



WELCOMING SPACES

WP3 – Policies & Governance
Notes on a multi-actors encounter
By José Ricardo Martins

Welcoming Spaces Roundtable in Saalfeld /Saale (Free State of Thuringia, Germany)

**Agency, Entrepreneurship and Employment:
Learning from each other about and from migrants**
(22 September 2022)



Photo of some participants of the event by Keina Espiñeira



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Executive Summary

The Saalfeld Roundtable held on September 22, 2022, served as a valuable forum for the discussion of policies and experiences related to the emplacement of migrants. The event brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including migrants, policymakers, practitioners, citizens, and academics, to share perspectives and learn from one another.

Key Discussions

The roundtable provided a platform for the examination of issues related to migrants' agency, entrepreneurial capacity, and employment hardships. Participants also had the opportunity to learn about the experiences of long-term residents collaborating in socio-entrepreneurship activities, such as those in Altenburg and Saalfeld.

Challenges to Sustainability

The roundtable participants identified several sustainability challenges facing welcoming initiatives, both those run by civil society and those led by governments.


In terms of governance and policy, discussions centred on issues such as discontinuity in funding, difficulties incorporating new demands into existing systems, and lack of stable structures and financing for integration work.

Additional challenges discussed included those related to mobility in rural areas, housing shortages, and labour market integration, including discrimination and racism.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the discussions held at the Saalfeld Roundtable, a series of recommendations were formulated for improving the integration of migrants. These recommendations include:

- The transfer of project funding into regular public funding structures, along with the implementation of new integration laws and the new integration programme (such as the one that has been developed in the state of Thuringia) to govern the distribution of funds
- The enhancement of more participation mechanisms by migrants, their organisations and other civil society organisations to mitigate top-down decision-making
- The utilisation of crowdfunding to avoid bureaucratic obstacles in funding distribution
- The enhancement of job attractiveness, such as long-term employment, to attract and keep personal
- The enhancement of the provision of regular and visible opportunities for advice, offered by local governments, welfare state organizations and other organizations, such as Caritas, ThINKA, IQ Netzwerk, MigraNetz Thüringen and Plattform.
- The dissemination of announcements by mayors to all inhabitants in ad-hoc situations
- The increased utilization of technical tools, such as video or audio translations, in doctor appointments, for example
- The further implementation of welcoming programs with regular and continuous public funding, such as the education budget
- The funding of places for social gatherings on a structural basis to promote inclusion
- The organization and promotion of public debates on discrimination in employment and education on regular basis and in addition to the programme *Demokratie Leben!*

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- The utilization of a variety of communication channels, including art (in public spaces), music, and theatre
 - The recognition by the political sphere and social society organisations that welcoming spaces are "making creative spaces", fostering social entrepreneurship, local small business, and art manifestations, among others, which leads to the inclusion of refugees and migrants in hosting societies.

In summary, effective migrant inclusion policies should be developed through a collaborative and inclusive approach that involves migrants themselves, provides targeted support and resources, and promotes positive public opinion towards migrants.

1 Introduction

As our society becomes increasingly diverse and globalised, the need for effective policies and programs that support the inclusion and integration of migrants and refugees becomes more pressing.

Welcoming initiatives can contribute to the further development of shrinking areas while also offering space for the successful social-economic inclusion of non-EU migrants in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (*'leaving no one behind'*). Often welcoming initiatives are run by cooperating actors from different societal fields, and their actions and impact depend on the local contexts. However, a turning point is necessary: migrants must have a key place in the knowledge production about migrants, entrepreneurship, transnational businesses and networks, and living with diversity.



The participants at the opening of the event. Photo: Keina Espiñeira

With a premise in mind - **“learning from each other about and from migrants”** - we got together on 22 September 2022 in the town of Saalfeld, State of Thuringia (Germany) to discuss agency, entrepreneurship and employment within multiscale networks of unequal power relations in shrinking towns.



This report aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the roundtable held in Saalfeld, state of Thuringia, Germany, on 22 September 2022, which has covered the current state of migrant inclusion in the localities of the Welcoming Spaces project in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain, with a focus on two localities in Thuringia and one in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany. It provides an overview of the challenges and barriers faced by migrants, as well as best practices and successful initiatives that have been implemented to support their inclusion in these areas. Additionally, this report offers recommendations for future policy and program development to ensure that all migrants can have the opportunity to fully participate in and contribute to society. The ultimate goal of this report is to inform policymakers, practitioners and advocates on the current state of migrant inclusion, and to provide guidance on how to improve the situation for migrants in those localities.

Prof. Dr Sabine Meier, moderator of the event. Photo: Keina Espiñeira

Aims of the Roundtable

The event aimed at bringing together politicians, city councilors, public administrators responsible for migration inclusion, social policy workers, and development planners at the local, district, and state levels, as well as migrants, international researchers, and practitioners from social organizations to share experiences, ideas and receive new insights related to the sustainable (long-term) inclusion of migrants and the development of their territories. The underlying question was: *What entails sustainable migrant inclusion?*

Despite a lot of creative energy and good examples of a welcoming culture, the welcome initiatives are experiencing growing challenges, but there are also encouraging practical experiences.

That is why we brought together actors of the welcoming initiatives in Thuringia and Rhineland-Palatinate, besides sharing international experiences from Italy, Netherlands, Poland and Spain. The roundtable was organised in the framework of the international comparative and EU Horizon2020-funded research project 'Welcoming Spaces in Europe' (www.welcomingspaces.eu).

Objectives Set for the Roundtable:

1. Promote continuous network development with the encouragement of discussions and cooperation among actors from different political levels and various interest groups.
2. Share local, state, national and international experiences on inspiring projects that offer solutions to the successful inclusion of migrants, especially related to employability and entrepreneurship.
3. Share the challenges faced in implementing migrant inclusion policies, especially the ones that are intended to foster employment and entrepreneurship among migrants.
4. Raise awareness of the diversity of the migrant population and their potential for further development of shrinking regions.
5. Exert political influence to place the topic of participation of migrants and their agency on the political agenda at all levels, promote awareness of the current populism and discuss instruments to overcome xenophobia.

Whom did we reach?



- **160 people attended**
- **35 different organisations present**

- ✓ Actors from welcome initiatives in Thuringia and Rhineland-Palatinate
- ✓ The inhabitants and migrants of the addressed districts in Thuringia and Rhineland-Palatinate
- ✓ Migrant organisations
- ✓ Actors of municipal administration, welfare state organisations and social institutions and associations that are committed to the inclusion of migrants
- ✓ Thuringia State Commissioner for Integration, Migration and Refugees
- ✓ Local and district integration managers
- ✓ Local and district politicians and policymakers
- ✓ Academics and researchers from Germany, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands.

The following word cloud shows the institutions that took part in our roundtable:



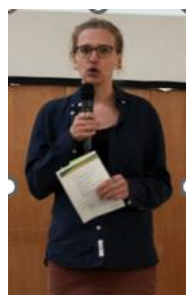
2 Initial Greetings

Prof. Dr Sabine Meier, the moderator of the roundtable, welcomed all the participants in the name of the Welcoming Spaces project.

The mayor of Saalfeld, Dr Steffen Kania (right), greeted the local, national and international participants and told how Saalfeld is making efforts to welcome and integrate migrants, emphasizing the efforts to receive the Ukrainian refugees.



Photo: Keina Espiñeira



Photos: Keina Espiñeira

Prof. Dr Johannes Schädler (far left) represented the University of Siegen (Germany), which was one of the promoters of the event.

“The University of Siegen aims to contribute to the Welcoming Spaces project.”

Mrs Juliane Döschner (left), representing the event's co-organiser, Plattform e.V., warmly welcomed the guests and speakers.

3 Migrants' Agency at the Front Scene

Political actors and policymakers, social agents, migrants and academics were presented with successful cases and confronted with challenges of continuing efforts for effective social inclusion of migrants, enabling them to be agents of their successful emplacement and participants in the local revitalization.

Praxisprojekt IWM



Syuzanna Fiberg of the **Praxisprojekt IWM** showed through a performance that sustainable cooperation between migrants, local residents and other actors is possible through cultural representations. This was a started point for further inspiring experiences.

civi kune RLP

Okka Senst of **civi kune RLP** (a project maintained by the Council of Refugees of the state of Rhineland-Palatinate) brought the experience of places of welcome: Encountering cafés (*Begegnungscafés*) and initiatives of solidarity-based for refugees' work in the rural regions of the state of Rhineland-Palatinate, which includes the provision of accommodation in a decentralised manner. Some challenges the rural areas of the state of Rheinland-Palatinate are facing were pointed out:

- mobility
- housing shortage
- labour market integration (and the shortage of skilled labour)
- lack of stable structures and financing in integration work:
- not all districts (Landkreise) have an institutionalized integration concept, a formal structure in the administration or a full-time officer or coordinator for the refugee work.



Okka Senst (Civi Kune RLP). Photo: Keina Espiñeira

Begegnungscafés (Encountering Café), created and promoted by civi kune RLP and the state Ministry of Integration, are a form of revitalising the places through encounters that help keep migrants attached to the places where they live and generate economic activity. They aim to compensate for the lack of social activities and interactions in the rural areas of the Rhineland-Palatinate state while promoting economic activity. Through the cafés and their wide range of offers, regions also experience added value for the local, long-term residents.



Photos: Civi Kune RLP

FACTory



Valentin Rühlmann and Nazmi Jmo of **FACTory** presented the entrepreneurial efforts of young leaders in Altenburg and the region to keep young people on the territory through social entrepreneurship. The focus of entrepreneurial initiatives supported by FACTory is in the creative, digital economy fields. Creating relations is one of the key values, as it is the best way to integrate different cultures and for keeping young people on the territory.

Valentin Rühlmann (left) and Nazmi Jmo (right).
Photo: J R Martins



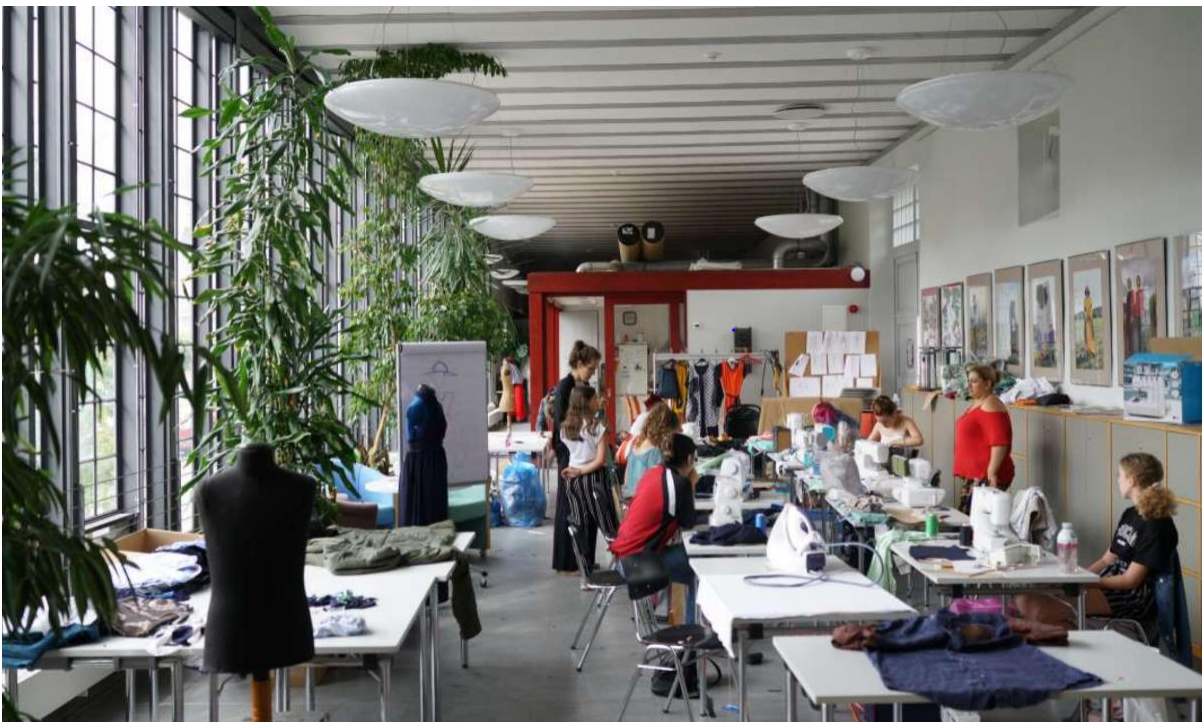
FACTory project counts with 104 young members that plan to create a life in their local communities, among them a few migrants.

Besides the support for entrepreneurship, the bond to keep people on the territory, according to Valentin, is the valorizing of culture in its diversity and creating relationships.

Beulwitz Design

Judith Skoderak of Skoderak Fashion and Rafiat Owolarafe of Näh Cafés presented the project **Beulwitz Design**. In this project, migrants can engage in creativity through fashion and design and entrepreneurship. The project takes place in an atelier, as shown in the pictures below.

Judith Skoderak (left) and Rafiat Owolarafe (right).
Photo: J R Martins



Ateliers of Beulwitz Design project. Photos: Workshop Beulwitz Design

Thüringer Ökoherz e.V.

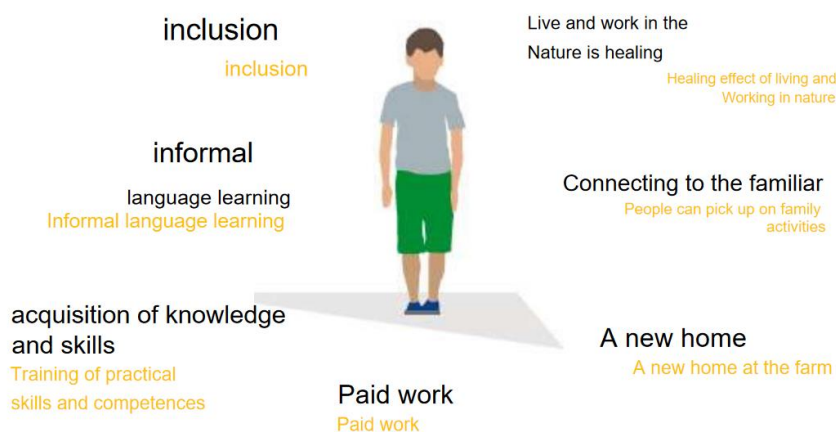
Claudia Schneider of **Thüringen Ökoherz** brought social farming as a means of the inclusion of migrants, a place to learn the informal language, and a place of job creation for migrants, as well as a place for healing traumatized migrants through the connection with animals and farming. Ökoherz also promotes intercultural gardens, which are places where migrants cultivate their known vegetables and learn to cultivate new ones. Claudia has also raised the issue that agriculture has a prejudice to exploit farmers, migrants included.



The diversity and the potential of social farming:

Social farming with refugees

Social Farming - A way to support refugees



Source: Claudia Schneider / Ökoherz Thüringen

THINKA Saalfeld

Marcel Sachse and Mandy Gora of **THINKA Saalfeld** presented their organization which is focused on counselling for refugees and migrants, including employment counselling, mainly helping migrants going through the bureaucracy. The category of migrants helped, by country of origin, are Syrians, Poles and Ukraine. THINKA stands for **Thüringer Initiative für Integration, Nachhaltigkeit, Kooperation und Aktivierung** (The Thuringian Initiative for Integration, Sustainability, Cooperation, and Activation). which has the mission to promote social and vocational integration of people who are excluded from the first labour market. The program aims to achieve cooperation instead of competition by promoting targeted networking between local educational institutions and employment support institutions and agencies. The goal of the projects is to activate and motivate the local citizens to develop self-initiative socially as well as professionally, with the aim of establishing a local culture of participation.

4 The Policy Table

Our event was grounded on the premise that sustainable inclusion goes far beyond the first welcoming assistance, and it aimed to discuss the challenges the political actors, policymakers, social welfare agents, and migrants face in rebuilding their lives in a new environment in view of a long-time stay. For this reason, we brought speakers to this table who could contribute and receive insights on how to propose migrants with a fresh start and transform them into actors of full capacity and an integral part of the strategies for demographic and economic revitalization of shrinking areas.

Political actors, policymakers, and social policy implementors discussed the challenges and opportunities of migrants' inclusion and its perspectives from a multi-level perception (state, district and municipal).

Our policy table brought together experts in the field of migration and integration to discuss and learn from each other about positive welcoming initiatives and the challenges that migrants, policymakers, and practitioners face. Topics such as migrants' agency, entrepreneurial capacity, and employment hardships were discussed, as well as different cases of long-term residents working together in socio-entrepreneurship activities. Additionally, speakers from various backgrounds shared their experiences and insights on migration policies in their respective regions, including Thuringia, Saalfeld-Rudolstadt, Altenburg, Jüchen and Rheinhessen. The roundtable also provided an opportunity to discuss the challenges and outcomes of these policies and to come up with recommendations for improvement.



From left: Ms Juliane Corredor Jimenez, M.S., Mr Herbert Petri, Mr Volker Liebelt, Mr Rolf-Henryk Thalmann, Mrs Mirjam Kruppa, Mr. Martin Spitzer. Photo: Keina Espiñeira

Mrs Mirjam Kruppa - Thuringia State Commissioner for Integration, Migration and Refugees (Thuringian ministry of migration, justice and consumer protection) – gave us an encompassing appraisal on “Migrants’ integration policies in the state of Thuringia: challenges and outcomes.” Mrs Kruppa emphasized the role of education in the integration and inclusion process to overcome the racist and discrimination problems present in the state of Thuringia. Research showed that 60% of Thuringians agree with migration, but 62% of migrants face integration problems. The proposed solution, according to the Commissioner, is through education, especially from the kindergarten, besides the promotion of encounters to enable migrants and locals can know each other.



Mrs Mirjam Kruppa
Photo: J R Martins

Mr Rolf-Henryk Thalmann - Saalfeld-Rudolstadt District Head of the Department of Youth and Social Affairs – presented the “Measures for the reception of immigrants in Saalfeld.” Mr Thalmann pointed out the increase in the number of migrants living in the district: today they are 4,000 and will be 6,000 in 2023, and the need for a change in integration law and a new legal framework. He also raised the issue that impacts the governance of migration policy implementation: integration managers often leave their positions, as they are not permanent ones, but based on projects.



From left: Ms Corredor Jimenez, Mr Petri, Mr Liebelt and Mr Thalmann.

Mr Volker Liebelt - Altenburg Caritas’ manager – spoke on the “Arrival and moving on of immigrants in Altenburg: Challenges and results.” Mr Liebelt highlighted Caritas’ work in supporting migrants in finding different welfare services. Nowadays special emphasis is given to Ukrainian migrants, which have some specific characteristics compared to previous migration waves: they are mostly women and children. His intervention was supported by a Ukrainian counsellor at Caritas, a migrant herself, and by the Altenburg migration district manager, Mr Strahlendorf.

migrants. He enthusiastically presented three initiatives being run in his community: “Inclusive Community”, “Welcome to the village”, and “Ukraine Help”.

Mr Herbert Petri - Mayor of Jugenheim, Rhineland-Palatinate presented “Welcome initiatives in Jugenheim, Rheinhessen: Challenges and results.” As a mayor, Mr Petri acts as an “integration manager” in his 1,692 inhabitant-municipality, from whom 182 are

Mrs Juliane Corredor Jimenez, M.S. - Sustainability manager of the Saalfeld-Rudolstadt District and Willy Brandt School of Public Policy at the University of Erfurt – spoke about “Economic and development planning in the context of sustainable, inclusive and viable development: What role do migrants play?” Mrs Jimenez highlighted some aspects of the strategy she is drafting for the development of the district with an emphasis on sustainability, including digitalization, climate change and economic transition. This includes a strategy to attract and attach people to the district through employment

5 The International Table

The international table brought together colleagues from the Welcoming Spaces project in Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain to share their research and inspire local initiatives aimed at the well-being and sustainable emplacement of migrants. Alberto Alonso Fradejas presented the research on 143 initiatives in 49 marginalised regions in the Welcoming Spaces project countries. Keina Espiñeira discussed innovative models of migration governance and emplacement in Spanish local shrinking municipalities, emphasizing the importance of civic engagement in exploring new processes of local governance. Alice Lomonaco highlighted the positive role of social capital in the inclusion of migrants in Italian shrinking areas and Sara Miellet presented her study on uneven arrival landscapes and emerging welcoming initiatives in the Netherlands focused on language, intercultural exchange, and professional training for employment in the care and sustainable energy sectors. Carmen Ayllon Medrano and Irene Almazan from Fundación Cepaim in Spain discussed their organization's focus on employment guidance in rural areas, with a special emphasis on programs that aim to improve the employability of rural women as employees or entrepreneurs.

Alberto Alonso Fradejas, from Utrecht University, presented sophisticated results of 143 initiatives in 49 marginalized regions in the Welcoming Spaces project countries. His research is entitled “Agency and locality in efforts to attract and attach migrant newcomers and longtime residents in marginalized EU areas.” One of the conclusions is that the less densely populated, the more remote, highly ageing population and the more marginalized a region is, the more active the emplacement efforts by migrants it is and the more these efforts are appreciated by the longtime residents.



In her presentation, **Keina Espiñeira**, from the University La Coruña, emphasized innovative models of migration governance and emplacement that she has found in Spanish local shrinking municipalities. Civic engagements are a good perspective to

explore new processes of local governance. This includes initiatives for the recognition of the rights of migrants and refugees, such as political and labour rights (especially for those working in the agriculture sector).

Alice Lomonaco, from the University of Bologna, introduced us to the “Welcoming and generative local reception as an agent of territorial development in Italian shrinking areas.” Alice stressed the positive role of social capital in the inclusion of migrants, including social infrastructure, public events, training courses and internships in local businesses.



If not taken in functional terms and if considering migrants’ aspirations, migration can be an important

factor in local development, concluded Alice.

Sara Miellet presented her study “Welcoming initiatives, regional revitalisation and links to care infrastructures and energy transition: insights from Dutch localities.” Sara found in her research uneven arrival landscapes and also emerging Welcoming initiatives in The Netherlands focused on language,

intercultural exchange and professional training in view of employment in the care and sustainable energy sectors. Communities help migrants to create their organisations.



Carmen Ayllon Medrano and **Irene Almazan**, from *Fundación Cepaim* in Spain, presented the different areas *Cepaim* is involved in and the activities carried out by the organization.

The presentation was about “Employment guidance in rural areas” and they emphasised rural development and demographic challenge. Emphasis was given to the *Nuevos Senderos* project which provides, qualifies and proportionates social inclusion for migrants through labour. Special attention is given to rural women through two programmes that aim to improve their employability as an employee or as entrepreneurs.

6 Concerns and Propositions raised in the Saalfeld Roundtable

The Saalfeld Roundtable fulfilled its role of bringing together migrants, policymakers, practitioners, citizens and academics to learn and inspire each other about the positive welcoming initiatives and the challenges migrants, policymakers and practitioners face. We were able to bring about migrants’ agency, entrepreneurial capacity and employment hardships. We could appreciate different cases of long-term residents working side-by-side in socio-entrepreneurship activities, as was the case in Altenburg and Saalfeld.

Entrepreneurialship, employment opportunities and hardships

With regard to the entrepreneurial and employment outcomes of migrants in the Saalfeld-Rudolstadt district, the primary sector for migrant entrepreneurs and job-seekers is the food industry, specifically the opening of restaurants. Italian or Vietnamese restaurants have been very common in Saalfeld for decades. In recent years, Arabic snack bars and shops have been added. During our investigation, we encountered an Indian restaurant managed and staffed by mostly individuals from Pakistan. In addition to food service, migrant entrepreneurs also establish small shops specializing in food or clothing and barbershops.

In terms of employment in industries, only a limited number of firms such as chocolate production, glass, and steel have migrants in their workforce. Some of these industries employ unskilled workers and migrants have good opportunities there. Due to digitalisation and the higher level of education demanded in industrial production, skilled workers are needed in this sector, and most migrants are not up to the required demands. Prejudice and lack of formal technical education are some of the barriers migrants face in the industrial sector.

With respect to the outcomes of the Beulwitz Design project, the young ladies and ladies learn social and intercultural skills, how to create fashion sketches, translate sketches into patterns, and sew with a sewing machine. They use these skills mostly for their own domestic needs.

Concerning the employment of migrants in the care sector, the Saalfeld-Rudolstadt district is an over-aged region and has many facilities for the elderly. Migrants are willing to work in this sector, but some state regulations regarding training and language skills become barriers. Nonetheless, slowly this area is opening for migrants. For those with a higher level of education, employment opportunities can be found at the Saalfeld hospital.

In the context of employment in industries, a limited number of firms, such as those in chocolate production, glass, and steel, have a migrant workforce. These industries offer favourable employment prospects for migrants, especially for those with low qualifications. However, most industries demand a high level of skill and education, which most migrants don't have.

The Beulwitz Design project focuses on imparting social and intercultural competencies to women, teaching them to create fashion sketches, translate them into patterns, and sew using a sewing machine. These skills are primarily aimed at fulfilling domestic needs.

In the care sector, the Saalfeld-Rudolstadt district is characterised by an ageing population and an abundance of facilities for the elderly. Migrants are willing to work in this sector, but state regulations, such as language and training requirements, pose barriers to entry. However, slowly but surely, this sector is opening up to migrants, and those with higher levels of education can find employment opportunities at the Saalfeld hospital.

Finally, Ukrainian refugees are permitted to work from their first day in Germany and receive social benefits and support from the Employment Agency. However, most of them initially attend language courses or are unemployed.

Sustainability challenges

The sustainability of numerous Welcoming Initiatives, both those led by civil society organizations and public entities, is a matter of concern. A specific instance is the *Beulwitz Quartiersmanagement* project, which underwent a shift in its focus and direction of activities. Previously, the project was coordinated by a social worker with a focus on the integration and inclusion of refugees and migrants. However, as of October 2022, a decision was made to appoint a professional in territorial planning to lead the position, which remains unfilled to this present day. This change in leadership highlights the challenges faced by many Welcoming Initiatives in terms of sustainability and the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation to ensure the most effective outcomes.

Below, we specify these issues in terms of governance and policy, and we bring in the propositions raised at the event.

Governance:

- Usually projects are based on a one-year period. So, there is discontinuity, interruption of activities, and insecurity for workers, volunteers, and migrants alike
- There is a turnover of personnel and project leaders, as people seek permanent positions
- New demands from the bottom face difficulties to fit into old policy/governance systems: changes and new laws are demanded
- Lack of stable structures and financing for the integration work: not all towns have an institutionalized migration integration concept, a formal structure in the administration or a full-time officer or coordinator for the refugee work. Many work voluntarily

Policies: there are challenges related to

- mobility in rural areas (lack of public transportation or too expensive for an asylum seeker)
- housing shortage (paradox: shrinking x lack of houses)
- labour market integration faces challenges related to racism, equivalence, or registration of diplomas; proof of work experience; language knowledge.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the discussions and experiences shared at the roundtable, one policy recommendation would be to create a more collaborative and inclusive approach to migrant inclusion. This can be achieved by involving migrants themselves in the policy-making process, as well as working closely with organizations and institutions that support and empower migrants. This approach will ensure that the needs and perspectives of migrants are considered and that policies are more effective in promoting their successful inclusion.

According to the Country Report Germany (Meier, 2022: 9), in 2016, the German national government enacted the Integration Act (*Integrationsgesetz*) which aims to promote and demand the integration of migrants. This act lays out guidelines and goals for integration efforts at the national level. In addition to this national legislation, the state of Thuringia also created its own integration concept, called "the integration concept - for a good togetherness" (*Das Thüringer Integrationskonzept – für ein gutes Miteinander!*). This concept focuses on nine specific action fields to support the integration process for migrants, including intercultural opening and welcoming culture, combatting racism, fostering German language skills, promoting access to employment, healthcare, socio-cultural everyday life, and building on a human rights-oriented refugee and integration policy. These action fields reflect the state government's commitment to creating a society that is inclusive and welcoming to migrants. The concept was developed by the red-red-green coalition government of the state of Thuringia, and it is a unique approach to integration compared to the national integration act. Overall, the concept is intended to support migrants in their integration process and to foster a good togetherness for all residents in the state of Thuringia (Kruppa, 2017).

Another recommendation would be to provide more targeted support and resources for migrants in areas such as employability and entrepreneurship. This can be achieved through the development of programs and initiatives that provide training, mentorship, and networking opportunities for migrants to help them succeed in the job market and start their own businesses. Additionally, providing language classes and other forms of cultural integration support can be very beneficial in facilitating the inclusion of migrants into society.

Lastly, it is crucial to make sure that public opinion is fostered in a positive way towards migrants, this can be done by promoting awareness and understanding of the diversity of the migrant population and their potential for further development of shrinking regions. Moreover, it is important to exert political influence to place the topic of the participation of migrants and their agency on the political agenda at all levels, promote awareness of the current populism and discuss instruments to overcome xenophobia.

Summary of Governance and Policy recommendations

- Project funding should be transferred into regular public funding structures and, therefore, new integration laws are needed to rule the money distribution from the top-down
- There is a need for a participation law to mitigate the top-down ruling
- Crowdfunding is recommended to avoid the bureaucratic distribution of money
- Make jobs more attractive to find personal
- Arrange regular and visible offers for advice (done by local governments and other organisations in place, nearby by the people)
- Multiply the announcements by majors to all inhabitants ("Bürgerbrief") in ad-hoc situations

- Make more use of technical tools, such as video translations
- Run the welcoming programmes with regular public funding, such as the education budget
- As places for social gatherings are very important for inclusion, these should also be funded on a structural basis too
- Promote public debates on discrimination in employment and schools
- Communication does not only function via traditional forms but many other channels can be used, such as art, music, theatre, etc
- Keep in mind that welcoming spaces are 'making creative spaces'

7 Concluding remarks

The roundtable brought together actors from different political levels and various interest groups to discuss and share experiences on the sustainable inclusion of migrants and the development of their territories. The event aimed to promote continuous network development and cooperation among actors, share local, state, national and international experiences on inspiring projects that offer solutions to the successful inclusion of migrants, especially those related to employability and entrepreneurship, share the challenges faced in implementing migrant inclusion policies, raise awareness of the diversity of the migrant population and their potential for further development of shrinking regions, and exert political influence to place the topic of participation of migrants and their agency on the political agenda at all levels, promote awareness of the current populism and discuss instruments to overcome xenophobia.

The roundtable was well attended, with 160 people from 35 different organisations participating. Actors from welcome initiatives in Thuringia and Rhineland-Palatinate, the inhabitants and migrants of the addressed districts in Thuringia and Rhineland-Palatinate, migrant organisations, actors of the municipal administration, welfare state organizations, and other social institutions and associations that are committed to the inclusion of migrants, Thuringia State Commissioner for Integration, Migration and Refugees, Local and district integration managers, Local and district politicians and policymakers, and academics and researchers were all present.

The roundtable was a success as it provided a platform for sharing experiences and ideas on the sustainable inclusion of migrants and the development of their territories. The event also helped to raise awareness of the challenges faced in implementing migrant inclusion policies and the potential for further development of shrinking regions. Additionally, it helped to exert political influence to place the topic of the participation of migrants and their agency on the political agenda at all levels, promote awareness of the current populism and discuss instruments to overcome xenophobia. Overall, the roundtable was an important step towards achieving sustainable migrant inclusion.

The international table also convened colleagues from the Welcoming Spaces project in Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain to share their research and inspire local initiatives aimed at the well-being and sustainable emplacement of migrants. Presentations highlighted the positive role of social capital in the inclusion of migrants, including social infrastructure, public events, training courses, and internships in local businesses. Research also emphasized the importance of civic engagement in new processes of local governance, including initiatives for the recognition of the rights of migrants and refugees, such as political and labour rights. Overall, the table emphasised the potential for migration to be a positive factor in local development if considered in terms of migrants' aspirations.

In summary, effective migrant inclusion policies should be developed through a collaborative and inclusive approach that involves migrants themselves, provides targeted support and resources, and promotes positive public opinion towards migrants.

Field Visit



The day after the roundtable, the Welcoming Spaces project team and the delegation from Rheinland-Palatinate, led by civi kune RLP, visited the Beulwitz Quartier Management project, directed by our Saalfeld partner Mr Martin Spitz.

On the right: Mr Martin Spitzer presenting the Beulwitz Quartier Management project. Photo: J R Martins

The residential area of Beulwitz (where the old Russian barracks in Saalfeld were located), with approx. 950 residents, has been affected by segregation processes for years. 56% of its population have a migration background. It is a very heterogeneous neighbourhood and with 50.74% young people between 0-27 years, the youngest neighbourhood in the city of Saalfeld. The central shared accommodation for asylum seekers of the district is also located here. In the district Saalfeld-Rudolstadt, there are circa 400 Ukrainian migrant families.



View of the central shared accommodation for asylum seekers and the area where a multifunctional building is being constructed, Photo: J R Martins

There is a great need for meeting opportunities and social activities in the neighbourhood of Beulwitz. The great diversity of the district residents contrasts with the lack of social infrastructure. Due to these initial conditions, the city of Saalfeld, the Saalfeld Education Centre and other actors are trying to establish a process of activating and empowering the residents, establishing co-determination and creating spaces for meeting, volunteering and working by means of entrepreneurial activities.

New uses for the neighbourhood

Architectural planning and construction for a permanent, multifunctional building of about 115 square metres have started. It includes a large, divisible space for play and events, storage, an office and a sanitary unit. Workshops rooms for entrepreneurs, a café and a shop are being built. These entrepreneurial spaces are going to be occupied mostly by refugees and migrants.

Testimony

An after-event testimony from our partner Okka Senst of civi kune RLP in Rhineland-Palatinate (Germany):



"We, the team of civi kune RLP, are very happy about our cooperation with the research project "Welcoming spaces". We find it very important that our experiences from the practice of welcoming workflow into the research. It is also an opportunity that questions that arise from our work to be dealt with in a scientific context. The conference in Saalfeld offered us a wonderful platform for exchange. Because we were a 15-strong delegation, made up of employees of our project, migrants and committed people from various administrative districts in Rhineland-Palatinate to Thuringia, there were a variety of exchange opportunities and interesting encounters and experiences. In this way, the work can be further developed at the state level, as well as on-site in the "welcoming places", namely the local initiatives or the meeting cafés. Especially the people with a migration background who came with us to Saalfeld and whose participation is so important, make the work sustainable."

Acknowledgements

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