

# **‘We can’t integrate ourselves to ourselves’. Integration in Europe: Living well together?**

**Interim Report, May 2018**

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## Executive summary

Drawing on investigations from the first part of my Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship - a two week learning visit to four European cities - this paper sets out my interim findings and reflections, and the recommendations that flow from these.

The interim findings cover:

- What is working in integration practice in each of the cities;
- Tensions over the need for both infrastructure and informality, the representation and participation of migrants and refugees, and conflicting attitudes to integration at the national and city level; and,
- Challenges to integration.

My initial recommendations comprise a call to all those working in the integration space, both state and civil society organisations, to:

- Invest in migrant community organising;
- Define a vision for integration;
- Understand ecosystems thinking as it relates to integration; and to
- Recognise participation as a right and as something important for accountability.

I also set out the impact of findings and reflections on my work on integration policy and practice at the Greater London Authority and Migrants Organise Ltd.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to all those who gave their valuable time to respond to my questions and share their thoughts on the successes, struggles and next steps for integration in their cities - as well as those who offered their time but were unable to meet. A list of organisations with which I met during this learning visit is set out in Appendix A. A full list will be published following the final learning visit.

Many thanks also to those who enabled or set up meetings. In particular, thanks are due to:

- Kai Leptien, *Beauftragte für Integration und Migration des Berliner Senats* / Commissioner of the Berlin Senate for Integration and Migration;
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- Nikolay Barbov;
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With thanks to Lilian Seeni and the North-West Migrants Forum in Derry-Londonderry in Northern Ireland, who first gave me the quotation, 'we can't integrate ourselves to ourselves'. The North-West Migrants Forum are an excellent example of what integration can mean and how new arrivals can bring established communities together.

## Abbreviations, glossary and language

Migrant-led	Organised and run by migrant, refugee or asylum seekers themselves
MSOs	<i>Migrantenselbstorganisationen</i> ('migrant self-organising groups')
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
Volunteer groups	Self-organised groups run by volunteers, many of which sprung up since 2015.

### ***A note on language***

Throughout this report I have used a mix of English translations and original spellings for the names of projects, organisations or approaches, aiming for clarity of meaning as much as possible. Where I have used the German, Dutch, French or Flemish names for organisations, projects or technical terms, I *italicise* them. I refer to the cities I visited as Berlin, Köln, Amsterdam and Brussels.

Where possible, I use 'migrants and refugees' to refer to anyone who has arrived from overseas and is resident in the city, and plans to remain settled for some time. This should be considered to refer to anyone, regardless of their status and including all overseas migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. I occasionally distinguish 'refugees' as a distinct category of persons where this is relevant to understand the target audiences of particular projects or organisations. In places, to limit wordiness, for instance when describing migrant-led organisations, I use 'migrant' as a catch-all term to refer to migrants and refugees.

I refer to interlocutors as 'speakers' for ease of reference throughout.

# Introduction to the project

## *Background to the project – why is the study of integration important for the UK?*

Two questions have recently shot up the European political agenda: How we do manage migration into Europe? And, how do we manage the integration of communities? Failure to build a common approach to answering these questions has led to a hotchpotch of policy and political responses across the continent, which vary from welcome to hostility. The UK is currently facing a time of flux and growing community tensions, in a broader context of unprecedented global forced migration. I believe that understanding the differing experiences of and approaches to integration across the continent can help us in the UK design integration policy that is not only more effective but also better rooted in evidence and on-the-ground realities.

The issue of integration is gaining importance in the UK. The 2016 Casey Review highlighted some of the integration questions facing the UK and set out an approach that aimed to dismantle historical ‘multiculturalism’ in favour of seeing integration as a one-way street where the emphasis and burden is on the behaviour of those who have migrated to the UK.<sup>1</sup> The UK’s exit from the European Union is somewhat predicated on profound concerns about integration across the country; the EU referendum result exposed immigration fault lines that divide the country. More recently, however, the scandal over the treatment of the so-called Windrush generation and general public outrage at the government’s policy of creating a ‘hostile environment’ for migrants and relying on targets for removals hint at a more complex public attitude towards integration and immigration that a binary referendum might suggest. A Home Affairs Select Committee report into immigration from early 2018 aimed to synthesis and seek a basis for consensus.<sup>2</sup> Their recommendations included promoting locally-led integration plans; but what might these involve, and where is the best practice guidance for integration? Through this Fellowship I aim to add to this debate and build a stronger understanding of possible approaches to integration for the UK.

I work with migrant and refugee communities across the UK, aiming, alongside other sector organisations, to seed a UK-wide movement of migrants and refugees capable of influencing policy, practice and attitudes. I am told by colleagues from other countries that the UK is well known for its integration successes. Yet, from our work, I know that across the UK migrant communities often feel increasingly divided from host communities, as well as from other migrant communities. Reported rises in hate crime and islamophobia, as well as simmering community tensions make this an urgent issue for the UK. At the same time, the process of leaving the EU will raise up many more questions for Britain about how we manage inward migration and integration. Migrant and refugee communities are often left out of national conversations about integration. This project aims to draw on experiences of migrants - both

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The Casey Review: A review into opportunity and integration’, Dame Louise Casey DBE CB, December 2016: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/575973/The\\_Casey\\_Review\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> ‘Immigration policy: basis for building consensus’, Home Affairs Select Committee Report, Monday 15 January 2018: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmhaff/500/50002.htm>

more established and newer communities - across Europe to inform the plans and approaches of the UK migration sector for the future.

### ***Aims, objectives and purpose of the project***

To get the most value from the Fellowship, I aimed to focus my journey on visits to: a) meet grassroots migrant and refugee community organisations that combine service delivery and with empowerment activities, and: b) observe and understand key integration programmes. In particular, these conversations were driven by a need to understand the perspectives and attitudes of migrant communities themselves (as well as host communities, where relevant) rather than on the experiences of sector or policy organisations.

Through my Fellowship, I hope to develop:

1. Greater understanding of current trends and attitudes to integration, particularly amongst migrant communities themselves (and host communities, where relevant) as well as migration sector organisations, public bodies and NGOs.
2. Knowledge of good or innovative practice in integration and migration-focused community building and community organising, in order to inform emerging work across the UK.
3. An analysis of 'themes' or approaches that underpin these examples of good practice, in order to seed new developments in our practice in the UK.
4. Stronger, continuing relationships with grassroots migrant and refugee groups and migration sector organisation across Europe, in order to develop Europe-wide conversations and connections between migrant communities.
5. Portfolio of 'case studies' or individual and organisational profiles, which can be shared publicly to highlight positive migration and integration stories across Europe.

### ***Approach and method***

The first part of the Fellowship was drawn from desk-based research to understand changing policies and attitudes to migration and integration across Europe. This took place within the context of my two part-time roles, first as National Organiser at Migrants Organise and second as Citizenship and Integration Advisor at the Greater London Authority.

The second part of the Fellowship involves learning visits to meet organisations and institutions across Europe. In order to get a broader perspective on different migration and integration policies and different migrant perspectives, I have proposed two fortnight-long visits - one to countries in northern and western Europe, the other to southern and eastern Europe. I have so far completed the first visit and am due to undertake the second visit.

Countries and cities were selected on the basis of the perspectives or insight they could provide for my opening question, as well as where I had strong connections. For this initial learning visit, I chose four cities: Berlin and Köln (or Cologne) in Germany, Amsterdam in the

Netherlands, and Brussels in Belgium. I had focused on capital cities which could provide a useful comparison for London. Köln was also chosen given its relevance to the volunteer-led '*Flüchtlinge Willkommen*' (Refugees Welcome) movement and the number of established migrant and refugee-led organisations it hosts.

I spent several days in each of these cities and met with representatives from four 'sectors' or different types of groups:

- city and municipal authorities, including elected officials and civil servants from national and municipal governments;
- established NGOs and organisations providing integration services to migrants and refugees;
- migrant and refugee community organisations (as far as they existed); and,
- local informal or volunteer-led groups.

Further details of organisations are set out in Appendix A. Through semi-structured interviews with these representatives, I aimed to compare of ideas and views across cities, countries and sectors. My interviews focused on understanding:

1. What people felt was working in integration policy and practice, from the perspective of city and municipal authorities, big NGOs and service providers, and local and migrant groups.
2. What people felt was the big challenge or threat to effective integration policy and practice, from these different perspectives - and how these differ.
3. What people thought that the roles of other organisations or institutions were in this space. For example: What do people see other groups doing? What people think other groups should or should not be doing? Exploring how these differ, especially between city/municipal authorities and migrant and refugee community organisations.
4. What would make the difference to overcome the challenges. In particular, was there value in strengthening closer connections between migrant and volunteer-led groups and city authorities?
5. How far people in city authorities and migrant groups were connected, and what people thoughts the impacts or benefits of this were.

In addition, I tried to dig down to better understand the relationship between city authorities and migrant organisations. This including exploring how far city authorities recognised the role of migrant groups, and how far migrant groups sought recognition from the state. I tried to get a sense of the gaps, for example whether or not there were things that migrant groups did that city authorities did not understand, and whether or not there were policies that city authorities were pursuing that migrant groups did not engage with.

As well as questioning how far different organisations saw a benefit in building stronger connections between migrant groups and city authorities, I asked questions about how these

stronger connections could be built, raising ideas of recognition, trust, personal connections, collaboration and funding.

### **Report overview**

This is an interim report based on the initial learning visit to cities in northern and western Europe. Following my final visits and interviews, and drawing on my professional experiences at Migrants Organise Ltd and the Greater London Authority, I will prepare a final report to focus on:

- What UK migrant communities can learn from how European migrant communities have been successful in influencing or unable to influence their governments or publics.
- What the possibilities for collaboration between migrant organisations across Europe might be, in terms of building a common agenda or approach to migration and integration.
- What UK city or regional authorities can learn from how their European counterparts have developed and/or implemented integration policies.
- What the possibilities for collaboration between city or regional authorities across Europe might be, in terms of building a common agenda or approach to migration & integration.

This report covers the interim findings from the first stage interviews and visits. It provides initial reflections for the UK from these findings. Finally, it sets out follow up questions to enable me to gain learning that is as rich as possible from future visits and interviews.

## **Interim findings**

These interim findings are based on interviews and conversations over a two-week period in November 2017. They are loosely grouped into the areas for understanding outlined above.

### ***What is working in integration practice?***

Many speakers were linked to specific integration projects, and described details from these programmes to highlight what they saw as working well in integration practice in their city. These were often NGO or volunteer-led, or had originated in civil society organisations and then were scaled up by the state. In Berlin, I visited both the Stieglitz office of the integration project known as *Integrationslotsinnen* or 'district mothers', which is now funded by the Berlin Senate across the city and run by a larger development association,<sup>3</sup> and the *Stadtteilmütter* in Neukölln, the original project where the idea of district mothers had been developed.<sup>4</sup>

A common theme from these and other integration projects was the importance of understanding entry points for integration activities, in other words how to build relationships

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<sup>3</sup> [https://dwstz.de/projekte\\_integrationslotsinnen.html](https://dwstz.de/projekte_integrationslotsinnen.html)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.stadtteilmuetter.de/>

with new migrants and refugees - or established local residents - in order to undertake activities to promote integration. This was particularly related to trust. Speakers from each city talked about the need to build trust with historically or recently marginalised groups. The Stieglitz Integration Project intentionally used 'softer' activities, for example cooking together, in order to build trust and to approach more difficult questions related to support to access services or find work. The *Stadteilmütter* focused on working with families where they were in their journey towards integration and responding to their immediate questions and needs, rather than enrolling families into a one-size-fits-all programme. It was important, they explained, that *Mütter* (mothers) live in the neighbourhoods in which they work. Both projects highlighted the role of unplanned interactions in integration - for example meeting families in supermarkets or on the street - that could only be enabled by a hyper-local, neighbourhood-based approach. In Brussels, the local Ixelles *Échevin* (alderman) spoke with passion about the success of very small-scale, practical initiatives that had been centred around one block or one street in a particular neighbourhood and improved community integration.

A refugee speaker in Amsterdam explained that, although he felt reasonably well integrated in the city, he found it hard to break into Dutch communities. It was only through attending Dutch language classes and meeting volunteer Dutch teachers that he had been able to get to know Dutch people. The way in which people described the productive interactions between refugees and local residents at BOOST in Amsterdam highlighted how unusual this mix felt to participants. Across the cities, language and work were seen as two big drivers for integration - or as opportunities to engage migrants and refugees.

Successful integration projects also seemed to share a simplicity of approach, which focused less on processes or standardisation and relied more on the skills and capacities of particular staff members. Speakers from the *Stadteilmütter* and *Integrationslotsinnen* projects both emphasised the importance of the training that *Mütter* or *Lotsinnen* received. This training was practical, but also encouraged district mothers to develop the values, approaches and instincts that sat at the heart of the programmes. At the Alpha project in Ixelles the success of the language class as a space for integration seemed dependent on one particular highly experienced teacher and her long roots in the neighbourhood. In contrast, in Berlin, NGOs spoke of the frustration of supporting volunteer advisors to navigate asylum and immigration systems that were complex and not fit for purpose. Similarly, in Amsterdam, Köln and Berlin more established NGOs shared stories of the potentially negative impacts of well-meaning but inexperienced volunteers on the experiences of migrants and refugees. In this situation, having simple and clear roles for volunteers seemed to harness the enthusiasm of volunteers whilst drawing on the expertise of those more experienced in integration. The *Kölner Freiwilligen Agentur*, for example, shared the details of a successful volunteering scheme that matched newly arrived families who had school aged children with 'godparents' to provide additional support with homework.<sup>5</sup> Local residents' familiarity with the role of a 'godparent' seemed central to the success of the project.

I came across some outstanding examples of programmes led by migrant and refugee communities themselves. As well as the *Stadteilmütter* in Berlin, which was set up by predominantly Turkish and Arab women in the neighbourhood, the *Begegnungs- und Fortbildungszentrum muslimischer Frauen* (or BFmF) in Köln was highlighted as an example of

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.koeln-freiwillig.de/>; <http://www.koeln-freiwillig.de/patenfuerfluechtlingkinder/>

an organisation that was set up by Turkish women roughly 25 years ago and which they continued to run. It now employed around 120 workers and had expanded into new service areas.<sup>6</sup> Also in Köln, I met the *Integrationsrat*, the directly-elected Integration Council of the City of Köln.<sup>7</sup> Members of the council saw their role as holding the city authority to account and championing smaller local migrant and refugee organisations such as local supplementary schools; they were also having to fight for the powers and budget they needed to implement real change across the city - for the migrant and refugee members involved, this was no state tick-box exercise.

In Amsterdam, BOOST provided an excellent example of how effective integration programmes can be when they are begun by new arrivals with the support of local residents and are led by volunteers.<sup>8</sup> When I visited, BOOST's cafe was full of local residents and refugees sharing in Dutch-English-Arabic conversation exchanges, and activities were taking place across three storeys - it was evidently a space for genuine social mixing. In the municipality or commune of Ixelles, in Brussels,<sup>9</sup> the civic leadership recognised the importance of political participation of migrants and refugees, who were voters and citizens in their own right, not just the passive recipients of projects. Elected councillors had worked with long-standing residents and new arrivals to establish a 'Committee for Dialogue' to manage local tensions. I visited two projects that were supported by the commune, a language school that also served as an integration hub for the neighbourhood (*Le Project Alpha*) and a youth mentoring programme for unaccompanied minors (*Mentor Escale*).<sup>10</sup>

### ***Tensions in integration practice***

The interviews revealed some fundamental tensions at the heart of integration programmes across the cities: between infrastructure organisations and less formal volunteer groups; in differing understandings of the representation and participation of migrants and refugees; and in conflicting attitudes towards integration at the national and city level.

#### *A need for infrastructure, experience and capacity vs. agility, responsiveness and citizen participation*

In every city I visited, those involved in integration programmes were grappling with the complex interactions between what we might describe as volunteer groups - volunteer-led, newly-established and relatively unstructured initiatives - and more established, professionalised integration and resettlement infrastructure organisations, including those delivering state-run programmes. Volunteer groups tended to have sprung up organically following the outpouring of public good will across Europe after media recognition in late 2015

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<sup>6</sup> [www.bfmf-koeln.de/](http://www.bfmf-koeln.de/)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/soziales/integrationsrat/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.boostamsterdam.nl/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://be.brussels/about-the-region/the-communes-of-the-region/ixelles>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.lire-et-ecrire.be/Centres-alpha-de-Lire-et-Ecrire-Bruxelles?lang=fr#Ixelles;>  
<http://www.mentorescale.be/>

of the global refugee crisis.<sup>11</sup> I was meeting with organisers, volunteers and paid staff from both groups, and conversations on each side revealed the tensions in their interactions.

On the one hand, volunteer groups were seen as bringing a certain dynamism, energy and responsiveness to situations. In Amsterdam, Berlin and Köln, many speakers recognised that this outpouring of good will had brought a valuable influx of energised, committed volunteers to the sector - many of whom were familiar with organising on social media or came with substantial professional skills. At the same time, volunteer groups in Berlin or Köln tended to be critical of larger, more established programmes - particularly those that were run by the city authorities. Many involved in the groups came from social movements that were anti-hierarchical, with a strong commitment to dispersed power and decentralisation. This put them at odds immediately with centralised state-run programmes. Many speakers in volunteer groups or NGOs saw this as valuable: by being better able to adapt to people's expressed needs, these groups could provide a much needed challenge to more formal structures that at times were not fit for purpose for new arrivals. OASE Berlin, similarly, saw the volunteer-led projects as valuable allies in challenging politicians who wished to talk about the success of projects but not to reflect critically on what is not working with migrant or refugee communities. Speakers from city or federal authorities in Amsterdam and Berlin often recognised the benefits that volunteers brought and were keen to provide public recognition for their contributions through public events or media showcases - although they sometimes did not see these new volunteer groups as playing a legitimate role in the integration sector.

On the other hand, speakers expressed anxiety about the unintended consequences of many new, dispersed and volunteer-led groups. In Amsterdam, for example, more established organisations, whilst recognising the energy brought by new volunteers, expressed concerns that a large numbers of new projects had meant that groups were competing to 'get' refugees to their activities, making newly arrived refugees feel awkward and uncomfortable. In Köln also, speakers from different organisations mentioned that a lack of organisational development experience and a desire for autonomy within groups meant that a large number of volunteer groups had sprung up, which were not always able to work effectively together and which sometimes competed for people or resources.

This has echoes in the UK: I have witnessed well-meaning but inexperienced volunteers providing ultimately unhelpful support to refugee families by being unfamiliar with concepts such as boundaries in the context of mentoring, and I have seen new groups compete to attract refugees and migrants to their programmes rather than responding to needs, relying on more established migrant groups for access to newly arrived refugees. To me it felt that this was one of the reasons that newer integration projects (such as the state-funded *Stadteilmütter* or *Integrationslotsinnen* projects in Berlin, or projects set up by the *Kölner Freiwilligen Agentur* or *Stadtbibliothek*) tended to emphasise the importance of training for new volunteers or staff.

Many speakers recognised the need for structure and capacity if successful integration was to be achieved at a city level. Both could be achieved through large-scale state-funded initiatives or the scaling up of successful projects. The increasing professionalisation of district mothers in

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, <http://tracks.unhcr.org/2015/12/2015-the-year-of-europes-refugee-crisis/> or <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20170629ST078630/eu-migrant-crisis-facts-and-figures>

*Stadteilmütter* or *Integrationslotsinnen* projects meant that all new recruits had training and a solid grounding in integration best practice, avoiding the negative impacts of well-meaning but inexperienced volunteers. However, those who had been involved in the *Stadteilmütter* when it had been a community-run initiative expressed concerns that the more a project was scaled up or replicated the more the nature of that project changed, and that they were working hard to maintain the rootedness of their work. In particular, the *Stadteilmütter* highlighted the loss of community knowledge and trust with particular migrant or refugee groups (essential for the success of integration projects) when operating at scale or when replicating a project in another location in the city. The investment in migrant or refugee community members as paid staff in the *Integrationslotsinnen* project in Stieglitz was seen as an important investment in capacity and local infrastructure; although some volunteer groups saw this as communities being co-opted by the state. Certainly, project workers in Stieglitz did not see their role as campaigning or challenging situations they came across that seemed to them unjust - such as the lack of engagement from doctors and hospitals - though they would pass on concerns through internal project meetings.

The proliferation of new groups had also led to tension over funding. This was mentioned by several speakers in Berlin, and in Köln speakers from the Integrationsrat highlighted that volunteer groups were making it more difficult for migrant-led organisations (*migrantenselbstorganisationen* or MSOs) such as supplementary schools to access the funding they needed to run their programmes. Without more established organisations, moreover, the volunteer groups could have limited impact. The *Kölner Freiwilligen Agentur*, for example, saw their role very clearly as only providing expertise or training to new initiatives and as offering a shared platform for groups to convene and connect. They saw themselves as playing an important role to support new people and new groups to learn and reflect as their work developed. The *Sprachraum* at the *Köln Stadtbibliothek* similarly situated itself as a convening space, and was used by a number of different initiatives in what seemed to be a productive manner. This was one positive example of where infrastructure and resources combined with less formal volunteer-led activity.

I did not have time to fully explore the role of the private sector, although this was raised by some speakers. Some volunteer groups in Berlin had been able to harness the expertise of social enterprises; speakers from ECRE in Brussels and STARK in Köln, however, found that the private sector had been very hard to mobilise.

### *The representation and participation of migrants and refugees*

Speakers in Amsterdam, Köln and Berlin all raised a concern about volunteer groups that is central to the focus of this Fellowship: how well they involved migrants and refugees. Some volunteer groups seemed to manage this well. BOOST in Amsterdam, for example, was set up by people with refugee backgrounds working with local residents, and seemed to have maintained the strong presence of refugee voices in planning and decision-making structures. Give Something Back to Berlin was clear on the particular role it played (engaging 'more privileged' migrants into projects with locals and those with less secure status) and how it interacted with other migrant or refugee-led groups, supporting or platforming their work. However, speakers in Berlin, Köln and Amsterdam from more established NGOs and from city authorities emphasised that the representation of migrants and refugees across integration programmes

was relatively poor, and this included volunteer-led groups. Organisations such as the *Kölner Freiwilligen Agentur* talked about the difficulties of migrant communities self-organising; a question raised by refugee and migrant speakers in Köln and in Amsterdam was whether the number of local resident-led groups left little room for migrants to self-organise. Speakers from *STARK* and the *Integrationsrat* in Köln both saw the focus on German volunteer groups as a distraction from important conversations about the development and sustainability of migrant-led organisations or migrant self-organising groups (referred to as *migrantenselbstorganisationen* or MSOs).

In interviews, I raised the question of the representation and participation of migrants and refugees in integration programmes. Almost every speaker I met shared the view that representation was important at the grassroots level. The only exception was in Brussels, where BON emphasised that self-organising of migrant groups was seen by many as being problematic, as it encouraged a focus on difference not commonality and meant that communities divided into different language groups. Migrant self-organisation was seen as divisive and as antithetical to integration. In general, this reflects more closely the attitudes towards integration predominant in France, where integration is often understood as assimilation into a national culture, rather than those evinced in Amsterdam, Berlin, Köln - and in London. Other speakers in Brussels, and all speakers in Amsterdam, Berlin and Köln questioned the extent of representation. Speakers from state authorities and more established NGOs most often broached this by raising concerns about a lack of migrant self-organising.

An interest in the participation of migrants and refugees in integration programmes or the representation of migrants and refugees in decision-making positions was evident across all cities. Berlin's *Senatorin für Integration, Arbeit und Soziales* (Senator for Integration, Labour and Social Affairs) hosted an event '*Integration im Dialog*' in Pankow whilst I was visiting the city. It was co-run with the *Integrationsbeauftragten von Pankow* (Integration Officer for the district of Pankow). The framing for the meeting showed a specific interest in participation, with questions on how to support refugees' active participation ('*aktiv mitzugestalten*'), the role of migrant organisations ('*migrant\*enorganisationen*') and co-operation between civil society and administration ('*zusammenarbeit zwischen zivilgesellschaft und Verwaltung*'). The existence of *Migrationsräte* and *Integrationsräte* (Migration Councils and Integration Councils) in districts across Berlin evinced at least a superficial interest in representation - even if speakers from NGOs and migrant groups emphasised that these councils were not fully functional nor did they hold state authorities to account effectively; the Köln *Integrationsrat* seemed unique in that respect. The *Stadteilmütter* and *Lotsinnen* integration projects employed people with migrant and refugee backgrounds, and reported that job centres were increasingly hiring people with language skills and the experience of migration. Speakers from the *Bundeskanzleramt Arbeitsstab* in Berlin were knowledgeable about the barriers to participation and self-organising facing migrants and refugees. In Amsterdam, the city authority had played a leading role in setting up a European Migrant Advisory Board as part of the EU Partnership for the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees. A senior staff member at the City of Amsterdam with the responsibility for integration had a refugee background themselves, and spoke about the important role of participation. Organisations such as the *Minderhederforum* (Minorities Forum) in Brussels<sup>12</sup> and

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.minderhedenforum.be/>

RISE ('Refugee Ideas and Solutions for Europe')<sup>13</sup> sought to use the participation and representation of refugees, migrants and minorities to positively impact on policy and practice.

Speakers from state authorities and state-funded programmes tended to describe the importance of participation as being on the grounds of efficiency - that involving migrants and refugees in designing or delivering activities or making decisions would make integration projects better, as they would better reflect people's needs or desires. There was also a recognition of the role of trust, in other words that integration projects needed trust to work with communities and that employing migrant community members or having migrant representatives on boards made it easier for organisations to build that trust. The *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) likewise sought to encourage migrant organisations to work together with integration projects '*um die Wirkung der Projekte zu erhöhen*' (to increase the impact of the projects).<sup>14</sup> Amongst the Integration Projects in Stieglitz and Neukölln, in the *Bundeskanzleramt Arbeitsstab* in Berlin and in the City of Amsterdam authority, there was also recognition that recent migrant and refugees had a sophisticated knowledge of asylum systems across Europe and of how to navigate and access welfare systems, and that this knowledge could be used to improve integration projects. This was borne out by refugee speakers in Amsterdam.

Seeing the role of representation as being for the benefit of integration projects - or for the benefit of individual migrants involved - could tend towards the patronising in interviews. Speakers from the *Senatsverwaltung* in Berlin emphasised the importance of trust and the participation of migrant communities, whilst also expressing the view that there were few effective self-organised groups, that migrant-led groups had problems with leadership and could be too exclusive, and that NGOs were not working well together. They saw their role as educating migrant leaders or NGOs on how to run projects, organise or work together, and expressed some frustration at the efforts required to maintain groups, platforms or forums. Similarly, the City of Amsterdam were proud to have established a sounding board or council of refugees and migrants to advise the city authority, but emphasised that civil servants had set it up and had put in significant efforts to run it. The German *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) recognises the support that migrant organisations offer to new arrivals, but sees their own role as offering funding, expertise and professionalisation, rather than listening to or engaging in policy dialogue with these organisations.<sup>15</sup> State authorities and more established NGOs in each of the cities talked about inexperience or lack of capacity of migrants and refugees to organise as being the major barrier to the development of self-organised migrant community infrastructure.

This idea was contested by speakers from migrant backgrounds, whether or not they worked for NGOs, as politicians, or volunteered in self-organised groups. Speakers in Köln and Amsterdam talked about the limited infrastructure support for migrant organisations and explained that they struggled to find places to meet and often had no help from state authorities or integration programmes to get their organisations off the ground. In Köln, national level

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<sup>13</sup> <https://advocate-europe.eu/ideas/refugees-ideas-and-solutions-for-europe-rise/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Willkommen/Engagement/Migrantenorganisationen/migrantenorganisationen-node.html>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Willkommen/VerbaendeOrganisationen/Migrantenorganisationen/migrantenorganisationen-node.html>

migrant organisations (such as Bv NeMo - *Bundesverband Netzwerke von Migrantenorganisationen* or Federal Network of Migrant Organizations - or BVRE - *Bundesverband russischsprachiger Eltern* or Federal Association of Russian-speaking Parents) were presented by speakers as getting recognition and support from the federal government and as being able to make their voices heard.<sup>16</sup> They were contrasted with smaller migrant groups who had less recognition. The Köln *Integrationsrat* shared stories of more than 40 self-organised migrant groups (MSOs or *migrantenselbstorganisationen*) in the city who were delivering substantial integration projects such as language schools, but who also struggled to access funding and relied on the *Integrationsrat* to ensure that integration policy was scrutinised and challenged. The speaker from STARK similarly shared stories of numerous migrant community organisations in Köln and the challenges they faced securing recognition and resources. There seemed to be few organisations offering organising support for migrant groups. STARK, as an exception, had invested time in supporting migrant organising, especially African diaspora MSOs, through their *Haus Afrika* project ('Africa House') campaign.<sup>17</sup> Several organisations in Köln also mentioned the role of *samo.fa* (*die Stärkung von Aktiven aus Migrantenorganisationen in der Flüchtlingsarbeit* or 'the strengthening of active members of migrant organizations in refugee work') in providing support to migrant organisations.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas speakers from state authorities, state-funded project or more mainstream NGOs tended to say that there was very little migrant community infrastructure and limited self-organising, migrant organisations or smaller NGOs spoke about a lack of support or connection to state authorities. In Berlin, OASE emphasised that, despite references to representation and participation, there had been very limited engagement with NGOs or migrant organisations in developing the city's Master Plan for Integration. They saw state authorities as being very hierarchical with a firm commitment to the existing power structures. They were also critical of the '*Integration im Dialog*' event, describing it as being merely for politicians to celebrate successes, and highlighting how refugee communities' questions about the effectiveness of certain integration projects and policies had gone unanswered. This also challenged the claims of city authorities in Berlin and Amsterdam that they had to sustain migrant groups. In Amsterdam, the *VluchtelingenWerk Nederland* gave some background to the representation of refugees and migrants on the city's sounding board by explaining that there had been an advisory board of refugees but that this had been shut down by the City of Amsterdam in the early 2000s. Rather than the City of Amsterdam having to promote and maintain representation on the new board, it was pressure from migrant and refugee groups that had initiated the platform. At the European level, despite the existence of the Partnership for the Inclusion of Refugees and Migrants and the new European Migrant Advisory Board, the self-organised group RISE explained that they received very little support or recognition. There was an evident gap between migrant organisations and state authorities - as well as with migrant organisations and some of the larger, more mainstream NGOs. In Brussels, NGO speakers claimed that communities did not play a role in integration in the city, and integration programmes were seen as separate from social or self-organised groups.

Whilst there was in general a shared recognition that participation and representation are important for integration, what was understood by participation and representation differed. In

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<sup>16</sup> <http://bv-nemo.de/>; <http://www.bvre.de/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://stark-koeln.org/zwei-jahre-stark>; <http://www.haus-afrika.de>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.samofa.de/>

international development practice, rationales for participation include efficiency and the concepts both of participation as a right (summed up by the phrase, ‘nothing about us, without us, is for us’) or as a mechanism for accountability.<sup>19</sup> OASE in Berlin, STARK and the *Integrationsrat* in Köln, *VluchtelingenWerk Nederland* in Amsterdam and ECRE in Brussels, as well as individual refugee and migrant speakers, specifically highlighted representation as a means to better hold national or city authorities to account. Speakers from migrant backgrounds were more likely to view participation or representation as a right, and to discuss the negative impact of its absence. The lack of political representation was highlighted as a particular concern in Köln - several speakers mentioned the election of Sadiq Khan as the Mayor of London as a very important moment for the representation of muslims in Europe, but felt that it would not have happened in Germany.

### *Conflicting attitudes at the national and city levels*

Across the cities I became aware of a growing consensus that integration is not just something for migrants, refugees and newcomers but about how we all live well together. Several speakers talked about integration as a process that was good for everyone, not as the way in which migrants needed to assimilate themselves. This was shared explicitly by the *Bundeskanzleramt Arbeitsstab* in Berlin and by representatives of the Ixelles municipality in Brussels, and was referenced in conversations with STARK in Köln and BOOST in Amsterdam. Speakers from ECRE in Brussels highlighted the language of inclusive societies and interculturality that they felt was gaining traction.<sup>20</sup>

This change seemed specific to cities, and speakers in all cities exposed another tension: the competing or conflicting attitudes to integration and immigration at the national level and at a city level. This was especially clear in Amsterdam. City of Amsterdam speakers spoke of Amsterdam as a ‘migration city’ and were keen to emphasise this framing as positive in how they understood the nature of the capital. Yet, the Government of the Netherlands’ language on integration is framed around ‘compulsory integration’, implying that it something only new migrants must do.<sup>21</sup> The approach is clearly not of integration as a two-way street: ‘*The government consistently monitors the effort migrants make to integrate. If you do not make enough effort, you may lose your residence permit.*’<sup>22</sup> This approach to integration was at the heart of the most recent election in the Netherlands,<sup>23</sup> and the success of the far-right anti-immigrant *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (PVV), which became the second largest party,<sup>24</sup> points to the tension between attitudes to integration in Amsterdam and in national Dutch politics. This tension was highlighted by speakers from the City of Amsterdam and *VluchtelingenWerk Nederland*.

In Berlin, NGOs and civil servants at all levels expressed anxiety about the changing attitudes towards migrants and refugees in smaller towns across Germany and in different *Länder*, and how this was impacting on national approaches to integration. The coalition discussions in the

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<sup>19</sup> See for example <http://www.participatorymethods.org/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/interculturality>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.government.nl/topics/new-in-the-netherlands/integration-of-newcomers>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/04d6f58c-073a-11e7-97d1-5e720a26771b>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-netherlands-election/dutch-pm-cheers-eu-leaders-by-seeing-off-far-rights-wilders-idUSKBN16M0MB>

*Bundestag* were still ongoing whilst I was in Germany, leaving the federal government in limbo, and speakers raised concerns that the growth of anti-immigration rhetoric - as symbolised by entry of the far-right anti-immigration *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) into the *Bundestag*<sup>25</sup> - would drive a greater wedge between Berlin's approach to integration and federal level policy. In Brussels, the speaker from BON emphasised the huge differences in approaches to integration between Brussels and the different parts of Belgium. These differences even played out in the different Flemish or French-speaking parts of the capital itself. The speaker described how these different approaches meant that newcomers would tend to come to Brussels, where they felt more welcome, rather than settling in other parts of Belgium. This exacerbated the distinct experiences of integration between the capital and the rest of the country, and therefore intensified the differences between the respective approaches to integration.

All city and state authorities I met were eager to connect with other large, multicultural cities across Europe, and many speakers talked about learning exchanges, policy connections and the chance to work alongside colleagues in other cities with whom they felt a sense of solidarity, particularly other European capitals. Many were already involved in networks of so-called intercultural cities or cities of migration, such as the EU Urban Cities Agenda,<sup>26</sup> the Cities of Migration network,<sup>27</sup> EUROCITIES,<sup>28</sup> the Intercultural Cities network,<sup>29</sup> and the Open Society Foundations' Open Cities Fellowship programme.<sup>30</sup> This highlighted how these cities of integration related most positively not to the national level, nor even to other cities in the country, but to other cities that shared their profile, and that understood and were experiencing the benefits and challenges that higher levels of immigration brought. London was seen as one of these cities, somewhere with substantial experience in integration and managing a multicultural identity, and that similarly faced tensions with national government as a result of conflicting interpretations of and approaches to integration.

### ***Challenges to integration***

In interviews with speakers I also asked about the challenges or threats to effective integration policy and practice. Answers varied hugely, and included some issues already discussed, such as the tensions between city-level approaches to integration and the national picture, and the lack of available funding or support for migrant-led organisations, smaller NGOs and volunteer groups. The remaining conversations tended to focus on two broad themes.

The first theme that came up in speakers' discussions of challenges was around the role of other organisations working in the integration space. This included comments that revealed:

- i. a lack of clarity about what other groups were doing, whether similar types of organisations or groups from the different categories, such as volunteer groups, migrant-led organisations, established NGOs or state authorities;

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<sup>25</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/09/24/europe/germany-far-right-party-election/index.html>

<sup>26</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/eu-regional-and-urban-development/topics/cities-and-urban-development/urban-agenda-eu\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/eu-regional-and-urban-development/topics/cities-and-urban-development/urban-agenda-eu_en)

<sup>27</sup> <http://citiesofmigration.ca/>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/news/Cities4Europe-Campaign-launched-WSP0-AYLHFR>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities>

<sup>30</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/europe-open-city-fellowship---new-fellowship-programme-for-migrant-leaders>

- ii. disagreements about the approach taken by others, particularly between state and civil society speakers, or between informal volunteer groups and more established infrastructure organisations;
- iii. a lack of understanding of the operating constraints or ways of working of the different types of organisations;
- iv. criticism of organisations or individuals for not behaving in accordance with their stated aims, or executing activities poorly.

In Berlin, organisations seemed to have very little knowledge of each other, compared to my experience of the 'migration sector' in London and the UK. Most speakers had very superficial knowledge of the other groups I was meeting, and very few were able to recommend a number of other organisations or individuals that I should be visiting. Speakers in Köln had a better sense of what other organisations existed and could talk for some time about groups working on integration; this may be a result of the smaller size of the city. Speakers from *Kölner Freiwilligen Agentur*, *Kölner Flüchtlingsrat* and STARK also contrasted the lack of or limited state involvement in integration in Köln with the greater, more proactive involvement of the city authorities in Berlin. This may have meant that in Berlin civil society groups working in integration had become reliant on the state to coordinate, connect and even establish projects - and speakers from the *Senatsverwaltung* expressed how difficult they found this. In contrast, in Köln, in the absence of a coordinating state, civil society organisations had to be better connected and better organised amongst themselves.

Despite the greater clarity about what other groups were doing in Köln, both STARK and *Kölner Freiwilligen Agentur* believed that there were gaps in connections and understanding between migrant-led organisations and volunteer groups. I had a similar impression of dislocation from migrant groups when meeting with the *Kölner Flüchtlingsrat*. This seemed borne out in conversations with the *Integrationsrat* and migrant-led organisations in the city who had little knowledge of the volunteer groups; at the Sprachraum, similarly, the volunteer groups I met were familiar with a few individuals from migrant and refugee background who were active, but were not in contact with the more established migrant-led organisations. In both Amsterdam and Brussels, few speakers were able to point to successful integration projects, aside from *Centre Alpha* and *Mentor Jeunes* in Ixelles or BOOST in Amsterdam; this may also have been down to my more limited connections, as I was less familiar with both cities and had to rely on English translators.

The differing roles of the state in each city hints at what sat behind some of the frustrations that speakers expressed about what other groups were doing. Predominantly this frustration was expressed as being about groups 'not doing what they should', but it was clear from conversations across different types of organisations that some of this tension was related to fundamental disagreements about the role of various actors - in other words, a lack of clarity or agreement on what each organisations 'should' be doing.

In Berlin, the *Senatsverwaltung* seemed to be trying to undertake a very broad range of activities, which hinted at a lack of clarity about their role. They variously appeared as a funding body providing resourcing to boost infrastructure, a delivery partner outsourcing services to civil society organisations and a strategic partner hosting dialogues and promoting collaborations between civil society groups. Whilst these roles are not incompatible, they

require careful management and communication with different types of partners: the 'top-down' nature of outsourcing service requires a different approach to 'bottom-up' platform-building or convening, for instance. This seemed to affect relationships with NGOs, who expressed interest in developing more strategic partnerships with the city authority, but did not feel that they were currently genuine partners. The state-funded *Integrationslotsinnen project* reported positive support from the *Senatsverwaltung* in bringing projects together to share learning. However, this seemed to be only open for projects involved in that particular integration programme. This sentiment was not echoed by the *Stadteilmütter*, who had built their own substantial relationships with international groups but seemed to have fewer connections with other organisations in Berlin.

Some criticism seemed to be related to a lack of understanding of how groups operated. Frustrations from the *Senatsverwaltung* about the lack of collaboration between smaller migrant groups and NGOs did not reflect what some speakers from NGOs shared about their interactions with the *Senatsverwaltung* or the types of support they need to connect. To me, with a background in working with smaller, grassroots community groups, this seemed to reveal a lack of understanding of the operating constraints faced by small migrant community organisations, particularly those led by volunteers for migrant communities; they are often unable to 'plug in' to a pre-planned formal programme and need more tailored support to thrive. This was in contrast, for example, with the speaker from the *VluchtelingenWerk Nederland*, who displayed a profound understanding of the different types of groups operating in Amsterdam and talked in depth about the various ways that migrant community organisations, volunteer groups and state-run projects operated, and the impacts of this on collaboration in integration. Overall, compared to the UK, I found across the cities there was a limited understanding of the potential role of migrant self-organised groups. In Brussels, as discussed above, there were strong disagreement between those who held the view that migrant community groups were actively unhelpful for integration and those who were felt there was a need for greater migrant and refugee participation through self-organised local community groups.

Some of the disagreement between organisations was nevertheless criticism of individuals or organisations for not behaving in accordance with their stated aims. In Köln, the *Integrationsrat* and migrant organisations felt themselves having to fight for funding, recognition and genuine decision-making power. Various speakers described the failures of *Migrationsräte* and *Integrationsräte* in other parts of Germany to fulfil their aims of ensuring the representation and voice of migrants and refugees; this seemed to bear out what the Köln *Integrationsrat* were describing. In Berlin, NGOs felt that the Berlin Senate was only paying lip service to dialogue, hosting conference events but being unwilling to really listen to criticism. In Amsterdam, Köln and Berlin, as highlighted above, many speakers expressed concerns about the activities and behaviour of inexperienced volunteer groups. Simultaneously, volunteer groups and NGOs expressed criticism of the state's failure to protect more vulnerable refugees and migrants from harm and had specific critiques of aspects of integration policy, whether the structure of Dutch language classes or the complexities around accessing asylum support in Berlin.

The second theme - which is also related to point ii. above - involved a lack of clarity or a conceptual disagreement about who is being talked about when we talk about integration. If we leave aside the broader question of whether integration is about all of us living well together or

whether the focus is on new arrivals, the organisations and individuals I met were variously talking about refugees, asylum seekers, migrants or established diaspora and minority ethnic communities. This often excluded certain groups; for example, only speakers from the Berlin city authority mentioned work with Roma migrants from Eastern Europe, despite their situation and associated integration challenges being widely reported in the German press when I was visiting.

Many integration projects - and particularly those involving new volunteers who had joined after 2015 - were focused on support for refugees only. Even this tended to be a short-hand for Syrian refugees or others displaced by the Syrian conflict - although *VluchtelingenWerk Nederland*, *Kölner Flüchtlingsrat* and OASE Berlin all highlighted the situation of other refugees and asylum seekers. Migrant-led organisations, on the other hand, understandably had a range of concerns dependent on their status and the identity of the group. Refugee community groups, whether Syrian, Eritrean or Sudanese; African diaspora organisations; Turkish and Moroccan associations; Roma networks; Russian-speaking federations - all had different integration challenges, and whilst they shared some similar difficulties that could sometimes bring them together, their approach was shaped by their and their communities' experience.

The state authorities who had a strong 'living well together' approach tended to speak the most broadly about integration, referring to new migrants, refugees with and without status, and more established diaspora communities. The *Bundeskantleramt Arbeitsstab* had a focus on labour market integration, meaning that they saw migrants not according to their immigration status or journey but as potential new citizens to join the workforce. This was echoed in their, and the Berlin *Senatsverwaltung's*, description of those they were principally supporting as '*Neue Deutsche*' or new Germans. The political representative I spoke with in Köln framed the discussions around any new migrants and more established diaspora communities. In Brussels similarly, in conversation with BON and representatives of the Ixelles municipality, the focus on new arrivals joining a larger citizenry seemed to serve to broaden the frame to any new or established migrants.

NGOs and volunteer groups in all of the cities on the other hand, tended to see a distinction between people with different immigration status, who had come from different countries and for different reasons - this was reflected in the specialised nature of services. The *Mentor Jeunes* project in Brussels was targeted towards unaccompanied minors and so had an inevitable focus on those young people. Other organisations in Köln, Amsterdam and Berlin would tend to speak very specifically about the particular cohorts that they served - whether refugees, migrants or others. I saw this as in contrast to the UK, where in my experience it is the state that tends to differentiate and categorise new arrivals, whereas civil society, particularly the established migrant sector, is increasingly drawing the connections between new arrivals from many different backgrounds and even established migrant communities - although tensions between refugee and migrant support organisations do exist. Notable exceptions to this were BOOST in Amsterdam, STARK in Köln and the *Centre Alpha* in Brussels, whose approaches were all predicated on building citizen or neighbourhood platforms.

## Interim reflections and recommendations

I have outlined my key interim reflections and recommendations below. I plan to return to cities in Europe to continue my investigations through a second learning visit, and these will be updated based on those findings in the future.

### *Invest in migrant community organising*

My questioning throughout the learning visit revealed a general sense of a lack of migrant community infrastructure in the cities. Most speakers from state authorities or larger more established NGOs linked this with statements that the UK was seen as more advanced in integration policy and practice. Some expressed surprise that I had come to Europe to learn about integration, saying that they looked to the UK for best practice around integration, particularly from the community-based perspective. In Brussels, the perception of a lack of migrant community infrastructure was coupled with a very different attitude toward the value of migrant self-organising, which was seen as something negative for integration and to be avoided. Many highlighted that there was little migrant self-organising in their cities. Whilst I hoped to focus on learnings from Europe for migrant communities in the UK - and whilst I did come away with valuable reflections which have already impacted on policy and practice here in the UK, as outlined below - recommendations here are therefore set out both for those I met in Europe and for those working for integration in the UK.

Despite less substantial migrant community infrastructure in the cities I visited, I did come across a number of migrant-led organisations. To some extent, the likelihood of an organisation existing - or the strength of the group - was related to the length of time there had been a diaspora community in the country. In Germany, Turkish organisations were the most established, reflecting the history of migration. The *Begegnungs- und Fortbildungszentrum muslimischer Frauen* (or BFmF) in Köln was a particular example. The *Stadtteilmütter* in Berlin similarly grew from a predominantly Turkish and Middle Eastern women's group into a substantial integration project. African diaspora organisations were the next most common. Britain's colonial past has meant earlier trends of large scale migration from overseas than some other European countries; one of the reasons for the more established sector of migrant and ethnic minority communities in the UK. This does not mean that there is no organising amongst newer migrant and refugee communities. I met some well-organised Syrian organisations, as well as those involving more recent arrivals from Sudan. Several small migrant-led self-organising groups, particularly in Köln, had managed to build connections with other migrant-led groups. The majority of these organisations were relatively new or isolated, however.

At the same time there were almost no organisations providing expertise, support or capacity to migrant and refugee groups to organise, with the exception of STARK (especially their *Haus Afrika* project campaign) or *samo.fa*. This was echoed in my conversations - in every city, migrant groups spoke to me about the lack of support to become established, the limited practical resources such as spaces to meet or funding, and the absence of genuine engagement from more formal state institutions. Whilst self-organised groups must rely on the internal talent, energy and capacities of their members, it is difficult for those organisations to flourish without a

supportive infrastructure. The inherent barriers to organising that face someone newer to a society who may experience discrimination based on race and class (and sometimes gender), are why resident-led volunteer groups tend to proliferate whilst migrant-led groups struggle. I would therefore recommend that those working in integration invest in migrant community organising. In the UK, a deliberate focus on supporting migrant and refugee communities and individual leaders to build the skills and capacities needed to self-organise has enabled the growth of more and more vocal migrant-led organisations and has built greater connections between groups.

I also came across significant appetite to build connections with similar groups in the UK, such as Migrants Organise, and across Europe. This was expressed by organisations such as the *Integrationsrat* in Köln, *Stadteilmütter* in Berlin, specific projects in Brussels, and the smaller migrant and refugee organisations I met throughout the visit but was not able to hold formal interviews with. I know of other migrant-led organisations, groups and networks that are developing across Europe - and to whom organisations such as Migrants Organise are offering training and support - and many of those I met offered links and introductions to more active migrant and refugee organisations. I hope to see these relationships continue to develop over the coming years.

For the UK, the question of migrant organising throws up a key warning for the debates about how to frame integration. In recent years there has been an increasing tendency to argue that multiculturalism has 'failed', as exemplified by the Casey Review but also reflected in public opinion and promoted by David Cameron as long ago as 2011.<sup>31</sup> Given how difficult it is to effectively analyse this 'failure',<sup>32</sup> and given the widespread European recognition that the UK in many ways has managed integration better than their European counterparts, if there is move towards a more assimilationist approach to integration, there is a substantial risk of forgetting the positive lessons from the past and recognising the positive impacts of a more multicultural approach. This does not mean that we do not face substantial social integration challenges.<sup>33</sup> Rather, it means that claims of the failure of multiculturalism should be re-examined, that the positive impacts of migrant self-organising in UK should be understood and recognised, and that migrant and refugee-led groups seen as assets in the work towards successful integration.

### ***Define a vision for integration***

Across the conversations I had in the different cities, there was a growing discussion of integration as something of benefit to everyone, and in which everyone should participate. As we have seen, the battle to define integration is not over, and not only state authorities but also civil society organisations should be able to articulate clearly the approach and the vision that they are working towards. This may help to resolve some of the lack of clarity about the roles of different organisations, and ensure that there is a common starting point for analysis of effective integration practice.

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/14/multiculturalism-failed-substantial-minority-britons-integration-rivers-blood-enoch-powell>; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12371994>

<sup>32</sup> See, for example: <http://uk.businessinsider.com/mps-report-social-integration-immigrants-uk-integrating-well-2017-1>; 'Has multiculturalism failed in Britain?', Anthony Heath & Neli Demireva, July 2013: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01419870.2013.808754>

<sup>33</sup> 'How integrated is modern Britain?', Social Integration Commission, July 2014: [http://socialintegrationcommission.org.uk/SIC\\_Report\\_WEB.pdf](http://socialintegrationcommission.org.uk/SIC_Report_WEB.pdf)

In London, a recent piece of research into whether there was a 'London identity' found not only that the people surveyed did feel that there was a distinct London identity, but that openness and tolerance towards others was strongly felt by people across different demographic backgrounds as being the first of several core elements that characterised Londoners. This sense of the centrality of diversity, openness and welcome for new arrivals in a large, multicultural metropolitan city seemed to be echoed in the ways in which different people spoke about their cities across the learning visit - whether talking about Amsterdam as a 'migration city', Brussels as an 'intercultural city', Köln as a city rightly proud of its welcoming nature, or Berlin as a place where communities will work to integrate any newcomer.

If this approach or characteristic is deemed to have value, then, with growing tensions between understandings of integration at the national and city level across Europe, it has become more important than ever for cities to promote a vision of integration that enables a spirit of openness, tolerance and connection. This comes through defining integration as being about how we all live better together, and recognising that all integration processes, from refugee resettlement to labour market integration, should build on this first principle.

### ***Understand ecosystems thinking***

An idea that has gained currency in the UK - promoted by movement building organisations from the USA such as the Ayni Institute and Cosecha - is that of the different organisations and groups interacting in a particular social justice 'space' as organisms in an ecosystem.<sup>34</sup> This metaphor has become useful to Migrants Organise and others in understanding how different types of organisations interact, how different approaches or tactics intersect and how groups understand their roles in promoting positive social change. This enables both more productive coalition building across groups with seemingly competing approaches or standpoints, and also more effective engagement with institutions which might be seen as power holders, such as state actors. I came across very little familiarity with this concept during the learning visit and limited understanding of its potential applications. I suggest that - for all those involved in integration - understanding their and others' roles in the 'integration ecosystem' in their city may be useful in resolving some of the tensions or disagreements I identified both amongst different civil society organisations and between civil society groups and state or state-funded organisations. For migrant and refugee groups in particular, understanding and being able to navigate the ecosystem could be a powerful way of increasing their representation in the integration space and strengthening their impact on integration practice.

### ***Recognise representation and participation as right and as central to accountability***

The extent of representation and participation of migrants and refugees in decision-making spaces related to integration was raised throughout the learning visit. Speakers from state authorities and others often expressed an interest in the participation of migrants and refugees. As I outlined above, there are three common ways of explaining why participation matters.

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<sup>34</sup> See, for example, <https://ayni.institute/>, <http://www.lahuelga.com/>, [http://ulexproject.org/courses\\_events/the-ecology-of-social-movements/](http://ulexproject.org/courses_events/the-ecology-of-social-movements/); <https://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/systemic-action-research-changing-system-dynamics-to-support-sustainable-change>; <http://berkeleyjournal.org/2018/01/social-movement-ecology-and-its-implications-unpacking-the-natural-metaphor/>;

First, the argument for efficiency, is that participation enables better outcomes for integration interventions, namely by overcoming issues of trust and by ensuring decision makers better understand the grassroots reality and so design programmes appropriately. I found that this was often articulated during the learning visit, particularly by those speaking from the point of view of state authorities or state-funded programmes.

The second, the argument for participation as a right, is that there is some intrinsic value or good in participation *per se* - that as human beings or as citizens we should have the right to influence decisions that affect us. Whilst several civic and political leaders from migrant backgrounds or others playing leading roles in migrant-led organisations touched on this during my conversations, I did not find it commonly articulated as a concept in the integration space, although the idea does seem to be implicit in the existence of *Integrationsräte* or *Migrantsräte* across Germany. The third, the argument for accountability, is that participation as an empowering process is central to holding those in power to account for their actions - in other words, that accountability cannot be complete without the participation of those affected. Again, this was not commonly articulated and was even challenged in the critique of migrant self-organising in Brussels.

These latter arguments - that participation is a right or is essential for accountability - seemed to have less traction amongst organisations than I have found in comparative groups in the UK. I have come across the argument for accountability articulated in local and regional government in the UK, albeit as often implicit in the development of programmes. During the learning visit, migrant community organisations and some NGOs reported that state authorities' relative lack of interest in participation was a barrier to effective partnerships. This may be a factor in the lag between many of the cities I visited and the UK in terms of the representation of migrants and ethnic minorities in political and other civic spaces, and the participation of migrants and refugees in self-organised groups. Whilst the argument for efficiency may serve a practical purpose for state authorities, if genuine participation and representation of migrants and refugees is to become more widespread, participation needs to be recognised as a right and as central to accountability. Similarly this recognition may be a necessary spur for civil society organisations to invest in migrant community organising and to question the limited participation of migrants and refugees in volunteer groups and NGOs.

## **Impact of findings and reflections on UK policy and practice**

During my Fellowship, I was working both as National Organiser at Migrants Organise, leading a programme of migrant organising around the UK, and as a Citizenship and Integration Advisor at the Greater London Authority (GLA), on secondment as part of the Mayor of London's Citizenship and Integration Initiative.<sup>35</sup> Within both these roles, my reflections from the initial learning visit impacted significantly on our work, and I was able to influence the development of policy approaches or put in place actions by drawing on the findings.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/mayors-new-citizenship-initiative>

## **Greater London Authority**

At the Greater London Authority (GLA), I worked for the Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement, sitting within the Social Integration team.<sup>36</sup> At the time, we were launching programmes related to a new social integration strategy, which included developing a London-wide approach to welcoming newcomers, supporting Londoners with insecure status to get on a pathway to residence and citizenship, and addressing some of the barriers to integration facing migrants and refugees.<sup>37</sup> The Mayor's social integration strategy sets out a vision and actions 'to build a stronger sense of unity within our cities' and create:

*an environment where more Londoners can make new connections, breaking down the barriers of social class and economic inequality and bringing those of different ages and backgrounds together in shared experiences.*<sup>38</sup>

Echoing the tensions between cities and national governments that I explored during my learning visit, this is in explicit contrast to UK government approaches towards integration. Dame Louise Casey's review into integration exemplifies this, as emphasised by her comments comparing integration to a motorway slip road, not a 'two-way street' and suggesting that integration practice could be improved by setting out new rules for arrivals.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, the Mayor's strategy defined social integration as 'about how we all live together' and highlighted central government's so-called 'hostile environment' policies as a barrier to integration.<sup>40</sup>

One area I worked on focused on developing London's approach to welcoming newcomers. An initial set of activities were set out in April 2018.<sup>41</sup> Drawing on my reflections about the need to understand the interactions between different types of organisations and the problems caused by a lack of clarity around the role of the state, initial activities will:

*use mapping, action research and targeted trial interventions to investigate and better understand the benefits to London and to Londoners of activities that welcome newcomers and promote social integration. Evaluation of these investigations and trials will enable us to test current ideas and assumptions around welcome, and will be used as the basis for future decision making.*<sup>42</sup>

The question that arose through of the Fellowship of balancing the need for infrastructure with a desire to maintain the involvement and energy of volunteer-led groups is very relevant to the

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/people/mayoral/matthew-ryder>

<sup>37</sup> 'All of Us: The Mayor's Strategy for Social Integration', March 2018: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/all-us-mayors-strategy-social-integration>

<sup>38</sup> 'All of Us: The Mayor's Strategy for Social Integration', March 2018: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/all-us-mayors-strategy-social-integration>

<sup>39</sup> 'The Casey Review: A review into opportunity and integration', Dame Louise Casey DBE CB, December 2016: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/575973/The\\_Casey\\_Review\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf); <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-38563877/louise-casey-integration-not-a-two-way-street>; <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/migrants-should-be-taught-when-take-bins-out-queue-order-integrate-into-britain-1600257>

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> See the Mayor of London's decision document: <https://www.london.gov.uk/decisions/dd2240-london-wide-approach-welcoming-newcomers>

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

UK. Following media attention on the refugee crisis in late 2015, a large number of new volunteers began organising first donations and then groups relating to the resettlement of refugees in the UK. At Migrants Organise, I was involved in enabling the set up of several volunteer groups in London and across the UK, as well as supporting a number of Syrian community organisations and other migrants and refugees involved in more formal resettlement schemes. The GLA began harnessing the energy of these groups to promote and support the government's Community Sponsorship refugee resettlement scheme.<sup>43</sup> In developing this new approach to welcome, my reflections therefore contributed to the design for GLA investment in existing civil society organisations and volunteer groups in London, using convening powers, financial support through a micro-grants programme, and recognition events to '*publicise, celebrate and connect existing welcome groups*'.<sup>44</sup> Recognising the challenges expressed by NGOs and volunteer groups throughout the Fellowship about the difficulty of developing genuine partnerships with state authorities, the design for this aspect of the programme involves careful mapping and relationship building in order to bridge the gap between the GLA and grassroots organisations more effectively.

Similarly, my finding about the importance of understanding entry points and learning how to build trust with new arrivals is reflected in the GLA's thinking on understanding the available opportunities for integration activities. In the Mayor's decision document, which sets out future plans on welcoming newcomers, there is a focus on understanding and improving the opportunities for integration on arrival, especially to '*undertake a mapping of entry points*' and to work with established, trusted institutions to build relationships with newcomers.<sup>45</sup> This is especially acute in a context where many people in London are feeling unwelcome, as a result of the government's 'hostile environment' policies (most recently brought to light by the so-called Windrush scandal) and of the UK's decision to exit the European Union and the subsequent rise in hate crime across the capital.<sup>46</sup> This also built on lessons about the positive impact of hyper-local, neighbourhood-based activities raised by many of the integration projects I visited.

Finally, my findings around the representation and participation of migrants and refugees enabled me to feed into a review of participation and engagement structures at City Hall. This included a review of the Mayor's Migrant and Refugee Advisory Panel (MRAP), which caused its membership to be reopened, and contribution to a new Community Engagement approach, the Mayor's Citizen-led Engagement Programme for London, which supported pilot projects into order to:

*build relationships and develop civic leadership in communities that currently do not have a 'voice' in City Hall.*<sup>47</sup>

## **Migrants Organise**

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-supports-syrian-refugees-with-new-initiative>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/decisions/dd2240-london-wide-approach-welcoming-newcomers>

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/c9vwmzw7n7lt/windrush-scandal>;

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/racist-hate-crimes-surge-to-record-high-after-brexit-vote-new-figures-reveal-a7829551.html>; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41648865>;

<https://discoversociety.org/2018/05/01/the-governments-hostile-environment-and-its-consequences-on-integration/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/decisions/dd2159-mayors-citizen-led-engagement-programme-london>

At Migrants Organise, my role as National Organiser was to support the foundation and growth of migrant community organising across the UK, which would allow us, alongside others, to seed a national migrant movement. As a result, the findings related to representation and participation and integration challenges more broadly, and the reflections related to investment in migrant organising and recognition for representation and participation, were of direct relevance to our work and were built into the development of the organising programme, as well as into staff training. This included the design of a new strategy group to provide strategic oversight and advice to the organisation, which launched in late spring 2018.

In addition, in January 2018 we embarked on a collaboration with Open Society Foundations, working as the learning and training partner for the Open Cities Fellowship project.<sup>48</sup> Whilst the learning visits provided useful context and background for the development of city-specific approaches in Amsterdam and Berlin, reflections from my Fellowship also enabled Migrants Organise to tailor training and mentoring for new Open City Fellows and support the development of the European Migrant Advisory Board.

## Questions for further study

My second learning visit will continue exploring integration practice from the southern European context, as well as potentially comparing how attitudes or experiences of integration practice have changed in these northern and western European cities in the intervening time. In order to provide a valuable comparison, questions for interlocutors in new cities will again focus on:

- What is working in integration policy and practice, from the perspective of city and municipal authorities, big NGOs and service providers, and local and migrant groups?
- What is the big challenge or threat to effective integration policy and practice, from these different perspectives?
- What are the roles of other organisations or institutions in this space? E.g. What do people see other groups doing? What people think other groups should or should not be doing? Exploring how these differ, especially between city/municipal authorities and migrant and refugee community organisations.
- What would make the difference to overcome the challenges? In particular, was there value in strengthening closer connections between migrant and volunteer-led groups and city authorities?
- How far are people in city authorities and migrant groups connected? What are the impacts or benefits of this?

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<sup>48</sup> See <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/grants/open-city-fellowship-20170721>, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/open-city-fellowship-20170718.pdf>, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/europe-open-city-fellowship---new-fellowship-programme-for-migrant-leaders>

I hope also to unpick some of the tensions in integration practice that were highlighted in this learning visit, such as between national and city-level attitudes towards integration, between infrastructure organisations and volunteer groups, around representation and participation, and about the role of migrant self-organising. I would like to further explore the concept of an 'ecosystem' of organisations working in integration in practice. At the same time I will try to better understand what makes an effective enabling environment both for successful integration policy and practice in and of itself, and for the growth of an effective ecosystem of migrant and refugee organisations that play an active role in integration.

In addition, I will try to draw out findings on the overarching questions for the Fellowship:

- What UK migrant communities can learn from how European migrant communities have been successful in influencing or unable to influence their governments or publics?
- What the possibilities for collaboration between migrant organisations across Europe might be, in terms of building a common agenda or approach to migration and integration?
- What UK city or regional authorities can learn from how their European counterparts have developed and/or implemented integration policies?
- What the possibilities for collaboration between city or regional authorities across Europe might be, in terms of building a common agenda or approach to migration & integration?

These findings will be synthesised into a final report.

## Appendix A - List of interlocutor organisations

Below is a list of the organisations and groups that I visited and interviewed. I have not yet listed the individuals or other groups I spoke with, as I am waiting for permissions from everyone to be able to do so.

In Berlin, Germany:

- Integrationslotsinnen Projekte, Steiglitz-Zehlendorf, Diakonisches Werk Steglitz und Teltow-Zehlendorf (*'District Mothers Project'*)<sup>49</sup>
- Stadtteilmütter im Landesrahmenprogramm, Neukölln (*'Neighbourhood Mothers programme'*)<sup>50</sup>
- Senatsverwaltung für Integration, Arbeit und Soziales, Der Beauftragte des Berliner Senats für Integration und Migration (*'Senate Department for Integration, Labour and Social Affairs, Office of the Commissioner of the Berlin Senate for Integration and Migration'*)<sup>51</sup>
- Give Something Back to Berlin<sup>52</sup>
- OASE Berlin, Integrationsprojekte für Migrant\*innen (*'Integration project for migrants'*)<sup>53</sup>
- Bundeskanzleramt Arbeitsstab der Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration (*'Office of the Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration'*)<sup>54</sup>

In Köln, Germany:

- Kölner Freiwilligen Agentur (*'Cologne Volunteer Agency'*)<sup>55</sup>
- Kölner Flüchtlingsrat (*'Cologne Refugee Council'*)<sup>56</sup>
- STARK, Die Bürgerplattform (*'STRONG, The Civic Platform'*)<sup>57</sup>
- Sprachraum, Stadtbibliothek (*'Central Library Language Area'*)<sup>58</sup>
- Integrationsrat, Stadt Köln (*'Integration Council of the City of Cologne'*)<sup>59</sup>

In Amsterdam, the Netherlands:

- Gemeente Amsterdam (*'City of Amsterdam'*)<sup>60</sup>
- Partnership for the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees<sup>61</sup>
- VluchtelingenWerk Nederland (*'Dutch Refugee Council'*)<sup>62</sup>
- BOOST Transvaal Amsterdam (*'BOOST Amsterdam'*)<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> [https://dwstz.de/projekte\\_integrationslotsinnen.html](https://dwstz.de/projekte_integrationslotsinnen.html); [https://dwstz.de/files/flyer/Flyer-Integrationslotsinnen\\_STZ\\_end.pdf](https://dwstz.de/files/flyer/Flyer-Integrationslotsinnen_STZ_end.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.stadtteilmuetter.de/>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.berlin.de/sen/ias/>

<sup>52</sup> <http://gsbtb.org/>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.oase-berlin.org/>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Webs/Breg/DE/Bundesregierung/BeauftragtefuerIntegration/beauftragte-fuer-integration.html>

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.koeln-freiwillig.de/>

<sup>56</sup> <http://koelner-fluechtlingsrat.de/>

<sup>57</sup> <http://stark-koeln.org/>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/stadtbibliothek/bildungsangebote/sprachraum-gemeinsam-lernen-und-sich-engagieren>

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/soziales/integrationsrat/>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.amsterdam.nl/>

<sup>61</sup> <http://urbanagendaforthe.eu/partnerships/inclusion-of-migrants-and-refugees/>

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/english>

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.boostamsterdam.nl/>

In Brussels, Belgium:

- BON, Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering (*'Brussels Reception Agency for Integration'*)<sup>64</sup>
- ECRE, European Council on Refugees and Exiles<sup>65</sup>
- Commune d'Ixelles (*'Municipality of Ixelles'*)<sup>66</sup>
- Centre Alpha Ixelles, Lire et Écrire Bruxelles (*'The Alpha Centre, Ixelles - Reading and Writing Brussels'*)<sup>67</sup>
- Mentor Escale & Mentor Jeunes (*'Mentor-Escale - Mentor Youth project'*)<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> [www.bon.be](http://www.bon.be); [www.integratie-inburgering.be](http://www.integratie-inburgering.be)

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.ecre.org/>

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.ixelles.be/site/index.php>

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.lire-et-ecrire.be/Centres-alpha-de-Lire-et-Ecrire-Bruxelles?lang=fr#Ixelles>

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.mentorescale.be/>