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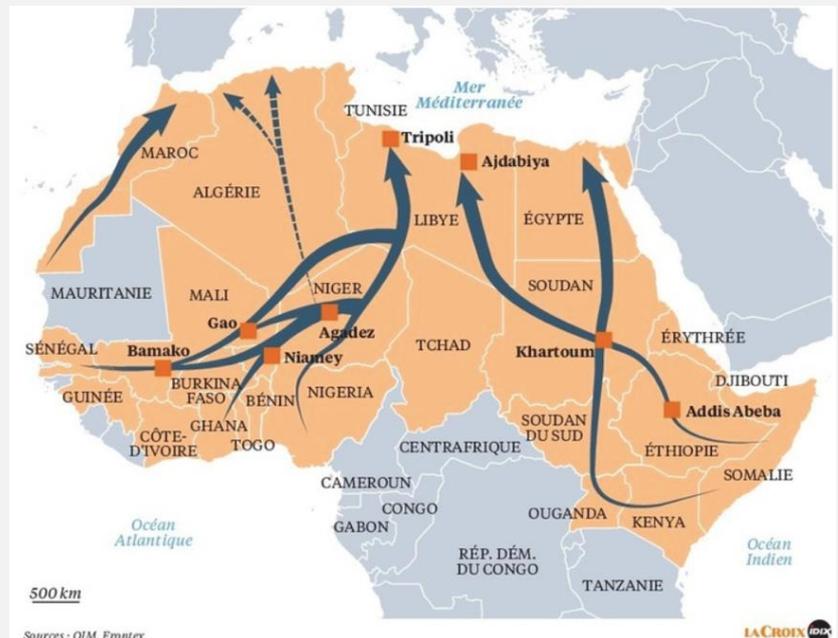**CGLU AFRIQUE**

MIGRATION MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA: WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES?

Janvier 2020

Context

Africa is the region of the world that is currently undergoing the most significant change in its population, a change that is accompanied by significant migration of people from rural to urban areas, from poor regions and countries to rich regions and countries, and from landlocked to coastal countries. Africa also includes two thirds of the world's fragile states, fragility often linked to socio-political crises and conflicts, sometimes leading to war situations resulting in numerous forced displacements and a growing flow of refugees. Local and regional authorities are at the heart of these voluntary or forced displacements of populations to be the points of origin or temporary or definitive destination. Local and regional authorities are therefore in the front line in the protection of migrants' rights. The African migration routes are described by those who have used them from one end to the other as an ordeal where smugglers, criminals and human traffickers take advantage of security, legal and institutional shortcomings to make the journey of the men and women who use them even more difficult. This unacceptable situation calls on the responsibility of the stakeholders in governance at the international, continental, national and territorial levels, who are involved in the management of migrant "flows" in Africa. However, it should be remembered that most Africans who migrate do so within the continent, and that only a limited proportion of migration in Africa choose Europe as a destination, some of which is "clandestine".

Candidates for the so-called "clandestine" migration to Europe generally use the same migration routes whether they are asylum seekers, forcibly displaced persons or economic migrants: the Western Mediterranean route (leading to the Spanish coast) or the Central Mediterranean route (leading to the Italian coast). Although these routes are different, they all face the same risks (exactions, exploitation, drowning, crimes, etc.) and few positive actions have been taken so far by the government to assist migrants and put an end to the permanent dangers they run in relation to the respect of their human rights.

European countries, particularly the members of the European Union, consider migration from Africa as a real risk of destabilization of their respective societies and are implementing a whole range of measures to reduce or even stop this migration, including by tackling its "root causes". In any case, there is growing tension between North and West African countries and European Union member states over the management of migration issues. This is why it is necessary to carry out a proper analysis of migratory flows and the role that local and regional authorities should play in their management. The distinction between migrants seeking international protection (political refugees, forcibly displaced persons who are victims of war situations) and migrants seeking better living conditions (migrant workers, unemployed people looking for work) makes no sense to the host cities or those along migration routes. Both are looking for dignified welcoming conditions that respect their rights, with special attention to the most vulnerable (pregnant women, minors, people with disabilities, etc.).
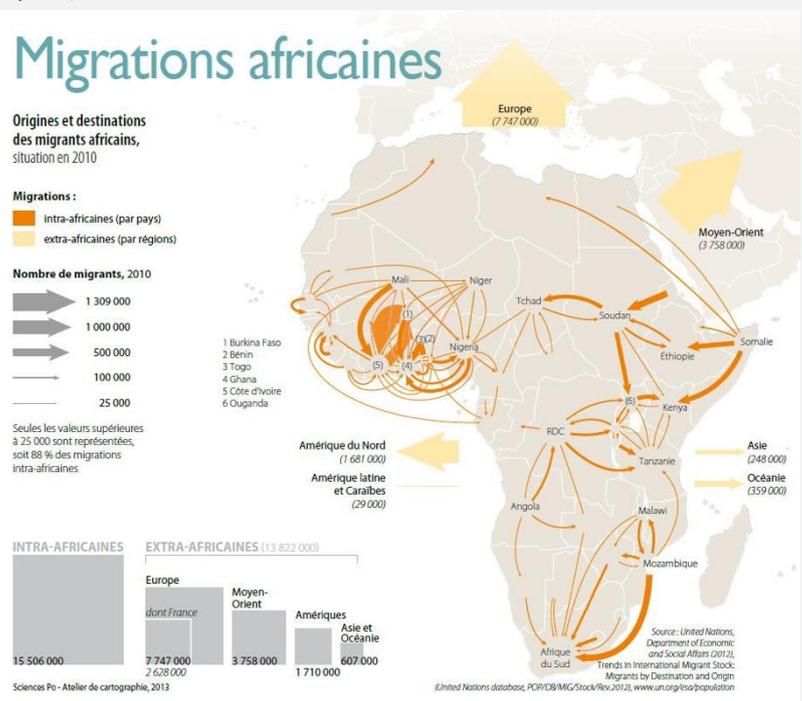
Most African cities suffer a cruel lack of effective policies and reception structures capable of increasing their resilience in the face of the challenges posed by migratory movements. This is reflected in the exacerbation of

difficult situations: inadequacy and poor equipment of migrant reception sites; lack of funding allocated to the hosting and integration of migrants into local society; hostility of the populations, particularly in situations where refugee camps have better infrastructure and equipment than neighbourhoods occupied by the local population, etc.

1.   Restrictions on freedom of movement: safety versus mobility?

In general, the current trend is towards tightening immigration policies in destination countries. More and more developed countries are choosing to fall back on security issue, breaking with the commitments to which their States have voluntarily subscribed through the adoption and ratification of charters, covenants or declarations in favour of human rights, and the rights of migrants in particular. The member states of the European Union have thus put in place an arsenal of measures including reinforced border surveillance, the creation of migrant assembly platforms (hotspots) in the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean and even in the countries of the Sahel, and measures to encourage the return of migrants deported from Europe, including the granting of financial assistance to African countries that agree to receive deported migrants, with specific conditions for limiting their movements in the host countries and communities. These conditions call into question the principle of free movement, one of the fundamental elements of the regional integration process within ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). Community instruments on free movement within ECOWAS do, however, give member States the possibility of refusing entry or restricting freedom of movement on their territory to any citizen of the community. On the

basis of these provisions, some ECOWAS member states have agreed to establish "hotspots" on their territories in return for the promise of higher subsidies if they agree to receive migrants deported from Europe on their territories. Moreover, the complication and cost of the visas formalities for European countries has the consequence of fuelling illegal immigration routes from North and West African countries.

However, it should be noted that the efforts made so far by developed countries to stop migration have not achieved the expected objectives: the construction of the wall between the United States and Mexico has no real impact on migration from Latin American countries to North America; the €320 million granted by the European Union to Frontex in 2018 has not prevented economic migrants and asylum seekers from arriving in Europe. Rather, the security approach has led to confusion in the identification of priorities, and has led to an increase in the number of deaths on the main migration routes due to the ever more dangerous risks that would-be emigrants are prepared to take. Among these would-be migrants are a large majority of young people, who, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), account for more than 10 per cent of the 232 million international migrants.

The setting up of "hotspots" (or regional landing platforms) on the main migration routes leading to Europe is in fact one of the expressions of security abuses in the handling of the migration issue; it gives concrete expression to the desire of European countries to limit and sort asylum seekers and migrants before their

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arrival in Europe, even if it means overturning the management of the cities concerned by the establishment of these reception sites in quasi extraterritoriality. In 2016, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) will set up its first reception centre for migrants in Agadez, Niger: 500 places which will very quickly be exceeded by the scale of the phenomenon. Then, the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) set up two camps, one outside the city of Agadez, with a capacity of 1800 people, and another on the outskirts of Niamey, the capital of Niger. In January 2020, asylum seekers from the UNHCR Agadez camp deliberately burned down their camp to show their frustration with the conditions in which they were being received in this camp and granted refugee status. Product of a security reflex, the "hotspots" are echoing the migrant detention centres in Europe (France, Italy, Spain, Greece...) where people awaiting the right to asylum and those who have been refused asylum, undocumented migrants and those who are obliged to leave the territory are locked up. The idea behind the establishment of "hotspots" in Africa is to limit the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea by distinguishing and sorting out asylum seekers from economic migrants outside European borders. But, several African states in the Maghreb (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt) and West Africa have already expressed their scepticism about the effectiveness of hotspots and their opposition to hosting such platforms on their territories. The latest attempt to set up a regional disembarkation platform in the Sahelian countries was made in Mali, which was asked by the European Union to set up a hotspot in Gao, a proposal that met with strong opposition from the municipal authorities.

Many political and scientific meetings on migration issues consistently call on States and international organizations to take a more balanced approach to migration which, without neglecting the security dimension, pays more attention to the protection of freedom of movement and the physical integrity and rights of migrants. Leaders of local and regional authorities in Africa are also calling for the development dimension of migration to be better taken into account. According to them, mobility should be seen as an opportunity for origin or host territories, as it promotes the sharing of experience, trade and cultural exchanges and the conditions for bringing communities closer together that are suitable for the emergence of a world of peace and harmony. That is why many regional and local authorities are now basing their decentralized cooperation partnerships on the dynamics of migrant and diaspora associations.

2. The response of territories to the challenges of hosting migrants: solidarity and hospitality

As mentioned, cities are at the forefront of migration management and are involved in finding effective solutions to mitigate the negative effects of migration policies. Faced with the tightening of migration policies at the national level, a number of local authorities and civil society organizations have developed initiatives in favour of welcoming migrants and respecting and safeguarding their rights. These initiatives are now organized in networks of cities that take different names, welcoming cities, hospitable cities, refuge-cities, cities of asylum, sanctuary cities, or cities of solidarity...with the same leitmotif of proposing strategies to welcome migrants in good conditions and to promote their integration at the local level.

In Africa, it was in November 2015, on the occasion of the Africities Summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa, that African local elected officials adopted the Charter of Local and Subnational Governments of Africa on Migration, whose members decided to create a network of welcoming cities. This commitment was confirmed and completed at the Africities 8 Summit in Marrakech in November 2018.

The Charter of Local and Subnational Governments of Africa clearly stipulates that the territorial collectivity which adheres to it is firmly and unequivocally opposed " the construction on its territory of detention camps to accommodate African migrant populations expelled from other parts of the world ".

The idea behind promoting adhesion to the Charter is to build strategic alliances between cities and associative movements at all levels (local, national and global), in order to give substance to a new governance of migration based on the values of solidarity, respect for the equal dignity of human beings and respect for the rights of migrants. The same type of approach has been developed in parallel in Europe, the United States and Latin

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America, where local and regional elected representatives have appealed for the establishment of networks of refuge cities, guaranteeing decent local reception conditions for exiles, migrants and asylum-seekers seeking to settle in Europe and the Americas.

These local and regional authorities in Africa, America and Europe are convinced that the crises around migration will not be resolved without dialogue between the State, local and regional authorities and civil society organizations. This dialogue should enable a new narrative on migration to be developed, one that takes solidarity, respect and protection of migrants' rights as a reference point and closely links migration, security and development. This perspective should normally lead to the development of local strategies capable of strengthening the integration of migrants in the city, in particular by promoting migrants' access to education, health services, and basic urban services.