

LOCAL INTEGRATION POLICIES TOWARDS FOREIGNERS: TRANSATLANTIC COMPARISON ON THE EXAMPLE OF FRANCE AND QUEBEC

Markéta Seidlová

Abstract

The social integration of immigrants into mainstream society always has a strong local (and especially urban) dimension and the attitudes and practices of local councils significantly affect this process and its results. Our research compares the practice in two cities: Paris, the capital of France, and Montreal, the metropolis of Quebec. The research has shown that in Paris the policy of studied city districts was influenced by the existing policy on the whole city level, applying significantly multicultural measures. However, the everyday practice reflects also other influences, like national policies primarily oriented on “assimilation” of immigrants (mainly the policies regarding the access to the rights or to the education). The concrete local initiatives for immigrants were also dependent on the personal visions of the leaders of the city/city district. In the case of Montreal, many local actions are encountered in the absence of a centralized policy statement on this issue. The approach of the leaders of the city is more pragmatic than in Paris, although many statements of philosophical principles exist. The study based on a large number of detailed discussions with municipal officials in the above mentioned localities allows illustrate and support these general observations through concrete examples.

Key words: local integration policy, immigration, integration of immigrants, France, Canada

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Introduction

France and Canada belong among the countries with the longest tradition of receiving immigrants. Both countries were for long time considered as model countries of incorporation of immigrants and represented two of four major models: the assimilative and the multicultural one (Freeman, 1994). Moreover, the second official language in Canada is French, and due to specific historical evolution, in of the Canadian provinces, in the Quebec,

the French is even the only official language¹. So the choice of this province, when we wanted to compare two different – but at the same time to some extent similar – societies was obvious. As the immigrants influence the life of the host society (Seidlová, 2012), we can ask not only about how does the process of their integration into mainstream society really occurs, but also if the local authorities have some possibilities to assist and help them? Which tools and measures do they really use? We will answer these questions following the experience of biggest cities of France and Quebec: Paris and Montreal.

1 Local dimension of immigration

The process of integration of immigrants into the host society always has a strong local (and especially urban) dimension. From the point of view of history, the biggest experience with integrating diverse and culturally enriching populations had big cities with strong economies (Borkert et al., 2007), serving as “machines of integration”. Therefore, “the integration of immigrants takes place at the local level” (Bosswick, Heckmann, 2006, p. 17). The city administrations may then act as “only” implementing national integration policy or, on the contrary, they may have considerable autonomy and independence in both finance and opinion (Borkert et al., 2007). The processes and the structures working on place are, of course, heavily influenced by the policy of higher levels, i.e. counties/regions, states or even by supranational organizations such as European Union (OECD, 2006). However, the everyday practice in implementation of laws and regulations at the local level always provides some space for own reading by municipalities. As result, the attitudes and everyday practices of municipal councils and of their administrations are the most important ones because they have significant influence on the results of the process of integration of immigrants into host society. The type of migration coming to city defines the attitude of municipality to the integration policy and lists the integration as a key or marginal priority within the issues solved (Bosswick, Heckmann, 2006).

2 Methodology

In fact, this article summarizes the findings of two different researches: the findings for Paris are only a part of much larger study² which compared the attitude of town halls to immigrants within metropolitan area of Paris and within rural region of Basse-Normandie in France

¹ In Quebec, French is mother tongue for 79.7 % of inhabitants (Corbeil, 2012).

² This study, Seidlová (2012), was realized between 2007 and 2011. Obviously, all acquired information was updated as this paper was written.

(Seidlová, 2012). The research in Quebec in 2014 was inspired by the findings for the part of Paris and by the desire to see how the everyday practise is similar or not within another country with long tradition of immigration and with the difference in overall attitude to the immigrants.

The hypothesis for actual research was as follows:

The way of implementation of national integration policy by local councils varies depending on the context in which they act: the bigger share of immigrants in the total population of their city, the bigger awareness of the need to deal with immigrant integration. Better knowledge of local conditions allows local governments to better formulate specific projects which aims to promote the integration of immigrants into the host society. The tools and measures used by local governments in studied metropolitan areas are quite similar; the only difference is the extent, while the city council of the city with bigger share of immigrants on its population is more active.

In order to confirm its validity or its non-validity, it was firstly necessary to compare the studied metropolises in the terms of their immigrant population: In *Paris*, we speak about 456,105 immigrants (20.3 % of all city residents) in 2011 (INSEE, 2014). In *Montreal*, 612,935 persons were immigrants in the same year, thus making 32.5 % of population of the agglomeration (Chui, Flanders, 2013). So it is definitely the city of Montreal who is supposed to be more active then Paris and implementing more measures in favour of immigrants.

For both cities, we used the methods of analysis of secondary data, participative observation and semi-structured interviews.

In *Paris*, we interviewed 15 elected representatives of city districts³ and of main town hall. The nature of tools set up in each district/in the city of Paris and their un/friendliness towards immigrants were then judged according to the scale of Alexander (2007): as the most accommodating, immigrant friendly and helpful local integration policy was considered the multicultural one, as less responsive the assimilation, then even less friendly was the discriminatory policy and the last and least friendly policy was the no policy (or ad hoc policy) (Seidlová, 2012).

In the case of *Montreal*, the comparison of local integration policies in the same way as in Paris was impossible for three main reasons. First of all, the towns in Quebec are much

³ The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the representatives of following city districts of Paris: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th, i.e. in 14 districts out of 20 (70 %). To reach the 100 % result was unfortunately impossible due to the not helpful attitude of town halls in other districts (i.e. in 4th, 6th, 7th, 9th, 12th and 20th district) (Seidlová, 2012).

more the „creatures“ of provincial government than the cities in Europe: their powers are much more shared with the province, and the province can abolish them, merge them, impose them the rules of management and administrative standards. Secondly, the lack of powers is even more evident in the case of town districts, and in fact there were almost no favourable answer from elected municipal officials to the demand of interview: out of 19 districts of the town of Montreal, we were able to have interviews only in two⁴. Thirdly, the concentration of power can be seen also in the non-governmental sector, where all of the addressed NGOs oriented us to their one and only speaker, the *Table of concentration of organizations serving refugees and immigrants*⁵. However, even in these unfavourable conditions, we were able to speak at least with the employees of the main town hall and discuss informally with the employees of NGOs, and we incorporate the information acquired this way in our research.

3 Characteristics of studied territories

In *Paris* in 2011 lived 456,105 immigrants⁶, making 20.3 % of all city residents. There were also 333,283 foreigners living there the same year, constituting 14.8 % of all inhabitants (INSEE, 2014). Among the city districts, the immigrants were located mainly in the northern part of Paris, with the highest share on population in 19th district (24.9 %; i.e. 46,396 persons). On the contrary, they didn't represent more than 15.7 % of inhabitants in 12th district (22,726 persons). Most immigrants in Paris came from Algeria (46,548 persons, i.e. 10.2 % of all immigrants), Morocco (37,494 persons, i.e. 8.2 %), Portugal (29,150 persons, i.e. 6.4 %) and Tunisia (29,052 persons, i.e. 6.4 %), and from Italy (16,069 persons, i.e. 3.5 %): from these five countries thus originated 34.7 % of all immigrants in the city (INSEE, 2014).

In *Montreal* in 2011 lived 612,935 immigrants, making 32.5 % of all city residents. Among the city districts, the immigrants were located mainly in the northern part of Montreal, in the districts of Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension, Ahuntsic-Cartierville and Saint-Laurent. In these 4 districts (together) lived 46 % of all immigrants in Montreal, while only in the district of Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce lived 16 % of them. On the contrary, only less than 2 % of immigrants have chosen as their place of residence the districts of l'Île-Bizard-Sainte-Geneviève and Outremont. Most

⁴ In Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension and in Ahuntsic-Cartierville.

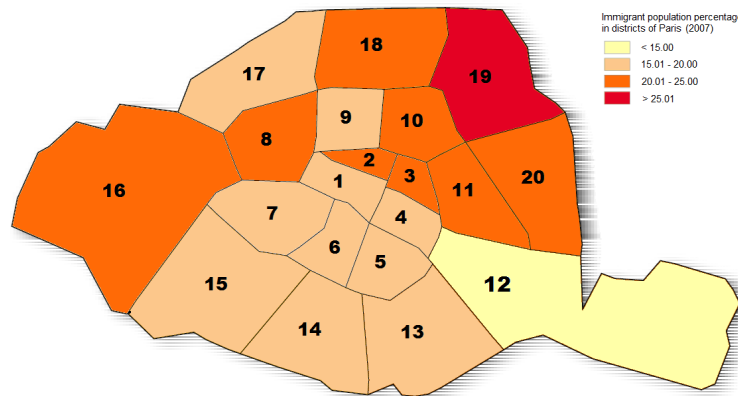
⁵ *Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes (TCRI)*

⁶ In French statistics the most important is the division of inhabitants according to their citizenship. The French citizens (French) and citizens of another state (foreigners) are distinguished. An immigrant is then a person born outside of France with another than French citizenship and living currently in France (INSEE, 2014).

immigrants in Montreal came from Italy (45,295 persons, i.e. 7.4 % of all immigrants) and Haiti (45,255 persons, i.e. 7.4 %), Algeria (33,870 persons, i.e. 5.5 %), Morocco (32,540 persons, i.e. 5.3 %) and France (30,545 persons, i.e. 5.0 %). Among ten most represented countries of origin of immigrants, we can find also China, Lebanon, Vietnam, Philippines and Romania. In fact, the immigrant population in Montreal is much more diversified than the one of Paris: ten most represented countries make a sum of only 47.3 % of immigrants.

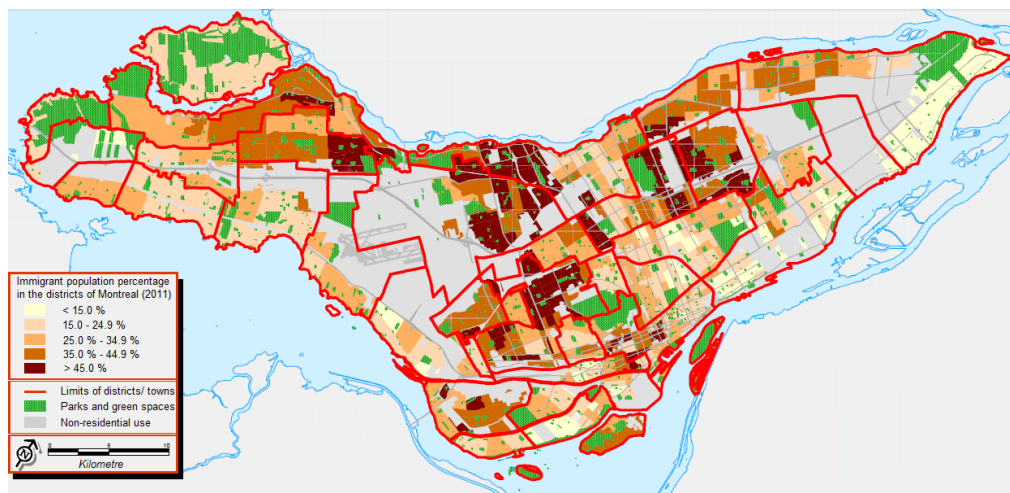
The unequal spatial distribution of immigrants among studied cities themselves can be clearly seen from figures 1 and 2.

Fig. 1: Spatial distribution of immigrants in the city of Paris (2007)



Source: Bidou, Virot (2011)

Fig. 2: Spatial distribution of immigrants in the city of Montreal (2011)



Source: Ville de Montréal (2014)

So, how is the diversity of the immigrant population in two researched cities reflected in practice of their local integration policy?

4 Tools and measures used by local integration policies

The obtained findings for both Paris and Montreal were summarized and divided into three major groups, according to the target population. Moreover, the common and distinct tools used by these cities were looked out. We underline the fact that all the presented tools and measures are the ones which are really and actively in use by local councils in studied cities⁷.

Among the *common* tools, used by both cities and *targeting primarily immigrant population*, we see:

- *Public declaration of support to diversity* or, in other words, the statement of the city leaders about fostering open and multicultural society. This openness is then translated in the number of activities that city does for its immigrants⁸;
- *Advisory Body of the City composed of representatives of immigrants* which allows immigrants to express their points of view, wishes and requirements to the town hall of their city⁹;
- *Support for non-profit organizations (NGOs) which help immigrants* could be financial or material or in the form of help with organisation of multicultural events, direct or through different grant schemes.

Among *distinct* tools targeting directly the immigrants, while this distinction arises mainly from the differences in the powers of towns in France and in Quebec, we can mention, for example:

In *Paris*:

- *Promoting the right of foreigners to vote in local elections* which motivates foreigners to participate actively in public life;
- *Language courses (French), Literacy courses and Courses of “everyday life”*;
- *“Parenthood” of foreigners including the interventions at the prefecture* means that the elected members of municipal councils can intervene in police office in favour of an immigrant using letters, personal meetings or by accompanying him to a meeting;
- *Ceremonies to celebrate the gain of French citizenship* at the town hall;

⁷ In the case of Paris, it has to be stressed out that all presented tools concerns only the immigrants from so-called “third countries”, i.e. from the countries which are not members of the European Union.

⁸ In the case of Paris, essential is the attitude of seeing all its inhabitants as „citizens of town“, adopted since 2001. In Montreal, there is impressive number of declarations in this issue (like for example „on Cultural Diversity and Inclusion” from 2004) and the city is even member of network of Intercultural Cities, an initiative of Council of Europe.

⁹ In Paris, we speak about the *Assemblée des Citoyens Parisiens Extra communautaires* (since 2002; 106 members). In Montreal, it is the *Intercultural Council of Montreal* (since 2003; 15 members).

- *Advisory places targeting their activity on traditionally marginalized groups of immigrants*, i.e. on seniors: Paris has (till October 2015) set up four so-called “*Social cafes*” where seniors-migrants can meet in a relaxed atmosphere, attend educational or cultural program or solve their particular problems (like access to social benefits or to pension) with the help of a social worker;
- *Banners with the requirements of various social movements that defend the rights of foreigners*, publicly hold on the building of the town hall or public institutions, even if, in general, there should be no such campaigning on public buildings as the public services must be strictly neutral in France;
- *Grant scheme “Developing partnerships between Paris and the South”* supports development projects that aim both to implement a development project in the country of global South and to integrate into the new society the immigrants coming from outside of the EU and living in Paris;
- *Restoration of common residences of foreign workers*: Besides improving the technical state of 45 buildings (with 8,7000 beds) and the quality of housing, the rooms for providing specialized services for immigrants (like legal, social and medical assistance or courses of literacy or of French) are also being built;
- *Use of the mayor’s right to examine the bride and groom* in order to detect marriage fraud is an instrument that is really not favourable to immigrants, but as some town halls use it, we had to include it here (Seidlová, 2012).

In *Montreal*, most of above mentioned tools/services are provided by other actors (for example by provincial government or NGOs). However, the city has found its own spaces for action:

- *Employment*
 - Action Plan *Equal access to employment of the City of Montreal* is implemented since 2008. In 2013, from 25,510 employees of the Town, the people of visible minorities were making 9.6 % (2,471 persons), of ethnic minorities 5.2 % (1,330 persons) and of first nations 0.3 % (75 persons);
 - *Professional Sponsorship Program (PPP)* takes place since 2006. Till 2011, it found first job in the form of paid internship for 260 persons, from those 54 % now have stable job (39 % within the town’s organisations);

- *Intercultural formation* for employees of town halls and municipal corporations (2009 – 2010: 500 persons);
- *Closer cooperation with police* in selected districts (Ville de Montréal, 2011).

The second group of tools, *targeting primarily on the major society*, is not so large in its number, but it is the most visible for all, as these tools are *supporting the projects that increase the awareness of the majority about the diversity of cultures present in the town*. These two types are implemented *commonly* in both Paris and Montreal:

- *Multicultural festivals* that shows the details of other cultures to city's inhabitants, quite often by performances of traditional music groups or by tasting typical food;
- *Lectures, conferences, exhibitions, theatre and film performances* showing the country of origin of immigrants, their life in new country or the life of immigrants in general.

Additionally,

- in *Paris*, there is a *specialized library*, where one can borrow books related to migration issues;

and

- in *Montreal*, the specific language sections in public libraries are quite common.

Last but not least come the third group of tools and measures *targeting to all city residents and promoting social cohesion of the city*. These tools help all disadvantaged groups of inhabitants or promote the active participation of citizens in public life. From the very concrete and *common* tools we can mention for example:

- *Advisory Body of the City Council intended for all inhabitants* of the city;
- *Financial and material support for NGOs* that provide legal and social assistance for free to all citizens;
- *Formulation of own city policy of social cohesion*;
- *Partnerships and cooperation with cities abroad* which can be either more formal (only a signed partnership) or more friendly and project cooperation, giving real results.

The city of *Paris* uses also *two more* tools, which are not in use in Montreal:

- *Promoting equal access to all rights and all the services provided by the City*: in the case of immigrants this means that all major information booklets (for example, about the access to social housing, about the services for seniors or about the services for

children under the age of 6) were translated to mostly commonly spoken languages of immigrant community (Arabic, Spanish, Turkish, Russian and English);

- *Retraining courses held in the evening* and aiming to boost the success of unemployed citizens on the labour market (Seidlová, 2012).

Conclusion

In this paper we were primarily concerned by comparing the similarities and differences in dealing with the same phenomenon, i.e. with the continuous influx of immigrant population of different ethnic origins, in two metropolises, hence representing two countries with longest tradition of immigration: Paris for France and Montreal for Quebec/ Canada.

Due to the big differences in the powers of cities in France and in Quebec, it is impossible to state clearly if the research confirmed or not the validity of our whole hypothesis, as its second part (i.e. *the tools and measures used by local governments in studied metropolitan areas are quite similar; the only difference is the extent, while the city council of the city with bigger share of immigrants on its population is more active*) is directly linked with the overall and traditional powers of cities in a country or moreover on a continent.

However, we can conclude that the results of this study can be used as inspiration for concrete and specific tools of local integration policies also in other cities and towns in other countries of world as well as for themselves. Even if the current composition of immigrant population in every country is the result of its specific migration history, the basic principles of successful integration of immigrants into major society remain the same. However, every city council should still bear in mind also the needs of the people from major population, in order to prevent their feeling that the city council is so immersed in combating discrimination and promoting diversity issues that it forgets the needs of other disadvantaged populations.

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Contact

Markéta Seidlová, Ph.D.

Geographic Migration Center – GEOMIGRACE

Department of Social Geography and Regional Development

Faculty of Science

Charles University in Prague

Albertov 6, 128 43 Praha 2, Czech Republic

mseidlova@seznam.cz