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## **The Policy of Refugee Reception and the Policing of Public Space in Paris**

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Since 2015, there has been a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers arriving in Europe, sparking a renewed discussion about the integration of refugees. The reception of refugees in the urban region of Paris is the outcome of a long process of structuring different policy streams. This marks a "local turning point" in the governance of migrations, with cities becoming the central level for the development of new local migration policies (Zapata-Barrero, et al., 2017).

Various local arrangements adapt public services and facilities to accommodate the increasingly heterogeneous local population (Raco, Tasan Kok, 2019). Such a process mainly occurs along the lines of multilevel governance and civil society involvement already developed to deal with migrants.

This chapter analyses local refugee reception initiatives against the backdrop of public policies for the reception of migrants in general (OECD, 2018). The reason is the overlapping of some actor networks, institutional resources, and territorialization logic. However, the state and government are the predominant actors in the reception and integration of foreigners in France, leaving slight room for maneuver to local authorities.

The arrival process in the Paris case does not correspond to an ordinary pattern of establishing an ethnic neighborhood, as an optimistic account of the refugees' arrival suggests deploying the analogy of the 19th-century migrants' neighborhood (Saunders, 2010). The actual process of settlement is nothing like smooth and eventless and does not coalesce in spontaneous order, if it ever had; social interactions and the 'institutional memory' of places (Cremaschi, et al. 2020) play a crucial role in shaping informal practices related to migration, practices that do not occur naturally. Cities concerned by the necessity of intervention should focus on how to intervene.

Several reasons lend support to this perspective:

- the legal and conceptual distinctions between migrant (or foreign-born)<sup>1</sup>, and asylum seeker<sup>2</sup> (possibly refugee) have been clarified several times; however, the empirical difference is often uncertain. Migrants entitled to reception repeatedly slip into illegality and are sometimes abruptly rejected or, on the contrary, 'authorized'. Some accept legal undefinition as the lesser evil, waiting for the opportunity to continue their migratory journey to their country of choice. Most suffer from it as one of the many manifestations of institutional irrationality.
- the policies for refugees lack a clear framework (Lelévrier, et al., 2017); they draw on an inadequate institutional context but face (and impact on) a strongly characterized social urban and metropolitan geography (Préteceille, 2007), that is also influenced by mainstream social policies and local urban policies (Fioretti, 2021) that foster migrants' integration through traditional measures (language class, vocational training);
- Policy narratives highlight the 2015 emergency crisis as a distinctive turning point for a new moment in Paris reception policy (Bonn, 2022), whereas policy analysis underscores persistency and institutional isomorphism. From this perspective, diverse policy streams may converge, outdoing intentions, spatial proximity, and contextual factors, fostering their interaction.

While we are interested in examining urban space and the spatial dimension of integration processes within cities, relying solely on a spatial perspective can lead to confusion and hinder our ability to observe the interaction of structuring phenomena (Cremaschi, Le Galès, 2018). These phenomena occur across multiple levels of governance and various dimensions of economic structuring. In certain cases, there is a legitimate risk of confusion, such as when considering the feasibility of developing a social geography related to legal foreign presence, often referred to as second-generation immigrants. Conversely, attempting to construct a geography focused on asylum seekers or broadly encompassing 'refugees' may lack both robust data as well as any political coherence. Nevertheless, the alignment of reception centers with migration areas is not arbitrary; it results from the territorial concentration of adversity factors and the convergence of actor networks. Of particular significance is the intricate layering of policies associated with the reception issue and the way it attracts resources and attention, even if not formulated with precision.

Given these premises, the observation of what occurs in public space remains crucial. It serves as a strength, both methodologically and substantively, for understanding the quality of life in

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<sup>1</sup> The statistical definition of a migrant or foreign-born resident is an individual who has resided for more than one year outside the territory of the state of which they are nationals or citizens.

<sup>2</sup> Asylum seekers are forcibly displaced people asking for the legal status of refugees according to the Geneva Declaration or to other national procedures... Undocumented migrants or refugees are either former asylum seekers or migrants who lost their legal status somehow (Cremaschi, 2020).

cities. Additionally, from a purely political standpoint, it sheds light on dimensions of legitimacy and political intervention—both infrastructural and symbolic—by local governments. This is particularly relevant in large capital cities with progressive local administrations (Therborn, 2017). An examination of public space provides insights into the disconnection between regulation and reception within the Parisian context. The visibility of refugees in public spheres has been instrumental in heightening civic consciousness in Paris. Simultaneously, it serves as a subject of political apprehension and an opportunity for the display of state-inflicted violence by humanitarian NGOs, too. The governance of public open spaces extends beyond traditional command and control approaches, emphasizing delegation, integration of new knowledge and technologies, negotiation, and self-regulation. The central concern involves an evolving, albeit ambiguous and partially contradictory, process of outsourcing certain aspects of reception policies without a well-experienced governance mode (Artioli, Le Galès, 2023).

The next section describes the relevant social geography of Paris. Social transformations due to deindustrialization have left a lasting impact, concentrating immigrant populations in areas marked by blue-collar workers and social housing estates. While Paris actively engages in social and redistributive policies, achieving a balanced geographical distribution for diverse social groups remains a challenge.

The ensuing section delineates the social policy responsibilities of both central and local institutions, against the backdrop of which the handling of refugees has transformed into a separate specific policy domain. Despite ongoing collaboration in Paris, challenges endure due to the stance of the French government and the inadequate coordination within the EU.

The following three sections analyse the role of space in framing the reception policies of Paris, paying reference to different ways of framing the space:

- The so-called ‘Project Territories’ of the EU Structural Funds exhibit a progressive drift where coalitions of territorial actors reinterpret national rules following their competencies (and expertise).
- Locally managed reception comes to a standstill in the face of state normative injunctions.
- Government authorities and local actors consciously use space for repressive purposes, even to manage conflicts between potentially incompatible uses.

The conclusions deal with the evolving landscape of local reception policies driven by state and non-state actors. Despite innovative efforts, there is a lack of coherence, and central dispersion policies (Dollet, 2023) contradict local commitments, raising questions about the

role of local governance. However, the cyclical coming and going between the dismantling of refugee camps and sheltering asylum seekers question the notion and scope of integration, highlighting the porous boundary between formal and informal regulations. Besides, the design of policies cannot underestimate the role of space in shaping welcoming practices.

## **A Growing Capital**

In France, the migrant population, which includes foreign-born citizens, made up 10.2% of the total population in 2020, according to INSEE 2021 data. Among these migrants, 4.4 million were foreign-born residents, with an additional 2.4 million having acquired French citizenship, bringing the total to 6.8 million. Furthermore, there were approximately 0.8 million foreigners born in France, making the total number of foreigners in the country around 5.1 million.

France has a rich immigration history, with migrants comprising 4% of the population as far back as 1920 (INSEE, 2012). What is interesting is that France has a higher proportion of former immigrants and children of immigrants who have been naturalised and are now citizens compared to other major countries, with estimates ranging from 21% (based on the High Council for Integration criteria) to 27% (according to INSEE, 2012). Ethnic and cultural diversity may significantly impact how the public perceives migration, often more so than the actual numbers (Giorgi, Vitale, 2017).

Only half of the migrants who arrive each year fit the typical image of migrants from the Global South. For instance, in 2018, one-third of the 265,000 residence permits issued in France were for student immigration. Due to the EU freedom of movement treaty, France hosted 30,000 minors and 76,000 new European immigrants that same year. Additionally, in 2012, 90% of immigrants resided in large urban areas, a trend that has continued in the past twelve years, in coherence with the general trends of the country.

France's migration patterns are influenced by its colonial past, with approximately half of the migrants coming from Africa, 27% from Europe, and 18% from Asia. Notably, the number of migrants from Europe has decreased since 1982, while the share of migrants from the Maghreb has remained stable, and migrants from Asia and sub-Saharan Africa have more than doubled. The composition of migration varies at different geographic scales, from regions to metropolitan areas and cities.

Several definitions exist for the Paris metropolitan area, considering its economic functions and influence, which extends well beyond the immediate region. While the INSEE statistical

metropolitan area is expansive and covers a wide geographical area (fig 1a), its area of influence encompasses almost the entire north of France, and its attractivity involves most of the region (fig 1b). In the 2017 Census, the Urban Area of Paris had a population of 10,785,092, with growth outpacing the national average<sup>3</sup> (INSEE, 2020).

In 2016, a new institution, the *Métropole du Grand Paris* (Greater Paris Metropolitan Authority; henceforth: MGP), emerged as an adding political layer for the metropolitan area (fig 2), competing with the Ile de France Region, the Departments, and the city of Paris (Le Galès, Mouchard, 2023). MGP covers a smaller area than the INSEE statistical area, encompassing four departments, including the city of Paris and its surrounding areas. While Paris has experienced stagnant population growth since the 1960s, the metropolitan area has expanded significantly. The MGP is divided in 12 second tiers institutions (*Établissements publics territoriaux*: EPTs) that regroup 131 municipalities. The MGP handles financial redistribution (Allé, 2023) and EPTs the social urban policy; they share responsibilities on major development projects, improving and rehabilitating housing.

The Paris metropolitan region is home to 2.2 million immigrants, a share that continues to grow since the beginning of the new millennium. Foreign-born residents are not evenly distributed within the Greater Paris area (fig. 3). Deprived neighbourhoods host around 30%, 10% higher than the city's average, according to INSEE 2015 data (Tab. 1). Migrants, foreign-born residents and, of late, asylum seekers or informal refugees tend to concentrate in specific geographical areas along the north-eastern arc and the southern longitudinal spine of the MGP (Boussad, et al., 2017). These areas have a higher percentage of foreign-born residents than the regional average, with Plaine Commune having the highest concentration at 37.5% (Tab. 2). Specific municipalities, like La Courneuve, Aubervilliers, and Saint-Denis, have foreign-born residents making up around 40% of their populations. These municipalities are characterised by high shares of young people, large families, unemployment, social assistance recipients, lower education, and social housing, and high odds of social and economic exclusion. 46% to 65% of the workforce comprises blue-collar workers, while the number of highly skilled workers is limited and much lower than in all other parts of the metropolitan area.

Paris also attracts young adults due to the availability of university and training courses and entry-level job opportunities. Much of the policies implemented in the Paris metropolitan area

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<sup>3</sup> Over the last three decades, France's population has increased by 9.4 million people, with half of this growth occurring in major cities, including 20% in Paris and the 13 largest urban areas. In most of these urban areas, the city centres have seen a decline in population as residents move to nearby municipalities.

can be attributed to its economic significance, social and geographic inequalities, and efforts to balance internal redistribution (Le Galès, 2020; see also Diemer, et al., 2022).

Yet, the geographic distribution of migrants is closely tied to factors like unemployment. Despite having a relatively young population, the overlap of unemployment, social housing, and low education levels raises questions about segregation within the Paris metropolitan region (Boussad, et al., 2017). Scholars consider multiple dimensions of segregation, including residential distribution, ethnic isolation, and concentration (Oberti, Préteceille, 2016). It is worth noting that there is little evidence of ethnic minorities being concentrated in 'ghettos' as seen in the United States; instead, mixed neighbourhoods are prevalent (APUR, 2023)<sup>4</sup>.

The shrinking working class has left the place for an increasing share of the middle class in several parts of the city, a significant aspect widely discussed in the scholarly literature on the metropolitan process of change of the major cities in Europe and France<sup>5</sup>. In the late 2000s, the increase of middle-class residents affected the entire capital. At the same time, the concentrations of social housing and old, run-down housing units contributed to preserving working-class neighbourhoods in the northeast sector of Paris and the peripheral belt. This transformation is part of the social reshaping of the urban region's social structure, restricting working-class residential options to inner suburbs or suburban communes far from the metropolitan center (Préteceille, 2007; Baqué et al., 2011).

As a result, the Greater Paris area exhibits higher income inequality compared to other urban areas in France, with more significant social inequality in Paris itself. The southern eastern EPTs are more affluent, as mirrored by the lower share of migrants in tab 2. On the other side, the Northeast neighbourhoods experience high unemployment rates and have a high proportion of social housing. At the same time, central and western districts and most southern districts are more affluent (APUR, 2019).

The social transformations of Paris have been substantial further to the process of deindustrialization. Like all major European economic capitals, the spread of the middle class, the self-segregation of an even wealthier upper-classes and social inequality have grown

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<sup>4</sup> Following APUR (2023) in the Greater Paris Metropolis, 37% of the population will live in one of the most mixed neighborhoods in 2019, and 21% in one of the most segregated neighborhoods (where households have high- or low-income levels very close to each other). Finally, 42% of the population lives in a neighborhood that falls into an intermediate situation, being neither one of the most segregated nor one of the most mixed (see also Oberti, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> On the nature and extent of gentrification in Paris an important debate highlighted the risk of over generalisation. Critical scholars tend to adopt gentrification as the central lens (Clerval 2016, 2020), risking however some theoretical and methodological inconsistencies (Hamnet 2021). Accurate empirical readings tend to put at the center stage the process of social transformation of the urban region (Préteceille, 2007).

together (Cousin, 2017). The spatial structure of the Paris metropolitan area remains deeply marked by these long-term trends, with the northeast fringe characterized by the presence of blue-collars and social housing estates (APUR, 2023). Consequently, the immigrant population concentrate in the same areas, as well as other less-affluent groups (APUR, 2017). However, the city of Paris, as well as suburban municipalities, especially in the northern fringe, are actively involved in social and redistributive policies. Notably, the city of Paris has nearly doubled the share of social housing in the last 8 years, which has now reached almost 25% of the housing units. It is an almost unique achievement in OECD countries (Le Galès, Pierson, 2017), although it has been less successful in rebalancing the uneven geographical distribution of social groups (Lefevre, et al., 2013; Ramond, Oberti, 2022).

### **Policies for Social Integration**

To understand integration patterns, it is useful to consider three discursive threads: migrants, suburbs, and refugees. The reception, specifically directed toward the world of refugees, would be less comprehensible without the backdrop of social policies for the resident population in the suburbs, which is weighty in France. This population largely coincides with residents born abroad:

- The integration of migrants is inspired by the French republican model, which upholds universal rights and equal treatment for all individuals, regardless of their origins. The constitution guarantees these rights, and the state promotes national 'republican' values. Unlike the 'multicultural' model, this approach forbids - in principle - categorising individuals based on criteria such as ethnicity and treating them as separate communities. The national immigration policy fosters social inclusion and the social mix. In the last three decades, French policymakers have transitioned from an 'assimilationist' policy implementation to a more 'integrationist' approach to immigration matters (Favell, 2022).
- During the 1990s, the clustering of immigrants in some peripheral large housing estates came to be seen as a challenge to the country cohesion. The Politique de la Ville (PV) in France targets socially deprived urban areas to combat social exclusion. This place-based approach focuses on disadvantaged urban areas and combines local resources with external support like networking and financial assistance. The implementation of PV is delegated to the local level, introducing some variability, and it involves local stakeholders and the public (Epstein, 2021). Over the subsequent decade, the EU anti-discrimination directive prompted a paradigm shift from integration to anti-discrimination policies, particularly concerning employment (Bereni, et al., 2021). French urban policy pursues the normative ideal of social mix, that was enforce by law as a national obligation for all



municipalities: aiming to combat social and ethnic segregation, all municipalities must provide a share of social housing estates while engaging in replacing old large estates with more commercial middle-class units, while controlling social displacements and guaranteeing proximity relocation. France stands out in Europe through its unique approach to social housing.<sup>6</sup>

- The institutionalization of asylum seeker reception in France occurred relatively late (Aulanier, Bartel, 2022), with the establishment of the National Reception Scheme (DNA) now managed by the French Office of Immigration and Integration (OFII). This scheme emerged through a collaborative effort between the government and NGOs mobilized in the mid-1970s for the reception of Chilean and Southeast Asian refugees. Initially conceived as an exceptional measure, temporary accommodation centers provided accommodation for asylum seekers and refugees indiscriminately. So, there is no permanent provision of public accommodation for asylum seekers; various programs have different durations and temporalities, which are very short for those more in need (Dollet, 2024).<sup>7</sup>
- A crucial change occurred in 2006 when the government introduced immigration quotas and increased efforts to combat illegal migration. Since the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as President in 2007, intense debates brought to a toughening of national policies regarding border control and immigrant' integration. Obtaining residency in France has become more challenging, with applicants now having to provide additional guarantees. A turn in central policies enhanced a geographical concern with fighting inequality.
- This trend was further reinforced by the creation of the General Commission for Territorial Equality (CGET) in 2014. A 'republican contract' was introduced for integrating foreign residents based on an individualised five-year path. Almost 40% of applications (70,052) for refugees were granted refugee status and subsidiary protection, with applicants hailing from countries like Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Haiti, and Bangladesh.

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<sup>6</sup> The Urban Solidarity and Renewal law of 2000 mandates municipalities with over 3,500 inhabitants (or 1,500 in the Île-de-France region) to achieve a 20% quota of social housing by 2020. In 2013, this requirement was amended to 25% by 2025 for inter-municipal districts with more than 50,000. To foster social diversity, municipalities may also designate development zones to rental housing categories. The '*Programme national pour la rénovation urbaine*' (2003-2021) has had a significant causal impact on both the supply of housing and the population of the targeted neighbourhoods. However, this impact can be seen mainly in the neighbourhoods where the demolition operations have been the most intense, neighbourhoods that are on average much less densely populated than the other targeted neighbourhoods (Cusset, et al., 2024).

<sup>7</sup> CADAs (temporary accommodation centers for asylum seekers), where recipients are entitled to stay for up to three months (renewable once); nine months in CPHs (temporary accommodation centers for "vulnerable" refugees); for those relocated by the state in remote or rural places (Flamant, *et al.*, 2020; Dollet, 2023), it is one year.

- Since 2014, 1514 ‘priority’ neighbourhoods have been identified to promote urban renewal, social inclusion, and new economic opportunities. Local governments and councils oversee services to refugees. In contrast, provincial governments (*Départements*) have general responsibilities for health and social assistance, accommodation in reception centres, and managing the active solidarity income (RSA).
- In coordination with PV, European Union (EU) structural funds for sustainable urban development are used in France. A contractual partnership exists between the government and local authorities, public bodies, and social housing associations/providers.

Scholars agree that “governing urban diversity in France is therefore complex” (Lelévrier, et al., 2017). While the national government oversees migration policy, local governments and councils oversee refugee services. The French case reveals that a better alignment between EU and national policies is beneficial but needs to be integrated more efficiently into the system. France's multilevel governance system has developed over time, with central and local institutions sharing significant responsibilities for social policies. However, France has a robust national framework for the migrants’ integration, focusing on disadvantaged neighbourhoods and inspired by the republican model. While uncertainties surround the definitions of migrants and integration, local integrated strategies are becoming increasingly relevant within the decentralised French system. These strategies are integral to addressing the challenges of including migrants in the current evolving context.

### **The Progressive Drift of Local Socio-Spatial Strategies**

From a policy analysis perspective, power is always territorialized, especially in the history of the nation-state (King, et al., 2017). Beyond general references, a more intriguing form of spatial control is through the policy territorialization institutions (and their instruments). Area-based development policies are defined in a specific territory, namely within the perimeter of a local society. These territories are shaped by social organization, constellations of actors, and their institutional memory. Beyond local communities, this memory is also carried by policy communities; in this case, the social development strategies are examined within the framework of European regional policies, revealing an interesting spillover effect of social policies towards migrants and, indirectly, refugees.

In the midst of persistent inequalities, France presents a dual narrative of successes and challenges. Emerging crises, including the impact of COVID-19, economic instability, the

volatility of income from low-skilled jobs, and climate change, are affecting the framework and impact of integration policies. The parameters of integration have historically shifted, with ongoing challenges related to access to the labor market, particularly during periods of economic downturn. At the same time, discussions on cultural integration are pervasive, often generating divergent viewpoints and criticisms. Additionally, national social policies related to housing, urban renewal, and education have undergone frequent revisions and grapple with persistent resource shortages.

Integration policies for immigrant and minority communities are intended to complement this framework, yet they face their own set of challenges in the midst of evolving societal dynamics. Even in the most promising cases, these policies must contend with troubling trends. In this evolving landscape, the endorsement of localized integrated strategies is in line with the broader trend of decentralization within the French system and addresses the imperative of inclusiveness for migrants.

The French experience underlines the potential benefits of better alignment between EU and national policies, emphasizing the need for more expeditious implementation. One of the priorities of the EU Structural Funds and regional programmes is to promote the inclusion of marginalized groups, including migrants, by supporting integration measures, combating discrimination and promoting gender equality.

While various approaches address the inclusion of migrants, with a particular emphasis on Romanian Roma migrants (Cousin, et al., 2021), the overarching theme is to improve access to social rights, employment, and housing stability with a mix of ordinary and targeted policy measures (Vitale, 2021).

Since 2016, the eleven Etablissements publics territoriaux (EPTs) manage with their Territorial Plans the urban policy, construction and development, sanitation, waste management, as well economic development, inclusion, training, and energy transition (Cremaschi 2021b). In addition, the Île-de-France region used Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs) to address sub-regional disparities and territorial inequalities through a Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) approach. ITIs support local partnerships, project engineering, and the initiatives selection.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Marco Cremaschi et al. (2021a) analyzed strategies in the Greater Paris metropolitan area between 2014 and 2020, targeting areas where migrants are concentrated. They have Evaluate regional and local ITI program documents and conduct interviews with local management teams for each ITI in April and May 2020.

1. In the northeast of Paris, inside and outside the city limits, policies invest in a densely populated and culturally diverse area, facing significant social inequalities and many urban, economic, and environmental challenges. The primary goal of this initiative is to support career development and prevent setbacks, with a particular emphasis on combating discrimination and promoting gender equality. The ITI complements other programs that focus on training, employment, and community development, such as the so-called “Politique de la Ville”. While the strategy does not explicitly mention migrants, the program is expected to reach this demographic due to the presence of Priority Neighborhoods (QPV). However, administrative rules and certification can sometimes exclude migrants. Other projects focus on language training and support for those in precarious situations.
2. Plaine Commune has historically played an important role in the reception and integration of migrants, with a diverse population of 134 nationalities and 130,000 immigrants. It is known for its high number of women and children among migrants, which poses challenges for employment due to childcare needs and language barriers, and an unemployment rate of 18%, making it one of the most economically challenged areas in the country. While migrants are not explicitly mentioned in the strategic guidelines, there are projects specifically designed for them, including socio-linguistic workshops, support for social benefits and civil rights, and a women's center in Saint-Denis. In addition, economic development initiatives indirectly address the socio-professional integration of migrants.

In the Paris metropolitan area, which has a particularly large immigrant population, local authorities have promoted employment, apprenticeships and vocational training for people with lower skills. This category includes many residents of foreign origin. Municipalities are also responsible for social housing, schooling, childcare, nursery and primary schools, catering and extracurricular activities. The city of Paris alone spends more than 38 million euros on the reception of foreigners, although these costs are normally the responsibility of the state. In addition, the SAMU Social de Paris, an NGO that provides emergency aid to the homeless, contributes to the housing of asylum-seeking families. There are few territorial conflicts over reception policies, but there is no solidarity between the wealthy west side and the vulnerable northeastern municipalities.

### **Reception Centres between Care and Control**

Since 2015, the French government has struggled to respond to the arrival of refugees, oscillating between dismantling the informal settlements (as repeatedly in Calais, known as the

'jungle') and relocating the population to distant areas (Aguilera, Vitale, 2018). This is increasingly the case in Western countries (Agier, Lacadet, 2014) and has led to increased demands on the resources, skills, and expertise from the associations and local authorities responsible for refugee reception, even though their involvement was voluntary.

Although the refugee resettlement program is a national policy in France, the City of Paris has established temporary reception centers that work with NGOs and local organizations to provide individualized support to resettled refugees. In addition, the city claims a strong commitment to human rights that goes beyond institutional obligations and national directives. The city of Paris wanted to explicitly challenge the central government, and position itself in the network of sanctuary cities, making a political commitment to do more than the national guidelines, justifying its action both on the basis of humanitarian reasons and on the basis of an investment policy for the purpose of reducing crime risks and insecurity for citizens.

In 2016, Paris set up a refugee reception center, inspired by the small town of Grande-Synthes in northern France. The humanitarian reception center was located at the Porte de La Chapelle (CPA: Centre de premier Accueil, also known as the "*Bulle*" (the Bubble) for its distinctive yellow and white bubble design) and provided temporary reception for refugees living in camps. It closed in 2018. The mayor emphasized the need for a quick but careful response that "embodies aesthetic sensibility" and "conveys a sense of humanity."

The Bubble was made in the greatest urgency, with the goal of making rapidie give immediate help and welcome. Urgency corresponds precisely to the rapid mobilization of resources to meet immediate and temporary needs. Observation of the organization and internal social relations confronted us with a paradox. While the relationships observed were peaceful and rather welcoming for asylum seekers, the mechanisms of selection at entry, collection of fingerprints at the prefecture, and geographical distribution of people were soundly contested by associations.<sup>9</sup>

The entrance to the site featured a unique inflatable structure that encompassed designated waiting areas. The Bubble was notable for its tall and wide structure adorned with intersecting yellow and gray stripes; the structure aimed to be a guidepost for refugees and migrants, directing them to the designated location. The yellow bubble was intended to give residents a

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<sup>9</sup> Critics denounced police violence in its vicinity against migrant-e-s, queuing problems, expulsions following fingerprinting, and unguaranteed asylum rights (France24, January 13, 2017 ; La Cimade, March 9, 2017).

glimpse of a less bleak landscape and convey a positive message, contributing to a sense of development and improvement in the neighborhood (Scott-Smith, 2020).

In addition, two floors of repurposed shipping containers served as multi-functional spaces, housing both offices and reception areas. The health center, strategically located in 14 containers, includes a waiting area accessible to guests of the central facility. The restored industrial hall housed facilities exclusively for male guests, with expected stays ranging from five to ten days. This space was equipped with eight sections of chipboard cabins, each with its own common areas, shower facilities, dining area, and recreation zone. Women and children were redirected to alternative reception centers to meet their specific needs. Critics have arguably seen the architectural implications of these buildings as "a recent move towards larger, aesthetically influential and highly emblematic interventions" (Scott-Smith, 2020).

The centre was established in response to the increasing number of resettled refugees arriving in Paris. Over the following year and half, the centre continued to support to resettled refugees, by providing services such as language training, legal assistance, and health care.

Strategically located on the northern outskirts of La Chapelle, the center provided access to essential services and transportation, but it was far from the center of Paris, and for asylum seekers, distance hinders connections with groups and associations. It was equipped with dormitory-style living quarters, sanitary facilities and common areas for social activities. With an initial capacity of 400 places, to be increased to 600, it was expected that 50 to 80 migrants would stay for 5 to 10 days before being transferred to other places, depending on their situation.

The shelter was established in collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide individualised assistance to resettled refugees. A diverse team of professionals and volunteers, including social workers, translators, and health care providers, ensured that refugees received comprehensive care. The CPA was reserved for men only, was run by Emmaus Solidarité association. However, the bubble was more of a spectacle than a practical solution, leading shelter managers to express concerns about issues such as heat, noise, and smell (Scott-Smith 2020).

The original concept aimed to provide an "unconditional welcome" in Paris. However, the city had to reconcile with the Ministry of the Interior, which did not endorse the notion of an unconditional welcome. As a result, the bubble was transformed into a space where residents entered into a contractual agreement, exchanging their shelter for obligations such as police visits, information registration, and integration into the formal asylum system. According to critics, this led to denying the promised hospitality (Macé, 2017); one of the NGOs challenged the management and subsequently withdrew from the shelter.

One of the difficulties was that the number of arrivals was much higher than expected. However, only asylum seekers were admitted, and many of them could remain in an illegal situation for several months. There is a gap between these measures and the reality on the ground, which combines a weak and sporadic political will on the part of the public authorities with a rather fragmented network of associations and support organisations.

Due to its limited capacity, the Chapelle Center quickly reached its saturation point, and the ad hoc camps, which were promptly reestablished, were repeatedly evacuated - often by force - only to be immediately reestablished. Moreover, both scholars and activists criticized the operational modalities of the shelter, which were modeled on state practices of sorting and controlling displaced populations (Gardesse, et al., 2022).

This conclusion may seem uncharitable, given Paris efforts, however inadequate: the city offered shelter to 47,000 people, with 21,400 spaces available year-round for homeless individuals between 2015 and 2020. In addition, 4,000 beds have been set aside for migrants and refugees, more than 1,600 of which have been made possible by the budget of the City of Paris. This is a recurring conclusion for local governments, whose actions must adhere to the framework of national policy, even though they may pursue different goals. The argument could be reformulated to indicate which specific mechanisms, cognitive resources, coalitions of actors, and policy instruments produce a particular outcome at a particular time.

## **The Repressive Policing of Space**

The policing of public space is an important and often contentious aspect of urban governance. The policing of public space in urban environments is a multifaceted and complex issue with significant implications for responsible reception policies, public perception, and individual rights.

In accordance with government directives, local prefects often ordered the use of police forces to dismantle squatting camps and unauthorized settlements. In one specific case, the prefect of Paris also ordered the erection of physical barriers between two neighborhoods in the city. These camps were repeatedly subjected to repressive measures.

Paris has seen the rise of several informal settlements, known as 'camps', mainly in the northern districts of the neighbourhoods north of the capital. These settlements bring together thousands of people from Afghanistan, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. The health conditions led to an increase in scabies epidemics, and the physical impact on the urban landscape of Paris motivated the decision to systematically demolish the shantytowns.

Here is how independent media<sup>10</sup> described one of these makeshift camps:

"Between 300 and 400 migrants, mostly Afghans, are living in a camp under an overhead metro ... Waiting to lodge their asylum applications, they have no choice but to sleep there, in temperatures that are sometimes below freezing. They brave the cold around campfires made from objects found in the street" (Oberti 2022).

Policing is often brutal, and the increase in the use of the police forces deployment sometimes surprises the responsible reception policies. The demolition of squatter camps, often made up of temporary tents, is a regular feature of Paris Region policy. As recently as October 2023, the Paris prefecture announced the evacuation of a large migrant camp in the north of the capital that housed 400 people, mostly single men from Afghanistan, Eritrea and Sudan; some had travelled via the Italian island of Lampedusa. Once identified, three-quarters were sent to temporary reception facilities in the Paris region and one-quarter outside. A few days later, 200 unaccompanied minors were taken to an abandoned school but continued to spend the night in the open air in the north of Paris (Dumont 2023).

In France, the police operate under the command of prefects, who are responsible for maintaining public order and security. The relationship between the government and law enforcement agencies is crucial in shaping the nature of policing in public spaces. Prefects play a central role in determining police strategies and tactics, which vary widely from region to region and situation to situation.

These operations are planned directly by the prefects in contact with the Ministry of the Interior but they also result in the daily patrolling of police officers, who can stop for checks or urge the occupants of public spaces to move (Aguilera, et al., 2018). The incremental nature of these policies became evident through a few events that marked the political debate. One noteworthy event was the occupation of riverbanks by the 'Les Enfants de Don Quichotte' association and homeless individuals following the enactment of the DALO law in 2007, which mandated prefects to provide housing or shelter to those without it (Aguilera, 2020). Quietly, activists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been organising local protests and demonstrations for Eastern European migrants and homeless families and against shantytowns for about two decades (Vacca, et al., 2022).

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<sup>10</sup> *InfoMigrants* is a collaborative project involving three major European media organizations: France Médias Monde, Deutsche Welle, and ANSA. The project operates across various platforms and is co-financed by the European Union.



## Exclusionary Urban Design

Space is also controlled by temporary urban design, the arrangement of objects and physical barriers. Space also affects regulation: a spatial disposition has a regulative effect on people's behavior and positive responses. How public space is managed and controlled can have a significant impact on the quality of life of residents and the rights of individuals, especially those who are marginalized or vulnerable.

The management of space can be emancipatory or violent. The city often selects repressive models of urban furniture or spatial arrangements, such as benches designed to prevent people experiencing homelessness from lying down. All in all, this may seem like a negligible example. It is all the more significant when one considers the importance given to the furnishing of public spaces in the city and the experimentation supported by the city. For example, in the same period, large wooden benches suitable for relaxing and lying down were placed in the central square of the Pantheon, as part of a project on gender equality. According to the city, the cozy benches make women more comfortable in public spaces.

The furnishing of metro stations or public spaces has highlighted countless examples of "defensible space," the analytical approach that underlines the normative aspect of physical design and its potential to regulate social behaviour (Newman 1972). A blatant case are the seats and benches designed by the city's metro company to prevent anyone from lying down and sleeping.

Indirect effects are not unintentional (Vitale, 2015). The control of public space takes place through active interventions, above all through the direct control and patrolling of the police. In France, the police depend on the government through the prefects who command and regulate public order. Recently, the police built a wall between two neighborhoods in order to drive out drug traffickers: the prefect of Paris ordered the construction of a wall to close an underpass between Paris and the neighboring town of Pantin to prevent the transit of drug users and traffickers.

Local governments implemented a range of spatial interventions to protect open spaces from occupation by migrants using makeshift tents. As highlighted by Poll (2017), the municipality undertook the installation of approximately 4 km of fencing and boulder fields during the construction of the shelter. Despite the shortcomings of the shelter, these measures were stigmatized in the public debate as inhospitable (Couvelaire, 2016).

The episode examined is a stark reminder of the often-brutal methods used in policing public spaces and the need for a more balanced and humane approach to urban management. It also highlights the importance of local government institutions, multilevel governance contention,

and the regulating role of governance modes in the use of force and maintaining public order. Further research and policy development is needed to strike a more equitable balance between public safety and individual rights within public spaces.

## **The Governance of Local Reception Policies**

The governance of local reception policies is increasingly ensured by enabling processes that take place in 'the shadow of the state' but with consistent input from non-state actors. We suggest that a process of regulation-in-progress is occurring, in which rule-making and decision-making are slowly allocating resources and adopting operating criteria thanks mainly to the activity of the government *Délégation interministérielle à l'hébergement et à l'accès au logement* (DIHAL).<sup>11</sup> However, like many other areas of public policy, refugee reception is a sector under strain and evolution, especially due to austerity policies and the state's recurrent repressive inclinations. At the same time, it serves as a field of experimentation, where agenda-setting and implementation are ongoing processes.

These processes are open to non-governmental and grassroots associative actors, who are sometimes capable to anticipate, correct, and influence public policy. In the best cases, some local and national agencies have taken up and expanded these experiments. In other cases, a framework of compliance and, often, repression has prevailed. This *chiaroscuro* clearly allows for different conclusions but should not hinder an empirical analysis of the common formulation of solutions.

A first minimal conclusion is that reception policy in the Paris region lacks a coherent framework (Cremaschi, 2021b; see also Artioli, Le Galès, 2023). Both the more established integration policy and the relatively recent reception of refugees are resonating and producing adaptations and innovations, but without achieving satisfactory results. The overall picture is rather contradictory, though not surprising given that it is the result of the crises of the last two decades and depends on actors with different legitimacies, purposes and functions. Critical assessments of the actions of the City of Paris overlook the fact that the 2015 shelter responded in part to political rhetoric and in part to innovative spontaneity without aspiring to change national rules and power dynamics. Advocating for a more systematic approach and a solid rationale in these cases is neither original nor sufficient. In addition, they face the typical

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<sup>11</sup> Created in 2010, it is responsible for implementing public policy on accommodation, access to housing and the maintenance of housing for people who are homeless or poorly housed, inspired by the principle of "housing first" with the aim of significantly reducing the number of homeless people.

challenges of newly established policy areas and difficulties in implementing policies at different scales.

A second conclusion concerns the possibility of a local response that contradicts national policies. The dispersal policy contradicts the commitments of the city of Paris, which has claimed the sanctuary since October 2015. The challenging question of the freedom of a local administration to act differently from the national government deserves an answer. Much academic research concludes with the scandalous statement that the results of local action are inadequate. While this is undoubtedly a politically and morally relevant response, the question itself may be misguided. The limitations of local action, and by extension of public policy in general, should not be ignored, but acknowledged considering its structural limitations. It may not be necessary to reaffirm them; instead, it is more useful to ask what mechanisms and tools can make public action more effective and sustainable.

Third, the cyclical dismantling of refugee camps after 2015, justified by national and local authorities as exceptional measures, deliberately confuses the "crisis" of migration with the crisis of the reception system. Scholars argue that this crisis has become a routinized argument, with dispersal becoming the main instrument for the "governance of exiled populations", undermining the claimed innovative character of the city's welcoming policies (Gardesse, et al., 2022: 22). The concept of integration is under review, in the light of current crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, economic challenges, and climate change. Access to the labor market remains a significant problem (limited opportunities for migrants and restrictions for refugees), and cultural integration is a subject of ongoing debate. National social policies on housing, urban renewal and education have been repeatedly revised and need to be improved with limited resources. In this evolving context, local integrated strategies respond to the trend towards decentralization in the French system and the need to address the integration of migrants.

In the intricate tapestry of metropolitan life in Paris, the nexus of diversity, integration, and security emerges as the master weaver, as local governance is almost about making compromises and mediating conflicts between political parties, associations, NGOs, interest groups, utilities, functional agencies, regional and national governments, and regulations. Urban governance transcends mere administrative machinery; it embodies a capacity to mediate among competing forces between local, national, and regional levels of government - a tapestry woven with threads of power, resources, and jurisdiction. Welcoming refugees, asylum seekers, and marginalized communities is not just about allocating resources to invisible infrastructure; it is made visible through the urban landscape: it extends beyond the halls of officialdom. It permeates the streets, squares, and parks - the very canvas on which

urban life unfolds. It is about the management and regulation of public space. Competence lies not only in decision-making and rule-making, but also in the ability to act quickly, wisely, and contextually. In this chapter, we show that the governance of local reception policies is more than the allocation of resources and the coordination of actors. The case of Paris shows a certain lack of stability and consistency but also some steps to maintain focus, resources, and coordination to move away from episodic, fragmented, and aleatory responses. The national, regional and local levels of regulation - they are blurred and intertwined, requiring additional efforts of continuity. The governance of local reception policies in Paris meanders through these porous lines. For public space, design rules collide with emergent needs, and hard conflicts in managing public spaces renew compromises between competing actors, some whispering welcome, others shouting rejection.

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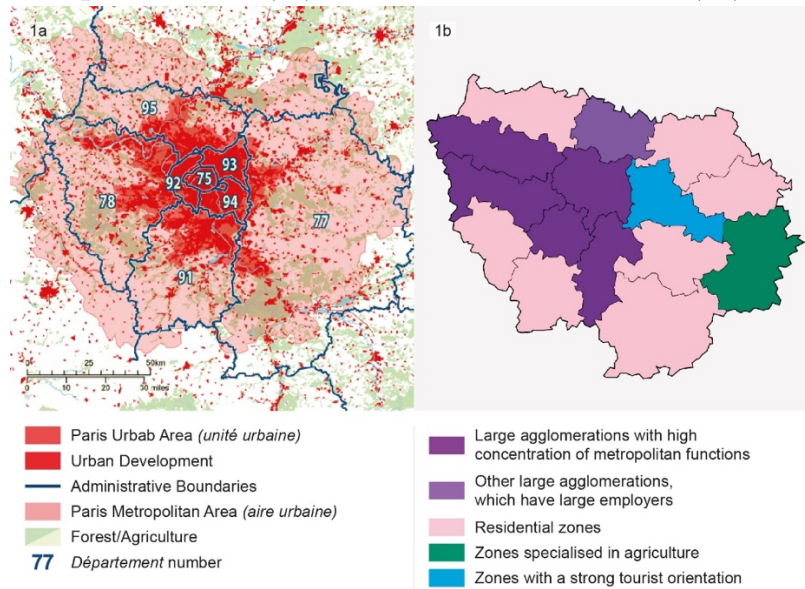
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Figure 1. The metropolitan area (1a) and travel-to-work areas (1b) in Île-de-France



Source: Insee, 2020

Figure 2. The MGP (metropolitan body) and the EPTs (second tiers institutions)

The MGP is divided into EPTs:

- T1 – Ville de Paris
- T2 – Vallée Sud Grand Paris (VSGP)
- T3 – Grand Paris Seine Ouest (GPSO)
- T4 – Paris Ouest La Défense (POLD)
- T5 – Boucle Nord de Seine (BNS)
- T6 – Plaine Commune (PC)
- T7 – Paris Terres d'Envol (PTE)
- T8 – Est Ensemble (EE)
- T9 – Grand Paris - Grand Est (GPGE)
- T10 – Paris-Est-Marne et Bois (PEMB)
- T11 – Grand Paris Sud Est Avenir (GPSEA)
- T12 – Grand-Orly Seine Bièvre (GOSB)



Source: MGP and Region, 202

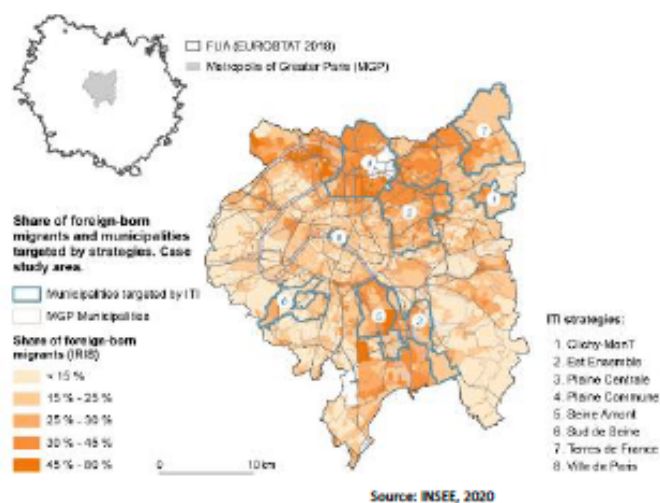


Table 1. Migrants in the region by geographical scale

	Total Population 2018	Annual growth rate 2013-18	Migrants	% migrants
Paris	2 175 601	0.5	440 464	20.2
MGP	7 075 028	0.4	*1 551 420	*22.1
Statistical Metropolitan Area (Aire Urbaine : FUA)	10 816 803	0.4	2 200 000	20.3
Region Ile de France (IdF)	12 213 447	0.4	2 378 567	19.5

Source : INSEE, RP2018 exploitation principale + INSEE 2012. \* INSEE 2015

Figure 3. Foreign-born population per municipalities and case study areas in the MGP



Source: INSEE, 2020

Table 2. Non-national residents per country of birth in the four departments corresponding to the MGP

				Country
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Dep t.		Foreigners	% of the tot population	UE	Algeria	Morocco	Tunisia	Turkey	Total of the four countries
75	Paris	310 145	14.3	27.9	8.9	6.1	4.6	0.9	20.5
92	Hauts-de-Seine	204 659	12.6	25.4	13.0	13.2	5.5	0.8	32.5
93	Seine-Saint-Denis	400 051	24.5	17.9	15.4	8.4	5.0	3.9	32.7
94	Val-de-Marne	221 051	15.8	27.0	14.0	5.9	5.9	2.1	27.9

Source: Insee, Census 2018

Table 3. Migrants in the metropolitan region of Paris per EPT

Paris and EPTs	Total Population	Migrant population %	Foreign nationals %
T1 – Ville de Paris	2 206 488	20.4	14.6
<i>Paris Arrondissements 18, 19, 20</i>	<i>574 778</i>	<i>22.7</i>	<i>NA</i>
T2 – Vallée Sud GrandParis (VSGP)	395 761	16.1	10.2
T3 – Grand Paris Seine Ouest (GPSO)	316 653	15.1	10.1
T4 – Paris Ouest La Défense (POLD)	559 982	17.1	11.7
T5 – Boucle Nord de Seine (BNS)	439 561	24.8	18.1
T6 – Plaine Commune (PC)	429 266	37.5	30.8
T7 – Paris Terres d'Envol (PTE)	357 568	29.9	22.6
T8 – Est Ensemble (EE)	412 972	28.7	22.2
T9 – Grand Paris - Grand Est (GPGE)	392 857	22.0	16.6
T10 – Paris-Est-Marne et Bois (PEMB)	506 882	16.2	11.3

T11 – Grand Paris Sud Est Avenir (GPSEA)	310 159	20.2	13.5
T12 – Grand-Orly Seine Bièvre (GOSB)	692 061	23.9	17.8
<i>Total MGP</i>	<i>7 020 210</i>	<i>22.1</i>	<i>16.1</i>

*Source: APUR 2019 on INSEE 2015 data*