



## **Culture, Narratives and Human Mobility Thematic Workshop | Paris, 27 June 2023 Summary**

This note summarizes reflections that emerged during the thematic workshop on **Culture, Narratives and Human Mobility**, which was organized by the French 2022-2023 Chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). The workshop, held in hybrid format at the National Museum of Immigration History (MNHI) in Paris on 27 June 2023, involved Member States, local and regional governments, civil society, the private sector, youth, as well as other institutional partners. Participants were welcomed by Ms. Constance Rivière, Managing Director of the MNHI and Mr. Christophe Guilhou, Director for Sustainable Development, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France. The discussions aligned with the priorities of roundtables 1 on 'The impact of climate change on human mobility; 3 on Diasporas: actors of the economic, social and cultural development of regions; and 5 on Improving the perception of migration in public opinion: narratives, culture, emotion and rational discourse', and of the GFMD Working Group on Public Narratives on Migration. H.E. Mr. Christophe Léonzi, Ambassador in charge of migrations, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France provided concluding remarks.

### **Key Take-Aways**

**The emergence of immigration museums across the world.** The Palais de la Porte Dorée was founded in 1931 for the International Colonial Exhibition and at the time served as a center of colonial propaganda. The palace went through different iterations, from the Colonies Museum to the African and Oceanian Arts Museum and in the early 2000s, it was converted into the National Museum of the History of Immigration (MNHI). Nowadays there are about 30 odd immigration museums in the world aimed at sparking public debate on human mobility. Museums play an important role as repositories of knowledge and information. Increasing knowledge on migration and its linkages with development can lead to a more open and better-informed perspective.

**Bringing narratives and culture to the core of the global dialogue on migration and development.** The GFMD 2022-2023 France Chair's programme aims to stimulate discussions on culture, migration narratives including the impact of climate change on human mobility, promoting balanced and fact-based debates to improve public perceptions, promote a better understanding of migration and foster the design of sound public policies. Perceptions of migration have become a significant issue for countries of origin, transit and destination and developing shared, responsible narratives is crucial for constructive dialogue. In fact, migration and culture go hand in hand and bringing culture to the forefront of discussions alongside economic and social issues can help focus on the positive contributions of migration. France acknowledges the importance of migration narratives and has included them as a thematic priority in its program for the 14<sup>th</sup> GFMD Summit, which will take place in Geneva in January 2024.

## **PANEL 1: Narratives and Public Perceptions on Migration and Human Mobility: How to Build and Nurture a Balanced Fair and Informative Public Discourse, Including with Respect to Climate Change?**

**Moderator:** Mr. Daniel Valdez, Chief External Affairs Officer, Welcoming America

### **Panelists:**

- **Ms. Kristine Leilani R. Salle**, Deputy Permanent Representative and Minister of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Philippines to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland
- **Ms. Halima Dabou**, Focal Point Migration, City of Casablanca, Morocco
- **Ms. Cecilie Kern**, Chair of the NGO Committee on Migration
- **Mr. Gary Slaiman**, Managing member of Slaiman Consulting LLC and Corporate Outreach Advisor to Talent Beyond Boundaries
- **Mr. Julio Cesar Daly**, Director, Xenophobia Barometer

**The key role of narratives on migration for governance and policy making.** Migration narratives shape public perceptions and can play a pivotal role in fostering governance and policies that prioritize the protection, inclusion and meaningful participation of migrants. It is essential to promote well-informed narratives around migration to facilitate the development of policies that support these objectives.

**Leveraging the private sector's role to nurture a balanced public discourse on migration.** The power of individual and collective stories can challenge misconceptions and biases often associated with migration. By sharing real stories on the contribution of migrants, for instance in the workplace or examples of migrants' agency and capacities, the private sector can continue to nurture narratives that illustrate the positive aspects of migration as an engine for development.

**The key link between regular pathways and migration narratives.** The integration of migrants into the formal economy is a crucial vector to foster a fair narrative on migration. By establishing accessible and rights-based migration pathways, it is possible to create an environment where migrants' meaningful contributions to societies become fully visible. In turn, a more balanced public discourse on migration can facilitate the creation of legal pathways and help address skills shortages in labour markets. These elements are key for the economy and for the well-being of society.

**Fostering cities and municipalities' potential in promoting fair and inclusive narratives on migration.** Local governments play a key role in facilitating the social inclusion and integration of migrants in communities as the level of government closer to the population. The involvement of local authorities in synergy with civil society organizations is key for improving the quality of public perceptions of migration and a broader understanding of how migrants contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Stressing the need for accurate data and quality analysis...** Accurate data and quality analysis play a vital role in improving public knowledge about migration. It is of utmost importance to frame public discourse on migration based on data to ensure that migration policies are designed and implemented in a manner that addresses the actual realities and needs of communities.

**...While going beyond the data at the same time.** While statistics and facts *per se* may not change public attitudes towards migration, the emotional connection that arises from listening to real stories may resonate with the public and compel many to reconsider their perspectives. Powerful stories can be instructive and help connect the often unrecounted dimensions of migration, highlighting the many

economic, social and cultural contributions of migrants to society and de-stigmatizing the image of migrants.

**Finding common denominators to leverage migration for development.** To promote social cohesion and overcome barriers to social inclusion, it is essential to identify shared values and emphasize our common humanity, which is sometimes overshadowed in public debates. Focusing on common denominators allows shifting debates towards common interests and promote solidarity.

**Fostering the “co-creation of migration narratives” to generate a 360-degree perspective.** An approach to migration narratives that includes migrants, refugees and diaspora organizations can help overcome stereotypical representations that associate migration with emergency and crisis only, or sensationalised stories of individual success, which may be inspirational but also entail an ‘exceptionalism’ effect, hiding the widespread, daily contributions of migrants to society. Co-creating narratives on migration can help generate a broader perspective on what is often an oversimplified public debate.

**Finding ways to counter hate speech and misinformation is necessary.** This can be done by holding individuals accountable for hate speech, leveraging social media and grassroots organizations to disseminate information and combat the proliferation of xenophobic discourse, keeping narratives up to date, debunking mis- and dis-information and anticipating instances where hate speech may arise (i.e., in contexts of political instability, before elections, etc.).

**Engaging with individuals with opposing views on migration and reaching out to the ‘moveable middle’ in society.** It is crucial to acknowledge diverse perspectives, including opposing points of view on migration. While engaging in dialogue with counterparts that hold a different position may not always appear immediately productive, it is often possible to find common ground or points of connection. A "movable middle" exists with respect to public discourse on migration, comprising individuals who hold mixed views about migration. Reaching out to the movable middle and engaging it can be a constructive approach to promote more balanced narratives on migration.

## **PANEL 2: Diasporas as Actors of Cultural, Economic and Social Change: How do Diasporas Contribute To Innovation and Human Development?**

**Moderator: Ms. Marta Foresti**, Visiting Senior Fellow, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and Founder of Local Actions on Global Opportunities (LAGO)

### **Panelists:**

- **Mr. Luis Gutierrez Reyes**, Head of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico
- **Ms. Núria Margarit Carbassa**, Advisor at the Coordination of Policies for Immigrants and Promotion of Decent Work, in the Secretariat of Human Rights and Citizenship of the Mayor's Office of São Paulo
- **Ms. Khady Sakho**, Former President of the Forum of Organizations for International Solidarity on Migration (FORIM) - a network of diasporas based in France
- **H.E. Mr. Awad Sakine Ahmat**, African Union Permanent Representative to the European Union in Brussels, Belgium
- **Mr. Vijay Singh**, Film maker, writer and journalist

**Acknowledging the relevance of diasporas beyond remittances.** The significance of remittances for development is widely acknowledged and documented, while the impact of the contribution of diasporas in other fields is often unrecognized. The numerous accomplishments of diaspora members in various

fields including politics, technology, science, arts, culture, gastronomy, sports deserve to be recounted. Acknowledging the multiple roles of migrants and diasporas is important to build a more fair and just perspective on the role of migration for human development.

**Unleashing the potential of diasporas in culture.** Diasporas possess a remarkable capacity to drive cultural change and are strongly represented in creative industries. Diaspora artists, thinkers, cultural actors profoundly influence perceptions, aesthetics and understandings of society. Diasporas hold the potential to shift migration narratives and foster a more balanced and equitable representation of migration in society.

**Looking at diasporas as actors of change and bridges across communities.** Diasporas often exist in a double space or increasingly in multiple spaces, particularly in terms of economic and cultural engagement. Among others, diasporas contribute to knowledge transfer, the creation and circulation of skills and innovative ideas and the shaping of new aesthetics.

**Recognizing the role of local authorities to support diasporas as catalysts for cultural development.** It is essential to consider the integration of diaspora communities not just in a generic sense within societies, but also within existing structures, systems and local government frameworks to strengthen the positive impact of migration within communities.

**Acknowledging the role of diaspora organizations in efforts to return artifacts and artworks.** Many diaspora organizations are engaged in efforts to ensure the return of artifacts and artworks held in museums abroad to their countries of origin. The restitution of cultural properties is an important topic that has significant implications for communities and for international relations.

**Involving migrants in consultative and decision-making processes.** While showcasing the beauty of diversity of cultures may help raise awareness and foster inclusion, this alone is not sufficient to combat stigmatization and address the barriers of 'otherness'. To truly promote understanding and bridge cultural gaps, it is necessary to actively engage migrant communities in participatory consultative and decision-making processes, be it for the organization of events, campaigns, projects or public services.

**Breaking down the "us vs. them" and moving beyond old debates and labels of 'diasporas' and 'migrants'.** It is important for individuals to determine their own definition of self, as identity is a personal construct. Many individuals, including artists and the younger generations may not feel comfortable about the use of the terms "diaspora" and "migrant", especially when they identify fully with the country of residence or citizenship, rather than with their or their family's country of origin. Overemphasis on categorizations and definitions can hinder progress, while shifting the debate focusing on shared priorities, needs and perspectives can be constructive.

### **PANEL 3: Migrations, Culture and Creations: How does Human Mobility Contribute to Cultural and Artistic Development?**

**Moderator:** Ms. Hortense Assaga, journalist

**Panelists:**

- Bessora, Author
- Mr. Alain Bidjeck, Director of the festival MOCA (Movement of Creative Africas)

- **Ms. Isabelle Boni-Claverie**, Writer, director, producer
- **Mr. Ray Lema**, Musician, composer
- **Ms. Nadia Yala Kisukidi**, *Agrégée* in philosophy, lecturer at the University of Paris-VIII
- **Mr. Onyekachi Wambu**, Executive Director, African Foundation for Development (AFFORD)

**The multidimensional aspects of migration in relation to culture and development.** The panel explored the influence of diverse backgrounds on artistic creation, focusing on individuals with experiences of immigration, exile and belonging to minority groups. It delved into creative processes and how artists elaborate their sense of identity across diverse cultural heritages. The panel also discussed how art can enhance social comprehension of migration-related matters challenging prevailing narratives.

**Addressing the circulation and protection of artworks and artists.** The ability for artists to travel freely is crucial as artists serve as ambassadors, educators, carriers of knowledge and heritage that hold immense value for humanity. The limitations imposed by visa regulations hinder artists' mobility and restrict the exchange of cultural expressions. This panel called on policy makers to consider how to address existing limitations to facilitate the circulation of artists and their work.

**Handling diversity and challenging stereotypes in the culture industries.** Panelists highlighted the lack of representativeness and diversity in the cultural production and the under-representation of ethnic minorities and individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Existing structures and systems within the culture industries often perpetuate biases and reinforce dominant cultural norms. Stereotypes and typecasting are prevalent and can lead to the perpetuation of harmful and one-dimensional portrayals of certain groups.

**Lack of robust cultural policies, financial support and recognition of artists.** Limited government support and lack of interest from international institutions hampers the ability of artists to create, develop and showcase their artistic work. While international institutions may provide financial resources for cultural projects, funding rules may constrain the independence of artists.

**The importance of cultural heritage tourism for communities.** Cultural heritage tourism can have a positive impact on economic development and has an important, empowering role for communities. Cultural items representing the ideas and history of the Global South provide opportunities for conversations about the traumatic experiences of colonialism and articulate a vision for the present and the future.

**Restitution:** The role of artists in articulating the need for new cultural relational ethics and fostering the acknowledgement of the significance of the return of icons is gaining traction. The 2018 Sarr/Savoy Report on the restitution of African cultural heritage was recognized as an important step in the right direction.

#### **Annex: Shared Practices**

Practices shared by participants during this workshop are available [here](#)