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**PROMISES AND CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY:  
THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES IN  
FOSTERING PLURALISM**

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## YÖNETİCİ ÖZETİ

Bir taraftan küresel ölçekte hızla artan göçmen ve özellikle mülteci hareketleri, diğer taraftan Kuzey Amerika ve Avrupa'da etkisi ve popülerliği giderek yaygınlaşan farklı kimliklere karşı dışlayıcı, ötekileştirici hatta ırkçı söylem ve pratikler yaşadığımız küresel dünyada çok önemli bir sorun teşkil etmektedir. Bu hareketlenmeyle toplumlar giderek çok kültürlü ve çok kimlikli bir yapıya dönüşürken, hükümetler bu yapıyı yönetmekte başarılı olamamaktadırlar.

Son yıllarda özellikle Suriye'de yaşanan insani trajedi ve siyasal çalkantı, genelde de Ortadoğu ve Afrika bölgesinde yaşanan şiddet, iklim değişikliği, yoksulluk ve benzeri sorunlar nedeniyle mülteci meselesi neredeyse kriz boyutuna ulaşmıştır. Suriye kaynaklı mülteci hareketi tüm bu sorunları en yalın şekliyle ortaya koymaktadır. Bu raporda, bir insani trajedi niteliği taşıyan Suriyeli mülteciler sorununa odaklanarak farklılıklarla nasıl birlikte yaşanabileceği sorusuna yanıt aranmaktadır. Bu çerçevede yerel ve sivil toplum etkinliklerinin topluma yeni gelenlerle birlikte yaşamayı mümkün kılan alanları nasıl açtığı ve ne gibi katkılarda bulunduğu üzerine odaklanılacaktır.

Bu raporda, sivil ve yerel inisiyatiflerin yerel halkla yeni gelenler, vatandaş olan ve olmayanlar ve en genelde içerde olanlarla dışardan gelenler arasındaki engellerin azaltılmasında ve sınırların yumuşatılmasında önemli bir rol oynadığı karşılaştırmalı örneklerle dayanarak ortaya konmaktadır. Bu karşılaştırmalı yöntemle ve derinlemesine mülakatlarla hazırlanan raporda İtalya, Almanya ve Türkiye'de başarılı ve etkili olmuş üç örnek vaka üzerinde durulacaktır. İtalya'nın Calabria bölgesinde yer alan Riace köyü, Gaziantep'te Kırkayak Kültür Merkezi ve Berlin çıkışlı Über den Tellerand inisiyatifi, Suriyeli mülteciler sorunu temelinde yeni gelenlerle birlikte yaşama olasılığını hayata

geçiren 'iyi örnekler' teşkil etmektedir. Rapor, bu 'iyi örneklerden' yola çıkarak mülteci sorununun çözümünde yapıcı öneriler sunmaktadır.

Mültecilerin gelmesiyle yeniden canlanan Riace'de çevre kentlerin aksine, mülteciler kabul görmüş ve belediye başkanının öncülüğünde gündelik hayata başarıyla katılabilmişlerdir. Belediye başkanı hem yerel halkı hem de yeni gelenleri dahil ettiği istihdam politikaları uygulayarak birlikte çalışma koşulları oluşturmuş ve iki grup arasındaki karşılaşmaların çoğalmasını sağlamıştır. Gaziantep'teki Kırkayak Kültür Merkezi örneğinde ise merkez herkesin özgürce gelip eşit katılımcılar olarak yer alabilecekleri açık bir mekan olarak tasarlanmıştır. Özellikle ortak kültür sanat faaliyetleri gerçekleştiren merkez, aynı zamanda mutfakta yemek kültürünü paylaşarak Suriyeliler ve yerel halkın birbirlerine temas etme olanağı sağlamış ve yabancı olma/ait olmama halini bir nebze değiştirmiştir. Almanya'da 'hoş geldin kültürü' içinden çıkan pek çok sivil inisiyatif arasında en iyi örneklerden biri olan Über den Tellerand herkese açık bir ortak mutfak projesidir. Beraber yemek pişirme ve mutfak kültürü etrafında bir araya gelme fikrinden yola çıkan Über den Tellerand, mülteciler ve yerel halk arasında dostluk ve dayanışma ağları kurulmasına vesile olarak önyargıları azaltıp mültecilerin aidiyet hissini arttırmayı hedeflemektedir.

Sivil ve yerel inisiyatiflerin önemini vurgulamak, ulus devlet politikalarının ve yerel yönetimlerin bu konudaki önemini göz ardı etmek anlamına gelmemektedir. Tam tersine, bu vaka örneklerinde görüleceği gibi yerel ve sivil inisiyatiflerin katkılarının sürdürülebilir olması ulus devlet politikalarının etkili ve destekleyici olmasına bağlıdır. Özellikle yerel yönetimlerin bu bağlamda rolü çok önemlidir. Mülteci sorunun çözümünde ulusal politikalar çok önemli olmakla birlikte sorunun yaşandığı ve çözü-

münü de içinde barındıran mekan kent ve yereldir. Bu nedenle mültecilik aynı zamanda kentin günlük yaşam pratiği içinde yeni gelenler ve yerelin sakinlerinin arasındaki ilişkiyi içermektedir. Raporda üç örnekte de ortaya koyulduğu gibi esas olarak yerelde tezahür eden, yeni gelenlerle birlikte yaşama olasılığının güçlendirilmesine katkı veren yerel ve sivil inisiyatiflerin yerel yönetimlerden aldıkları destek arttıkça etkileri ve katkıları güçlenmektedir. Şu noktayı vurgulayalım: sivil ve yerel inisiyatiflerin etkinliklerinin sürdürülebilmesi başta yerel yönetimler olmak üzere hükümetlerden aldıkları desteğin güçlü ve uzun dönemli olması ile mümkündür.

Rapordaki üç vaka örneği ulusal politikaların ve yerel yönetimlerin önemi kadar arabulucu (interlocutor) rolü üstlenebilecek aktörlerin varlığının önemine de işaret etmektedir. Bu arabulucu (interlocutor) rolünü oynayacak aktörler belediye başkanları, kaymakam ve valiler gibi yerel devlet görevlileri, etkin ekonomik aktörler ve yerelde saygınlığı kabul gören akil insanlar olabilir. Bu aktörler sivil ve yerel inisiyatiflerin katkılarının yerel toplum tarafından olumlu algılanmasını ya da yerel yönetimler veya ulusal devlet politikaları tarafından desteklenmesini sağlayabilirler.

Göç ve özellikle mülteci sorunu dönemsel düşünülmece kadar ciddi ve kalıcı bir sorundur. Yapılan çalışmaların gösterdiği gibi küreselleşen dünyada göç ve mülteci hareketleri sürecektir ve var olan politikalara en önemli meydan okumalardan biri olmaya devam edecektir. Bu sorunun merkezinde Avrupa vardır ve bugün yaşandığı biçimiyle mülteci sorunu bir Avrupa ve Türkiye sorunudur. Türkiye ve Almanya ve Türkiye ve AB sorunun çözümünde merkezi rol oynamaya devam edecektir.

Şu noktanın altını çizmek gerekir: hükümetler ve yerel yönetimler bu soruna dönemsel bakmak yerine bütüncül yaklaşarak sorunun çözümüyle ilgili katkı sağlayan sivil ve yerel inisiyatiflere desteklerini kalıcı hale getirmelidir. Gerek bu raporda yer alan 3 örnek, gerekse de araştırma kapsamında incelediğimiz diğer örnekler kendilerine verilen desteğin kalıcı olmasının önemini vurgulamaktadırlar.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die steigende Zahl der Migranten, insbesondere die der Flüchtlinge, auf der einen Seite und die ausgrenzenden und ausschließenden wenn nicht sogar rassistischen Diskurse und Praktiken, deren Einfluss und Popularität in Nordamerika und in Europa allmählich wächst, auf der anderen Seite, bilden ein enormes Problem in unserer globalisierten Welt. Während Gesellschaften infolge der Migrationsströme immer multikultureller werden und aus zahlreichen Identitäten bestehen, sind Regierungen nicht in der Lage diesen neuen Strukturen konstruktiv zu begegnen.

Die menschliche Tragödie, vor allem in Syrien, und die politischen Unruhen, sowie die Gewalt insbesondere im mittleren Osten und Afrika, der Klimawandel, Armut und ähnliche Probleme haben dazu geführt, dass sich die Flüchtlingsfrage allmählich zu einer Krise entwickelt hat. Der Flüchtlingszustrom aus Syrien stellt alle diese Probleme in ihrer klarsten Form dar. Der vorliegende Bericht stellt die menschliche Tragödie und die Flüchtlingsfrage der Menschen aus Syrien in den Mittelpunkt und sucht nach Antworten auf die Frage nach einem Zusammenleben mit Diversitäten und Differenzen. Der Bericht richtet das Augenmerk darauf, wie lokale und zivilgesellschaftliche Initiativen durch ihre Aktivitäten Räume schaffen, in denen das Zusammenleben mit Neuankömmlingen ermöglicht wird und diskutiert welche gesellschaftlichen gesellschaftlichen Beiträge diese Initiativen damit leisten.

Der vorliegende Bericht veranschaulicht durch den Vergleich von unterschiedlichen Beispielen die bedeutende Rolle zivilgesellschaftlicher und lokaler Initiativen in der Minderung von Hindernissen und Grenzen zwischen Mehrheitsgesellschaft und Neuankömmlingen, zwischen Bürgern und Nicht-Bürgern und insbesondere zwischen dem Eigenen und dem Fremden. Der Bericht wurde mit einer vergleichenden Methodik erstellt und beruht auf

eingehenden Befragungen, wobei vor allem drei erfolgreiche Fallbeispiele aus Italien, Deutschland und aus der Türkei im Mittelpunkt stehen. Die Gemeinde Riace im italienischen Kalabrien, das Kirkayak Kulturhaus in Gaziantep und die Berliner Initiative "Über den Tellerrand" sind "best practice" Beispiele. Diese Initiativen ermöglichen auf der Grundlage der Flüchtlingsfrage der Menschen aus Syrien ein Zusammenleben mit Neuankömmlingen. Der vorliegende Bericht unterbreitet ausgehend von diesen 'guten Beispielen' konstruktive Vorschläge zur Lösung der Flüchtlingsfrage.

In der Gemeinde Riace, die mit der Ankunft von Flüchtlingen sehr lebendig wurde, sind Flüchtlinge im Gegensatz zu den umgebenden Ortschaften mit offenen Armen empfangen und unter der Führung des Bürgermeisters erfolgreich in den Alltag integriert worden. Der Bürgermeister schuf durch die lokale Beschäftigungspolitik, die sowohl die Einheimischen als auch die Neuankömmlinge umfasste, eine Grundlage für die Zusammenarbeit und die Möglichkeiten der Begegnung zwischen den beiden Gruppen. Das Kirkayak Kulturhaus in Gaziantep wurde als ein öffentliches Zentrum konzipiert, das von jedem frei und als gleichberechtigte Teilnehmer besucht werden kann. Das Zentrum setzt gemeinsame kulturelle und künstlerische Veranstaltungen um und bietet außerdem durch den Austausch von Essenskulturen die Möglichkeit der Begegnung zwischen Syrern und Einheimischen. Diese Begegnungen konnten das Gefühl des Fremdseins/Nicht-Dazugehörens in einigem gewissen Maße mindern. Eines der besten Beispiele, das aus der 'Willkommenskultur' in Deutschland entstanden ist, ist unter zahlreichen anderen Zivilinitiativen das Projekt "Über den Tellerand". Das Projekt stellt eine gemeinsame Küche zur Verfügung, die für jeden zugänglich ist. "Über den Tellerrand" ist von

der Idee ausgegangen, dass wenn man Menschen in der Küche und beim gemeinsamen Kochen und rund um die Essenskultur zusammenzubringt, Freundschaften und Solidarität zwischen Flüchtlingen und Einheimischen entstehen und dadurch Vorurteile abgebaut werden können und Flüchtlinge ein Zugehörigkeitsgefühl aufbauen.

Die bedeutende Rolle die zivilen und lokalen Initiativen in diesem Bericht zugewiesen wird bedeutet keineswegs das die nationale oder kommunale Politik als unwichtig angesehen wird. Ganz im Gegenteil: Die Fallbeispiele zeigen, dass die Nachhaltigkeit der Beiträge lokaler und ziviler Initiativen von der Wirksamkeit und Unterstützung der nationalen Politik abhängen. Vor allem Kommunen spielen dabei eine wesentliche Rolle. Die nationale Politik ist zwar ausschlaggebend in der Lösung der Flüchtlingsfrage, aber das Problem und dessen Lösung liegen in den Ortschaften und ist lokal geprägt. Aus diesem Grund zieht die Flüchtlings- und Migrationsfrage gleichzeitig die Frage der Beziehung zwischen Neuankömmlingen und Einheimischen in der urbanen Alltagspraxis mit sich. Wie auch die drei Beispiele im vorliegenden Bericht darlegen, das Zusammenleben mit den Neuankömmlingen ist eine im Wesentlichen lokale Angelegenheit, und die Wirkung zivilgesellschaftlicher und lokaler Initiativen ist umso stärker je mehr sie dabei von der jeweiligen Kommune unterstützt werden. Folgendes ist besonders hervorzuheben: die Nachhaltigkeit ziviler und lokaler Initiativen kann, angefangen bei den Kommunen, vor allem durch die Intensität und Dauer der Unterstützung durch die Regierung gewährleistet werden.

Die drei Fallbeispiele in diesem Bericht weisen nicht nur auf die Bedeutung der nationalen Politik und der Kommunen, sondern auch auf die Bedeutung von Akteuren, die eine Vermittlerrolle (interlocutor)

übernehmen könnten hin. Die Akteure, die diese Vermittlerrolle (interlocutor) ausüben könnten, wären Beamte der örtlichen Verwaltungen wie z.B. Bürgermeister, Präfekte und Gouverneure, außerdem wichtige wirtschaftliche Akteure und Respektpersonen der einheimischen Gemeinde. Diese Akteure können dazu beitragen, dass die Leistungen der zivilen und lokalen Initiativen bei der einheimischen Bevölkerung positiv aufgenommen werden bzw. durch Kommunen oder auch durch die nationale Politik unterstützt werden.

Migration und vor allem die Flüchtlingsfrage sind ernsthafte und dauerhafte Angelegenheiten, die man nicht als eine vorübergehende Phase betrachten darf. Bisher unternommene Studien belegen, dass Migration und Flüchtlingsströme weiterhin als Teil der globalisierten Welt bestehen und die größte Herausforderung der aktuellen Politik bleiben werden. Im Zentrum dieser Frage liegt Europa, wobei die Flüchtlingsfrage in ihrer heutigen Form eine Herausforderung für Europa und für die Türkei bildet. Die Türkei und Deutschland sowie die Türkei und die EU spielen zentrale Rollen in der Lösung des Problems.

Folgendes ist besonders hervorzuheben: Regierungen und Kommunen dürfen diese Frage nicht als eine vorübergehende Angelegenheit betrachten, sondern sollten einen ganzheitlichen Ansatz verfolgen und ihre Unterstützung für zivile und lokale Initiativen, die zur Lösung des Problems beitragen, nachhaltig gestalten. Sowohl die im Rahmen des vorliegenden Berichts untersuchten 3 Beispiele als auch alle sonstigen Beispiele, die während den Recherchen näher betrachtet wurden, belegen die Bedeutung der Nachhaltigkeit dieser Unterstützung.

## INTRODUCTION

At a time when more migrants and refugees are on the move, xenophobia and racism are also on the rise across Europe and North America.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, we have witnessed the emergence of far-right parties and movements, such as France's Front National, Hungary's Fidesz Party, the Alternative for Germany, and the election and exclusionary measures of Donald Trump's government. Reflecting on this bleak scenario, UN Secretary-General António Guterres insightfully stated: "Societies across the globe are becoming multicultural, multiethnic and multireligious. Like it or not, we cannot stop this trend; it is inevitable. We do have a choice, however, in how we approach this. Do we embrace diversity as a source of strength, or do we play the populist game and make it a source of fear? I believe tolerance is the only responsible option."<sup>2</sup>

This report addresses the timely issue of how to live together with difference by focusing on the role that local and civil society initiatives play in opening up communities to newcomers. While many govern-

ments are struggling to find peaceful ways of living together with those from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, these smaller-scale initiatives demonstrate effective ways of breaking down barriers between insiders and outsiders, citizens and non-citizens.<sup>3</sup> Wishing to show solidarity with newcomers, these initiatives find creative ways of fostering pluralism in environments increasingly hostile to newcomers. Germany's Welcome Culture (*Willkommenskultur*), Denmark's Good Neighbors/Kind Citizens (*Venligboerne*), and other smaller-scale initiatives, such as art and kitchen projects, first emerged in the wake of 2015. Within the Turkish context, the arrival of over 3.5 million Syrians in Turkey, many of whom are becoming long-term residents and even citizens, poses challenges for the Turkish government. Yet, even in Turkey, where, with such numbers, living together is no doubt a complicated process, we see similar civil society initiatives emerging to help integrate Syrian newcomers within Turkish society.

This report examines three cases, based on original field research, that illustrate the promise of a bottom-up approach to welcoming newcomers. We consider the small Italian village of Riace, which saw its community and economy reinvigorated with the presence of refugees integrated by progressive local policies; a Turkish cultural center in Gaziantep, which promotes the dignity and self-expression of otherwise marginalized Syrian refugees; and an ever-expanding Berlin-born kitchen project, which has been connecting locals and refugees through the socializing power of cooking together.

1 This report comes out of a workshop at Humboldt University, Berlin, March 15, 2018 and a public forum "Challenges and Promises of Diversity: Refugees Policies and Citizenship Politics" held at Mercator Centre, Berlin, on Friday, March 16, 2018, which was organized by the authors. The research findings for the cases are based on original field research conducted by Drs. Baban and Rygiel as part of a five-year project entitled "Living with others: Fostering cultural pluralism through citizenship politics," funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). This project investigates why, how, and under what conditions some communities are more open to cultural difference than others; what types of projects facilitate openness to newcomers; and how do citizens and non-citizens participate in these projects in ways that transform understandings of citizenship and belonging. Field research was conducted over the summers of 2015 and 2016 and in March 2017 in Berlin, Germany; Gaziantep, Turkey; and Riace, Italy as well as in Copenhagen, Denmark from July–August 2017 and March 2018.

2 A. Guterres, "Open the Gates to Uprooted Syrians," *The Globe and Mail*, May 29, 2014.

3 See F. Baban and K. Rygiel, "Living with others: fostering radical cosmopolitanism through citizenship politics in Berlin," *Ethics & Global Politics* 10, no. 1 (2017): 98–116.



These three cases attest to the often-sidelined importance of face-to-face encounters for challenging prejudiced conceptions of the “Other,” and they show the importance of moments of everyday living together for fostering a spirit of solidarity. Finally, we highlight that these everyday practices promoting living together need to be supported at a policy or service-provision level and with strong government leadership so as to be effective in countering xenophobia.

## CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES WELCOMING NEWCOMERS

This section focuses on three cases where networks of solidarity were formed between refugees and host communities, which facilitated co-existence and integration. In the first case, we present the story of Riace, a small village in Italy, which was able to regain its vibrancy under the leadership of its mayor who implemented policies that supported inclusion in everyday encounters. The next case is a rare example of a cultural center in Gaziantep, Turkey, whose refugee population has reached one-quarter of its total population. The Kırkayak Cultural Center is unique in the sense that it was one of the first efforts in Turkey that started to think critically about how to bring together these communities. Finally, the case of Über den Tellerand in Germany illustrates the welcome culture in Germany in action. This civic initiative, like its counterpart in Gaziantep, has created open spaces of exchange between hosts and newcomers in everyday activities such as cooking.

### Riace (Italy)

Riace is a small village in the coast of the southernmost part of Calabria, Italy. The village has attracted significant attention in recent years, as refugees from North Africa started to arrive in the region. While there have been reports of violence and hostility towards refugees in surrounding villages, locals in Riace have welcomed refugees into their community. Riace's success largely depends upon the effective combination of leadership and feasible policies that integrate newcomers, along with experiences of living together. With a total population of 1,800, Riace now hosts 500 refugees, whose presence has contributed to the revitalization of what was otherwise a decaying village. Under Mayor Domenico Lucano's leadership, the town agreed to receive refugees with financial help from the Italian government. Initially, many of the local Italian

residents were skeptical about the newcomers and about the mayor's plans to integrate them into the day-to-day life of Riace. Key to the mayor's success in changing the minds of local residents was the fact that he directly addressed their fears through pragmatic and financial policies. He did so by making sure that the funds allocated for employment projects for refugees also included the hiring of local Italian residents.<sup>4</sup> He thus preempted the appearance of competition and prevented resentment. With government funds, the mayor established cooperatives where newcomers and locals receive job training and work together in workshops and local stores. The mayor also rented empty flats in which to settle newcomers, encouraging their mixing with the local population. Working together and living in close quarters with locals created daily interactions that enabled newcomers to develop relationships with the locals. As a result of these steps, the village is revitalized, with new roads running to the central square in town, a space where locals and newcomers meet every night. The arrival of newcomers, and the economic activity resulting from this increase in population, also helped to expand existing businesses in town and inject new life into them. As one of the town's local residents Mirella Cogocoru remarked, the arrival of newcomers enabled her to expand her bakery into a grocery store and to open a café next door. "It is good the migrants are here. The town is now full of people. Before there was nothing, no work," Cogocoru explained.<sup>5</sup> The town's school, which was almost empty prior to the arrival of newcomers, is now full of new students. Houses

4 Visit to Riace, interview with Bayram Acar, July 5, 2016, and tour with Mayor Lucano, July 6, 2016. Original field research conducted by Drs. Baban and Rygiel as part of the SSHRC-funded project "Living with others: Fostering cultural pluralism through citizenship politics."

5 "A Small Town in Italy Embraces Migrants and Is Reborn," *Parallels*, National Public Radio, August 6, 2016.

that once stood empty are now occupied with new residents.

Compared to similar towns in close proximity, which are often depopulated and decaying, Riace is vibrant. While small in scale, Riace displays that peaceful co-existence is possible and that the arrival of newcomers does not have to be framed as a crisis if the proper circumstances and framing of opportunities are created. The success of Riace starts with the mayor's leadership, which not only convinced locals to host newcomers but also created the conditions in which locals and newcomers could interact in productive ways. However, leadership alone is not enough. The mayor implemented policies benefiting locals as well as newcomers. When locals saw that the arrival of newcomers did not lead to a loss of jobs and resources, their resistance diminished, and they welcomed the new residents. Finally, fears about cultural change disappeared once locals and newcomers were able to share and get to know one another within common spaces such as schools, houses, and other public spaces. Fears about newcomers usually emerge in cases when there is little or no interaction between people. Having the experience of living together helped to ease tension and fostered common understanding. Mayor Lucano summarizes his vision to a group taking a tour of the town in the following words: "Riace is a contradiction: a small village but of the world... a *villaggio globale*, or a global village. But it is a village that was created. It took risks, work, and proactive steps by the mayor and his citizens."<sup>6</sup>

### **Kirkayak Cultural Center (Turkey)**

Kirkayak is a cultural center in Gaziantep, Turkey, founded in 2010 and funded by eight private citizens. While its primary focus is to organize cultural

events, Kirkayak has, in recent years, extended its reach to Syrian refugees, whose numbers are now close to half a million in a city of two million residents. When Kirkayak opened, its first aim was to understand what was happening in terms of why so many newcomers were arriving in Gaziantep. According to Kemal Vural Tarlan, one of the founders of Kirkayak and the director in charge of day-to-day operations, "So many people came in such a short time period. We started to see them everywhere. We had no idea about who Syrians were, let alone the idea of thinking about how we might live together with these newcomers. We needed to understand them—we needed to give them a voice to tell their stories."<sup>7</sup> It became quite clear that there was very little awareness about refugee issues in Gaziantep, and there was no civil or institutional infrastructure to address issues related to refugees and their relationships with the local population.

Syrians in Turkey have no official status other than an arbitrarily defined "temporary protection" status, and many of them live in extremely precarious conditions. Tarlan explains that Syrians in Turkey are reminded daily that they are outsiders and do not belong. In Kirkayak, however, Tarlan and the others consciously create and nurture an alternative—an "open space" where everybody belongs and where people freely come, participate, and contribute as equals and as members of the community.

After Syrians began arriving in Gaziantep in 2011, in order to increase awareness about Syrians living in Gaziantep, Kirkayak began contacting Syrian artists and intellectuals and organizing meetings with them so that they could tell their stories to larger audiences. Kirkayak opened its

<sup>6</sup> Visit to Riace and tour with Mayor Lucano, July 6, 2016. Original field research conducted by Drs. Baban and Rygiel as part of the SSHRC-funded project "Living with others: Fostering cultural pluralism through citizenship politics."

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Kemal Vural Tarlan, Gaziantep, October 27, 2016. Original field research conducted by Drs. Baban and Rygiel as part of the SSHRC-funded project "Living with others: Fostering cultural pluralism through citizenship politics."

doors to exhibit the works of several Syrian artists, encouraging them to use the center for social and cultural events. Soon after, Kırkayak became a cultural space for Syrians in Gaziantep, where they can exhibit their work with locals and organize events to showcase their rich cultural tradition. In addition to art activities, Kırkayak started a kitchen project to create a space for further interactions between Syrians and local populations. Similar to those in various European countries, the kitchen project brings Syrian, Turkish, and Kurdish women together around food culture, where they can exchange recipes and cook together. However, the kitchen project is not simply limited to food and cooking but also operates as a space for gathering where participants can learn to relate to one another through literature, food, music, and storytelling. Creating shared experiences and learning about and from one another are the principal objectives at Kırkayak through which the center tries to create an environment in which Syrians and the local population interact as equals. Syrians feel marginalized in everyday life in their dealings with Turkish citizens, with institutions such as schools, hospitals, and municipalities. More importantly, Syrians live parallel lives in many Turkish cities, with very little interaction with local populations. This often results in alienation and a misrepresentation of Syrian culture and people. Kırkayak offers an alternative space where Syrians can interact with the local population as equals, not as refugees or second-class members of the community.

In an environment where it is very difficult for Syrian refugees to experience any normalcy, Kırkayak becomes a space where Syrians can reclaim their dignity, cease to be seen as refugees, and experience normalcy as artists, writers, and community organizers. Tarlan summarizes their philosophy as follows: “Here we learn to live together. It is not just Syrians who are becoming part of the community, but with them we also learn

that we need to change.”<sup>8</sup> Various projects organized by Kırkayak, such as art exhibits, concerts, and the kitchen project, aim to erase the narrative of “Syrians as strangers,” emphasizing instead the similarities between the local population in Gaziantep and Syrians.

If integration of newcomers starts with understanding each other, Kırkayak’s philosophy and activities contribute to creating a first step in Turks’ and Syrians’ better understanding one another. Tarlan’s description of “open space”—in which Syrians are no longer refugees, strangers, non-citizens, or outsiders but are equals who can interact with others without the stigma of always being identified as “the Other”—is the first step in initiating a meaningful integration of newcomers.<sup>9</sup> This not only contributes to establishing the status of Syrians as part of the community but also plays a crucial role in their successful integration into Turkish society. Tarlan summarizes their philosophy as follows: “Here we learn to live together. It is not just Syrians who are becoming part of the community, but with them we also learn that we need to change.”<sup>10</sup>

### Über den Tellerand (Germany)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel is commended in international circles for her initial leadership in response to the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees in the summer and fall of 2015. Her call of “we can do it (*wir schaffen das*)” was an important moment for rallying the German public to open

8 Interview with Kemal Vural Tarlan, Gaziantep, October 27, 2016. Original field research conducted by Drs. Baban and Rygiel as part of the SSHRC-funded project “Living with others: Fostering cultural pluralism through citizenship politics.”

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

its doors to refugees,<sup>11</sup> particularly Syrians, at a time when many European countries closed their borders. Canada saw a similar shift in public openness towards accepting Syrian refugees<sup>12</sup> as a result of the election of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the leadership he showed towards welcoming Syrians into Canada. Just prior to the elections then Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper had run on an election pledge to put into place a tip line to report what he called “barbaric cultural practices.”<sup>13</sup> In both cases, it is not that the citizens changed but rather that the public discourse shifted because of the tone of leadership. Yet, leadership can only, at best, ever be part of the story. Leadership must be supported by solid policies that assist newcomers in making new lives for themselves, including through housing support, job training, educational support, or access to healthcare, to name but a few key pillars important to successful

integration.<sup>14</sup> More than this though, leadership and policies need to be complimented by positive experiences of exchange in which newcomers and locals can have opportunities to meet and get to know one another and to learn about one another’s differences. It is here where civil society initiatives can provide platforms and new spaces and opportunities for exchange and relationship building.

In Germany, civil society initiatives that welcome refugees into their communities range from flat sharing projects to cafés providing employment to newcomers. One such important initiative is Über den Tellerand, which literally means “looking beyond your plate,” an expression insinuating open-mindedness. Über den Tellerand is a non-profit kitchen project in the chic Schöneberg district of Berlin, where refugees and ordinary Berliners come together to cook, share a meal, and to interact with one another. Originally established in 2013, based on a student project, Über den Tellerand started as an open kitchen with a communal table in the middle of the room and all furniture hand-built by those initially involved in the project. As one of the founders Rafael Strasser explains, Über den Tellerand is trying to create “a platform where refugees and ordinary people come together in a relaxed environment, cook and share food and socialize as friends do, and more importantly establish friendships as equals.” Über den Tellerand began as a “kitchen hub,” offering a monthly cooking class that was co-taught by a German and a newcomer acting as a guest chef, teaching a group of about 12-15 people to cook a meal which they would then share together. The organization initially funded itself by publishing two successful cookbooks, *Recipes for a Better Us* and *A Pinch of Home*, which shared favorite recipes chosen by newcomers from a variety

11 Chancellor Merkel used this phrase in a speech on August 31, 2015 (see C. Stack, “Opinion: Angela Merkel’s ‘we can do this’ refugee mantra lives on,” *Deutsche Welle*, August 31, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/opinion-angela-merkels-we-can-do-this-refugee-mantra-lives-on/a-40300640>). Although the number touted by the government and media was frequently 1.1 million, the actual number of refugees taken in over the course of 2015 was smaller, at about 890,000. See R. Noack, “Germany said it took in more than 1 million refugees last year. But it didn’t.” *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/09/30/germany-said-it-took-in-more-than-1-million-refugees-last-year-but-it-didnt/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.fdbb7c1c2002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/09/30/germany-said-it-took-in-more-than-1-million-refugees-last-year-but-it-didnt/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.fdbb7c1c2002).

12 Canada accepted about 40,081 Syrians from November 4, 2015–January 29, 2017. Government of Canada, February 27, 2017, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/welcome-syrian-refugees/key-figures.html>.

13 The Conservative government’s proposal for the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act was designed to prevent women and children from immigrating to Canada if they were involved in polygamous relationships and prevent marriage under the age of 16. However, critics argued that the bill oversimplified issues, was inflammatory, and fuelled discrimination towards certain groups. L. Powers, “Conservatives pledge funds, tip line to combat ‘barbaric cultural practices,’” *CBC News online*, October 2, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-election-2015-barbaric-cultural-practices-law-1.3254118>.

14 The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration, Research Unit, “How might integration succeed? Asylum seekers about their life situations and participation perspectives in Germany,” [https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/SVR-FB\\_How\\_might\\_integration\\_succeed.pdf](https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/SVR-FB_How_might_integration_succeed.pdf).

of different ethnic and national backgrounds. These cooking classes soon led to the desire for the “kitchen hub” to also become a community space to bring people together for other activities like yoga, basketball, and soccer, again often co-led and organized by both native-born Germans and newcomers. As its website explains, “We [Über den Tellerand] apply a holistic approach to the complex process of integrating newcomers into German society, while at the same time acknowledging and empowering their agency. By bringing newcomers together with their host communities, we aim to create a sense of belonging as well as reduce stereotypes and prejudices on both sides. These efforts contribute towards the creation of a more united, inclusive and open society.”<sup>15</sup>

From this starting point, Über den Tellerand has grown to offer kitchen hubs in over 30 “satellite” cities and developed a mobile kitchen on wheels (a “kitchen on the run” or a kitchen in a trailer or container) that can travel across the country to smaller, often more rural locations where there may be fewer opportunities to meet newcomers. It now also includes a “Building Bridges” project, a project that helps newcomers build a new life in Germany. The project connects a newcomer with an “old comer” as part of a team that then meets weekly to share in a recreational activity. It also offers opportunities for the partners to join other partners in a larger group for activities once a month. Such activities help people build new friendships and support systems within the community.

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<sup>15</sup> Über den Tellerand website: <https://ueberdentellerrand.org/en/>.

## EMERGING RESEARCH RESULTS

In the above section we have chosen to highlight just a few of the many civil society initiatives that have emerged with the aim of welcoming newcomers. These are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive. Based on the cases described above, and various others in different European countries, our findings indicate that to be successful, integration requires three levels of intervention: 1) leadership from above; 2) meaningful integration policies such as access to housing, education, health, language acquisition, employment, etc.; and 3) civil society initiatives geared towards fostering interaction between locals and newcomers.<sup>16</sup>

As seen in the above examples, without the positive tone set by leadership it becomes very difficult to create policy and civil society environments that are open to welcoming newcomers. For instance, Angela Merkel's famous statement "we can do it," which came in the middle of the European refugee crisis, set the overall tone in Germany, a tone which encouraged many civil society initiatives to flourish in what has now become known as Germany's "welcome culture." Similarly, on a much smaller scale, Mayor Domenico Lucano's active leadership played a key role in convincing the local population of Riace to welcome refugees into the community. In Turkey, the Turkish government's decision to open its borders to enable some 3.5 million Syrians to temporarily settle in Turkey is equally important in this regard.

Germany, on a larger scale, and Riace, on a much smaller scale, are interesting cases through which to reflect upon how the three levels of intervention can work together to create a relatively

successful level of integration of newcomers. After Merkel's initial decision to open Germany's doors to refugees and the positive leadership direction that she provided, Germany found its resources overwhelmed with the rapid movement of refugees across its borders. Nevertheless, in Germany, it was possible to arrange a level of coordination between the federal government, municipalities, and civil society organizations to accommodate the urgent needs of refugees and welcome them to Germany.<sup>17</sup> Here, municipalities played a particularly effective role in housing refugees and providing living assistance, while some of the funds provided by the federal government were able to support training and employment programs.<sup>18</sup>

Riace is another interesting case in which the positive tone of leadership was reinforced by successful policies. As mentioned previously, with the support of EU and national funds, Mayor Lucano was able to set up training, employment, and housing initiatives that not only addressed the needs of refugees but also contributed to the wellbeing of the local population.<sup>19</sup> Because these policies included both refugees and locals it was possible to prevent resentment, which might otherwise be felt by the local populations. On the other hand, in the Turkish case, despite the fact that the Turkish government

<sup>16</sup> Baban and Rygiel, "Living with others"; F. Baban and K. Rygiel, "Snapshots from the margins: Transgressive cosmopolitanisms in Europe," *European Journal of Social Theory* 17, no. 4 (2014): 461–478.

<sup>17</sup> J. Grotte, "The Changing Influx of Asylum Seekers in 2014-2016: Responses in Germany," focused study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN) Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/11a\\_germany\\_changing\\_influx\\_final\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/11a_germany_changing_influx_final_en_0.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> A. Zanghi, "The importance of arrival cities," City Lab, August 18, 2016, <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2016/08/the-importance-of-arrival-cities/494189>.

<sup>19</sup> Visit to Riace and tour with Mayor Lucano, July 6, 2016. Original field research conducted by Drs. Baban and Rygiel as part of the SSHRC-funded project "Living with others: Fostering cultural pluralism through citizenship politics."

opened its door to provide temporary protection to Syrians, the lack of overall coordination between the national government and municipalities, in addition to the ad-hoc and frequently changing provision of support, makes Kırkayak's role that much more significant.<sup>20</sup> In the case of Kırkayak, we see an example of an effective civil society initiative that has welcomed newcomers amidst an environment fraught with discrimination and marginalization. However, the impact of Kırkayak is much more limited when compared with similar examples of civil society initiatives in Germany. Kırkayak's activities have not been supported or reinforced by national and municipal policies (e.g., housing support, employment, pathways towards more permanent settlement, and sufficient opportunities for Turkish language acquisition and adequate health assistance), which are necessary for successful integration.<sup>21</sup>

In this overall framework, civil society initiatives become particularly important in providing the space and possibilities for exchange between locals and newcomers. Successful integration and welcoming newcomers can only occur in situations where locals and newcomers have opportunities to get to know one another. Such encounters are important in order to challenge preconceived notions and stereotypes about one another and in order to break down discriminatory barriers that lead to thinking about people as insiders and outsiders and as properly belonging (or not) to the community.

20 F. Baban, S. Ilcan, and K. Rygiel, "Syrian refugees in Turkey: pathways to precarity, differential inclusion, and negotiated citizenship rights," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43, no. 1 (2017): 41–57; S. Ilcan, K. Rygiel, and F. Baban, "The Ambiguous Architecture of Precarity: Temporary Protection, Everyday Living, and Migrant Journeys of Syrian Refugees," *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies* 4, no. 2 (2018).

21 F. Baban, S. Ilcan, and K. Rygiel, "Playing Border Politics with Urban Syrian Refugees: Legal Ambiguities, Insecurities, and Humanitarian Assistance," *Movements* 3, no. 2 (2017). Online journal: <http://movements-journal.org/issues/05.turkey/06.baban.ilcan.rygiel--playing-border-politics-with-urban-syrian-refugees.html>.

All three examples discussed above demonstrate the importance of everyday living together as an important component of facilitating successful integration. In the case of Riace, apart from integration policies, what brings locals and the newcomers together is their everyday living experiences such as sharing a coffee or an ice cream in the public square, having children attend the local school and play together, and working side-by-side to revise the local artisanal crafts of the area. In the case of Über den Tellerand, what begins as a shared cooking experience evolves into spending time together in various recreational activities, such as playing a pick-up game of soccer or basketball or families participating in picnic outings, which then provides opportunities to turn these interactions into longer-term friendships. In the case of Kırkayak, where there is a high level of marginalization of Syrians in Turkey, the organization provides opportunities for the local population and Syrians to share the space and live together as members of the same community. While these initiatives span several different countries, they share a common goal of providing space for encounters and for getting to know one another and thus offer the possibility of developing greater understandings between locals and newcomers, without which successful integration is simply not possible.

### Challenges

The examples above and the overall research results underline a number of factors that are essential to the successful integration of diverse groups, with a particular emphasis on the role of civil society initiatives. Everyday interactions and grassroots initiatives that provide the spaces to bring together hosts and newcomers contribute to changing notions of who does and does not belong. These experiences are invaluable in showing where the key to co-existence lies. However, this said, our research results reveal that the larger policy context is also crucial and presents several challenges for

successful integration, which policy makers and civil society actors need to be aware of:

- Scale makes a difference. The fact that 3.5 million and nearly 1 million Syrian refugees have arrived in Turkey and Germany, respectively, has put a substantial strain on resources and coping capacities of host countries, more so in the developing country context. This requires governments to undertake a comprehensive policy process, with a multidimensional response based on the inclusion of multiple stakeholders.
- Everyday encounters, while they may provide opportunities for getting to know one another and can dismantle boundaries of who does and does not belong, may also give rise to prejudice, especially when large numbers of newcomers, such as refugees, have arrived as is the case in Turkey. In Turkey, it is common to hear such prejudicial statements, such as the following, expressed: “they have run away from the war and are hanging out here”; “we would have fought”; “they are lazy”; “Syrian women are overdressed and too made-up”; “they don’t take care of their children, they take care of themselves.” These sentiments demonstrate the importance of having supportive policies and civil society organizations to facilitate peaceful coexistence. In their absence, prejudices quickly develop.
- Similarly, Syrian refugees in Turkey face discriminatory practices and discourses, which makes it more difficult for the two communities to come together. This is exacerbated by the fact that false information circulates about Syrians (e.g., they can enter university without an entry exam).
- Changes in the life conditions of locals (e.g., rising rents, falling wages) create resentment toward Syrian refugees.

- Lack of language skills is a major limiting factor in successful integration since it can impede communication in everyday life and labor force participation.
- There is limited participation in civil society spaces or activities, especially on the part of host communities. Even though civil society organizations increasingly undertake activities to provide a space for host communities and refugees to come together, interest in participating in these activities is limited, especially on the part of locals.
- The political context has a direct impact on how Syrian refugees are received. In Europe, they become instrumental for far-right parties in the construction of election manifestos. Unlike the European context, refugees have not become a crucial election issue in Turkey. Nevertheless, deep-seated political and social polarization spills over into the refugee issue. Locals’ responses towards refugees very much depend on citizens’ political affiliation. For instance, constituents of the opposition parties believe that the government supports Syrian refugees to serve its political interests and increase its political capital. More importantly, there is a growing discontent even among the supporters of the incumbent party in relation to the potential rights (e.g., political, legal, and economic) and status refugees could gain in the future.

### **Policy Recommendations**

In a globalizing world, confronted by severe economic and security risks, the greater number of migrants and refugees on the move presents challenges that can be addressed by the following policy recommendations:

- We need to distinguish between migrants and refugees, as the latter refers to the forced displacement of people from home. As in the case

of the Syrian refugee crisis, the more that global turmoil increases, the more likely it is that we will continue to see refugee movements in the future. The refugee issue should be seen as an unprecedented global and regional challenge.

- Currently, Europe, especially Turkey and Germany, is at the heart of the refugee issue and should be considered a pivotal space for more humane and better governance.
  - The refugee deal is more political than legal. In Turkey there is legal ambiguity in terms of the rights and status of Syrians in Turkey. The existing discourse of hospitality is no longer sufficient to capture and govern the refugee issue as Syrian refugees increasingly claim legal rights and status. The needed shift from the discourse of hospitality to a discourse of rights remains to be implemented. Similarly, the EU has not addressed the issue with a more long-term and sustainable approach.
  - Our research indicates that notwithstanding the need for effective state policies, civil society and citizen initiatives should be incorporated within the policy-making process. A balance needs to be struck between top-down and bottom-up relations, paving the way for better collaboration among diverse actors ranging from governing elites to grassroots initiatives.
  - While governing elites should take an enabling role in constructing civil society activities to create the possibility of living together with Syrian refugees, civil society in turn should look for ways to cooperate with state actors.
  - The positive role that the governing elites at different levels of government, from federal to municipal, plays is crucial for the establishment of a cordial public sphere where the hosts and newcomers can engage one another with empathy.
- Moreover, as in the case of Riace in Italy as well as Gaziantep in Turkey, interlocutors varying from municipal mayors to local respected figures can play a key role in facilitating social cohesion and should be included in the policy-making process.
  - As the cases of Kırkayak in Turkey and Über den Tellerrand in Germany show, civil society involvement with the refugee issue is of the utmost importance in finding sustainable ways to ensure co-existence, conviviality, and social cohesion. More attention needs to be paid to these and similar best practices.
  - Open spaces and practices that enhance co-existence need to be diversified including various art forms and artistic exchange.
  - Donors need to include local populations as beneficiaries in programs and projects to ensure their acceptance of the newcomers not as rivals but as equal members of a common community.



