

The Migrant's House *Project*

Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and choice of residence within a State. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

1 - Background

The Nord-Pas de Calais region is a region of transit for migrants wishing to travel to the UK.

International migration is an important phenomenon even if it only concerns 3% of the world's population (200 million people). They have always existed. People leave their usual place of residence to escape conflict or insecurity (7% of migration), for political or environmental reasons, to seek better livelihoods for "economic" reasons or for personal reasons. Migration between neighboring countries and even within the same country is quantitatively much higher. The rising inequality in the world and the means of communication showing lives that may seem idyllic tend to accentuate economic migration. Not all migrations are illegal. Some countries even encourage immigration.

The destinations of migrants fluctuate. They can change along the way.

There are no real international policies that take into account migration. We see attempts to close borders which are more or less effective and the repression of migrants who managed to pass illegally. But no amount of repression has ever ended migration.

The existence of "networks of illegal immigration," are often referred to in which the individual migrant, once inserted into the network, moves as if on a highway to the country of origin to destination countries, along a linear path punctuated by tolls. However, it is more often observed that during their journey, migrants rely on personal and informal contacts or more structured networks (which are always more important when the repression is stronger) and advance step by step. While migrant having more resources (financial, relational, etc.) move faster, moving from one territory to another with support, migrants who are unable to find the resources try to go their way in stages by themselves, stopping at certain points to work, before resuming their journeys. This explains the differences that may exist regarding the journeys and the fact that the voyage can take several years

Logically, the smugglers, who are often former migrants trying to pay their debts or migrants who have temporarily put their passage on hold, staying in strategic locations along the classic migration routes without it showing that at each stage there are really organizational links between them.

On these migration routes to Western countries, there are sometimes obstacles: the Nord Pas-de-Calais, like other French ports (Cherbourg, Dieppe, Le Havre, Caen, St Malo, Roscoff) and Belgian ports hosting ferries to England or at the Straits of Gibraltar, Lampedusa, the borders between Turkey and Greece and between Mexico and the United States, ...

Nord Pas de Calais sees migrants arriving in transit.

This does not mean that all migrants present in the Nord Pas de Calais want to go to England. Those that do are in the ports of Calais, Boulogne and Dunkirk or near their paths, here we find all migrants attempting to move illegally to England. Their situation is different from that of other migrants who want to stay in France, they are in transit.

They have no rights respected, have no opportunity to exercise their fundamental human rights (housing, food, water, health, sanitation). They do not legally exist in the eyes of the authorities and only repression is exercised against them with the illusion that this will prevent their arrival and will encourage them to return to their country of origin!

And yet here they are!

Only humanitarian organizations trying to take account of their existence and contribute a minimum to their human dignity.

2 – Who is Concerned

For migrants who wish to remain in France, some schemes are provided.

The CADA host asylum seekers. Support for insertion exists. All of these schemes are insufficient or difficult to access. The proposed migrants housing does not address this category of public, it is not intended to substitute for the deficiencies of existing schemes.

For isolated minors legal provisions do already exist, they are still insufficient even if significant progress has been made. Solutions adapted to the needs and / or desires of the migrant's concerned remains very difficult.

The proposed migrant's house is therefore aimed primarily at migrants passing through.

3 - The Project

To live everyone is entitled to:

Adequate food, drinking water, housing, access to health care, a healthy environment, and protection against violence...

The Migrants House is a place for the temporary reception of migrants in transit.

This is place that has several objectives:

- The exercise of fundamental rights
- A pause in migration routes
- Access rights: information and implementation

The exercise of fundamental rights

The house of the migrant can support basic human rights that are

- Accommodation
- Access to water and food
- Hygiene and clothing
- Health care

Access to these rights is now supported primarily by humanitarian organizations.

Their actions should not be questioned but can be continued and extended in the house migrant.

A pause in migration routes

The migrant house would become a place where the migrant paused on his path to take stock of their futures, their choice....

The house is a place where and migrant people can have access to information on migration, the testimonies of other migrants, and proposals for support.

One could envisage the organization of discussion groups.

The migrants house must be linked with professionals (external) where they may access social care, psychological counseling

Access to rights: information and implementation

For foreigners, the regulations on the right of residence or asylum are particularly opaque.

The migrant's house is a place where people would have access to all necessary information and an accompaniment for him or her in their possible procedures.

The project would be to develop several Migrants Houses which could take different forms depending on the environment of the territory where they settle or according to the different potential possibilities (the buildings, the different project stakeholders, the will of the council, the associations ...).

Here, we are calling it a Migrants House but the project could take different names depending on locations. The aim is to avoid stigmatizing the place.

4 - Conditions for setting it up

A house is a small sized place migrant (it is not to restore a Sangatte style reception center)

The migrants' house must remain on a human scale. The number of persons accommodated must first of all be based on what opportunities are available. We might imagine a home of up to about 20-30 migrants per house.

A house is a place of partnership.

Besides the involvement of specialized external partners, a closer partnership must be implemented with humanitarian organizations, and local and state officials. This would be a guarantee of the success of the project provided that these partners fulfilled the necessary independence of the place.

A migrant house is a private place adapted to the environment and can build on community or municipal initiatives already underway.

In some locations initiatives exist that can in some ways be likened to a Migrants House. Norrent Fontes Angres, Teteghem, Saint Omer or Steenvorde are places where the reception of migrants in relation to local authorities has taken more humanized forms than in Calais.

All these actions can be reinforced by their inclusion in the overall Migrant House project. This will complement the existing projects.

A migrant house must be located near to a site of passage

It is illusory to believe that migrants will come to stay in a house that is not close to where they are trying to pass. Today, makeshift camps are settled near ports or near areas on highways where trucks stop while heading to England. A distance of at most a few kilometers may be possible to divide the projects implementation over several nearby communes.

A migrant house is a professionalized place whose support is part of a balance between professional associations and the migrants themselves

If we want most of the objectives to be achieved, we could consider the presence on the site of professional support for migrants. This Social worker Facilitator of the home would work together with charities, with local authorities and with different social or legal participants. It is the work of a social network. Is it full-time? We could envisage sharing the time between several houses.

One of the most crucial point is that the association of migrants themselves with the management of the daily life of the home. The fact that this house that receives transiting migrants induces on them only a moderate investment in the medium and long term. However, the project must be a place where they are involved the maximum possible.

A migrant house is a place open very widely 24h/24, 7/7

The maximum opening would be a guarantee of success. Indeed, we must adapt to the condition of passage of the migrant and their way of life.

A house is a "private" migrants space under the law

The private character of the place is another key to its success as trust must be established with migrants. This trust cannot be put into question at any time, by Police intervention.

A migrant house must be integrated into its environment. The terms of relationship with the surrounding population must be worked on well beyond giving information.

We have seen different experiences with other population groups, particularly the Roma, who have been abused by the reactions of some of the local population. The growing xenophobia among some of our citizens cannot be hidden.

The informing of "neighbours" is essential. Beyond that, one of the roles of the governing body will be to establish the link with neighbours. To do this, it will be based in particular on the network of associations

The legal responsibility for a house might fall to a migrant association specializing in social work

There are no specialized structures in this area, which we have seen, is quite different from the support for immigrants wishing to settle in France. However, the associations already involved in this area of support for foreigners are perhaps better able to to invest in this new direction. It may also be an association involved in the field of housing or in that of social work towards other sections of the public

5 – Difficulties

The people smugglers

Regarding the issue of smuggling, it seems important to elucidate a number of points to allow the clarification of the debate. Above all, remember that, unlike the speech often heard, the figure of the smuggler is not "behind" or "responsible" for the phenomena of migration. The existence of smuggling is the result of a demand for mobility of individuals to which are opposed greater and greater obstacles in other words, it is because the crossing of the border is more and more difficult that the appeal to the use of "path specialists" is becoming ever more essential.

On the other hand, it seems reductive to involve systematically the figure of the smuggler as the image of a 'dangerous criminal'. There are global transnational mafia organizations and among them organizations that trade in illegal immigration, there is no doubt that they are present everywhere, and that any smuggler is the sign of such a system, this does deserve to be questioned.

The observations made at the camp Norrent-Fontes show that in that case, no "chain" or "network" has been mobilized to make the journey. It is a self-organized process of the Exiles themselves, in which an individual will offer these services to the group. This service being risky (arrest & conviction), is more often paid for. Finally, the individual acting as ferryman may ultimately want to go himself, to try the passage. The role of smuggler is then transmitted to another member. It is an artisanal mode of passage."

There is no question of denying the existence of smugglers, by objectively observing their role in local migration. The greater the socio-psychological and precariousness of health situation in which the migrants find themselves, then the greater the risk of falling into the hands of more structured and potentially criminal networks.. Thus, allowing Exiles to take a break in their journey, the Migrant House scheme would temporarily extract individuals from such external influences. This would allow the resolution of this question that the concerted operation of this place (between Exiles and professional associations) should add a common vigilance to ensure the independence of the space.

Safety

Safety is another important aspect. The terms of relationship with the Police will need to be specified, since they will be sought when internal problems arise. A protocol of agreement will need to be developed in this direction.

The coexistence of different nationalities

In makeshift camps coexistence between migrants from several origins is sometimes complicated. If there is often a very understandable tendency for communities to be grouped together according to their origins, successful experiences of intercultural coexistence do exist. Therefore, there is no need to partition the people into communities or conversely impose cohabitation. Wherever possible, the migrant home would encourage mutual support, solidarity and intercultural understanding. By default the configuration of

the sites may allow the coexistence of groups with tensions, via accommodation in different rooms.

A Mixed Population

The vast majority of migrants are men, but the presence has been observed (a third) women and some families with children.

The layout of the site there would also be a factor in their potential reception. The main question will be for families. Would a migrant house be a suitable place for them?

Languages

Communication with migrants is important. The Social Worker Facilitator cannot speak all the languages. His knowledge of English is required. But beyond the Social Work Facilitator and individual associations or professional partners, the establishment of a network of interpreters around the migrant houses will be required.

Installation of migrants over time

One of the issues that will need to be addressed by the Migrant Houses will be the settlement of migrants after their passage. Friendly hospitality, and the difficulty of the passage, may serve to encourage ... a long length of stay. The rules of the functioning of the houses should specify the mode of operation. Should there be a maximum length of stay? Beyond that period, should people be directed towards other hosting solutions. Would this question be posed with each migrant in the frame of setting goals jointly?

6 - Implementation

Prior consultation

Many issues remain to be clarified for the success of the migrant house. For this, each house, prior consultation should be carried out. Humanitarian organizations, local authorities, government departments and specialized services will need to be around the table. Upstream of this consultation opportunistic work can be conducted: the choice of location, analysis of the type of local environment...

The association of migrants in the design

Close to all the potential places that might be considered, humanitarian organizations are already taking action. Their relations with the migrants would allow them to bring the reflection necessary for the expression of their needs.

All this without forgetting the difficulty for planning in the medium term for people passing through.

7 – Budget

The Migrant House cannot be at the expense of a single Commune. The issue can be addressed at the intercommunal level with the support of the State, the Regional Council and the General Council, each with their own skills or political will. Again partnerships with associations would need to be established.

Investment

Besides the cost of the preliminary study and consultation, the initial investment will depend on the location.

Operation

In addition to the cost of maintaining the house to shelter the migrants (water, heating, and maintenance, insurance) should be considered support costs for food, health care...

The cost of the Social work Facilitator is to be taken into account, as well as the intervention of external experts