

# The Dream of Integration

## Civic Participation of Sub-Saharan Migrants in Tunis

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*Olfa Ben Medien*

FATOU: 'I'm here to listen. I live in hope of being accepted, working, and finding shelter'.

Fatou, a 38-year-old Ivorian migrant who has been living in Tunis for eight years

With this sentence, Fatou begins her speech at a participation workshop that is part of the Tunis City Development Strategy (SDVT) in 2022. Initiated after the revolution in 2011, this strategy was developed for application in urban settings (Kahloun/Frische, this volume) and is based on the cooperation between Tunisian municipalities, civil society, and international organisations. The SDV strategy in Tunis is part of the overarching ASIMA Tunis: Strategic Planning and Improved Governance for a Resilient City project. The SDVT strategy is also part of the Medinatouna<sup>1</sup> ('Our City') initiative, and has organised two consultation workshops with Sub-Saharan migrants living in Tunis. Like many migrants who have entered Tunisia, either legally or irregularly, to settle or transit to Europe, Fatou – Fquoted above – is driven by the hope of a better, more stable and secure future. For years, Tunisia has been a country of immigration for Sub-Saharans, fleeing wars, environmental, political, or economic crises in their countries of origin. Fatou took advantage of the Tunisian authorities' 2014 abolition of visas for nationals of several Sub-Saharan countries. Between 2014 and 2019 a stay of less than 90 days for nationals of several African countries, like Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and the Central African Republic did not need a visa. However, as people fled economic misery in their countries of origin, they came to Tunisia with the hope of finding work and then paying for a journey across the Mediterranean to Europe, aspiring to a dignified life and better future – but many stayed. This journey thus represents the dream of thousands of Sub-Saharan migrants for whom Tunisia is a transit country. For

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1 For further information about these initiatives see the online presentations (cf. <https://medinatouna.com>).

others, it has become a final destination where they must settle down due to lack of other options (INS et al. 2021).

Sub-Saharan migration to Tunisia dates back to 2003, when the African Development Bank transferred its office from Côte d'Ivoire to Tunisia. This relocation led to many civil servants and their families moving to Tunisia. Moreover, Sub-Saharan students frequently enrol in Tunisian universities following bilateral agreements linking Tunisia with other African countries. With the opening of several private universities in Tunis, Sfax, and Sousse, the number of students, often attracted by the French-speaking environment, further increased. In 2011, a new migration dynamic began with the Tunisian revolution, making Tunisia an increasingly attractive territory for Sub-Saharan migrants (MMC 2021). Indeed, the political and regulatory context, shaped by a very dynamic, post-revolutionary civil society working for the protection and integration of migrants, has resulted in Tunisia being perceived as a safer country than its neighbours: In Libya there is little protection for migrants, while Algeria carries out mass expulsions of irregular African migrants. The civil war in Libya has also prompted many Sub-Saharans to leave the country and instead make a new attempt at (irregular) emigration from the Tunisian coast to Italy (Nasraoui, 2017: 159). Finally, the 2014 opening of visa regulations for several African countries has contributed to the growth of Sub-Saharan immigration to Tunisia. Thus, the number of registered migrants in Greater Tunis has increased from 7,200 migrants in 2014 to 21,466 in 2021 (INS et al. 2021).

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) estimated there were 57,000 Sub-Saharan migrants – including registered refugees and asylum seekers – in the capital Tunis and Tunisia's major cities (UNDESA 2019). However, this number does not represent the entire migration community given the difficulties in identifying informal migration networks and the choice of many migrants not to report to the Tunisian authorities for fear of paying fines (that accumulate per day of irregularity). The Observatoire National de la Migration (ONM) focuses its studies on internal migration and the migration of Tunisians abroad. It is limited to data on migrants who entered Tunisia through official channels or who have taken steps to legitimise their situation. Therefore, the ONM also underestimates the actual number of Sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia. The National Institute of Statistics (INS) also does not collect data on this demographic. As a result, the Tunisian authorities have no meaningful statistical picture of the migrant population. Can we then claim that 'migrants do not exist in Tunisia', as they are absent from official statistics? (El-Ghali/Chemlali 2022: 84)

Researchers prefer to speak of a 'Tunisian non-migration policy' on two accounts: firstly, because of the absence of the right of asylum and refugee status in Tunisian official texts; and secondly, due to a fragmentation of the architecture for the protection of migrants' rights, distributed over a multitude of national bodies, local associations and international NGOs, without any real collaboration and harmonisation. When it comes to the integration of migrants in the city, local governance is the 'echo chamber of national policies' (Belmessous/Roche 2018: 21). Faced with the Tunisian non-migration policy at the national level, what should local action look like, and what kind of impact can we expect in the absence of regulations regarding the protection and integration of migrants?

This chapter thus addresses the connection between the enforced immobility of Sub-Saharan migrants and their situations of il/legal and socio-economic instability. These migrants, driven by their hopes for dignity and a better future, now often find themselves 'stuck' in irregularity in Tunisia. In the following, I will focus on local action of the civil society, which strives for the welcoming and integration of Sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia. I assess this topic in the context of a Tunisian democratic transition that places the issue of human rights, and in this case those of migrants, at the heart of the political debate at the national level, as well as more recently at the local level.

Since the 2011 revolution, Tunisia has faced a series of transformations, also in relations between government and citizens. The territorial dimension and causes of the uprising, the call for more spatial equity between regions, and the inclusion of marginalised territories in development policies quickly placed decentralisation as a major pillar of the reforms carried out. Furthermore, the legal framework has been changed with the implementation of the Local Authorities Code (Organic Law No. 2018–29 of 9 May 2018). This law confirmed the new principle of subsidiarity and reduced control over local governments. Indeed, in this period participatory approaches in the design and implementation of local policies or projects have become a main feature of municipalities' activities and projects. Thus, encouraged – or pushed – by NGOs and donors, several municipalities, directly elected since 2018, have begun to integrate their migrant populations into the process of citizen participation.

My aim then becomes to answer three questions: Why is this migrant population, which has remained 'invisible' in national statistics and policies, becoming the focus of municipality action? What is the role of international donors in these campaigns to involve migrants in local affairs? And what is the reasoning of local actors and their positioning in relation to operating methods imported and dictated by international actors? I address these questions in the context of the SDVT migrant participation workshops, by investigating the reasoning of the different actors, including the participating Sub-Saharan migrants. These workshops took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2022. Migrants, who have suffered racism, illegality, precariousness, and exclusion in the capital's neighbourhoods are suddenly called upon by the municipality of Tunis to participate in a reflection for an inclusive city, ensuring the 'right to the city' for all its inhabitants. However, the question must be asked, what are their expectations from these consultation workshops and are they being met? What are the difficulties and limitations of this process of involving migrants in citizen participation around the SDV in Tunis? To answer these questions, I favoured a qualitative approach based on interviews with migrants, carried out on the sidelines of the consultation workshops organised by the municipality of Tunis. These interviews were conducted at the beginning and end of two focus groups, one with Sub-Saharan students enrolled in universities in Tunis and the other with irregular Sub-Saharan migrants. Other interviews with associations promoting the integration of migrants in the city, stakeholders from the SDVT project in Tunis, representatives of the municipality, and international donors complement this research.

## Expectations of Migrants and Objectives of the Workshop: A Gap

While the team of stakeholders of the SDV of Tunis and the municipality need the migrant populations to help them develop proposals, and plan a set of projects and programmes to develop the capital, the migrant participants – students and irregular migrants – came to the workshops with a different set of expectations. Migrants on the one hand, came with an attitude of ‘listening’, expecting to learn more about their own status and how to manage insecurity. On the one hand, many students expected to receive information to facilitate the paperwork process of becoming ‘regularised’, as they often face problems with administrative procedures in Tunisia. They deplore the lack of a virtual or physical space that centralises information on the granting of a residence permit, services, or cultural and sporting events for students: ‘I am involved in community life, I come to find out how to improve the situation of Sub-Saharan students and to benefit our brothers and sisters and to pass information on to others’ (Marie, Cameroonian student). The group of irregular migrants in contrast, came to participate in the SDVT consultation in the hope of finding information or new regulations that could improve their daily lives. In addition to this, they wanted to explain to local authorities how their daily lives are characterised by racism, violence, and precariousness. The discourses of planners on public spaces, the development of the metropolis, or the rehabilitation of the central axis are therefore far from their reality, and distract from their essential and urgent needs. From the beginning, the discrepancy between the expectations of the workshop organisers and the expectations of these migrants is glaring. In response to ‘we came to listen’ to migrants, one of the so-called experts replied ‘we are the ones who are listening to you!’

When they took the floor, the migrants explained their discomfort in the city, their lack of rights; from difficulties in finding housing, precariousness of work, insecurity in public spaces and transport, difficulties in accessing public health services, to the challenges of enrolling a child in a nursery. In response to the question: ‘What projects can the municipality propose to improve your situation and your living environment?’, those present asked for a regularisation of papers and a change in the mentality of Tunisians, who are often seen as very hostile to their presence. Very quickly, the migrants understood that the municipality and its representatives had nothing to offer them and, vice versa, the organisers of the consultation soon realised the limits of the municipality’s ability to act in the face of the migrants’ situation.

Indeed, in Tunisia, many of the issues raised, such as laws and regulations on migration and the organisation of work, are the responsibility of the central government. Similarly, there is no local housing policy in Tunisia and the municipalities are drastically lacking in resources. The scope of local action is thus limited to the provision of spaces for cultural exchanges, awareness-raising programmes, reception and information centres, or for training and learning the Tunisian language. In this sense, during the consultation workshops with civil society, associations (e.g. community groups, unions, NGOs, religious organisations) taking care of migrants in Tunisia recommended improving access to housing, transport, public spaces, and services in the city for all inhabitants of Tunis regardless of their origins. For better social integration of migrants, the associations advise against residential projects or public spaces that exclusively target migrant populations, as this would risk further isolating them in the city. For these associations,

comprehensive action to improve the living environment in the city would reduce tensions and hostility among locals towards migrants.

Sub-Saharan students who are in their final year of high school or at the end of their studies say they have very little interest in the city and its development. As one workshop participant explained: 'We are here for a year or two, but the important thing is that I can attend today, because we as Sub-Saharan students lack information and thus have a lot of problems' (Charles, Cameroonian student). These students do not show a connection to the city because they have no plans to stay there after graduation. The other group of students, who aim to study and settle in Tunis – often for reasons of the quality of its universities, affordable study fees, and living costs – have, however, found it difficult to integrate into the city. Some stress, they stick to the community where they live and rely on solidarity among Sub-Saharans. Others live in university accommodation and only socialise on campus. In Greater Tunis, many students thus only know their particular community or the university, its premises, its students, its teachers, and its cultural and sporting events. During the rare opportunities they have to travel around the city, they experience discrimination and racism both in the means of transport and on the streets. This experience strongly influenced their perceptions, practices, and their lack of attachment to the city. 'If I feel marginalised, I don't even want to learn the language and try to integrate', says Marie, a Cameroonian student who participated in the SDVT consultation. Many students also confirm that they have great difficulty finding end-of-studies internships in Tunisian companies and that they do not intend to settle in Tunis after completing their studies. They speak of the impossibility for Sub-Saharans to work or create their own business in Tunisia, unlike European or Arab foreigners. Tunis is then perceived as a city of passage where, 'you come ..., you do what you have to do (get the diploma) and then you leave', says Arnaud, a student from Burkina Faso. In the absence of a sense of belonging to the city, students subsequently lack enthusiasm to get involved in the design of a project for developing the capital.

The group of irregular migrants did not express a lack of interest in the city's issues, but on the contrary, they wanted the right to access the city's services. They demanded more basic rights than Sub-Saharan students, such as access to health care in hospitals without the police being notified of their illegitimate status, or being able to enrol their Tunisia born children in childcare. Irregular migrants are very interested in any change of Tunisian regulations that might grant them access to residence permits, allow them to access work in the formal market, open a bank account, and sign a rental contract – they aspire to gain these basic rights that are necessary for a stable future in Tunisia.

Most recurrent and important are however safety and security issues; this comes up in the interventions of all Sub-Saharans, even if there are vast demographic differences between migrants, such as gender, religion, and legal and illegitimate-status. The testimonies reveal that irregular migrants are more vulnerable to physical attacks and acts of racism than students. The latter are frequently in contact with Tunisian students and academics that are more often open to otherness and are accepting foreigners. These students also show a certain level of awareness and information about their rights as a result of their proximity to associations, in particular the African Students' Association. On the one hand all participants noted that women are more exposed to aggression in

public spaces and to exploitation in the workplace, while on the other hand Muslim Sub-Saharan women who wear the veil say they are spared and feel safe in the city.

### **Local Experts: Adapting a Participatory Approach**

In the following I first introduce the discourse and methodological project settings of the SDVT consultation workshops, before I discuss the interest and motivations of the municipal experts and the scope of participatory approaches. Discursively speaking, the use of the term 'expert' reflects an acceptance of asymmetrical knowledge. I therefore would rather suggest that we are all experts in the practices we perform and experience, regardless of whether we earn an income from these tasks – as foreign students, refugees, representatives of an urban policy, or stakeholders of an international organisation: different groups have specific and sometimes vested interests. Even though the methodology applied in the SDVT strategy has to be considered a travelling model (i.e. it is imported by European donors) it has been easily adopted by local experts. The latter are professionals working on a private basis who are responsible for setting up the SDVT strategy on behalf of the municipality of Tunis, and in accordance with a methodology imposed by the Medinatouna project. These experts who have studied in European or Tunisian universities (allegedly) share the same values of human rights and beliefs of an inclusive and sustainable city. The two principles – participatory approach and sustainable development – are the strategic axes of the project for Tunis. The methodology involves a participatory diagnosis of the social, urban, economic, and environmental situation in the city. The results serve as a basis for building a strategic framework with a future vision of the city that will be translated into strategic development axes, objectives, goals, and projects. The project's integrative methodology is further based on the consultation of the city's stakeholders, including institutional actors, civil society, private entrepreneurs, and citizens. It works to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030 are met.

Local experts should be familiar with the participatory approach, imposed by the regulations (such as the Local Government Code, Local Fundamental Law No. 29 of 9 May 2018) for local projects financed by international donors. Their understanding is that through learning processes they have overcome 'the mistrust and scepticism of the first participatory experiments giving citizens a voice in Tunisia' (SDV Tunis, coordinating expert). They now adhere to the principles of participatory democracy, which 'ensure the acceptability of actions and projects and the appropriation of the strategy by all stakeholders', as an expert involved in the consultation workshop put it. Simultaneously, they remain sceptical about the results that can be obtained from consultation workshops. One of the local experts from SDV Tunis testifies:

Sometimes, institutional actors are very much involved in sectoral reasoning. Private actors are driven only by their own interests. They often come to take advantage of the availability of municipal officials to deal with a personal problem. The discourse of civil society is often very relevant, except when associations follow a politicised discourse.

The consultation with citizens was carried out in the form of a large questionnaire survey, which was then supplemented by more targeted focus groups. The outcomes of the first round of citizen participation have been mixed: One local expert said, 'the needs confirm the results of our diagnosis and the orientations of our strategic framework'. The expert continues:

Residents perceive the city through the prism of their own neighbourhoods; often the proposals do not go beyond the scale of the neighbourhood and issues of proximity. They don't plan for the medium or long term and don't visualise the metropolitan scale.

The participatory approach with city stakeholders and citizens required local experts to have command of both technical knowledge, and the ability to analyse, interpret, and make use of the results. This task becomes harder when in engaging with migrants.

In the focus group discussions, the experts admit that it did not go exactly as planned as the migrants mainly talked about their own experiences and difficulties in the city. These problems are mainly related to everyday violence, limited access to housing, and racism. The cornerstone of this pyramid of precariousness and vulnerability is Tunisia's regulations on migration and the granting of residence permits. Without a regularisation of the situation, migrants can only work in the informal market. They have no social security coverage or right of access to public health services. In addition, they are often underpaid or exploited by their employer. Without a residency card, migrants cannot sign a rental agreement and risk eviction and abuse by landlords. Migrants cannot even file a complaint against their attackers with the police as they fear of paying a fine for overstaying their visa deadline. One of the experts involved in the consultation workshops with migrants explains the difficulty of getting irregular migrants interested in the city's problems:

It's good to involve migrants, they have the right to the city like all inhabitants. But our discourse on sustainable urban development and the city's outreach strategy is very far from their needs, which are very urgent. They need to come out of hiding and build a future.

For the representatives of the municipality, the participatory approach is supposed to be an assurance of the acceptance and appropriateness of the project for the city by the citizens. Often, the mobilisation of citizens in consultation workshops gives the municipality visibility among voters and legitimisation of their action. This was the case of participatory budgets, which, despite a low level of citizen mobilisation, constituted 'an opportunity for legitimisation by involving citizens through deliberation in municipal management' (Som/De Facci 2017: 246). Moreover, the participation of citizens is often mediated and politically co-opted by local representatives. The migrant population, however, which has no electoral clout, has difficulty making itself heard by Tunisian officials. The involvement of migrant populations in the SDVT project in Tunis is therefore first and foremost due to the recommendation of donors and international 'experts'. The local authorities have accepted this procedural obligation, but stress that there are limits to their ability to respond to the needs of the irregular population, given their logistical and

financial means, and their limited powers. However, among the actions that have been proposed is the creation of local reception centres to take care of the vulnerable homeless population, including migrants, while a creation of citizenship schools would raise awareness of the values of living together and the right to the city for all.

### **Donors: Imported Know-how about Migrants' Participation in Local Affairs**

To understand the potential participation of migrants in the management of the city, it is also important to analyse the role of international actors in policy transfers. This concerns the establishment of local governance based on participation of all of the stakeholders involved in the management of cities. Indeed, the Medinatouna initiative through the nine SDV projects exports a city model (labelled sustainable and inclusive) and a *modus operandi* to include all stakeholders. In addition, the SDV in Tunisia is part of international cooperation focusing on local governance for the integration of migrants, an MC2CM project (Mediterranean City to City Migration project) implemented by the ICMPPD (International Centre for the Development of Migration Policies), and funded by the European Union and the Swiss Development Cooperation (cf. EU 2023) happens alongside. The main objective and slogan of this support project is: 'Leaving No One Behind: For an Active Participation of Migrants in the Strategy of the City of Tunis' (MC2CM project, Tunis, 2022). This project focuses on the capacity of cities to improve the living environment of migrant populations, even if the basic problem – especially in relation to the legal status and rights of migrants – is a matter of national policies. As part of the MC2CM project, international donors, in partnership with local associations, municipalities (e.g. Sfax, La Marsa, Raoued), and Sub-Saharan migrants, have carried out cultural projects and built reception centres that aim to facilitate the inclusion of this vulnerable population at the local level. The current Tunisian context, moving towards decentralisation and local governance that favours both an inclusive and participatory approach, seems to be conducive to the development of these local actions. International actors have defined their objective as the promotion of the social integration of migrants and the enhancement of the role of migration as a driver of development. This starts with the active involvement of migrants in the SDV of Tunisia and in local affairs, and this has given rise to the establishment of focus groups organised with Sub-Saharan migrants as part of the citizen consultations.

In order to succeed in mobilising the vulnerable population and groups at risk of exclusion, including migrants, to participate in the SDVT, and to strengthen the role of Tunisian cities in the involvement of migrants in sustainable urban development (expected results of the MC2CM project), the local experts of the municipality were closely supervised by international experts during each stage of the project. The international experts speak of a mission to provide 'methodological and technical support to the teams of the municipality of Tunis'<sup>2</sup>. The trainings then aim to strengthen capacities in urban

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2 MC2CM Project Presentation Note: 'Leaving No One Behind: Towards Active Participation of Migrants in the City Strategy of Tunis', Component 2 (2022).

planning, the Sustainable Development Goals, and participatory processes. More specifically and in terms of the inclusion of migrants, a specific 'training in social inclusion and taking into account the needs of marginalised populations, including migrants in the SDVT' (Interview with the SDV Project Manager in the Municipality of Tunis, 2022) and a webinar 'Migration and Integration' with the objective of exchanging good practices between cities on the participation of migrant communities in local planning processes and local affairs, were carried out for the benefit of SDVT local experts. Because of the adaption of the imported methodology by local experts and the municipality, some political scientists fear a forced modernisation of local governance in the countries of the South by the importation of standardised *modus operandi* without sufficient adaptation to the local specificities, and the social and political contexts of the different countries. This critique is not new: Allal, for example, reflects on international development actors in Tunisia:

[They] use specific rhetoric to promote the adoption, in the countries where they operate, of instruments and knowledge that they consider to be international standards. They act as import-export entrepreneurs of 'good practices' in different fields [democratisation, good governance, sustainable development, citizen participation] and propose to the governments with which they cooperate model reforms aimed at modernising the different sectors of the state (Allal 2010: 98, own translation).

Other political researchers question the interests governing international donor activities for the integration of Sub-Saharan migrants in the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean. Beyond the application of the SDGs for inclusive and resilient cities and beyond the granting of the right to the city to all inhabitants despite their origins, is there not the desire to 'better settle' these migrants far from European countries (cf. Garnaoui, this volume)? Chemlali/El Ghali (2022) denounce a European policy of externalising borders that makes Tunisia a good student in terms of security migration policy (cf. Sha'ath, this volume). Indeed, for Geisser (2019), Tunisian politics in recent years has seen a return to the security paradigm implemented by a government elite that develops good relations with donors and European states. Such Tunisian decision-makers are trying to meet European requirements for border control and the fight against irregular migration. This kind of security policy is a step backwards for Tunisia, which has enshrined the right to asylum in its 2014 constitution, without however, translating it into an asylum law. At the same time, the post-revolution democratic effervescence of 2011 has led to a de-tabooisation of the debate on migrants' rights. The issue has thus been reappropriated by a Tunisian civil society driven by an openness to otherness and acceptance of foreigners (Geisser 2019: 6–7).

The role of international donors in the indirect application of a security policy aimed at protecting other maritime borders from the flow of Tunisian and African migrants has tarnished the image of international and even humanitarian organisations acting for the protection of migrants on Tunisian territory. This perception is strongly influenced by a general political climate in Tunisia that is positioned against any external interventionism under the leadership of international organisations. The issue of migrants is particularly sensitive, since Tunisia is both a host and a country of departure. Like Sub-

Saharans, Tunisians are drowning in the Mediterranean, and are victims of racism, and clandestine and precarious situations in the countries of the North.

## Conclusion

The global economic crisis, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, climate change, as well as national political instability, has affected the most vulnerable in Tunisia, particularly the young and the poor, who are now increasingly seeking to move to Europe. With rigid border controls and the near-impossibility of obtaining a visa, these young people attempt illegal journeys, braving all dangers. This same desperation has made Tunis a departure point not only for its youth, but also as a transit country, and even as a forced final destination for thousands of Sub-Saharan migrants. This chapter, by analysing the process of migrant participation in the urban development strategy of Tunis, captures a moment of freedom and hope for a better future in an inclusive city, offering the right to expression and mobility for all. The consultation workshops offered a space for mutual listening that translated for some migrants in an experience of regained dignity.

However, the participation of Sub-Saharan migrants in local affairs, or in this case more so in the drawing up of a development strategy for the capital Tunis, is clearly the result of a recommendation from international donors, based on vested interests. These actors have ensured the application of a methodology designed and tested in developed countries. But the implementation of participatory processes in the Tunisian context has shown clear limitations. First, Tunisian municipalities do not have the means to meet the specific needs of migrants in terms of housing and services. Indeed, in Tunisia, several issues such as housing, health, and access to work and security are in the responsibility of the central government and not the municipalities. Secondly, the current migration policies and regulations fail to facilitate the integration of migrants (e.g. via granting residence permits or changing labour laws). Finally, the hostility of the local population towards migrants has been aggravated as a result of the economic crisis and high unemployment rate in Tunisia. However, personal encounters in workshops made it possible to bring together the city's stakeholders to discuss the often precarious and vulnerable situation of Sub-Saharan migrants who are currently mainly concentrated in Tunis. While the Tunisian authorities often seem to deny the existence of this population (inadequacies in terms of data, strategies, and laws) and adopt a migration policy based on a security model, the municipalities in contrast are beginning to implement more concrete actions for the integration of migrants, with the support of local and international associations. Local authorities, who are often directly confronted with the difficult situations of migrants, are called upon to act and integrate these groups in the urban setting.

Improving the situation of migrants can therefore begin with the creation of places of information and reception for migrants, places of cultural exchange and sociability, and safe and inclusive public spaces. In the absence of reliable statistical data or official information, the workshops enabled representatives of the city to better understand the difficulties of migrant populations. The participation of migrants in the consultation workshops has therefore achieved one of its main objectives, namely to give 'visibility'

to a migrant population that is rarely heard. This, in turn, could be a first step towards strengthening a sense of belonging to the city – and having a voice in local development – among a population that often feels excluded from political decisions. As Fatou, the Ivorian migrant and participant in the consultation workshop, explains: ‘I came out of curiosity, I come back with the satisfaction that there is someone who is worried, who is fighting to find a solution for me’. Marie, the Cameroonian student and participant, explains: ‘I appreciate the initiative, you are taken into consideration somewhere. It all starts with a round table. I hope that the statements can be applied’. While the results of the consultation process remain uncertain, the dialogue established between the municipality and migrant populations potentially opens up avenues for participation and collaboration that could establish relationships of trust in the future.

