Overview

- Anchorage is a Welcoming Community, which strives to promote equity, justice and inclusion. We participated in a Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange to learn from our partner cities in the US and Germany about models for inclusion and integration.

- Our delegation of Welcomers included:
  - Mara Kimmel – First Lady and Founder of Welcoming Anchorage; Anchorage Museum
  - Amy Coffman – Special Assistant to Mayor and lead staff for Welcoming Anchorage
  - Shannon Kuhn – Public Information Office, Anchorage Health Department
  - Reth Duir – Southern Sudanese Immigrant and Alaska Geographic Education Program Assistant
Key Highlights

• Integration is as much of a process as it is an outcome
• Creative processes for healing are critical to integration
• The right to be “lucky enough” to live without luck
• Strong non-traditional networks are essential for success
• “Upstanding vs Bystanding”
Welcoming Community Goals: Building Inclusivity, Equity & Justice

Goal One
• Institutionalize “Welcoming”

Goal Two
• Build Resilience
# Project Description

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Welcoming Week
September 2019

2018 Anchorage Welcoming Week Community Celebration
Public · Hosted by Welcoming Anchorage and Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center · 1 co-host pending [?]
County of Bautzen
2018 Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange Action Plan
Executive Summary

Overview about Bautzen (county)

The town of Bautzen is the biggest city in Bautzen county with a population of about 40,000 inhabitants. 340,000 people live in the whole county of Bautzen. The town of Bautzen is the capital of the ethnic minority of Sorbs (12%). The Sorbs have been living here for about 1000 years. In addition to this the town has an estimated number of 4.5% of immigrants. Since the refugee migration in 2014/15 asylum seekers from all over the world have lived in Bautzen. Some of them have received a residence permit and some of their cases are still pending. Bautzen county has four bigger asylum houses that are located in Bautzen, Kamenz, Hoyerswerda and Wehrsdorf (close to the Czech border).

In parts of the civil society latent racism exists due to the lack of knowledge of foreign cultures and religions especially the Islam. There is much prejudice against strangers or people of colour but mostly against people from Muslim countries like Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Eritrea, Libya no matter if they have escaped from war or persecution.

Apart from that very aggressive and violent groups of nationalists and groups like Almighty Brotherhood Eastside exist in the county of Bautzen which are not afraid of intimidating or threatening refugees or immigrants! There have been violent outbursts against refugees, immigrants, people of colour, Sorbs and people who speak up against racism.

On the other hand there is a lot of commitment for refugees from some of the citizens who live in Bautzen county. There are organizations like Steinhaus e.V., House of Resources, the German-Sorbian Theatre the volunteer organization 'Bautzen bleibt bunt!' (Bautzen remains diverse) that have worked on the integration topic very hard in the past 3 years. Beside this there are many individuals who make a difference and get involved in the town again and again.

We are also some of these dedicated people:
Michelle Bray – Thespis center/ German-Sorbian Theater (Theater Educator)
Carolin Dittrich – Steinhaus e.V. (Social worker, Children and Youth)
Susett Mildner – Bautzen bleibt bunt! (Coordinator of volunteer work, especially mentoring work)
Claudia Scheibe – House of Resources (Project Management)
Eckart Riechmann – City of Bautzen (Speaker, Citizen Dialogue Department)
Our visit to the United States took place from 28th April to 10th May in the cities of Washington D.C., Boston, Charlotte, Anchorage and Montgomery County.

During the visit we had the opportunity to participate in site visits and discussions with various stakeholders from the NGO sector, politics, and civil society, to share best practices and discuss the processes of integration at the local level in both countries.

Focus of the Programme

The programme focused on enabling participants from both Germany and the USA to share promising approaches to welcoming and integrating refugees and other newcomers into their communities. Furthermore, it enabled us to get insight and knowledge of how American stakeholders collaborate in order to promote integration of migrants entering the USA (especially refugees). Participants were encouraged to bring back the lessons learned and apply them to their home communities through the development of a Community Action Plan, in which a timetable for implementation in the respective home cities in Germany was established.

Why we participated?

We participated to get the chance of getting in contact with different cities in Germany as well as the United States and of connecting with different institutions in those cities and their work and to learn from each other.

Since the county of Bautzen is struggling at the moment to welcome newcomers in general and especially refugees we wanted to get ideas on how to improve the current situation and maybe even build up a strong network with other cities in Germany similar to Welcoming Cities in the United States.

The County of Bautzen Action Plan

  1. Strengthening the network of parties working for the advancement of minorities

The goal of strengthening the already existing parties and connecting their work consists of 2 measures:

a) Building up a mutual assistance center

All active parties in the county meet on a regular quarterly basis to exchange experience on their work and the issues in integration work at that moment. Each meeting will be organized and held by a different initiative.

b) Revival of the "Noteingänge" (Don't Look away!) Project

The „Noteingänge“ project was a project that had already started in Bautzen and
eventually got forgotten. The idea is to ask business owners to mark their stores, restaurants and bars as "save spaces" for people who are suffering discrimination of any sorts.

The idea is to revive this project – maybe with a different name, as the expression „Norteingänge (Entrance in the case of danger)" might be understood in a negative way – to show that people in Bautzen stand up for each other and against racism and to provide a safe place for people who suffer discrimination or threats.

2. Make Bautzen reflect the diversity that already exists and use it as a resource

a) Positive examples of integration/giving refugees a voice

In cooperation with local newspapers articles about immigrants who live in the area will be published. At the beginning we will start with immigrants that have already lived here for decades and are well respected business owners or doctors. The stories of refugees are supposed to follow later. The idea is to give people the chance to realize that there have been immigrants in the county for quite some time and that these ones are respected and hard-working members of our society. We would like to give the "strangers", that have come here, a face and a story and to humanize them.

b) Employing refugees and immigrants in public authorities and the municipal government

Working for the employment and apprenticeships of refugees and immigrants in public authorities and the municipal government on the one hand to have it reflect the diversity in the county of Bautzen, but also to widen the variety of languages spoken by people in those institutions and making it easier for people who are still in the process of learning German to get help when looking for it.

3. Empowering all minorities living in Bautzen

Creating a minority council

A minority council will be built to vocalize the issues and wishes of the different minorities in the county. The municipal and county governments are going to listen to their needs and consider them in their decisions. The minority council is supposed to be made up of representatives of the immigrant organizations in the county as well as a representative of the Domowina (Federation of Lusatian Sorbs).

4. Making Bautzen a more welcoming county

The goal to make the county of Bautzen more welcoming consists of 3 parts and plans:

a) Welcoming letters in different languages

We will support the administrative offices and municipal governments of the county
to establish Welcoming letters in different languages. These letters should be handed over to all new inhabitants. All important information needed to get orientation will be given in those letters. The newcomers will feel more welcomed.

b) Cultural Competence Training for administrations and municipal government

To decrease the cultural misunderstandings all administrative offices and official organizations should have regular cultural competence training. Employees will learn in these trainings to deal with immigrants on an eye to eye level and not in a condescending way.

The training can be split in 2 parts: the first part is a „normal“ cultural competence training and the second part can be a direct exchange between employees of the administration and immigrants in small discussion groups. This could raise the awareness of all participants and raise understanding.

c) Shared projects of the organizations who took part in the exchange as part of the intercultural week

The team of Bautzen is planning projects together as part of the intercultural week in the county of Bautzen in September 2018. The following projects are in the planning process:

- **Community Cleaning:** The idea is to go around town and to remove stickers promoting racism and nationalist ideas. Since by German law you are not allowed to remove stickers on public property this idea can only be realized in cooperation with the city of Bautzen.
- **Story Telling:** Based on the idea of giving immigrants a voice, people will be encouraged to tell their migration story in a public setting.
- **Mixed Tables:** a picnic will be organized with people of different cultures attending and bringing food, that will be shared among all people participating in this project.
- **Dancing Workshops:** The newly founded group Nissa’a (a group of Arab women) will give a belly dancing workshop for all people interested in this workshop.
- **Walking Together:** The idea is to give people the chance to share the experience of refugees and people of colour in Bautzen, by having “Germans” and people of colour walk through the city in pairs or German women wearing a head scarf or hijab for a day.
Names and signatures of participants:

Michelle Bray
Carolin Dittrich
Susett Mildner
Claudia Scheibe
Eckart Riechmann

Bautzen, June 2018
Boston, Massachusetts
2018 Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange
Action Plan Summary

Background
Like most major U.S. cities, Boston has a significant foreign-born population at 28%. Almost 50% of school-age children have at least one foreign-born parent. Under the current Mayor Martin J. Walsh, the City makes various efforts to support immigrants, including the programs under the Office for Immigrant Advancement. Since the inauguration of the Trump administration, the City has also made extra efforts to ensure that it continues to be a welcoming and safe place for immigrant residents and newcomers, despite hostile federal government rhetoric and policies.

Boston has a long and rich history of immigration dating back to the 1600s when the City was founded, and many neighborhoods have evolved into strong ethnic communities with first, second and third generations of immigrants. Out of these communities have grown a vibrant ecosystem of immigrant activists and immigrant-led nonprofits that provide services and programming in a wide array of areas: workforce development, English language and citizenship classes, civic engagement/participation, youth development, and housing. The City has a strong track record of public-private partnerships with these groups in providing services to its immigrant residents.

WCTE Learning Highlights
As part of the WCTE Exchange, the Boston delegates visited Frankfurt, Hamburg, Bautzen, Teltow-Flaeming, and Berlin in November 2018. Below are three key themes we took away from our trip:

● Integration: We noted that German cities have access to significantly more government resources and funding for integration programs in contrast to the U.S. At the same time, we recognized that this results in a more “top-down” approach to integration, and service providers are more influenced by funders than consumers.

● Inclusion: We met many grassroots immigrant-led and civil society-led organizations that fill in gaps left by government programs. In these areas, there is more space for growth of grassroots leadership.

● Enfranchisement: In contrast with Boston and major U.S. cities, we noted less representation in Germany by foreign-born people and 1st generation Germans in decision-making roles.

Action Plan
Based on our learning takeaways, the Boston team came up with the following three action plan areas:

● Enfranchisement: U.S. 2020 Census Participation
With the current federal administration, there is expectation that there will be fewer resources and incentives to ensure accurate data collection among underrepresented groups, including immigrants and people of color. These obstacles are in addition to language and digital access to census forms, and distrust of government.

Many local nonprofits and funders have already begun convening to coordinate efforts around increasing immigrant participation in the census. We plan to participate in public awareness campaigns and outreach through each of our different roles: public sector, private foundation, and trusted immigrant-led nonprofits.

- Inclusion: Supporting Grassroots Initiatives through Flexible Funding for Immigrant-Led Pilots
  - In Hamburg and Bautzen we were impressed by the many creative initiatives launched by newcomers, that were supported by flexible microgrants. Although Boston has a well established philanthropic community, grassroots initiatives have a hard time competing for their funds, which often have pre-existing restrictions.
  - We will work to roll out a funding round in 2019 that emphasizes new initiatives and stakeholders, hoping to see a new wave of pilots that could be expanded or replicated.

- Inclusion: Language Justice through Launch of City Language & Communication Access Plan
  - The City of Boston will be launching its Language & Communication Access Plan across all of its departments in 2019 to ensure that immigrant residents have equal access to city services despite language barriers.
  - We will work together to raise public awareness among immigrant communities of the new access plan and to encourage its use, as well as to provide feedback on the quality of service and implementation.

Team Members:
Mariam Gas, Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center
An Le, Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Advancement
Angie Liou, Asian Community Development Corporation
Nahir Torres, Hyams Foundation
Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange 2018 (WCTE)
Executive Summary of the City of Frankfurt am Main

Background Information

The City of Frankfurt was selected as one of five German cities to participate in the 2018 Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange (WCTE) organized by Welcoming America, Cultural Vistas and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, funded by the Transatlantic Program of the Government of the Federal republic of Germany through funds of the European Recovery Program (EPR) of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy (BMWi), as well as by the U.S. Department of State, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, and BMW Group.

The members of the delegation representing the City of Frankfurt am Main come from a variety of organizations and political institutions. Everyone plays a key role in integration work in Frankfurt:

Politics:
Prof. Dr. Daniela Birkenfeld - Deputy Mayor City of Frankfurt, Department for Social Affairs, Seniors, Youth and Legal Affairs

Municipal administration:
Katrin Wenzel - Deputy Head Special Unit for Refugee Management

Entrepreneurship:
Ellen Bommersheim - Director Kompass - Zentrum für Existenzgründungen (Center for Business start-ups)

Civic engagement:
Anita Heise Project Director "Frankfurt hilft!" Volunteer Coordination Initiative, FRAP Agentur

NPO Migration:
Karsten Althaus CEO Internationales Familienzentrum e.V.

Our visit to the United States took place between April 28 and May 9 in the cities of Washington D.C., Boston, Charlotte, Montgomery County, Anchorage. During the visit, the Frankfurt team, together with representatives from four other German cities, had the opportunity to undertake site-visits, meet various stakeholders from the NGO sector, politics and the civil society. We learned a lot about the American system, had multiple enriching discussions and shared experiences and best-practices.

Focus of the Program

The program focused on enabling participants from both Germany and the U.S.A. to share promising approaches to welcoming and integrating refugees and other newcomers into the various communities. Furthermore, it enabled us to get insight knowledge into how American stakeholders collaborate in order to promote integration of migrants and especially refugees entering the U.S.A. Participants were encouraged to bring back home the lessons learned from the U.S.A.-experience. Subsequently, a Community Action Plan with a stipulated timetable for implementation in the respective home cities in Germany was established.

Our Frankfurt team was mostly interested in the following topics:

- How can we strengthen the long-term integration of refugees and migrants?
- What is the role of civic engagement in US-communities on behalf of integration issues?
How succeed US-communities in bringing migrants and refugees into work within a very short time period?

How do US-communities measure the economic impact of migrants?

How US-communities are promoting migrant and refugee entrepreneurship?

How do US-communities handle racism and backlogs in the communities?

How did the Trump administration and their decisions influence the work in welcoming communities?

The Frankfurt Action Plan

What impressed us most during this exchange program was the fact that there was such a strong focus on employability. The organizations involved in the integration process have strong collaborations with corporations and often live a „We tailor solutions“ – attitude. We experienced a mindset that migrants are seen as assets and not as hints. Different cultures and what they can contribute to their new home country are highly appreciated. We saw a strong commitment to collaboration, civic engagement and networks.

The Frankfurt Action Plan has three main objectives:

1. Creation of a mapping tool: Overview of different services for refugees provided by the city of Frankfurt (main focus on employability – capabilities, capacities, language skills, qualifications etc.)
   - Frankfurt will create a mapping tool for all services already provided in Frankfurt according to the Anchorage roadmap in the first step focusing on employability
   - Creating new Linkages/Networks to companies (underlying moto: Employability through access to entrepreneurs, start-ups and multipliers)
   - Framework: Standards from Welcoming America (9 fields of activity)

2. Strengthening children’s rights
   - Education advice in refugee’s residences
   - Poster campaign in accommodations for refugees
   - Forum „Flüchtlingshilfe Frankfurt“ in Sept 18
   - Panel and discussion event with the Hesse Minister of social affairs
   - Integrating the issue of children rights into the children book fair “Leseeule”

3. Set up a welcoming environment at schools, youth clubs and create a mutual understanding, how peer groups can create a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Activities and next steps until Nov 2018

- Press conference to inform about the exchange program (18th of may 2018)
- Meeting with the bishop
- Presentation and information among team colleagues (6th of June 2018 at FRAP-Agentur & 15 May Kompass Centre for Business Start ups)
- Meeting at the Consulate General of the US in Frankfurt to debrief the visit and discuss the learnings within an interested, local network in Frankfurt (12th of June 2018)
The delegation from Hamburg participating in the WCTE 2018 represent various fields of integration work in Germany’s second largest city - from municipal administration, public housing; to foundations and civil society actors.

Anselm Sprandel (Team Leader) has been head of the Hamburg Central Coordination Unit for Refugees (Zentraler Koordinierungsstab für Flüchtlinge or ZKF) since October 2015. The ZKF is responsible for public housing and first integration measures.

Lena Blum works for the BürgerStiftung Hamburg, Germany’s largest community foundation, where she is project coordinator for the Landungsbrücken für Geflüchtete, a project that supports around 50 refugee mentoring projects in Hamburg.

Jorge Birkner is integration commissioner for the District Office of Bergedorf in Hamburg, a district that has historically been very diverse. In this capacity, Jorge has continuously emphasised intercultural dialogue and cooperation as well as immigrant empowerment.

Lilly Murmann has been volunteering for several local initiatives since mid-2016, as well as being an active member of the network of refugee aid initiatives in Hamburg (Bündnis Hamburger Flüchtlingsinitiativen or BHFI). Between October 2017 and June 2018 she was one of six spokespeople for the BHFI.

Marina Sokolowski works for fördern & wohnen, a company under public law, which runs the majority of accommodations for refugees in Hamburg. She is head of the department Unterkunft mit Perspektive Wohnen in the district of Wandsbek. This relatively new model of accommodation aims to provide refugees (amongst others) with long-term perspectives of social housing.

The team reflects the wide range of activities in Hamburg - some have existed consistently for many years, and some have grown since the significant influx of Hamburg’s refugee populations in 2015. Similar to other cities, Hamburg’s response to the large number of people arriving developed over time. Since the ‘peak times’ of 2015, the city administration’s infrastructures for refugees has grown accordingly and can now support Hamburg’s refugee communities and cover a the majority of requirements.

However, as the situation and the requirements continue to evolve - last year (2017), 5,700 refugees were registered in Hamburg - so should Hamburg and its integration practitioners. The Hamburg delegation began the 2018 WCTE with the ambition to gather insights into new approaches for the city’s integration work, and find ways of implementation that build upon the existing structures, while also empowering our new communities in Hamburg.

Key insights from the delegation’s time in Washington D.C., Boston, Montgomery County, Charlotte and Anchorage

- City administration staff, political representatives and volunteers are as diverse as their target audience

- Common vision & shared values are communicated clearly by leaders in all communities

- High level of commitment and stability of NGO, volunteer & individual engagement
• Efforts by local communities to compensate the restrictive federal legislation

• Emphasis in refugee integration on fast track to self-sufficiency

This list is obviously a brief summary of the wealth of insights gained during the programme! From these, the team filtered out three ‘umbrella themes’ in order to organise the action plan: Accessibility, Visibility, Empowerment.

Key points from Hamburg’s WCTE 2018 Action Plan

• Accessibility
In all U.S. communities visited, the Hamburg delegation was impressed by the information infrastructures provided on administrative (e.g. Charlotte City Council) and civil society levels (e.g. Boston’s “Know Your Rights” Programme). The commitment to providing information in multiple languages and in an easily accessible way for refugee and immigrant communities was impressive and exemplary. This gave the impulse to consider ways to improve access to information about services and rights for refugees in Hamburg. One idea from the action plan is to make Hamburg’s Integration Concept (Integrationskonzept), published in 2017 more accessible, readable and visually inviting to all communities.

• Visibility
A lasting impression left by the U.S. communities ist that diversity, inclusion and integration are not just buzzwords used in meetings, but rather the lived experiences of practitioners and decision makers. A key aspect appeared to be the ability to recognise the diversities (of languages spoken, nationalities, backgrounds, skills etc.) that already exist within the community and utilising these in meaningful ways. While the transferability of this mindset to Hamburg will require time and more discussion, the delegation is motivated to suggest ways to highlight the history and significance of diversity in Hamburg. Possible ideas include taking greater advantage of multilingual public administration employees, for example for intercultural communication in Hamburg’s public administration offices. Another idea, inspired by the #toimmigrantswithlove project in Boston, is wall murals where the histories and contributions of immigrants (and refugees) are publicly visualised and honoured.

• Empowerment
The empowerment of immigrant and refugee communities, to increase resources and decision-making power, is of course a long-term process. A significant amount of work is already happening on many levels in Hamburg, which is why one aspect of the action plan is to consider and compare the WCTE inputs with existing structures, for instance Hamburg’s integration advisory committee (Integrationsbeirat). Additionally, the delegation hopes to introduce some of the best practices seen in the U.S. communities to Hamburg, for instance the “Communiversity” idea from Charlotte, or the holistic integration approach practiced by high schools in Montgomery County.

In terms of political empowerment and strengthening communities, one compelling example from Anchorage was how during politically changing times, a dialogue between political representatives (in this case, the Mayor of Anchorage) and new members of Anchorage was facilitated. Though the structures in Hamburg differ from those in Anchorage, and such dialogues could also be organised on a district level, the idea of promoting dialogue, not only as a symbolic gesture, but with the goal of empowerment and political participation is certainly part of Hamburg’s action plan.
Executive Summary of the Action Plan from Iserlohn 2018

Background Information

When over one million refugees came to Germany in the summer of 2015, this presented the municipalities with a great challenge. 1,250 refugees were sent to the city of Iserlohn. Above all, by great commitment and a strong cooperation of city administration, charities and volunteers managed to accommodate all refugees, to provide, to advise and to accompany. The cooperation continued in the following years. The further development of the welcome culture through reception, counseling, support and integration is a declared goal of the Iserlohn society. Against this background, 5 actors from different fields of integration work participated in the Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange (WCTE) in 2018:

Mrs. Erbil Eren of the Integration Council

Mrs. Gudrun Jung-Malberger from the Vocational Training Center of the Kreishandwerkerschaft

Mr. Jens Keienburg from Diakonie

Mrs. Miriam Remmert of the workers' welfare office

Mr. Daniel Schöning from the refugee network “Lebenswert Iserlohn e.V.”

The exchange brought them to Washington DC, Boston, Charlotte, Montgomery County MD, and Anchorage to learn about U.S. welcoming and integration work. The following Action Plan is the result of this exchange.

The Iserlohn delegation was able to gather many new ideas for Iserlohn from the WCTE 2018 program. We would like to put a special focus on strengthening and involving migrant organizations as well as promoting the networking and presence of volunteer work in the urban community. Given the fact that the Iserlohn team does not work directly with the city administration, a particular focus of our next steps is that we get supporters in the administration in order to be able to continue our strategic work. We are convinced that with the ideas from WCTE 2018 we can arouse the enthusiasm for new projects in the city. In addition, we also want to be available as a network partner and link our already established approaches with the new ideas and supporters.
As project ideas, we will propose the following ideas from the exchange program to the department head for culture, participation and integration of the city of Iserlohn in July 2018:

**Six Welcoming Community Goals for the next 2 years**
- Short presentation of the sense of WCTE 2018 and the overview of the Welcoming Community goals to Iserlohn citizens
- Homepage of the city of Iserlohn: Installation of read-aloud functions on the translated into various languages (such as Arabic, French, English, Farsi, Tigrinya, Turkish, Italian, Russian, etc.) homepage of the city of Iserlohn
- Support and improve civil engagement by building platform network (by using the "Platform Meeting Escape / Integration")
- Participation in the "Intercultural Week 2018" (23.09 - 29.09.2018)
  -> Join in picnic - diversity contacts

Find and identify community leaders of migrant organizations to improve participation implementing a "social day" (like the U.S. Boys and Girls Day).

**The following implementation deadlines are already set:**
- Meeting of the WCTE group in June & July to vote on and develop the next steps
- First presentation in the Integration Council (30.05.2018) - Decision to participate in the Intercultural Week (23.09 - 29.09.2018)
- Meeting with the management of the city of Iserlohn to examine support and implementation options (04.07.2018)
- Intercultural Week from 23.09.-29.09.2018
- Presentation of the detailed Action Plan in the Integration Council of the City of Iserlohn (03.10.2018)
- Incorporation of further committees in the city administration as well as search for network partners.

**Contact Person from the WCTE delegation:**

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Montgomery County, Maryland

2018 Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange

Action Plan Executive Summary

Background Information

Montgomery County has been one of the leading welcoming communities in the United States for over three decades. Located just outside of Washington, D.C., Montgomery County has a population of slightly over one million, and has attracted talented people from all over the world. Approximately 33% of county residents are foreign-born, and 42% live in immigrant households. The county’s immigrant population can trace its origins to over 130 different nations, with the largest community from El Salvador, followed by India, China, Ethiopia and Korea.

Germany Visit

The Montgomery County Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange (WCTE) team consists of representatives from the regional government, the public school system and the nonprofit sector who work closely with local immigrant communities and other communities of colors:

- Kaori Hirakawa, Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center, Office of Community Partnerships, Montgomery County Government
- Monica Martin, Linkages to Learning, Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County Government
- John Landesman, Equity Initiatives Unit, Montgomery County Public Schools
- Carolyn Lowery, IMPACT Silver Spring

The Montgomery County WTCE delegation, along with delegations from Anchorage, Boston, and Charlotte, visited several cities in Germany between November 3-15, 2018, including Frankfurt, Hamburg, Teltow-Fläming, Bautzen and Berlin. During the visit, the delegations met with German local government officials, nonprofit leaders and volunteer groups to learn how they approached the unexpected influx of refugees in the last three years, to share challenges and best practices around the integration processes at the local and national levels. In May 2018, delegations from Germany visited several cities/jurisdictions in the United States, including Montgomery County, to participate in a similar learning experience. The goal of this exchange was for shared learning that leads to the development of implementable action plans specific to each delegation.

The culmination of our trip was a 2-day convening of delegations from all three participating years in a conference in Berlin.

Montgomery County Action Plan

Overview: The Montgomery County delegation has identified three goals to achieve over the next year to enhance our county’s welcoming practices and integration of new migrants, as well as contribute towards a thriving community for all:

1. Implement a unifying, equitable framework to tackle big issues and align all county efforts
a. Learn from The UN Model for Sustainable Communities (used in Baruth, Germany; potentially to be used in Anchorage, AK, as well)

2. Improve our culture of a welcoming environment
   a. Create additional welcoming spaces for cultural and social preservation & exchange (through arts, education, etc.)
   b. Create policies & structures to bring different communities together

3. Create policies and funding streams that support innovation in economic development
   a. Invest in policies that promote global models for our diverse communities to participate and thrive in our local economy
      • Cooperatives, micro-enterprise, collectives, social enterprise, etc.
   b. Link these opportunities to existing services, organizations and communities that have thriving immigrant/refugee participation
The county of Teltow-Fläming applied to participate in the 2018 Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange. Teltow-Fläming is proud and honored to be part of this program, along with the cities of Hamburg, Frankfurt, Iserlohn, and Landkreis Bautzen.

The county of Teltow-Fläming, an area of 2,092.03 km² just south of the German capital Berlin, has a population of 167,000 people from 110 nations. 3,186 of altogether 7,270 non-German citizens are presently in the process of obtaining asylum.

The county has been challenged by various demographic changes since it was established in 1993. Recently, the influx of refugees has created challenges and transformational processes as well as a rise of populist and group-focused enmity rhetoric. The delegates’ motivation to participate in the exchange was to acquire new skills and insights for our fields of work by sharing and discussing promising aspects of integration on both international as well as local levels.

While each delegate of Teltow-Fläming found ample inspiration for his or her individual professional field, the group as a whole was very inspired to apply a more cross-sectional approach to establishing
Teltow-Fläming as a more welcoming county. The following aspects of the US experience were identified as most inspiring to our delegation and therefore inspired our WCTE Action Plan:

- The conversation in the U.S. focuses on living “diversity” as opposed to talking about “minorities”
- The conversation is about opportunities and challenges as opposed to “problems”
- Strong collaborations with partners are key! (successful multi-sectoral work)
- The high level of professionalism in public relations as well as leadership skills within the organizations we met

From these inspirations, TF developed an Action Plan with three main goals, which will be operationalized within each delegate’s area of work as well as in a multi-sectoral approach.

Public relations:
Our narrative will become more focused on diversity, rather than minorities. Partners like the new bureau for tourism, corporations as well as partners from European programs such as LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Économie Rurale), EBDR and engagement global will be invited for dialogue at the Herbstkonferenz and as partners to create a label for TF similar to “Charlotte has a lot”. This will increase visibility as a diversity oriented and welcoming county, as well as create synergetic effects.

The lessons learned through the WCTE exchange will be communicated on many levels to various stakeholders throughout the community.

Networking:
Multi-sectoral efforts need to be expanded. Especially in the area of education, many efforts have been made, such as the project “Willkommen bei Freunden”, though these need to be implemented more resolutely and with more sustainability. Redundant and similar programs, such as language and vocational courses, need to be empowered to network as well as meet more diverse needs, rather than work competitively. New as well as existing networks are encouraged and welcomed: MSOs, NGOs and administrations are strongly encouraged to collaborate.

Positive leadership skills:
A prize for outstandingly welcoming organizations and corporations will be developed in collaboration with partners.

Through our networks and existing formats, the concepts of positive leadership will be communicated. Seminars and trainings in this area will be made available for our partners and associates.

The delegation representing the county of TF consisted of:

- Christiane Witt: Commissioner for Integration and Equal Opportunities for the county since 2008.
- Mechthild Falk: appointed Commissioner for Integration in Jüterbog and pastor
- Gerd Herpay: County Director of Child Protective Services and Youth Welfare for unaccompanied refugee minors
- Peter Limpächer: County Labor Market Coordinator for Refugees
- Annette Braemer-Wittke: Coordinator of the Federal Program “Demokratie leben!” in the county