weaknesses, to share good practices and lessons learned and to foster innovation in policymaking and partnership creation. This is being done in several international forums, such as the Mayoral Forum on Mobility, Migration and Development, which held its first session in Barcelona in 2014, with a second one planned to take place in Quito in 2015. The 2015 Conference on Migrants and Cities will bring together relevant national and local actors to discuss for the first time in a global policy forum the complex dynamics of human mobility at city and local level and assess how risks can be managed and development opportunities maximized.

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[8]   See, for instance, the Joint Migration and Development Initiative, an inter-agency initiative funded by the European Commission and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation: www.migration4development.org/.

[9]   See Global Migration Group, *Mainstreaming Migration into Development Planning: A handbook for policy-makers and practitioners* (IOM, Geneva, 2010).

[10]   The European Migrant Integration Academy is a good example of a multi-stakeholder approach (see www.eu-mia.eu/content_view).

Conclusion

The present paper provides an overview of the issues, challenges and opportunities related to linking migration with local and urban planning, as well as some of the main arguments in favour of effectively considering this link as fundamental to the development of urban centres around the globe. The main points discussed can be summarized as follows:

- Migration is one of the main features contributing to urban growth, and therefore needs to be readily incorporated into urban planning.

- Migration brings challenges as well as opportunities related to urban planning. Adequate resources and capacities to support the provision of services and opportunities are key to accommodate rapid demographic growth. Furthermore, transnational and translocal linkages and the diversity brought by migration, if adequately managed and promoted, can benefit both home and host territories.

- To address the challenges and build on the opportunities related to migration at the local level, it is important to recognize that migration is a cross-cutting issue, affecting and being affected by, both positively and negatively, most national and local sectoral policies.

- The same applies in the context of humanitarian crises. City authorities, the private sector and NGOs play a fundamental role in reducing potential vulnerabilities of forced migrants in cities. Inclusive access to basic services and opportunities is key to successfully address displacement, promote integration of newcomers in the urban fabric and create more sustainable human settlements.

- Local actors are therefore increasingly recognized as key in addressing both the challenges and opportunities in the link between migration, urbanization and the related global aspects. They have a major role in migration governance.

- Migration governance implies establishing strategic partnerships among all actors (from institutions to civil society and the private sector) at the local, national and international levels, from various sectors, and within and across borders. Such partnerships should include the participation of migrants and migrant groups.

- Owing to the diversity of the actors involved and of existing initiatives, it is important to establish platforms for dialogue, such as the International Dialogue on Migration, to build on good practices and lessons learned and to promote policy coherence at all levels.

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