"Between Conflict and Cohesion: Refugee-Host Relationships in Southeastern Turkey"

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Turkey hosts the largest population of Syrian refugees. Yet, little is known about the relationships between refugees and host communities and how these affect their livelihood opportunities. While recent studies have focused on the impact of refugees on Turkey, the perspectives of local communities, as well as the motivations of refugees to integrate, have often been left out. However, as no quick solution to the Syrian conflict seems in sight and the EU-Turkey deal further steers the influx of refugees to Turkey, local integration appears to be the “only” possible durable solution for most refugees in Turkey. Consequently, understanding what factors facilitate local integration and social cohesion, thus diminishing tensions between refugees and hosts, is crucial. Using a comparative case study approach of two southeastern provinces in Turkey, the paper investigates the relationships between refugees and hosts more closely by putting particular emphasis on the voices of the two groups. First results indicate that besides cultural ties, previous business relations, as well as the host government discourse on refugees influences the relationships between refugees and hosts significantly. Surprisingly, aid organizations and refugees themselves have only few long-lasting livelihood strategies in place, despite the fact that the Syrian conflict is in its fifth year.