



Migrant representation & participation bodies in the intercultural city: key considerations & principles

Cities face the challenge of ensuring inclusive governance for migrant population. How can cities enable engagement from migrant communities in debate and decision-making at the local level?

This short paper offers an overview of the practice of migrant participation at the local level through the analysis of consultative/advisory/decision-making structures based on the ICC cities situation and experience.

Cities are confronted with many challenges: from providing specific services to local residents – both nationals and foreigners, to fostering social cohesion and intercultural dialogue within the local community. It is therefore important for the cities to act as beacons of inclusiveness¹.

Intercultural cities' experience and an extensive literature research on this issue show that active participation and representation can take on many forms and, most importantly, that successful integration begins with an open and inclusive attitude toward one another. Moreover, when the national policies do not offer effective tools to address civic inclusion of foreign citizens, it is the cities that manage to create new initiatives, often in collaboration with different stakeholders: the civil society, NGOs or local authorities and welfare organisations².

The crucial question is how can a city think ahead in terms of a more comprehensive and meaningful participation? And - above all - what does it take to enhance foreign citizens' political and social participation?

Some cities have issued a work plan based on a clear vision of migrants' participation. When it follows the establishment of a structured group/council so to give a voice to the foreign residents, representatives and but also the foreign community itself should feel that their participation will have an impact in improving their everyday life, and making them contributing more actively to the economic, social and cultural issues of the city as a whole.

How can consultative bodies of foreign residents be effective?

Cities find it important to offer meaningful ways of guaranteeing a minimum of representation of the interests and views of foreign city residents who are not entitled to vote or run as candidates in local elections, by creating migrant consultative bodies. The literature agrees that such committees have mainly an advisory function, and that they have not achieved an optimal stage yet, notably increasing foreign residents' participation in decision-making. Local governments still have to further explore the possibility to enhance diversity governance by establishing standards in the representation of migrant minorities, and potentially through mandatory bodies.

1 UNU-GCM (United Nations University Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility), 2014. "Building city Identities in Contexts of Diversity". Available at: <https://gcm.unu.edu/publications/policy-reports/building-city-identities-in-contexts-of-diversity.html>

2 To provide an example on this specific issue, see the Bertelsmann Integration, "Successful integration is no coincidence – Strategies for a local community policy".

Available online: http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Presse/imported/downloads/xcms_bst_dms_16212_16213_2.pdf

Broadly speaking, an effective consultative/advisory body should act as a point of contact for all issues related to integration and foreign residents' participation, and it should be dedicated to all matters concerned with integration, involving representatives of the local government, civil society and experts as well as young people and entrepreneurs. Indeed, virtuous models show how effectively the associations of migrants may cooperate with the city council through a steering committee composed by people representing the migrant population³. On the other hand, the rationale of these bodies could be only strengthened if the cities establish a link among public offices dealing with social and welfare issues, so to ensure a sort of continuity with migrant councils' proposals.

Evidence shows that the advisory and consultative committees could have an impact on decision-making when:

- the quality and concentration of the participation is ensured, and the migrant council and its relationship with governing bodies permanently institutionalised (it also appears positively influenced by the diverse subjects on which the foreign community is consulted);
- such participatory committees are encouraged by the local authorities creating working relations and building networks with schools, companies, neighbourhood councils, trade unions, religious associations, migrant associations, non-governmental organisations and anyone else involved in the process of boosting integration at local level⁴.
- an appropriate budget as well as the logistical support is foreseen by the city council, in order to allow such committees to carry out their tasks.

Migrant councils are more impacting when they express opinions at their own initiative, not only when asked by city councils (usually based on clear terms of reference). They also they need to be able to elaborate and suggest actions and projects aimed at improving the situation of residents especially with respect to housing, education, entrepreneurship, work, health⁵. In doing so the expertise of the members is extremely important. They are meant to promote mutual understanding among population groups of different origin; they may inform foreigners living in the city and their associations about important topics that are of relevance to the local administration; they may wish to cooperate with associations, institutions, residents and other public integration offices; and, as aforementioned, their ultimate goal must enhance the participation and integration of the foreign population living in a city.

There are many examples and good practice cities can consider.

Some municipalities have issued a call for ideas in order to enhance the participation before establishing a participatory body involving migrant population⁶.

³http://www.comune.milano.it/wps/portal/ist/it/servizi/sociale/servizi_interventi_sociali/adulti_immigrati/servizi_immigrazione.

⁴ FIERI - an independent research institute on migration, mobility and integration, actively engaged in European and international networks. See also <http://www.fieri.it/2013/05/17/governi-locali-e-integrazione-il-nuovo-dinamismo-delle-citta-statunitensi>

⁵Council of Europe (2016), "Building Inclusive Societies Action Plan".

Available online: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c1a1f.

See also <http://unhabitat.org/books/international-migrants-and-the-city>

⁶(ICC city of Genoa-Italy) <http://www.genovagiovani6tu.comune.genova.it/content/partecip-e-open-genova>

See also (ICC city of Turin-Italy) the project "Puzzled By Policy" is an e-Democracy tool whose aim is to ask citizens their point of view on topics concerning migrations. For instance, there is a questionnaire where users can say to what extent they agree with the current migration policies. Available online:<http://www.puzzledbypolicy.eu/Overview/Scope.aspx>

Likewise, in dealing with such participatory bodies, cities may also develop municipal guidelines and framework programmes for a wider migrant participation, which foresee the organisation of festivals, concerts and campaigns on tolerance and diversity across the city, trainings for teachers and students.

Some cities that established a migrant advisory council have also elaborated a welcome policy for foreign citizens, an urban citizenship and intercultural dialogue programme based on different participatory actions⁷.

As far as the designation of the members is concerned, also in some migrant councils representation is based on a democratic election process. The elections may be anticipated by public meetings organised regularly throughout the year, where candidates can present their programmes. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that exist some difficulties when it comes to elective models, since it is necessary to combine the bonds of a community with individual preferences for one or another candidate⁸.

Positively acknowledged are migrant advisory committees entitled with the task of advising the city council in all issues concerning foreigners which are within the municipal competence. Proposals can either initiate by the advisory committee or be invited by the city council or the municipal administration. Such committees may also be consulted by the Mayor on any question or project involving the city. They can also transmit any proposition regarding public interests to the mayor, even though their work does not involve any decision-making as such.

In addition to migrant consultative bodies, creating a forum can also be an opportunity for some cities to support the self-organisations of foreign communities. Such forums can be organised several times per year by city councils and each meeting may have different topics to discuss (migrant employability, security issues, sports activities etc.) The main goal of such forums is to create roundtables and improve dialogue among local authorities and the citizens, especially foreign citizens.⁹

ICC cities' experience

The intercultural cities index assesses cities' performance in relation to the intercultural integration model and, as the ICC INDEX questionnaire states, *"perhaps the most powerful and far-reaching actions which a city can take in making a city more intercultural are the processes of democratic representation and decision-making. Clearly some of these may be determined nationally, but there is much that a city council can do to influence the way in which diverse groups interact and co-operate around the*

⁷ EUROCITIES asbl, Integrating Cities Toolkit Engagement of migrant communities in local policy making processes and political participation, pp. 6-7. Available on <http://www.integratingcities.eu>

⁸ The bonds in terms of national belonging are very strong among foreign communities living in a city. Generally, evidence has shown that migrant electorate tend to vote for someone who has the same national origin of the voters, rather than another relevant candidate. Therefore cities should foresee solutions aimed at avoiding the risks of unbalancing the representativeness of these committees.

ASGI – FIERI, "La partecipazione politica degli stranieri a livello locale", in FIERI – Forum Internazionale ed Europeo di Ricerche sull'immigrazione/International and European Forum of Migration Research. Available at <http://www.fieri.it/2005/12/19/la-partecipazione-politica-degli-stranieri-a-livello-locale/>

See also Buyse and Gricevich, 2001. *"Breaking the Cycle of Indifference: Participation of Ethnic Minorities in Local Politics"*. Available online: <http://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/17-breaking-the-cycle-of-indifference-participation-of-ethnic-minorities-in-local-politics>

⁹EUROCITIES asbl, Integrating Cities Toolkit Engagement of migrant communities in local policy making processes and political participation, p. 8. Available on <http://www.integratingcities.eu>

allocation of power and resources". The questionnaire contains 66 indicators grouped in 10 indices¹⁰; specifically the question 68 of the INDEX questionnaire and its results can help in understanding the different models adopted in some realities¹¹.

Acknowledging that each ICC city is unique and ready to learn from one another, the index results by cities has already shown outstanding and "more active" governance policies attainment rates (notably as for the eligibility to vote for newcomers and residents having an EU and other non-EU background). As for some cities, the ethnic background of elected politicians in large part reflects the composition of the city's population; in other words, a 'step forward' in terms of foreign citizens' participation¹².

Along with that, the majority of the ICC cities seem to opt for consultative or advisory models of participation which are quite diverse. And what has emerged from the analysis of an informal survey sent via email to some ICC cities, last October 2016, is that such councils should meet on a regular basis; they should be involved in projects of the city and other local stakeholders, informed/endorsed to the submission (and implementation) of projects by the city on related topics; and they should be opened to new members to participate, not only those with a migrant background (perhaps, as observers)¹³.

The improvement of local analysis of problems is increasingly linked with the cooperation of all the actors in a city, especially migrant associations. On the other hand, migrant associations would have a much greater impact on the participatory process if the city considers collaborating with those having the ambition to be fully representative of their communities, and if they are able to offer solid expertise in specific social or political issues related to their communities. Besides, local authorities and administrative staff should be sufficiently educated on intercultural issues, and therefore take migrant associations into account and their expertise as appropriate. In Reggio Emilia, migrant associations have coordinated forces to challenge municipal authorities over different issues. Based on a participatory culture, a dialogue between local authorities and the Foundation *mondoinsieme* (formed by associations) began and was somehow institutionalised. During the various meetings with the city councillors the associations propose several projects defined through internal consultation. However, it is the willingness for the cities to create a network model of local governance that may gradually improve participation.

Furthermore, according to the majority of ICC cities, councils should make qualitative improvements in the opportunities for interaction between foreign residents and the host society. The migrant council of

¹⁰ The 10th indices refers to Governance, leadership and citizenship: voting rights of foreign residents; ethnic background of elected officials compared to the citizens' body; existence of an umbrella body to represent ethnic minorities and which is independent of the local authority; existence of a standard for migrant representation in the boards of schools and public services.

¹¹ ICC INDEX, question 68: "Does the city have a political body (council or similar) to represent ethnic minorities/migrants and/or to deal with diversity and integration matters and which is independent of the local authority and has an advisory function?" Available at <http://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/about-the-index>

¹² Rotterdam's governance policy attainment rate (38%) is higher than the city sample (31%). Rotterdam assumes a position in the second tertile among the 29 cities with a population of over 200,000 inhabitants and the 24 cities with a foreign-born population of over 15%, along with Barcelona (Spain) and Zurich (Switzerland). In Rotterdam, newcomers from the European Union are eligible to vote in local elections, regardless of the duration of their residence in the city. Non-EU citizens are eligible to vote in local elections after 5 years of regular residence. See also Rotterdam's INDEX results

<http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016802ff6e0>

¹³ See Appendix – survey results.

the city of Berlin-Neukölln, for instance, decided to meet not only in the town hall, but also organise visits to interesting projects and institutions, so that everybody get knowledge of some other good practices happening at local level. Therefore, still, the networking aspect is very important.

San Sebastian/Donostia has an interesting model too. In Spain foreign nationals can vote in local elections after five years of residence or more. Thus, long-term residents with a migration background are given the opportunity to express their opinions and actively participate. However, the city has an advisory body (not a migrant council) involving migrant and minority representatives chosen by their community or organisation. In addition, the advisory body holds regular meetings with migrant organisations so as to inform about the activities planned by the city council; this advisory body collects general information about foreign citizens' needs, and all the questions to be addressed to the city council. In 2014 the city council asked migrant organizations if they wanted to establish a migrant council, but the migrant community has replied they wanted continuing with the advisory independent group. This example clearly shows that the full participation and power in decision-making has not reached a desired outcome yet. Nonetheless, there exist as a consultative space that definitely recognise the foreign population' potential for the city, by allowing them through their representatives to make contribution and proposals; and hence by creating multipliers for a wider participation both at community and municipal level.

The city of Copenhagen has also set up a political body to represent ethnic minorities which is independent of the local authority of Copenhagen¹⁴. The administration has formalised the advisory function of the civil society through three advisory boards. The boards advise the city on issues concerning respectively: combatting discrimination (board made up of representatives from minority organisations), furthering youth participation (board made up of representatives from youth organisations) and inter-religious issues and campaigns. Copenhagen has also taken a number of actions to improve the representation of migrants in the city administration: paid internships specifically targeted at people with minority backgrounds, for instance by requiring they should be able to speak a certain language. It also offers training possibilities for its interns so they can acquire permanent positions.

The analysis of the ICC cities experience and situation clearly show some key principles:

- It is important to be clear about the precise mandate of the body and how it relates with formal decision-making structures in order to avoid confusion and frustration.
- Regular meetings and exchanges with the city council as well as NGOs and other organisations/institutions are key for ensuring adequate information flow, build trust and networking/partnerships between the migrant advisory council and the other actors in the city.
- Reaching all the foreign communities, newcomers and building broad support for their associations (beyond established boards) is essential to reach the goal of participation and inclusive governance.
- A city council must be attentive in developing outreach tools to gain the attention of all the communities (especially those under-represented).
- Cities may consider using as many channels and platforms as they can to meet the participatory goal or increase the established boards' visibility. How? Perhaps via media, campaigns, targeted events, the mayor's office, local institutions and public space.

¹⁴ICC INDEX results report: Copenhagen, pp.27-28. Available online:
<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016804835a8>

- There needs to be some in-built flexibility in membership and participants (eg by allowing observers);
- Young people living in the city, with a migrant background, need role models they can follow to inspire and guide them to future participation and access to such boards at local level.

APPENDIX – survey's answers – attempts to pluralise the role of representatives in policy-making:

Country	City	Participation structure	The members	Methodology for the selection of the members and the participation structure
Portugal	Lisbon	Migrants Council	-Representatives elected by migrants. -Representatives of civil society organisations & NGOs.	Selected or elected by migrants, foreign residents, and newcomers – based on their community of origin.
Greece	Patras	Council for the inclusion of Migrants (Not a decision-making but a consultative body ensuring migrants representation)	Migrant representatives.	The various migrant communities and other participating organizations appoint their representatives.
Switzerland	Geneva	The City has only an informal group of various associations acting as advisory council	No migrant representatives	The Canton has created a group of 5 relevant associations (with no migrant elected representatives) to provide the city council with the expertise for its integration strategy.
Iceland	Reykjavik	The Multicultural Council of Reykjavik (founded in 2010)	5 representatives from civil society organisations The Multicultural Council's role is to act as an advisory body on issues related to Human Rights. Its role is also to connect the various communities in Iceland, build bridges between Icelanders and immigrants,	3 representatives are selected by the Multicultural Congress of the city of Reykjavik. 2 representatives are selected by the Reykjavik city council.

			<p>be spokespersons for immigrants' issues and to contribute to a peaceful intercultural society.</p> <p>The Multicultural Council is formed during the Multicultural Congresses which are held every two years.</p> <p>This advisory body also includes a wide range of experiences and backgrounds; and it is aimed at represented also short-term residents.</p>	
Norway	Oslo	Migrants Consultative Council (since 1986)	<p>-10 appointed migrant representatives;</p> <p>-10 elected migrant representatives;</p> <p>-1 representative leader appointed by the vice mayor.</p> <p>The Council has a representative acting as secretary employed by the City of Oslo and its members are reimbursed via an attendance fee.</p> <p>The rationale of this body and its effects has been debated over the past years. The council was started at a time when Oslo had less than 20 years of experience</p>	<p>The representatives are chosen by migrant organizations based country of origin (Africa, Asia, Europe, South-America and Middle East/Turkey) and elected by representatives of all organizations through a general voting process.</p> <p>The leader is chosen and appointed with the elected members by the vice mayor responsible for integration policies in Oslo.</p>

			<p>as a city of migrants. To date, the council is mostly a consultative body. It has been considered an important arena for learning and increase participation in decision-making. In recent years, the council has engaged in promoting intercultural citizens values, local elections, youth, and welfare services.</p>	
Germany	Neukölln-Berlin	Migrationsbeirat Neukölln	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -12 migrant representatives from NGOs; -8 representatives of civil society organizations focusing on welfare, education, security issues; -4 members of the city council; -The mayor of the city. <p>The council meets once a month (since 2007). Its members discuss migrants related issues; the politicians (city councilors) advance suggestions to the local/regional parliament. 4 up to 10 guests are allowed to take part at the council meetings, as well as participating in the debates.</p>	<p>Every 6 years the city of Neukölln sends invitation letters to the local NGOs and asks if they are interested to become member of the council. If they show their interest, the NGOs are allowed to take part in the voting process so to be selected. Therefore, the city council advance a suggestion and the local parliament vote for the members.</p>

Serbia	Subotica	Migrant Consultative Council	Some experts and representative of public utilities, City of Subotica, public health representatives, representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.	The members are elected by the immigrants living in the city regardless of their community of origin.
Poland	Lublin	The Integration Support Group	<p>The only members are experts from different organizations (but some of them happen to have a migrant background)</p> <p>The Integration Support Group is an informal, voluntary consultation group acting as a crucial part of Lublin's diversity management system. The system is based on coordinating activities of various stakeholders and building a comprehensive service base for foreigners as well as relations with minorities and communities. However, there is no formal consultative body on migration/ integration issues.</p>	Members are selected by the municipality. However, any organization and /or institution interested in intercultural issues and /or integration are free to join the Support Group.
the Republic of Ireland	Limerick	Limerick Integration Working Group (IWG)	Migrant representatives and representatives of other	Migrant community representatives were invited to join a working group based on local population

			local organizations	concentrations and established networks. The membership is reviewed on an ongoing basis.
Spain	San Sebastian - Donostia	No council – only an informal advisory body (this formula was chosen after consultation with migrants)	Migrant representatives and organisations that work in fostering migrant rights. (SOS Racismo, Caritas, etc). The advisory body has regular meetings with migrant organizations to give information about the activities foreseen by the city council. Additionally it aims at collecting information about their needs and request to the city council, as an advisory space.	Members are chosen by their community or organization. The municipality usually invites migrant organizations to participate and choose the representative.
Russia	Izhevsk	Coordination Committee All the issues related to the foreign population residing in the city of Izhevsk are a matter of a coordination committee and their involvement/participation with the society is under control of the Ministry of the interior in Izhevsk.	The Coordination committee includes the following members: Mayor of the city of Izhevsk; 1 coordinator; the vice-mayor of the city of Izhevsk; The head of the Department of international relations and protocol; the head of the Department for information and analytics; the head of the Department for youth affairs; the head of the Department for culture and tourism; various representatives of public organizations.	The committee's meetings are held once a month. At present, its principal efforts are directed at working out a document provisionally named "Concept of strategic development of Izhevsk as an intercultural city".

Cyprus	Limassol	Informal Intercultural Council	Migrant representatives and representatives of other local organizations	The members are chosen/elected by the foreign residents with different origin and background. The members of this informal council participate on a voluntary basis and are not remunerated.
Norway	Stavanger	Migrant/foreigners Council	the migrant board consist of 9 members	<p>3 of the members (migrants) are elected by migrant organization/ communities within the city.</p> <p>3 of the members are elected from political parties and must have a migrant background.</p> <p>3 members are also elected from political parties and can be either migrants or ethnic Norwegians.</p>
Italy	Reggio Emilia	No Migrants Council (Not yet a legally or politically binding body)	The municipality of Reggio Emilia has established <i>Mondinsieme Foundation</i> , which is the seat of all associations of migrants and or associations linked to intercultural aspects. Migrant communities participate to the political life through <i>Fondazione Mondinsieme</i> . Each association (about 40) is entitled to become a full member of the Foundation based on a compulsory fee. Each association meets twice a year during the plenary assembly within the Foundation. The mayor or the city councillors of Reggio participate to the plenary meetings (notably the city councillor for integration " <i>città internazionale</i> "). Therefore, this assembly is the only attempt migrants have to participate and to advance issues or proposals. Nonetheless the majority of the association are formed by migrants, but also there exist mixed associations or associations formed by ethnic Italians. The assembly nominates the representative of the <i>Mondinsieme</i> Executive Board (a very important body since it is the only one entitled of taking decisions and hence for interacting with the municipality of Reggio Emilia and other local institutions).	
Norway	Kristiansand	Consultative Council "Kommunalutvalget"	The city of Kristiansand has established one political committee which deals with equality as well as gender issues regarding migrants and foreign residents. This consultative committee is formed by migrants' representatives and municipal	

			members (politicians and administrative staff). This body called " <i>Kommunalutvalget</i> " also deals with other topics, as employment, welfare etc. Additionally, some elected city councilors are members of this committee. Members are appointed directly by the municipality. Kristiansand municipality also has one adviser who is responsible for creating a dialogue among the citizens coming from different backgrounds, the local NGOs and the municipality. Among other activities, this adviser and his executive committee arrange workshops/trainings for NGOs where relevant topics are discussed. The adviser also cooperates with other experts, for example to prevent and counter radicalization and extremism.
Switzerland	Neuchâtel	<p>Working Group for cohesion and intercultural issues</p> <p>« Communauté de travail pour l'intégration et la cohésion interculturelle »</p>	<p>Migrants representatives and representatives of local organisations. The members of this working group are chosen or elected by their community, partly selected by the city council and proposed to the mayor who formally nominate them for the entire duration of his/her mandate. The next Commission is due to be appointed in June 2017 and the city is are considering to review the methodology for their selection/appointment; for example by giving priority to other selection criteria rather than nationality (while ensuring diversity in terms of gender balance, age, origin, residence, professional background, and so forth). The academic background may be considered as new criteria. Some representatives have been members of the working group since its establishment (25 years ago). However, studies have shown that only a minor percentage of migrants are members of cultural associations as such. On the contrary, the majority of the migrants are members of other associations (for example sport and country clubs), which could also be a recruitment pool for new representatives.</p> <p>The main challenge for the city is linked to the intercultural concept and to the fact that by appointing people according to their nationality and background (migrants and foreign residents) amplifies the categorization in a certain way. These councils should have a more inclusive approach so to involve the participation of everybody.</p>
France	Paris	2002-2014 - CCPNC le Conseil des citoyens parisiens non communautaires (Council	The CCPNC and the ACPE are formed exclusively of foreigners and were chaired by the Deputy Mayor. From 2002 to 2014, the Council of Non-Community Parisian Citizens (CCPNC) and then the Parisian Citizens' Assembly (ACPE). These councils, which met in plenary sessions (four times a year), and councils of

		<p>of migrants from third countries of origin)</p> <p>From 2014 - ongoing l'Assemblée des citoyens des parisiens étrangers (Assembly of foreign citizens)</p>	<p>boroughs, responded to the needs expressed on themes such as: migrant workers' homes, learning French language and so forth. These foreign councils were not reactivated during the current term. However, in Paris there are 123 neighbourhood councils established by the law of which falls under the competence of borough mayors, open to all inhabitants, regardless their origin. They allow the citizens to express their opinions and send proposals on the subjects concerning the district, the neighbourhood or the all city of Paris. In the 18th district, outsiders are encouraged to participate in the neighbourhood councils in which six seats are reserved for them. The 163 members of the councils (same number as the councillors of the city Paris) were selected by a lottery by issuing a call for applications, thus ensuring equal representation of migrants according to 5 geographical areas.</p>
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