

GPM Position Paper: Migration
From arrival to welcoming cities
SDG 8/ 10/ 11



Background

Globalization is urbanization

There are more than one billion migrants in the world right now (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015.) While 75 percent are internal migrants, moving within their home country, an estimated 244 million are international migrants. 3.3 percent of the world's population live outside of their country of origin. 2015 was the year that the SDGs were adopted, but it was also the year with the highest-recorded number of forcibly displaced people: 65.3 million people.

Cities have turned out to be preferential destinations for migrants. Current urban population growth is primarily rapid rural migration towards urban centers within the same country, and international arrivals due to instability. In both cases, livelihood and well-being drive urban migration.

Even though migration has always been a formative factor in urban development, in the era of globalization, urbanization has become more internationalized. Cities worldwide are points of intersection for continental and intercontinental migration flows. 21st century urbanity includes new and diverse inhabitants. The roles they play and contributions they make shape our communities.

These demographic shifts place significant pressure on urban government. With few options to steer migration's dynamics, cities have to cope with the immigration fact: newcomers must be integrated and included, and old-timers must be receptive and accepting. Different visions do confront each other from conservative anti-migration positions to open border policies. Regardless of what policy options exist within and between countries, cities remain the ultimate hosts, placed at the forefront of the struggle for social cohesion. Where aims to overcome socio-economic, ethnic, and ideological fragmentation fail, xenophobia and racism rise.

The integration of new arrivals demands specific efforts by our cities, including housing, access to decent work, social and health care, and language courses. In many cases, public institutions must build the trust of the newcomers. In this "arrival phase," all integration efforts are focused exclusively on the newcomers and their needs. Specific, short-term measures are implemented by service providers with specialized expertise on new arrivals. In contrast, long-term integration efforts must be focused on the local community as a whole. As integration efforts transition from arrival to inclusion, the immigrant transitions to a fellow resident. All institutions of society, mainly targeting a domestic audience, must adapt to the increased diversity caused by immigration. This process proves a city's ability to successfully be inclusive.

The crucial link between short-term assistance for newcomers and long-term embedding into the city's society becomes evident with regard to the spatial structure: urban immigration generally occurs in specific "arrival spaces". These spaces provide an opportunity to observe structural permeability and access-for-all-infrastructure. To prevent spatial segregation, cities have to pay special attention to the transitional infrastructures which exist between formal (regulated), informal (unregulated), and non-formal (legal, but unrecognized) spaces. Our success achieving social cohesiveness in our cities depends on our ability to improve, desegregate, and further prevent deprived urban areas.

Objectives

Adaptation to diversity by institutionalized welcoming standards

The requirements for cities to be successfully inclusive in the long-run are obviously complex. Though specific local programmes and measures are indispensable, the crucial condition is the cities' ability on the whole to adapt their infrastructures and institutions to the increasing diversity. Because of its complexity, a systemic approach is needed to ensure

clarity and transparency of the expectations, goals and mechanisms of this comprehensive adaptation process. Without it, we will never fulfill local governments' commitments to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Welcoming standards provide for a coordinated transformation that takes into account the diverse demands of a diverse community. These standards – which must be highly adaptable to account for the many diverse contexts in which cities around the world find themselves – define the action fields required to shape a cohesive, diverse, and equitable community. These include: government leadership, civic engagement and participation, social cohesion, education, decent work and economic development, intercultural institutions, communication and conflict management, and safe communities. For local standards to take hold, it is essential that all sectors of a city – including host community members and immigrants and refugees themselves – be consulted and engaged in their development and implementation.

Such welcoming standards are also helpful to evolve the mind-sets and missions of the different institutions and stakeholders required in this adaptation process. The institutionalization of welcoming standards normalizes immigration as a self-evident part of urban change. “From arrival to welcoming cities” also intends a shift of perception on immigration: a welcoming perspective emphasizes the impact and the potentials of immigrants to come. There is no doubt on anyone's mind that migration is a challenge, but that doesn't mean it is a burden.

“The global only exists by the generosity of the local” - Koen Vanmechelen (Belgian Artist)

Migration Working Team:

Claus Preißler	Commissioner for Integration and Migration City of Mannheim (Germany)
Eric Corijn	Emeritus Professor of Social and Cultural Geography, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium)
Bongumusa Zondo	Acting Head Safer Cities Unit, City of eThekweni Municipality Coordinator African Forum on Urban (AFUS) (Durban)
David Lubell	Founder/Executive Director Welcoming America