

**Research Article**

**Food Diplomacy in Municipal Policies for the Social Integration of Immigrants: Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality**

*Göçmenlere Yönelik Belediyelerin Sosyal İçerme Politikalarında Yemek Diplomasisi: Gaziantep Büyükşehir Belediyesi*

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**Abstract**

*Food has a solidarity value for communities as a collective that goes beyond nutritional needs and habits. In this respect, many studies highlighting the relationship between food culture and migration allow for a deeper study of gastronomy as a discipline. The importance of this study is that it evaluates the impact of food culture on the phenomenon of migration from a different perspective, addressing the relationship between food culture and migration within the diplomatic relations of local governments. Thus, the phenomenons of migration, food and diplomacy are discussed together at the urban level. The aim of the study is to examine the impact of food diplomacy activities in the context of local governments' migration policies. The study covers the migration and food diplomacy activities of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality. The study was conducted using the document analysis method through literature. Within the results of the study, it was found that the impact of local governments' food diplomacy activities on their migration policies has important results on the employment and cultural interaction of immigrants living in the city.*

**Keywords:** Food Diplomacy, Gastronomy, Migration, Local Governments, City Diplomacy.

**Öz**

*Yemek, beslenme ihtiyacı ve alışkanlığının ötesinde kolektif olarak topluluklar için birleştirici bir değer taşımaktadır. Bu doğrultuda yemek kültürünün göç ile ilişkisini vurgulayan çok sayıda çalışma, bir disiplin olarak gastronominin daha derinden incelenmesine olanak tanımaktadır. Bu çalışmada, yemek kültürü ve göç arasındaki ilişki, yerel yönetimlerin diplomatik ilişkileri kapsamında ele alınarak, yemek kültürünün göç olgusu üzerindeki etkileri farklı bir perspektiften değerlendirilmiştir. Böylece kentsel ölçekte göç, yemek ve diplomasi olguları birlikte ele alınmıştır. Çalışmanın amacı, yerel yönetimlerin göç politikaları bağlamında yemek diplomasisi faaliyetlerinin etkisinin araştırılmasıdır. Çalışma, Gaziantep Büyükşehir Belediyesinin göç ve yemek diplomasisi faaliyetlerini kapsamaktadır ve ikincil kaynaklar üzerinden doküman analizi yöntemi kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma bulguları kapsamında, yerel yönetimlerin gastronomi alanındaki diplomasi faaliyetlerinin kendi göç politikaları üzerindeki etkilerinin kentte yaşayan göçmenler için istihdam ve kültürel etkileşim üzerinde önemli sonuçlar ortaya koyduğu görülmüştür.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yemek diplomasisi, Gastronomi, Göç, Yerel yönetimler, Yerel diplomasi.

**1. Introduction**

The power and benefits of the urban economy are concentrated in the hands of people with social and political power. This increases inequalities. Migration is one of the key determinants of the opportunities for individuals

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and groups to reap the full benefits of urbanization, or often to be excluded from the same rights as residents. In complex urban systems, such outcomes and opportunities are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing (Habitat III Issue Papers, 2015). Local governments play an important role in the formulation and, in particular, the implementation of migration policies. As the closest level of government to citizens in the city, local governments have closer and more detailed information about the impact of migration on the city and the adaptation processes of migrants in the city. They can act more flexibly according to possible differences between cities. The success of migration policies implemented at the local level depends to a large extent on the strength of local governments' institutional capacities, the sustainability of their financial structures and the applicability of their local policies. The urban scale has gone beyond being the local extension of the nation-state and has been reshaped by economic, technological and cultural transformations in the process of globalization. In the historical process, global, national and local scales are a dynamic process in which power relations are reproduced in each period. Migrants contribute to the repositioning of cities in national, regional and global systems through the labor market and production they provide, the family members they raise and the social institutions they create. The fact that migrants are an important part of cultural representation contributes to the reproduction process of urban space. Migrants enable the flow between cities and transnational connections in terms of capital, goods, ideas and cultural representation (Schiller and Caglar, 2009: p. 189). It is seen that diplomatic activities between cities in the context of the place of gastronomy in intercultural communication have an important place in the migration policies of cities. Local governments actively use the field of diplomacy in order to increase social cohesion in the city, ensure economic development and strengthen the international position of the city.

Considering previous research on migration and food, it is understood that migration is not only a phenomenon that increases the number of people in the city. Migration also emerges as an accumulative opportunity that develops along with capital and power relations (Akdemir and Öngel, 2017). The strategies and policies adopted by cities to cope with the mass influx of migrants demonstrate the need for innovative practices at the local level. As Alvanoğlu and Ateş (2020) argue, migration requires the development of alternative service delivery models at the local level, especially for municipalities with regulatory barriers and insufficient financial resources. In studies on Gaziantep, it is often stated that the city, which is at a cultural crossroads in terms of demographics, also has a wide range of food (Fidan and Özcan, 2019). It is understood that this food culture has been gradually expanded by Syrian food and beverage establishments established and operating in the city (Lordoğlu and Aslan, 2016). On the other hand, it is important for the economic development and tourism of the region that Syrian companies offer products that reflect Syrian culture and traditions while maintaining their existing brands in Gaziantep (Demir, 2024).

Within the scope of the study, the impact of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality's local diplomacy activities in the field of gastronomy on migration policies was investigated. In this context, the study first presents a literature review on the social inclusion activities of municipalities towards migrants and the impact of the gastronomy phenomenon on migrant communities. This was followed by an examination of the activities of the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality in Turkey in the field of migration and food diplomacy. Secondary resources were researched in order to investigate the relationship between these activities.

## **2. Social Inclusion Activities of Municipalities for Migrants**

Nowadays, the migrant population comes from many countries of origin and socio-economic backgrounds, increased transnational connections, ease of travel and diversification of reasons for migration have led to an increase in the heterogeneity of migrant groups in host countries. Second and third generation migrants have further enriched the diversified social fabric. This situation shows that the nature and purpose of social inclusion activities for migrants in the 21st century need to be reinterpreted (Appave and David, 2017: p. 1).

City governments (municipalities) feel the impact of migration and migrants in the city more intensely than central governments. Municipalities have a better understanding of where migrants come from, where they live, how to reach them and the main problems they face (Harwood, 2022). As a result, municipalities are increasingly integrating migration into their strategies, while others are ignoring it. If a municipality has a large number of migrants, it is more likely to include migration in its strategy (Heino and Jauhiainen, 2020).

Social inclusion policies for migrants include language, education, labor market participation, family reunification, political participation and naturalization policies. One of the first challenges that migrants often experience is the language barrier (World Migration Report, 2020). Language is not only a barrier to communication for migrants, but also to other services such as health care (Abohalaka and Yesil, 2021). Local governments can support overcoming the language barrier by providing language courses for migrants. In

terms of social and economic integration of the large number of migrants in the settlement called "Midtown " in Norway, compulsory language learning and vocational training programs are organized to provide them with important skills for education, employment and socially independent living (Dordevic, 2018: p. 474). As in the case of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme in the UK, local authorities can benefit from national government funding to provide language training for migrants (Chick and Hannagan-Lewis, 2019).

Education is another comprehensive issue in the field of migration. Education is a two-way process for both migrants and local citizens living in the city and is an important tool both for migrants to adapt to the city and for local citizens to better understand migrants. For example, a study of immigration units within the organizational structure of local governments in 30 cities in the United States of America (USA) shows that in addition to educating immigrants about city rules, the staff of these units also spend time training city staff on how to interact with immigrants in culturally appropriate ways (Harwood, 2022). The creation of a special unit for migrants within the organizational structures of municipalities is seen as an important element of the educational activities to be offered in the process of migrants' adaptation to the city. In Turkey, municipalities with large immigrant populations, such as Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Bursa, Adana, Bursa and Adana, have a special unit for immigrants. These units can provide translation, guidance and advisory services to migrants (Ustabaşı Gündüz and Cifci, 2021: p. 21). In 2016, the Amsterdam approach developed within the Social Affairs Department of the municipality is another example. The model, which was implemented in partnership with many stakeholders, particularly NGOs, aimed to provide guidance to refugees on employment, education and integration. In this context, 70 advisors were appointed in cooperation with an employment-oriented NGO. These advisors provide advice to refugees in many areas such as education, employment and entrepreneurship. These services are financed by the municipality (Alvanoglu and Ates, 2019: p. 387). Similarly, the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Immigration Office established at the local level in Germany are among the important units providing services for migrants and refugees (Ates, 2020: p. 32).

Migrant workers who arrive in cities through internal or external migration rarely share in the wealth and opportunities created in the city. Many migrants are forced to live in slums (Habitat III Issue Papers, 2015). For many migrants, urban life is associated with insecure, unequal or poorly paid work, abuse or deprivation (Habitat III Issue Papers, 2015). As the public sector requires employees to have higher education, English language skills and experience, migrants' lower levels of education, weaker English language skills and younger age reduce their chances of employment compared to natives (Lewis et al. 2014). According to Chinese government studies cited in a report by the Hong Kong-based China Labor Bulletin, in China, where millions of people leave their homes in search of work, the children left behind by many migrant workers are unable to grow up with their nuclear families (Mitchell, 2009). Employment is important for the economic integration of migrants in the city. In Turkey, according to Law No. 5393, municipalities can produce housing and establish enterprises by producing land with zoning and infrastructure, building housing/mass housing, selling or renting them in order to ensure orderly urbanization. Municipalities can thus play an active role in housing and employment. Furthermore, a study of US municipalities has identified some important elements that explain the relationship between migration and local economic development policies. For example, there is a significant and positive relationship between loans and grants to start small businesses and support community development, and programs that encourage immigrants to obtain identity documents, job training and the hiring of immigrants and international students (Reese and Khan-Galli, 2022).

It can be seen that local governments are involved in different ways in the changes that migration is bringing to cities around the world. In many cities around the world where migration and migrant numbers are increasing, local governments are taking various initiatives and participating in the process. The roles and responsibilities of local governments may differ in many aspects, such as central government understanding, legislation, revenue sources, organizational capacity and staff qualifications. Therefore, the migration policies of local governments today are also changing and diversifying within the framework of the internal and external conditions surrounding them. One of the alternative methods for municipalities to provide local services to migrants is to engage in diplomatic activities. In this context, as an important part of cultural diplomacy, information on the use of food diplomacy as a local service delivery tool for migrants is presented below.

### **3. "Food Diplomacy" as a Local Service Delivery Tool for Migrants**

Foods and beverages that are the basis of nutrition are generally referred to as food. However, food is not only for nutrition, it has always been a means of reconciliation in both diplomatic and personal terms throughout history (Sancar, 2016: p. 109). Food, which has been studied in depth by cultural anthropologists and

sociologists, has attracted attention as a new discipline called gastronomy (Ozkan and Turgut, 2022: p. 41). Gastronomy acts as a link between cultures (Grandi, 2023). Food cultures from different cultures can both influence and be influenced by the host country. Moreover, food from different cultures can enable the fusion of societies or the emergence of a new cultural synthesis. Migration and food culture play a crucial role in the formation of identity and the cultural transition of communities. Food is an effective tool for cultural identity construction and analysis of existing identity, and has an important place in expressing communities through politics and diplomacy (Dursun and Guzeller, 2023).

There are many studies that demonstrate the relationship between migration and the food service sector. According to Grandi (2023), the food sector offers not only opportunities for low-skilled migrants, such as working as dishwashers or waiters, but also educational opportunities for migrants to advance as skills are acquired. Social mobility in the food sector offers workers the opportunity to move into better paid jobs such as cooks, restaurant managers and even entrepreneurship. Migrant entrepreneurs in the restaurant sector are able to build an income base in the region through existing family and friendship ties in the areas to which they migrate. In this sense, migration is not just a physical and economic movement. Some migrant initiatives in gastronomy are also part of a search for a certain lifestyle (Lardies, 1999). Migrants bring with them an embodied, internalized knowledge of cooking that is acquired through practice and oral tradition and does not need textual support. Food and cooking unite migrant groups. Migrants construct transnational food spaces in their own neighborhoods through restaurants and grocery stores that sell ethnic foods, food ingredients brought back from visits to their home countries and from relatives or friends. The production of food consumption is therefore realized through fluid nationalist identities. Migrant shops and restaurants in host countries create a sense of transnational identity while maintaining a sense of connection and belonging to their home country (Nyamnjoh, 2018). Migrant entrepreneurs in food tourism serve different national tourist groups or expatriate communities (Williams and Hall, 2000). These migrants have started businesses ranging from bars and restaurants to dental clinics and estate agencies to serve (mostly) tourists and migrants of their own nationality (O'Reilly, 2003). On the other hand, special ceremonies and national day celebrations create spaces for migrants to cook and share meals together. For example, migrants gather around social events such as funerals, births and weddings to prepare ethnic dishes together or to buy food from relatives. At these times, migrants have the opportunity to revitalize cultural practices and remember themselves (Nyamnjoh, 2018).

Food culture is deliberately used by state and non-state actors through migration, trade routes and globalization (Soner, 2022: p. 98). In the policy of the local government, the close relationship between migration and food culture can be presented through the activities of city diplomacy. In contrast to public diplomacy, city diplomacy includes international activities carried out by autonomous regions, states and local governments as subnational governments. Sister city relationships, membership in international networks, international projects, international events, international visits, international awards are some of the main types of city diplomacy activities. Changes in the context of city diplomacy activities over the years have increased the diversity of their implementation, making it difficult to clearly define city diplomacy (Wijnen, 2010: p. 13). The sources of motivation for city diplomacy also vary. Although it is possible to talk about many dimensions of city diplomacy, the literature highlights six themes: security, development, economy, culture, cooperation and representation (Plujim and Melissen, 2007: p. 19). Culture is one of the important elements in the field of city diplomacy. Young people from different countries coming together through sports activities, visits to different countries and events are just some of the examples in the field of cultural diplomacy (Plujim and Melissen, 2007: p. 27). Similarly, food diplomacy is also a field within the scope of cultural diplomacy (Sancar, 2016: 110). The concept of food diplomacy is defined as the use of food and cuisine as a tool to create intercultural understanding in the hope of improving interaction and cooperation (Chapple-Sokol, 2013: p. 161). Food diplomacy refers to countries sharing their cultural heritage through food (Sancar, 2016: p. 112). Food diplomacy has begun to be seen as a new communication role, such as solving the problems of migrants and asylum seekers, raising awareness and creating solutions to conflicts (Rockower, 2020: p. 207). Similarly, the international policy agendas in which local governments are now involved are linked to global issues such as human rights, climate change, pandemics, migration and the environment, as well as peacebuilding and security issues that have intensified in the post-World War II period.

Gastronomy has an important role to play in intercity diplomatic activities in the context of cultural dialogue and policy transfer between different world cities. In the context of the impact of city diplomacy on global intercultural approaches, gastronomy has several potential benefits to offer in this area. Local governments are actively using the field of city diplomacy for migrants, especially in terms of economic and cultural opportunities. Best practices in gastronomy, regular international events, participation in international networks and organizations for similar purposes become strategic service delivery tools that link local

governments' diplomatic activities and migration policies. City diplomacy activities, which emphasize the international relations of municipalities in general and in the field of gastronomy in particular, play roles such as promotion, information, experience sharing, social project design and fundraising, which enable the strengthening of outputs in the context of migration policies.

#### **4. Methodology**

The study used document analysis as a qualitative research technique to evaluate the importance of food diplomacy activities in the context of migration policies in local governments. The scope of the study is Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality. In this context, empirical information on migration and food diplomacy activities of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality is obtained, developed, analyzed and interpreted. The relevant data were obtained from the second academic publications on the activities of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality in the field of migration and gastronomy, municipal reports of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, websites of municipality and internet news.

#### **5. Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality's Food Diplomacy Activities on Migration Policies**

The city of Gaziantep, examined within the framework of the study, is important both in terms of the migration it receives and its activities in the field of gastronomy. In the context of migration and immigration phenomena, Gaziantep is one of the cities in Turkey with the highest number of immigrants, especially Syrians. Gaziantep's proximity to Syria is one of the factors influencing migration preferences (Vesek, 2021a: p. 84). On the other hand, Syrian migrants can learn about the economic and social life of the city through their social networks (acquaintances and relatives) in Gaziantep (Vesek, 2021b: p. 183). In terms of gastronomy, Gaziantep is a city whose baklava is officially protected by the European Union (EU) and was awarded the "Local Tourism and Gastronomy" prize in 2015 as part of the European Commission's EDEN Award. In 2015, it was recognized by UNESCO as a Creative City in the field of gastronomy. Gaziantep is also one of the two cities in Turkey that are members of the Delice- Network on Food and Gastronomy ([www.delice-network.com](http://www.delice-network.com)).

##### **4.1. Food Diplomacy Activities on Employment and Entrepreneurship in Migration Policies**

Food and beverage businesses are organizations that have the profession of meeting the nutritional needs of individuals (Bulut and Canpolat, 2020: p. 70). In this respect, gastronomy enables the creation of employment opportunities in the city. In Turkey, there are many small-scale companies in the food and beverage sector and the rate of informal employment in these companies is quite high. It is known that especially Syrian migrants are employed in this sector (Vesek, 2021a: p. 82). Similarly, Syrian migrants in Gaziantep are often involved in economic life through the informal sector (Vesek, 2021a: p. 84). Syrian refugees mostly work in professions such as shop keeping, restaurant management, tailoring, and janitorial work (Alvanoglu and Ates, 2019: p. 390). Both the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and Delice, to which Gaziantep is a member, have important roles in promoting many of the city's food and beverages to the citizens of the world. In this context, Gaziantep also hosts many food and beverage businesses (Bulut and Canpolat, 2020: p. 68).

Foreigners who come to Gaziantep through migration and work in enterprises in the food sector, while gaining employment opportunities, encounter a different economic dimension of social exclusion due to low labor wages. Gaziantep has been expanding its labor depot in the city due to the decrease in labor wages as a result of migration. Especially after the 1990s, Gaziantep became one of the prominent cities in the food and textile industries thanks to its competitive advantage in the labor force. One of the important characteristics of migration in Gaziantep is that it includes not only the poor seeking work, but also a mass of people who own capital and aim to start a business (Akdemir and Ongel, 2017: p. 61). In this sense, various training programs are provided at the local level for both poor people working in food enterprises and capital-owning migrants. There are various local units that provide services in this context. Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality has a Migrant Affairs Branch Directorate and a Syrian Desk established by various stakeholders in the city (Alvanoglu and Ates, 2019). Considering the presence of Syrian tradesmen and craftsmen (Lordoglu and Aslan, 2016: p. 792) in Gaziantep, especially in the food sector, the Syrian Desk's cooperation projects with UNHCR and GIZ organizations since 2016 are important. In this context, Syrian companies, their employees and Syrian entrepreneurs are provided with capacity building support through Turkish and English courses, entrepreneurship and marketing trainings ([tr.euronews.com](http://tr.euronews.com)). International events organized by Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality also support food-related training activities. In 2015, the international event "Syrian and Gaziantep Cuisine Workshops with Syrian Women" provided Syrian women with information about Turkish cuisine and taught them Turkish cuisine (Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, 2015). The training and information activities offered to immigrants in the food sector through international events and

international projects of local governments are an important opportunity for low-skilled workers in the sector to improve themselves. Awareness of the issue is also raised through training and information activities.

In 2008-2009, with the agreement reached between the governments of Turkey and Syria, visas were lifted between the two countries, and Aleppo (city in Syria) and Gaziantep became sister cities. During this period, Gaziantep became a popular city among Syrians both as a touristic destination and in terms of commercial and economic relations (Coskun and Kılıç, 2019: p. 18-19). Therefore, the sister city relationship has become an important factor in strengthening the ties between the two cities in the field of gastronomy. Many information and experiences related to the food culture of Aleppo have been a source of inspiration for Gaziantep cuisine (gaziantep.ktb.gov.tr). Thus, migrants have gained a place in the food sector in Gaziantep, the host city, not only in food and beverage establishments shaped by Gaziantep cuisine, but also in the food sector through the interaction of their own culinary culture in the city. Syrians investing in Gaziantep are able to produce and put on the market many products ranging from chewing gum to yoghurt, bread to coffee, nappies to chips in Arabic packaged food products. To the extent that the middle-class district of Karatas has cafes with Arabic-only menus (Vesek, 2021b: p. 185). This is important in terms of migrants' attachment to the city through employment. Many small businesses in Gaziantep are run by Syrian migrants. Among the workplaces referred to as small businesses, the most common are coffee (flavored and different types of coffee), sales and presentation workplaces, restaurants, bread production places, tourism and travel agencies, and places where local products are sold (Lordoglu and Aslan, 2016: p. 795). The desire to maintain the habitual diet has led to an increase in the number of ethnic restaurants in parallel with the increase in global migration (Bulut and Canpolat 2020: p. 70). In addition, the international events organized also ensure the fusion of food cultures between the host city and the cities of origin and destination of migrants, and have an impact on consumer preferences in the host city. The migrants' transnational initiatives on food culture are combined with the locals' desire to recognize different cultures.

In 2016, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, in cooperation with the Department of Foreign Relations and Social Services, hosted the "UCLG MEWA 5th Ordinary Congress - International Gastronomy, Migration, Culture Summit" with the participation of 50 mayors from 5 countries and 160 members of UCLG MEWA. This meeting, which assessed the phenomena of migration and gastronomy together, assessed the importance of funding and multi-actor cooperation for municipalities facing the influx of Syrian migrants (Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, 2016). One of the most important contributions of international events is the collection and sharing of global experiences. These events provide a platform for sharing knowledge that will lead to more sustainable and lasting benefits that go beyond in-kind and cash assistance to migrants, such as employment, in order to integrate migrants into the life of the host city.

## **5.2. Food Diplomacy Activities in Migration Policy and Cultural Interaction**

Gaziantep is a city between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean, carrying the traces of many civilizations and hosting civilizations. With 291 types of food, 99 geographically registered products, kebabs and desserts, Gaziantep is one of the cities with the richest cuisine in Turkey (Ozkan and Turgut, 2022: p. 42). There is a mutual cultural interaction between Gaziantep cuisine and eating and drinking habits and immigrants. The tradition of eating together in Gaziantep both keeps the community together and fulfils functions such as socialization, communication and cultural transmission. In Gaziantep, there is a process of interaction between migrants and locals through food. Gaziantep cuisine enables the exchange of many cultural elements. In the context of Gaziantep's migration policy, the successful integration of refugees and migrants with the local population can be achieved through the unifying role of culinary culture. Migration is one of the common policy areas of Gaziantep and many other cities around the world, and its relationship with food is supported by the activities of international networks. The inclusion of Gaziantep in the Creative Cities Network as a city of gastronomy by UNESCO has created sensitivity in the components of the city and a conscious attitude has begun to be displayed in the promotion, presentation and protection of the city (Fidan and Ozcan, 2019: p. 76). Because by promoting cultural sectors, supporting creativity and cultural professionals, encouraging cultural participation of citizens and approaching public space from a new perspective, the Creative Cities Network, in collaboration with public authorities, the private sector and civil society, can make a difference and support a more sustainable urban development in line with the practical needs of local populations. Gaziantep's development strategy based on culture and trade enables the effective use of gastronomy culture (www.unesco.org). Collaboration, often emphasized in the context of changing policies in public administration, is an important element that the Creative Cities Network offers to Gaziantep. Particularly for cities like Gaziantep that want to mobilize their creativity and use it strategically in the context of various urban policies, the Network has the tools to design new solutions to common problems at the local level. In

this context, as a member of UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, Gaziantep has the opportunity to benefit from the Network's peer learning and collaborative initiatives and to take full advantage of its cultural assets. The city tries to create sustainable development by sharing this culture on both national and international platforms. Following UNESCO, the European Commission also announced Gaziantep as a European Destination of Excellence in gastronomy. In an investment to develop and grow its tourism through gastronomy, Gaziantep became the second pilot city to invite members of the Delice Network to the GastroAntep festival. The festival brought together national and international chefs, food enthusiasts, food writers and citizens of Gaziantep to celebrate Gaziantep's gastronomy, explore culinary traditions and exchange ideas on policies and approaches to gastronomy. Within the scope of this event organised in Gaziantep with the Delice Network, a famous design company in the USA was contracted to create a corporate identity and city logo for Gaziantep to become a Brand City ([www.delice-network.com](http://www.delice-network.com), 2022). Thus, a strategic approach was adopted to introduce Gaziantep's food culture to other cultures at both national and international level. Therefore, Gaziantep seems to have a special strategy for food diplomacy. Gaziantep not only strengthens its rich culinary culture through diplomacy activities, but also integrates it into local migration policies as one of the most migrant cities in the country.

Gaziantep's cuisine brings together different cultures not only in the variety of foods and beverages, but also in the cooking methods and ingredients used ([www.delice-network.com](http://www.delice-network.com), 2022). The fact that Gaziantep is located at a cultural crossroads, its religious beliefs and the dynamics of Turkish socio-cultural life show that a wide range of dishes, the contents of the dishes prepared and the customs and practices related to special day meals continue. The purpose of the meals prepared on certain days and the way they are eaten also reflect the culture of Gaziantep. In recent years, it can be seen that there have been some changes in the dishes prepared by the people of Gaziantep on special occasions and the way these dishes are eaten (Fidan and Ozcan, 2019: p. 76). The interactional environments that allow these changes to take place are developing with the international events organized in the city. The numerous meetings organized by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network at regular intervals in 2020 allow cities from different countries to introduce the dishes of their own regions in Gaziantep (Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, 2020). By combining local and migrant cultural products, social diversity can be achieved by combining different cultural flavors. Thus, the fact that the company produces both its own cultural products and the cultural products of the new country ensures that the brand has a recognizable identity (Demir, 2024: p. 61). The created brand identity allows the reproduction of the city's local values, builds a bridge between the local population and the migrant population, and culturally supports the integration of migrants into the city. The city's diplomatic activities in the field of gastronomy contribute to branding initiatives that will help strengthen this integration.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

One of the major issues facing local governments is migration. In cities around the world, local governments' migration policies have been shown to be effective in many areas, from education to health, from housing to employment. Many academic studies in the literature discuss the impact of urban gastronomy on migration policies. These studies show that the phenomenon of food is not only a matter of food production and consumption, but also a part of local migration policies as an important part of the economic and cultural development of the city. Food and gastronomy not only increase the brand value of a city, but also contain important values that will increase the loyalty of migrant communities living in the city. On the other hand, the space created by food and food culture for migrant communities can sometimes contain exclusionary elements that feed the informal economy sector. Economically, the food sector can create migrant labor under inappropriate working conditions, as well as trigger the development of exclusionary, prejudicial attitudes that prevent the formation of a sense of belonging in society culturally. In this context, it is necessary to emphasize the coexistence of positive and negative effects generated by food culture. Within the framework of this study, although the existence of various contradictory consequences of the relationship between gastronomy and migration is accepted, the subject is limited by focusing on the potential benefits between these two phenomena.

This study analyses the place of local governments in the context of migration policies through their own diplomatic activities. It evaluates the role of local food diplomacy activities in migration and immigration policies in the city. Today, local governments actively use both gastronomy and diplomacy in the provision of local services. This study, which brings together and evaluates both fields, identifies the impact of food diplomacy on migration policies at the local level.

Food and beverage establishments provide important opportunities for migrant populations who want to work or start a business. The city of Gaziantep, which is analyzed in the study, is a place where people who have

migrated from Syria live and where there is a lot of cultural exchange with these people due to the geographical proximity. In this respect, many of the city's activities in the food sector are directly related to the migrant population. The city has a high brand value in the field of gastronomy and actively uses diplomatic means to maintain its advantages. The international networks in which the city is involved and the international projects it implements increase the potential value of the city's food and beverage businesses, while supporting individual and institutional capacity building in the food sector through training projects directly targeting migrants. On the other hand, beyond meeting individual nutritional needs, food also contains important components of social solidarity and cooperation. Food culture creates social capital as well as economic capital in society. Based on intercultural communication, food increases the strength of solidarity in society and increases the mutual recognition of societies. Gaziantep is developing a common food culture, especially with the cities it is geographically close to. By sharing its food culture on international platforms through various activities such as events and festivals, the city creates cultural interaction between migrants and local citizens. This interaction also creates innovation in the migrant settlements, allowing two different cultures to get to know each other better through food and creating a spirit of solidarity. The various international networks in which the city is involved offer significant benefits as a key component of migration management to promote social inclusion and good relations between different groups in society, contributing to inclusive and cohesive societies. Social inclusion activities, which have an important place in the context of migration policies, are strategically valorized through the cultural functions of city diplomacy. As a result, it can be seen that the food diplomacy activities of local governments create new opportunities to offer migrants training in the food sector, to inform them about the sector, to create new job opportunities, to bring migrants and locals together around food culture and to increase their sense of belonging to the city.

Migration, as a global and complex problem for the countries of the world, is one of the areas where local actors have important roles and responsibilities. The interactive and trans-boundary effects of migration require the evaluation of innovative ideas through the development of interaction and trans-boundary relations in order to tackle this phenomenon. Culture emerges as an important element in this context and it is important to strengthen the capacities of local policies in this regard. The activities discussed in the context of food culture and linked to the phenomenon of diplomacy in the study provide an alternative service delivery tool at the local level. While food culture emerges as one of the superior aspects of the city in Gaziantep, migration is one of the areas of threat that the city faces. Diplomacy activities offer an innovative method to evaluate both phenomena together and turn them into an advantage. Especially in local governments that do not have sufficient sources of income, these alternatives need to be developed. Many cities have the opportunity to increase the economic and cultural capacity of the city through diplomatic activities within the framework of their own dynamics and use it in accordance with the local needs of the city. In this sense, it is important to transform the advantages that cities gain in the global arena into new opportunities and resources at the local level.

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**Arastırma Makalesi**

**Food Diplomacy in Municipal Policies for the Social Integration of Immigrants: Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality**

*Göçmenlere Yönelik Belediyelerin Sosyal İçerme Politikalarında Yemek Diplomasisi:*

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**Genişletilmiş Özet**

Günümüzde insanların büyük bir çoğunluğunun kentsel alanlarda yaşamakta olduğu bilinmektedir. Bu oranın gelecekte daha da artması beklenmektedir. Kentler, insanların gündelik faaliyetlerinin yaşandığı ve bu faaliyetleri şekillendiren ekonomik, sosyal, kültürel ve politik mekânlardır. Kentleşme ve kentlileşme süreçleri bağlamında, bu mekânlar küreselleşme, yerelleşme, teknolojik gelişmeler, iletişim ve ulaşım alanındaki ilerlemeler gibi birçok etkene bağlı olarak değişmekte ve dönüşmektedir. Dünya genelinde yaşanan tüm değişim ve dönüşüm süreçleri içinde göç, ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel yönden birbirinden farklı insanların ya da insan topluluklarının aynı mekânı paylaşmasına yol açan ve bu bağlamda kentin gelişim süreçlerinde önemli etkiler meydana getiren bir olgudur. Sanayi devrimi sonrasında, kırsal alanlardan kentsel alanlara doğru yaşanan büyük göç dalgalarının yanı sıra uluslararasılaşma süreçlerinin etkisiyle farklı ülke kentleri arasındaki göçler de kentleşme sürecinin önemli odak noktalarından biri haline gelmiştir. Ulus-ötesi bağlantıların artması, seyahat alanındaki kolaylıklar, savaşlar, hastalıklar gibi birçok değişene bağlı olarak göç etme nedenleri çeşitlenmekte ve ev sahibi ülke kentlerinde yaşayan yerleşiklerle birlikte göçmen nüfusun da oluşturduğu toplumlarda heterojenlik artmaya devam etmektedir. Göçmen nüfus, bir yandan ev sahibi kentin ekonomik, kültürel, sosyal ve politik dokusuyla tanışırken, bir yandan da bu dokuya etki ederek, kentleşme ve göç arasında dinamik, çift yönlü bir etkileşim meydana getirmektedir. Diğer yandan göç, uluslararası, ulusal ve bölgesel/yerel ölçeklerde çok düzeyli bir yönetişimin ilgi alanı olmakla beraber, kent (ve kent yönetimleri olarak yerel yönetimler/belediyeler), göç ve göçmenlerin beraberinde getirdiği etkileri somut olarak yakından hissetmektedir. Bu bağlamda, günümüzde belediyeler göç yönetimi konusundaki karar alma süreçlerinde daha fazla yer almakta ve aynı zamanda göçü ve etkilerini kendi karar alma süreçlerine daha fazla dâhil etmektedir. Dünya genelinde göçün kent üzerinde meydana getirdiği değişimlerde belediyelerin çeşitli roller üslendiği görülmektedir. Göç ve göçmen sayısının arttığı birçok dünya kentinde, yerel yönetimler çeşitli inisiyatifler olarak süreçte yer almaktadır. Yerel yönetimler bağlamında üstlenilen görev ve sorumlular, belediyelerin bağlı olduğu merkezi yönetim anlayışı, mevzuat, gelir kaynakları örgütsel kapasite, personel nitelikleri gibi birçok açıdan farklılık gösterebilmektedir. Dolayısıyla günümüzde belediyelerin göç politikaları da kendilerini çevreleyen iç ve dış koşullar çerçevesinde değişmekte ve çeşitlenmektedir. Ancak yine de dünya genelinde birçok belediye, az ya da çok, dil öğrenme, eğitim-öğretim faaliyetleri, yeni istihdam alanları yaratma, işgücü piyasasını genişletme, aile birleşimi, siyasi katılım ve vatandaşlığa kabul konularını ve dahasını kapsayan sosyal içerme faaliyetlerine odaklanmaktadır. Belediyelerin göçmenlere yönelik sosyal içerme faaliyetlerinde kültürel etkileşim önemli bir araç olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Göçle gelen insanlar, beraberlerinde yeni alışkanlıkları da kente taşıyarak ulusötesi kapsamda kentler arasında bir köprü kurulmasına yardımcı olurlar.

Beslenme ihtiyacı ve alışkanlığının ötesinde kolektif olarak topluluklar için birleştirici bir değer taşıyan yemek, göç olgusu ile ilişkisi bağlamında belediyelerin sosyal içerme faaliyetlerine etki eden önemli bir kavramdır. Çünkü yemek, sadece insanın temel beslenme ihtiyacını karşılayan bir kavrama işaret etmemektedir. Aynı zamanda, kolektif olarak insan topluluklarının birlikte uyum içinde yaşamasını sağlayan önemli bir unsur olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Farklı kültürlerden gelen yemek kültürleri ev sahibi ülkeyi etkileyebileceği gibi ondan da etkilenmektedir. Ayrıca farklı kültürlere ait yemekler, toplumların kaynaşmasına ya da yeni bir kültür sentezinin ortaya çıkmasına olanak sağlayabilmektedir. Bu doğrultuda yemek kültürünün göç ile ilişkisini vurgulayan çok sayıda çalışma, bir disiplin olarak gastronominin daha derinden incelenmesine olanak tanımaktadır. Gıda sektöründeki sosyal hareketlilik, işçilere açıcılık, restoran müdürlüğü ve hatta girişimcilik gibi daha iyi maaşlı işlere geçme fırsatı sağlamaktadır. Diğer yandan, uluslararası göçün gıda turizmi alanındaki faaliyetlerinin kültürel ve sosyal boyutları da göz ardı edilmemelidir.

Yemek diplomasisi (food diplomacy) kavramı, yemek ve göç arasındaki etkileşimi ve bu bağlamda topluluklar arasındaki iş birliğini geliştirme konusunda yemek ve mutfağın bir araç olarak kullanılmasına önemli ölçüde olanak tanımaktadır. Yerel yönetim politikalarında, göç ve yemek kültürü arasındaki yakın ilişki yerel düzeydeki diplomasi faaliyetleri aracılığıyla sunulabilmektedir. Gastronomi, farklı dünya kentleri arasındaki kültürel diyalogun sağlanması ve politika transferlerinin gerçekleştirilmesi bağlamında kentler arası diplomatik faaliyetlerde önemli bir role sahiptir. Yerel diplomasi küresel kültürlerarası yaklaşımlar üzerindeki etkisi bağlamında, gastronominin bu alanda sunacağı çeşitli potansiyel faydalar bulunmaktadır. Yerel yönetimler, göçmenler için özellikle ekonomi ve kültür alanında sağlayacağı olanaklar açısından yerel diplomasi alanını aktif olarak kullanmaktadır. Gastronomi hakkındaki en iyi uygulama örnekleri, düzenli olarak yapılan uluslararası etkinlikler, benzer amaçlarla oluşturulan uluslararası ağ ve organizasyonlara katılım, yerel yönetimlerin diplomatik faaliyetleri ve göç politikalarını birleştiren stratejik hizmet sunma aracı haline gelmektedir. Göç ve gastronomi ilişkisini birlikte ele alan birçok çalışmada yiyecek ve içecek sektörünün göç politikalarındaki rolü belirtilmiştir. Genel anlamda belediyelerin uluslararası ilişkilerinin vurgulandığı yerel diplomasi faaliyetlerinin özellikle gastronomi alanındaki tanıtım, bilgilendirme, deneyim paylaşımı, sosyal projelendirme, finansman yaratma gibi rolleri üslenmesi göç politikaları bağlamındaki çıktılarının güçlendirilmesine olanak tanımaktadır.

Bu çalışmanın önemi, yemek kültürü ve göç arasındaki ilişkinin yerel yönetimlerin diplomatik ilişkileri kapsamında ele alınmasıyla yemek kültürünün göç olgusu üzerindeki etkilerini farklı bir perspektiften değerlendirmesidir. Böylece kentsel ölçekte göç, yemek ve diplomasi olguları birlikte ele alınmıştır. Çalışmanın amacı, yerel yönetimlerin göç politikaları bağlamında yemek diplomasisi faaliyetlerinin etkisinin araştırılmasıdır. Çalışma, Gaziantep Büyükşehir Belediyesinin göç ve yemek diplomasisi faaliyetlerini kapsamaktadır. Çalışma, ikincil kaynaklar üzerinden doküman analizi yöntemi kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında incelenen Gaziantep kenti, hem aldığı göçler yönünden hem de gastronomi alanındaki faaliyetleri dolayısıyla önemli bir yere sahiptir. Göç ve göçmen olguları bağlamında Gaziantep, Türkiye’de göçmenlerin özellikle de Suriyelilerin en fazla yaşadığı kentlerden biridir. Gastronomi bağlamında ise Gaziantep, baklavalarının Avrupa Birliği (AB) tarafından resmi olarak korunduğu ve 2015 yılında Avrupa Komisyonu EDEN Ödülü kapsamında “Yerel Turizm ve Gastronomi” ödülüne layık görülmüş bir kenttir. 2015 yılında, UNESCO tarafından gastronomi alanında Yaratıcı Şehir olarak tanınmıştır. Ayrıca Delice-Dünya Gurme Kentler Ağı’na Türkiye’den üyeliği bulunan yalnızca iki kentten biridir ([www.delice-network.com](http://www.delice-network.com)). Çalışma bulguları kapsamında, yerel yönetimlerin gastronomi alanındaki diplomasi faaliyetlerinin kendi göç politikaları üzerindeki etkilerinin kentte yaşayan göçmenler için istihdam ve kültürel etkileşim üzerinde önemli sonuçlar ortaya koyduğu görülmüştür. İstihdam bağlamında ortaya çıkan bulgular, düzenlenen uluslararası etkinliklerin ev sahibi kent ile göçmenlerin göç edip geldikleri kentler arasında yemek kültürlerinin kaynaşmasını sağladığını ve ev sahibi kentte de tüketici tercihleri üzerinde etkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Göçmenlerin yemek kültürü konusundaki ulus ötesi girişimleri, yerli halkın farklı kültürleri tanıma istekleriyle birleşmektedir. Uluslararası etkinliklerin en önemli katkılarından biri, dünya deneyimlerinin bir araya getirilmesi ve paylaşılmasıdır. Söz konusu etkinlikler, göçmenlerin ev sahibi kentteki yaşama dâhil olması için istihdam gibi göçmenlere yönelik aynı ve nakdi yardımların ötesine uzanan daha sürdürülebilir ve kalıcı faydalar doğuracak bilgi paylaşımlarının yapıldığı bir platform sunmaktadır. Diğer yandan, belirtmek gerekir ki, Gaziantep’e yapılan göçlerle gelen ve gıda sektöründeki işletmelerde çalışan yabancılar, istihdam olanağı elde etmekle birlikte, düşük işçi ücretleri gibi nedenlerle sosyal dışlanmanın farklı bir ekonomik boyutu ile de karşı karşıyadır. Kültürel etkileşim bağlamında ortaya çıkan bulgular ışığında görülmektedir ki, Gaziantep’in kültür ve ticarete dayalı kalkınma stratejisi, gastronomi kültürünün etkin bir şekilde kullanılmasını sağlamaktadır. Kent, bu kültürü hem ulusal hem de uluslararası platformlarda paylaşarak sürdürülebilir kalkınma yaratmaya çalışmaktadır. Kent, hem ulusal hem de uluslararası düzeyde Gaziantep’in

yemek kültürünün diğer kültürlere tanıtılması konusunda stratejik bir yaklaşım benimsenmiştir. Belirli aralıklar düzenlenen çok sayıdaki uluslararası toplantılar, Gaziantep'te farklı ülke kentlerinin kendi yörelerine ait yemekleri tanıtmasına imkân vermektedir. Gıda, bireysel beslenme ihtiyaçlarının karşılanmasının ötesinde toplumsal dayanışma ve işbirliğinin de önemli bileşenlerini bünyesinde barındırmaktadır. Kültürlerarası iletişime dayalı yemek, toplumdaki dayanışmanın gücünü ve toplumların karşılıklı tanınmasını arttırmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Gaziantep özellikle coğrafi olarak yakın olduğu diğer ülke kentleriyle ortak bir yemek kültürünü geliştirmektedir. Kent, yemek kültürünü uluslararası platformlarda etkinlik ve festival gibi çeşitli etkinliklerle paylaşarak, göçmenler ve yerel vatandaşlar arasında kültürel etkileşim yaratmaktadır. Bu etkileşim aynı zamanda göçmen yerleşimlerinde de yenilik yaratarak, iki farklı kültürün yemek yoluyla birbirini daha iyi tanınmasına olanak tanımakta ve dayanışma ruhu yaratmaktadır. Kentin dâhil olduğu çeşitli uluslararası ağlar, sosyal içermeyi ve toplumdaki farklı gruplar arasında iyi ilişkileri teşvik etmek, kapsayıcı ve uyumlu toplumlara katkıda bulunmak için göç yönetiminin temel bir bileşeni olarak önemli faydalar sunmaktadır.