

## Moroccan Cities Experiencing Migration: Towards the Local Governance of a Globalized Phenomenon

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### **Abstract:**

Due to the globalization of human mobility and international migration, cities are today the primary destination for Migrants. Though migration constitutes a *social fact* in Morocco's landscape, the various implications it has on multiple levels remain ignored, mainly at the local scale. Migrants do shape urban spaces and are in turn influenced by urban and societal interactions. Yet, migration still presents serious challenges to local actors, mainly in terms of migration governance regarding local development and the promotion of diversity. Morocco's position as an immigration country is recent. It was not until 2013 that the government launched a policy of immigration and asylum. While the country's policy on migration is widely conceived and implemented by national (*centralized*) institutions, local (*decentralized*) authorities occupy a minimal position in migration management. The overlooked local-based approach to migration governance ignores the city scale as a sociospatial sphere which allows more scrutiny to modern migration patterns.

This article highlights the importance of the local level in ensuring migrants' integration and promoting diversity in urban environments. Despite the enhanced roles of local authorities in implementing local policies, migration governance largely remains a reserved domain of national institutions. Based on a critical analysis of the experience of the Moroccan City of Oujda, I will try to underline the importance of the integration of migration as an approach in local development agendas and to acknowledge its role in the (re)formation of urban public space in Morocco.

**Key Words:** Migration; Integration; Diversity; City; Morocco.

## **Introduction:**

It is no surprise that migration is currently one of the most problematic issues around the world. It is gaining more attention as a public issue and has triggered the interest of governments, international organizations, and political actors (IOM, 2015). Several push factors, especially in the South, contribute to enhancing peoples' mobility. The economic recession and political instability can be considered the main drivers of what is referred to as the recent "migration crisis". Statistics show that the international migrant stock in 2019 reached 272 million, representing 3.5% of the global population (UNDESA, 2019). Since the so-called migration crisis, resulting mainly from political instability and popular uprisings in some parts of the North African region and in the Middle East, there has been significant attention towards the issue in several parts of the world. During the so-called crisis, media coverage largely contributed to presenting the issue as daily "bad" news, while objective scholarly-based analysis appeared to get little space. Hence, the unbalanced representations on international migration fuel anti-migration discourses, support the Far-Right rhetoric on migration and migrants, and shadow the positive approaches to migration's contributions to international development. One can argue that international migration, in contrast to the politicized and ideological rhetoric, suggests several positive influences on both migrants and receiving countries. Migration not only ensures the fluidity of human mobility as one of the fundamental human rights, but it also reinforces the economic and cultural exchanges between nations.

Recent debates on international migration have stressed the right to mobility along with the need for a renewed global framework on migration and asylum-related issues. Indeed, the uneven development rates between the North and the South regions of the world remain one of the key migration motives, plus the political instabilities, mainly in Africa and the Middle East. Destination territories such as Europe and the United States have long worked on sharpening and externalization of border management. The view on international migration as a South to North mobility has long been considered the foremost international mobility pattern. However, scholars stress that the latter asymmetry is a misconception of modern human mobility since it disregards South-South migration realities. Despite the inaccuracy and scarcity of statistics on migration influx and stocks in the global South<sup>1</sup>, a significant rise in international shares of migrants was observed. Over the past 40 years, South-South migration has grown to represent 41% of the global migration (Ratha and Shaw, 2007). By 2010, South-South migration increased to be nearly equal to South-North migration. According to the United Nation's Population Division (2012), 73 million migrants residing in the South regions originated from the

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## **<sup>1</sup>Endnotes**

One of the main reasons for data scarcity on migration in the South is the absence of institutions dedicated to collecting and analyzing migration data. For instance, it is not until December 2020 that the African Union launched the African Migration Observatory in Morocco. One of the main objectives of the Observatory is to provide accurate and updated data on migration in the African continent.

South, representing about one-third (34%) of the global stock of migrants. The same statistics suggest that 35% of international migrants residing in the North countries originated from the South region.

Numerous factors influenced the uprising interest towards South-South migration. The economic growth observed in several South regions allowed potential migrants to diversify their itineraries towards neighboring regions offering better economic and social opportunities. Besides, the formation of economic regions in the South facilitated and encouraged intra-national mobility. Moreover, situations of political instabilities and natural crises enhanced forced migration with growing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in South countries. One can also claim that restrictive policies on migration adopted by North governments contributed to the genesis of countries with diverse migratory profiles, usually referred to as "transit" countries. These countries represent new host settings for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, such as the case of Morocco, Mexico, and Turkey (De Haas, 2015).

Modern migration scholarship seeks to stress the principle of freedom of movement as a human right and a human characteristic. As far as human mobility is concerned, one can underpin that the international human rights law provides a large set of instruments that aim at protecting the rights of migrants and the right to mobility. The Universal Declaration for Human Rights (1948) clearly indicates the right to human mobility. The Declaration states that: "1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state; 2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country" (Article 13). Other instruments stress the right to mobility for refugees and asylum seekers, mainly the Convention of Geneva (1951) and its supplementing protocol (1967).

Similarly, one can also mention the adoption of the recent two Global Compacts on migration and Asylum in 2018. Nevertheless, while these international instruments provide, on the one hand, legal guarantees for migrants as well as for the right to international mobility, international law, on the other hand, recognizes the right of states to control and manage access to countries. The sovereignty of states is explicitly portrayed in the establishment of borders, (selective) visa regimes and the incrimination of "irregular" migration. Such tools stand as the political and legal systems used by states to hinder and control the universal right to mobility.

The states' desire to regulate migration can be the main reason for restrictions of international mobility. As a matter of fact, the emergence of the nation-states has essentially been influenced by cultural and ethnic identifications, which led to a systematic exclusion of ethnic and cultural groups deemed to be foreign/alien. Similarly, the evolution of the legal definition of citizenship as a concept, crystallized in belonging to a specific nationality, compromised the situation of migrants and led to the reinforcement of nationalist identification of citizenship. In this line of thinking, Thomas Nail (2019)

suggests that the political developments of state models largely contributed to the exclusion of the “foreigner” and led to the undermining of the right to human mobility. The author calls for an understanding of international mobility as a concomitant pattern to humanity’s kinetic character. The author argues that contemporary migration dynamics needs an explanation that lies beyond “[...] (T)he casual explanation of push-pull factors, psychological volunteerism, neoclassical or structural economism [...]”. In the same vein, human rights activists seek to guarantee the right to international mobility and campaign against the reinforcement of borders when more countries tend to limit their international commitments towards migration and migrants' rights.

Recent debates on international migration have focused mainly on questions of the right to mobility along with the rising anti-migration sentiments and discourses on both political and social scales. The claim for sovereignty is often applied through strict border management and the limitation of “regular” paths for potential migrants. As a result, irregular (also referred to as illegal) migration became the principal way of border crossing, challenging the sovereignty of states. In this same vein, the proliferation of transnational practices and networks reinforces the attractiveness of several destinations while engendering new forms of migration such as family reunification and circular mobility. The aforementioned dynamics encouraged the states to establish bilateral and intra-state agreements in ways that reduced their engagements towards universal frameworks. The focus on migration-related issues as a concern of circularity and movement contributed to overlooking some critical elements in the study and management of human mobility, including the effects migration and transnational communities have in shaping the host context. For instance, several scholars analyze migration through the lens of functionalist theories and “push-pull” models, which study mobility without paying attention to the social/cultural interactions that occur in the host societies (Castles, de Haas, J. Miller, 2014).

While answers to the globalization of international migration are often translated into strict border control policies, we are currently witnessing the transformation of several countries into immigration destinations and host spaces (Düvell, Molodikova, and Collyer, 2014). This reality is relevant to south Mediterranean countries, mainly in the North African region. Many of these countries turned into stopovers for thousands of Sub-Saharan migrants. The establishment of the Schengen visa regime in the early 1990s as well as the externalization of border control through Frontex mechanism enhanced South-South migration and contributed to the diversification of migratory itineraries within the African Continent (Alioua and Ferrié, 2016). Similarly, the externalization of border control contributed to limiting the arrival of irregular migrants to European shores. Likewise, Morocco’s migratory landscape was influenced by Europe’s restrictive immigration policies. The European Union’s migration policies intended to limit the influx of migration originating from the south of the Mediterranean and, thus, contributed to reinforcing the permanent character of immigration in Morocco and has shaped its recent policy developments (de Haas, 2015).

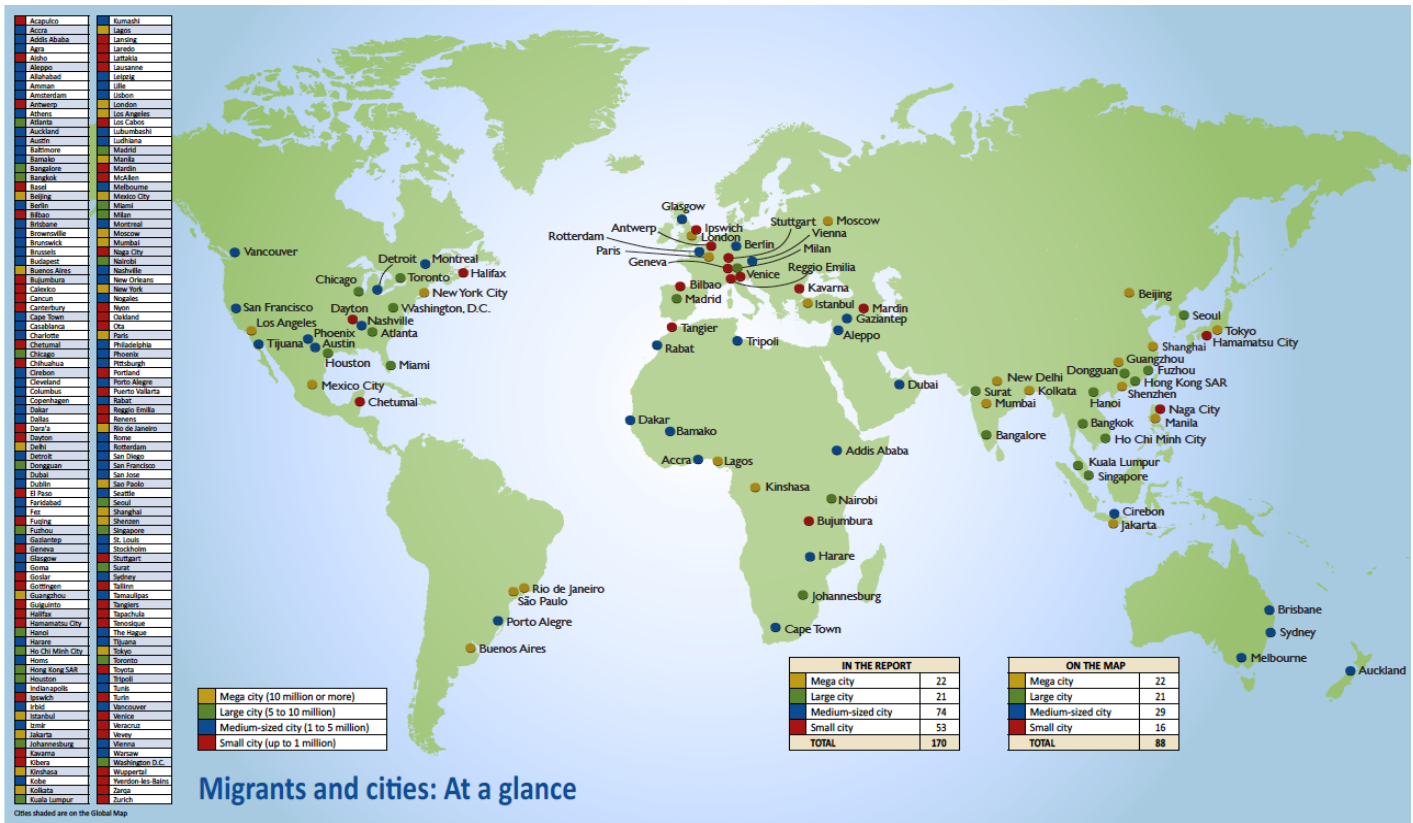
Migration-related issues in Morocco are one of the topics that gained the attention of scholars from various fields. Being a classical emigration country, the migration dynamics from Morocco and their impact on home and host societies was a topic that revealed enormous academic interest and production. According to Berriane and Aderghal (2008), the study of Moroccan emigration has been significantly studied and understood. Accordingly, Moroccan emigration was studied in Morocco and Europe. The academic interest towards the Moroccan emigration contributed to shaping public policies in Morocco as well as influenced immigration policies in host countries. However, the changes that characterized migration dynamics from Africa to Europe reinforced Morocco's position as a transit territory and, eventually, as a settlement country. In this line of thinking, Hein de Haas (2015) reveals that until very recently, "[...] (T)he idea of Morocco as an immigration country [might seem] unimaginable to most Moroccans". Nowadays, the presence of Migrants (immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers) in different locations of Morocco is noticeable.

The study of immigration as a permanent phenomenon allows a better understanding of its impact on host societies. It contributes to steering the political and public representations on migration towards a migration-friendly discourse in a given setting. Actually, the shift towards a host country does question local communities' ability to foster cultural and social diversity values. "*This means [according to Caponio, Scholten, and Zapata-Barrero] that the governance challenges associated with migration and migration-related diversity usually become manifest at the city level, from access to services and socio-economic resources to the conflicts arising from social inequalities, power relations and racisms*" (2019). Today, we are called to shed more light on the interconnectedness of migration as a globalized phenomenon and its dynamics on the local level, especially in cities. This article attempts to highlight the importance of the local level in ensuring migrants' integration. It also seeks to demonstrate the necessity of local-based integration policies as a tool to fostering diversity and citizenship in the formation of urban public spaces.

### **Migration: An urban phenomenon**

In its 2015 annual report, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) highlights the urban effects of international migration. The report qualifies migration as essentially an urban affair and shows that 50% of the 232 million international migrants inhabit urbanized, high-income areas (IOM, 2015). Several pull factors increase large-scale migration to urban areas, such as development inequalities between regions, demographic instability due to aging in some developed countries and the need for the workforce. Skeledon (2013) reveals that migration determines the demographic structure of some cities more than their fertility and mortality rates. For instance, until 1960, Johannesburg was the only city in sub-Saharan Africa with a population that surpassed a million. This number has grown to four cities in 1970 and 33 by 2010 (UN-Habitat, 2013).

Currently, more countries/nations are significantly affected by the globalization of migration. Likewise, several countries have transformed into destination territories. Such transformations expose societies to new realities characterized by diverse groups with various “economic, social and cultural backgrounds” (Castles, de Haas and J. Miller, 2014). While the effects of the globalization of human mobility are generally viewed as impacting States at the national/central level, the influence of migration also has direct effects at the local level. In fact, contemporary migration trends do challenge the traditional frameworks, defining mobility as a result of predetermined “push-pull” factors, mainly relying on the relationship between “income gaps and volumes of migration” (de Haas and Fransen, 2018).



**Cities receiving migrants around the world (2015)**  
**Source: International Organization for Migration**

There is a general misconception of migration as an influx that originates from the poorest countries and that economic growth and development are promoters of international emigration. During the last two decades, international migration trends witnessed several shifts in terms of migrants’ characteristics and mobility trends. One of the most observable changes is the diversification of host territories, as other regions are becoming more attractive or -at least- represent stopovers and “second best option” for migrants (Dowd, 2008). Moreover, some countries that were traditional lands of

emigration are becoming host territories. De Haas and Fransen (2018) reveal that “[...] (H)igh-emigration states such as Mexico, Morocco, and Turkey typically belong to the middle-income groups, while the poorest countries generally have comparatively low emigration rates, such as is the case for many parts of sub-Saharan Africa”. In light of this, we can argue that there is a need to rethink international migration beyond the economic development nexus. Various factors contribute to reinforce the globalized character of modern migration. For example, political oppression and instability, climate change and the degradation of natural resources, the need for (un)qualified seasonal workers... are all essential stimuli for immigration. Therefore, immigration trajectories are no longer bound to classical host destinations, as we witness a rise of, not only, South-South migration but also the concrete reality of immigration influx from the North to the South<sup>2</sup>. This is what Castles, de Haas and J. Miller refer to as; the *proliferation of migration transition*. According to the authors, this concept reveals that “[...] (T)raditional lands of emigration become lands of immigration. Growing transit migration is often the prelude to becoming predominantly immigration lands,” as it is the case of several countries such as Spain, Morocco, Mexico and Turkey (2015).

Despite the restrictive policies towards migration, human mobility and transnational migration represent a key figure of today's societies. The increase of migration influx embodies several opportunities and challenges to migration stakeholders. Several governments are equipped with legal frameworks and national policies that aim to govern immigration. Yet, migration and integration are dynamics that primarily occur on a local scale, namely cities. Migration governance has long been viewed and supported by national authorities (Caponio, Scholten, and Zapata-Barrero, 2019), while local actors are challenged by the lack of resources and the absence of well-defined legal competencies for governing migration and diversity-related issues. Similarly, local actors are also constrained *-de facto-* to ensure migration governance as an essential component in urban development programs and strategies. Another issue that weakens the roles of local authorities in migration management is the limited nature of national-local cooperation. In general, migration policies are generally discussed in dissociation from local planning and regional development programs. The centralized approach disregards the impacts of migration on the local scale as well as it weakens local authorities' capacity in addressing migration and migrants' needs. In fact, migration patterns incentivize the

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North to South migration was stressed in academia following the impact of the economic breakdown, referred to as the global economic crisis. Significant numbers of European nationals and EU- migrants headed to southern shores, such as Morocco, seeking better economic and professional opportunities. Yet, that does not necessarily mean that European migration to Morocco is recent. Several Europeans choose to settle in Morocco, especially retirees from France and Spain. According to the Haut Commissariat au Plan (2017), Europeans represent the highest number of foreigners living in Morocco (40%), while French nationals represent 25.4% of the overall number of foreigners residing in Morocco. However, we should highlight that this study does not cover irregular migrants (including asylum seekers) and might not be representative of all foreigners living in Morocco.

local sphere as much as migrants are also influenced by the urban social and cultural dynamics (Castles, de Haas, and J. Miller, 2014).

Governance of migration, integration, and diversity has long been managed in a centralized scale as part of national policy-making. The “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002. Qtd in (Eds.) Caponio, Scholten and Zapata-Barrero, 2019) in the field of migration is clearly manifest in the States’ exclusive competence of border control and in their exclusive prerogative to define who and who is not allowed access to the national territory. Thus, given the centralized nature of law and policy-making, migrants’ integration strategies -implemented at the national level- tend to ignore the variety of multilevel analysis, and fail to apprehend the distinction between localities in the same country.

### **Migration to Morocco: When the local experiences the globalized**

Due to the proliferation of migration in the Southern regions, mainly in Africa, Morocco witnessed a rapid shift from a country of emigration to a transit territory and a land of permanent residence for migrants. The events following the "Arab Spring" also reinforced the country's status as a destination, hosting significant numbers of refugees and asylum seekers. The increasing presence of migrants in Morocco has led to a new model of migration governance. It has also participated in reconsidering Morocco as only an emigration country. Hein De Haas (2015) reveals that "[...]it is largely a myth that migration to and settlement in Morocco is a myth, (or) that most sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco are 'in transit' to Europe". By noting the new reality, the author echoes the country's position as a territory of settlement and permanent residence. Moroccan authorities have long ignored migration dynamics and have only targeted the issue as a temporary phenomenon. Besides, the European Union's pressure on Morocco has also influenced this policy shift and contributed to Morocco's adaptation to this new reality. Hence, in September 2013, we witnessed the genesis of the New National Policy on Immigration and Asylum.

The Moroccan government launched two exceptional regularization campaigns in 2014 and 2017<sup>3</sup>. As a result of these two phases of this exceptional campaign, more than

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<sup>3</sup> While working on the legal frameworks related to migration and integration in Morocco, the authorities launched Morocco's first regularization campaign in two phases; in 2014 and between December 2016 and December 2017. These campaigns were conducted in application of the joint circular of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry in Charge of Moroccans living Abroad and Migration Affairs. The authorities defined five criteria for eligibility:

- Foreign spouses of Moroccan nationals;
- Foreign spouses of other foreigners regularly residing in Morocco;
- Children from the two above mentioned cases;
- Foreigners having effective employment contracts;
- Foreigners providing proof of 5 years of continuous residence in Morocco;
- Foreigners with serious diseases.



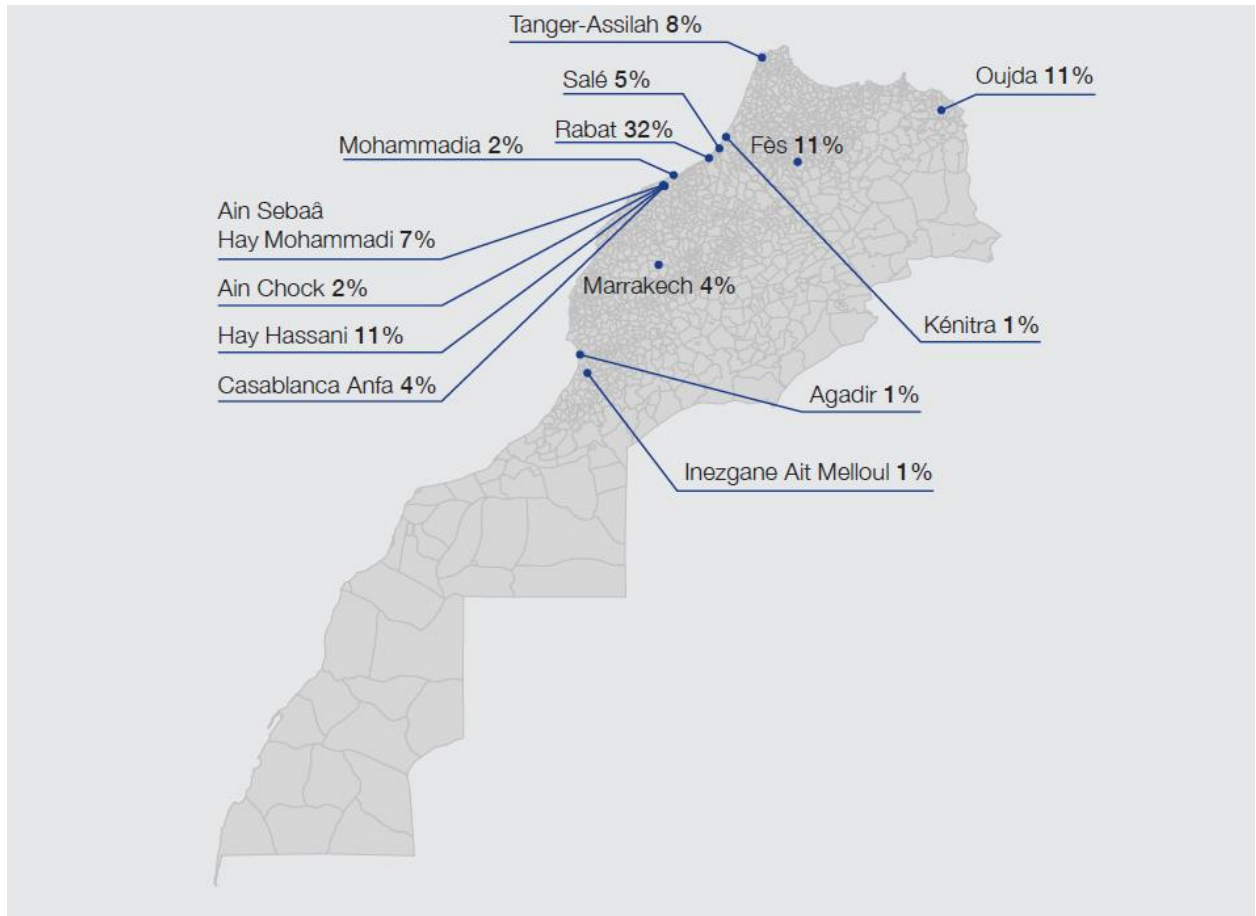
50.000 migrants were regularized and granted residence permits (MDCMREAM, 2018). It is noteworthy that migrants' destinations within Morocco have become more diverse and are not concentrated in some historically installation regions. Recent trends of immigration in Morocco show that some regions have become important destinations. Their attraction is not limited to their being border regions, as is the case with the Northern and the Eastern regions.

Under the legal changes, migrants could ensure their access to several public services, and many became aware of their rights. Migrants were able to establish NGOs in several cities to assert their physical presence and claim their rights as residents. Residence Permits have also reinforced their freedom of movement in cities where they reside. This visibility is mainly performed in urban public spaces. Today, migrants have the right to access public services and eventually are present and visible in schools, hospitals, and public administrations. Moreover, several migrants have launched ethnic economic activities as informal professional activities. The use of public spaces has, on the one hand, reinforced the visibility of migrants in Morocco's daily settings. On the other hand, this presence, demonstrated in diverse cultural and ethnic manifestations (traditional clothes, artisanal products, ethnic cuisine, ...) affirms the diverse and rich nature of urban spaces in Morocco. Migrants' inhabitation of urban public space questions society's ability to adopt, and adapt to, the formation of a multi-racial and multi-ethnic society, founded on the values of diversity in a context of ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity. The presence of migrants in urban public spaces raises debates around the issue regarding national identity and questions the ability of local actors to govern migration. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that migrants living in Morocco are mainly settled in the country's main cities, such as Casablanca, Rabat, Tangiers, Oujda, Nador, and Fes. According to the Haut Commissariat au Plan (2017), most foreigners living in Morocco (92.5%) reside in urban centers, while only 4.8% reside in rural areas.

Migrants' settlement in a city is neither accidental nor arbitrary. The choice of a region of destination relies on several criteria. Family and relative networks are determinants in this choice. The presence of established social networks facilitates migrants' settlement and integration in the new settings. Besides, the migrant's choice of a given city demonstrates his/her migratory aspirations, which can be either settlement or transit. In fact, migrants who choose to settle in the north of Morocco prefer to continue their journey to Europe. This is valid for migrants living in the cities of Tangiers and Nador in the North and the North-East. Migrants who choose to live in cities such as Fes, Oujda, Rabat, and Casablanca have ambitions for a mid-term and long-term residence (Khrouz and Lanza, 2015).

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Applicants who failed their request for regularization could address their appeals to the National Commission of Appeals, that was chaired by the National Human Right Council (CNDH). One of the most distinguished recommendations of this Commission was the call to accept all applications of women migrants and their children.



**Inhabitation of migrants in Moroccan cities, according to the regularization campaign in 2014**

**Source: The Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs (Morocco)**

### **Experience of the Moroccan cities in governing migration: The example of the city of Oujda**

Since 2015, Morocco has adopted the new legal framework for the implementation of an advanced regionalization system. The Constitution stressed the country's territorial organization. Article one stipulates that "The territorial organization of the Kingdom is decentralized. It is founded on an advanced regionalization. The 2011 Constitution first introduced the new model of regionalization. It is adopted to reinforce the Collectivities' autonomous governance in their territories and to foster local democracy. In this regard, the Constitution (Article 135) stipulates: "*The Councils of the regions and of the communes are elected by direct universal suffrage*". Here, we need to stress that local governance is regarded as a means for the enhancement of the democratic nature of local authorities as well as a way to reinforce the bottom-up process of public policymaking. The implementation of this regional model relied on the adoption of three *Lois Organiques* that determined the

enhanced competencies of local authorities (*Collectivités Territoriales*). The three legal texts define the framework for the three levels of local governance, namely: The Regional level, the provincial level, and the local (urban and rural) level. However, the "extended" competencies of local authorities are limited to dealing with issues of migration. Either for Regional or Local Councils, the work on migration has long been considered *taboo* and a mere competence of national (central) authorities. The three laws defining the competencies of territorial collectivities do not mention any competence related to migration governance, including the affairs of Moroccan emigrants or those returning for a permanent stay. This situation results in a lack of coordination between the national and local levels and creates a gap regarding the governance of migrant populations. In this regard, enhancing the role of the city in managing migration and diversity has demonstrated several best practices, especially in Europe and the United States. Thus, dealing with migration from the lens of locality (the city) allows the different actors to better address and manage migration-related issues (Glick Schiller and Gaglar, 2008).

Migration patterns and experiences vary from one city to another. While some cities have historical traditions and can be regarded as "cities of migration", other cities have experienced emigration and their profile as immigration cities remains recent. Integration policies formulated on the local level contribute to a better management of migration, based on an understanding of particular migration patterns and specific problems (Caponio, Scholten, and Zapata-Barrero, 2019). In Morocco, cities like Oujda and Tangiers have been historically recognized as territories of migration, especially in terms of host societies. Both cities are borderland territories and have always witnessed a fluid exchange of goods and persons. Other cities in Morocco have been characterized as sending territories but are now experiencing the status of host territories. This is mainly applicable to cities in the south of Morocco, such as Agadir and Tiznit.

The governance of migration in cities remains of little interest and does not represent a key element in city policymaking. Several reasons may explain this. First of all, migration governance in Morocco was limited to border security issues and had not tackled the problematics of integration and diversity promotion. This is mainly because migration to Morocco was considered only as a transitory phenomenon. To some extent, this explains the absence of a public policy on migration and integration before September 2013. Besides, the misconception of migration as a South to North movement -as discussed above- contributed to reducing the attention towards South to South and regional migration. Moreover, since 2011, the Syrian crisis has driven more than 5 million refugees around the world, including Morocco. Today, Syrian refugees and asylum seekers are present in different cities and represent significant numbers among migrants living in Morocco.

Oujda might be one of the cities with a rich profile of migrants. Despite the statistical inaccuracy of the numbers, the city hosts a mixture of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from various source countries. As a borderland territory, Oujda has been a point

of entry since the beginning of the 1990s. The city represents a migratory hotspot due to two main reasons: a) Oujda is close to the Algerian borders and, therefore, represents not only a gateway to Morocco but also a destination territory where they choose to settle. Actually, most Syrians residing in Morocco have crossed to the country from the Eastern borders, mainly near Oujda (before the establishment of the visa on Syrians coming to Algeria). b) Migrants choose Oujda as a destination city due to the presence of already established networks representing transnational communities. These networks allow newly arrived migrants to facilitate their stay in the city. c) The presence of various actors dealing with migrants' related issues, especially NGOs and some of the international organizations such as IOM and the UNHCR, and the German International Organization GIZ.

Local authorities in the city Oujda have long overlooked the issue, and migration has never been discussed for the city's local stakeholders. Despite the presence of migrants in Oujda for more than two decades, local policies did not consider migrants' needs. With the advent of the new policy on migration and asylum, migrants in Oujda were treated in the same manner as migrants elsewhere in Morocco. Yet, in an attempt to govern migration, the City Council has integrated migration-related issues as a component in the City's Development Framework (*Plan d'Action Communal*), jointly developed with the various departments and local civil society. Today, the experience of Oujda is considered a good practice and was subject to several presentations and exhibitions on both national and international levels. In an interview with a representative of the City Council<sup>4</sup> (conducted in April 2019), the person in charge revealed that the City's experience in migration governance and migrants' integration seeks to facilitate the implementation and the adaptation of the national policies on migration issues. However, our interviewee stressed that the City Council did facilitate the organization of several capacity-building sessions for the key actors in the city. Actually, the city Council of Oujda focused on the integration of migration as a transversal approach and paved the way for the implementation of pilot projects that promote the integration of migrants in various domains (economic, social, educational, and cultural). Moreover, this initiative tends to reinforce the cooperation with local NGOs responsible for the follow-up of these projects.

Besides Oujda, nine other Moroccan Cities dealing with local governance of migration are supported by the German Cooperation Agency and the Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Residing Abroad and Migration Affairs (MDCMREAM, 2018). The overall objective of this project is to "equip local authorities with the necessary tools and knowledge, allowing a better understanding of migrants' needs". This initiative - supported by the German International Cooperation GIZ- is the sole experience for Moroccan cities, including Oujda, in managing migration. However, the City of Oujda, as

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<sup>4</sup> The interviewee asked for anonymity but at the same time suggested that the shared information was not confidential. This was the only interview we could ensure for this study as our request for meetings remained without an answer.

a locality that receives an essential share of migrants living in Morocco, does not consider migrants as a constituent of the local population but rather as an added *burden* that authorities need to deal with, aside from the issues related to Moroccans living in the same territory. This exclusionist perception of migrants, as a group parallel to the local (national) population, not only demonstrates the limited capacities of Cities in governing migration as a permanent phenomenon but also shows that migration policies in Morocco are an affair of the State.

Local policies, especially in the field of migration and integration, are primarily implemented in a Top-Down process. Migration shapes the social setting of local societies. Oujda and many other cities in Morocco embrace complex migratory profiles (Immigrants, Moroccan returnees; especially the Second-generation "quasi-returnees" (De Haas, 2015)), and are compelled to conceive migratory policies that tackle their specific realities and which better address their needs. The Moroccan Constitution indicates that "The regional and territorial organization is based on the principle of free administration, of cooperation and of solidarity. It assures the participation of the populations concerned in the management of their affairs and favors their contribution to [a] complete and lasting human development" (Article 136). This strongly suggests that migrants also as inhabitants of cities need to be consulted to develop local policies. Their exclusion from the decision-making process will inevitably result in a denial of their cultural and social needs, which may, eventually, reinforce assimilationist approaches rather than policies that promote multiculturalism and values of citizenship. In other words, ignoring the presence of various ethnic groups at the city level leads to a homogeneous social and cultural fabric of the city as well as it fosters the view of the migrant as the "other".

## **Conclusion**

Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson (2000) report that "Porous boundaries and multiple identities undermine ideas of cultural belonging as a necessary accompaniment to political membership. There are increasing numbers of citizens who do not belong". It is from the crossing of the border that the struggle for integration, the inquiry of space and the struggle against domination systems begin (Mezzadra and Nielson, 2013). Gateway cities such as Oujda face the challenge of migration influx management and are also challenged by migrants' settlement and incorporation. The lack of a governance framework at the City scale hampers migrants' access to their fundamental rights and reinforces their spatial and symbolic exclusion. At this point, it is noteworthy that the work on migration governance in Morocco needs to consider the role of the city in ensuring migrants' integration programs, disregarding the national scale. Also critical is the need for local-level migration scholarship, relying on the city as a unit of analysis (Glick Schiller and Gaglar, 2008). It is *in the city* that these communities are created and shaped, besides their influence on the social and cultural architecture of the host society.

Despite the limited initiatives related to migration and diversity governance in Moroccan cities, local policies need to review the positionality of migrants as temporary residents or “outsiders”, and consider them, instead, as an essential constituent of the city making and as providers of various opportunities for development and diversity enhancement. Today, there is an urgent need to implement local policies that value diversity, foster inclusion, and promote equality on the basis of equal citizenship. The International Organization for Migrations (2015) indicates that “Inclusive local policies at the city-level are critical in defining the well-being and resilience of migrants”.

To sum up, Caponio, Scholten and Zapata-Barrero (2019) argue that: “The city governance of migration and diversity does not happen in a void, but is profoundly shaped by interactions with institutions and actors operating at other territorial scales, i.e. regional, national and supranational. How this vertical, multilevel dimension of governance is in its turn affected by cities’ migration histories, politics of migration, policy approaches to migration and diversity, and the specific way a city perceives itself and/or is perceived in a certain national but also transnational and supranational context, is again an open research question”.

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