

Chapter 3. Block 2. Time and proximity keys for migrants and host community to live together (Objectives 4 & 5)

This section aims to describe the leading principles along which reception and integration policies are designed at city level. Across the cities analysed in the study sample, the concepts of time and space appear to be essential in imagining durable integration solutions. Time refers to the life-long process of establishing oneself in a city, and the continuum of solutions that have to be provided along this process. Besides the objective of facilitating and hastening the integration of newcomers, cities must offer entry points for foreign born or even native born individuals with a migrant background, to facilitate the different aspects of their well-being and development throughout their lives. Space is understood as proximity and is well illustrated by the concept of *Connecting* that many cities have adopted in their approach to integration. This concept acknowledges that inclusion doesn't result automatically from living in the same city nor street, it requires sustained interaction. Cities have a role to play in encouraging such interaction, by supporting local level initiatives and creating public spaces, where connections among different groups can spark a dialogue and all components of the society (host communities, long standing migrant communities, business, third sector entities, etc.) can play their role in a multi-directional integration process.

These principles are embedded in the 30 proposals for “reducing inequality in living conditions and creating good opportunities in life for everyone” (box 4.2) of the city of Gothenburg (Gothenburg, 2014_[3]), which targets vulnerabilities rather than groups based on their origins. The strategy sets out a range of multi-stakeholders, long-term measures, aiming to have well-integrated schools and reduces segregation in housing, to name just a few examples.

The aim of Strategy for a sustainable city is “To shorten distances, both between places and people. The city will be brought closer together both physically and socially. The city will be more compact with new homes, workplaces and meeting-places”.(OECD meeting with the municipality 16 March 2017)

In addition to the integration-related measures in the areas attributed by law (e.g. within the Introduction programme, see box below) the city reaches beyond them within this strategy for reducing inequality. For instance, the city aims at maintaining high and equal level of quality in health, childcare, preschool and education facilities across all neighbourhoods. While measures ensuring access to universal services and medium- to long-term housing solutions will be described in section 2.4, this section highlights how the city develops places for encouraging meetings between different groups, to create linkages with a broader network of actors over time.

Spaces that foster contacts and equitable access to services over time

An example of a **space** designed to facilitate equitable access to complementary services for migrants all along their lives is the Integration Centre (*Integrationscentrum*)¹.

This section of the Committee for Allocation of social service of the city of Gothenburg, (*Social resursförvaltningen*) works as a meeting place between “newly arrived, other

migrants and Swedes''. In this centre, located in the city's downtown, the municipality organises educational and informational activities, including city tours, about Swedish society, as well as about migration. Courses in societal orientation for refugees are given by teachers with a migrant background themselves. These courses are delivered within the framework of the Introduction programme and are subsidised by the national government. In March 2017, there were 755 persons registered for training and in 2015 about 16 000 people registered. Besides seminars for skill development and workshops the centre also offers a mentoring programme – Pathfinder – to inspire newcomers to reach their professional goals. The centre also has an information office, which helps migrants in their mother tongue to fill out forms and contact authorities for key establishment issues ranging from finding accommodation to family reunification. These services are not only offered to recently arrived refugees but to all vulnerable groups including long-standing and undocumented migrants. In line with the idea that integration measures can be carried out by different players, the Integration Centre offers the opportunity for Swedes to enter into contact with migrants in their free time through the "Refugee-guide and Language friend" programme established in 2003. The programme brought together nearly 2 000 people in 2015 through study circles and individual meetings (OECD interviews at the Integration Centre 16 March, 2017). With the large influx of refugees in 2015, an increasing number of Swedes willing to participate in such activities and to coach refugees. Swedes volunteer to meet up with refugees, become mentors, socialise, go for walks, participate in sport activities, teach refugees to swim and women to bicycle, cooking activities, etc. The Integration centre is also a platform for cooperation with NGOs and offers migrant organisations support and training in societal orientation. This prepares them to, in turn, support newly arrived migrants (OECD Meeting with staff of the Integration Centre, 16 March 2017).

Several other grassroots initiatives run similar activities and facilitate language cafés, mentorships, buddy-systems and provide meeting places. These initiatives help establish linkages between newly arrived individuals and Swedes, facilitating informal aspects of inclusion and integration. The municipality can support associations to find spaces for organising activities in particular child, youth and sports activities. District have cultural centres and sport halls that can be hired by the associations.

In line with the idea of making spaces for integration available throughout the city, a new orientation unit, *Angeredskompassen* opened in the district of Angered (as described in section 1.2 Angered is a neighbourhood at the outskirts of the city characterised by high levels of socio-economic segregation) in 2017. Its role is to provide information for a clearer and simpler integration into Swedish society in general for newly arrived asylum seekers and their families. In this space users meet officials from all municipal sectors: Social services, Education sector, Culture & Leisure, Elderly Care services and Health Care. Different skills are grouped in this centre: teachers, social workers, leisure instructors, nurses and an administrator. The users receive individual counselling and can be directed to relevant municipal services. This unit is also in charge of running knowledge assessments of newcomers between 7-15 years old. This assessment includes language and experience, pupils' knowledge in basic school subjects including math and literacy test. Based on this information, pupils are oriented towards the relevant education institutions. The work started in early 2017, as of mid-march 79 pupils had been assessed and 18 families counselled. The intention is to work in a preventive manner and through cooperation with other actors from the district that prepare local civic orientation and leisure programmes for newcomers (Meeting with Angered district 17 March 2017).

Box 3.1. Multi-cultural city events agenda

Not only does the municipality create spaces to bring the culture “out” to the suburbs (e.g. culture houses built in the 1970s in Angered (Blå stället) and in Frölunda) but it also favours cultural activities that bring together local and migrant communities in an attempt to diversify both the content and location of cultural events. These are seen as opportunities to attract residents of Northeast districts, of which a large part has a migration background, to visit the city centre. One important event is the Kulturkalaset, a week of cultural activities at the end of the summer explicitly aimed at diversity and inclusion. Recently, for example, a music icon from the Lebanese music scene was invited. Other events that attract multi-cultural crowds are the celebrations for the Persian New year as well as the Latin American Carnival and the International film festival. Such events are often funded through a combination of municipal and private sector funding. The city museums have carried out campaigns to increase the number of visitors from districts with a large number of residents with a foreign background, for instance Eid al-Fitr is celebrated every year at the World Culture Museum.

Supporting civil society initiatives

Historically, civil society organisations and NGOs play a crucial role in organising activities and offering key services, easing integration of migrants in Gothenburg. Some NGOs (i.e. Save the Children, the Red Cross, Individuell Människohjälp, Caritas, etc.) have a long-standing presence in the most exposed areas providing services such as language classes (i.e. provided by Caritas Hjälp in Angered for over twenty years), private coaching and tuition for school children (OECD interviews with civil society representatives, 15 March 2017). Over time, these actors guarantee the continuity of their services thanks to different contributions from the municipality, charities or foundations. Several sources of funding are available from the municipality (see section 2.3.2.) for civil society activities promoting inclusion and integration, particularly related to cultural and sport initiatives.

As observed in other cities analysed in this study, the 2015 peak in asylum seekers arrivals prompted new ways of cooperation between the municipality, civil society initiatives and NGOs. While it emerged from the interviews that there is no structured cooperation framework between civil society organisations and the municipality, these actors were able to closely collaborate in unprecedented ways in receiving asylum seekers in autumn 2015 who were either arriving or passing through Gothenburg. The municipality also cooperated with the Migration Agency and the police. This collaboration mechanism was quick to develop. Civil society organisations coordinated under the umbrella ‘Welcome refugees’ accompanied the societal wave of empathy and implemented arrival assistance at the central station in Gothenburg, providing information about where to find food, water, medical assistance, access to wi-fi, clothes, blankets, toys for children. In the words of civil society organisations involved (Swedish Red Cross interviews with OECD, 15 March 2017), a good indication that the coordination worked is that there have been no casualties despite the large number of arrivals.

Innovative initiatives emerged from NGOs, host communities as well as from asylum seekers and refugees who started to develop solutions to meet their own needs. For

instance, as result of the difficulties in living in temporary accommodation centres, a group of asylum seekers founded *The Support Group Network* at the Restad Gård². This is a large accommodation centre for refugees outside the city of Vänersborg, approximately 10 kilometres from Gothenburg, in the Västra Götaland region. The main aim of the Network is to facilitate early paths towards the Swedish society for those waiting for the decision on their status or who have received protection. The network organised a number of supportive activities, where refugees support refugees and cooperate closely with a number of actors. For instance, the Network organised open seminars with the College West in Trollhättan and internships for those interested in higher education or employment in the academic sector. In particular, a partnership was institutionalised with Save the Children allowing the network to establish itself in 16 places throughout Sweden. This partnership received financial support from the Västra Götaland county. Based on the capacities and motivations of refugees and asylum seekers, this initiative is an example of how resourceful this group can be, autonomously seeking opportunities for empowerment and self-reliance (Meeting civil society 15 March 2017).

Cooperation under the peak of arrivals could benefit from the expertise of the civil society organisations in reception and integration activities, the empathy showed by civil society in acting for a common interest and the availability of funding for the NGOs involved.

Over time, beyond the immediate response and reception mechanisms, in the view of some of the NGOs participating in OECD interviews (Meeting 15 March 2017) the municipality does not have a long-term strategy to partner with NGOs with regards to integration and reception tasks in those areas where they would have an added value. In deed continuous dialogue with NGOs happens more at district level. This lack of long term strategy might be linked to the absence of a ‘road-map’ approach for mainstreaming equitable access to public services for migrants, with risks of reduced access (e.g. when public agencies ask migrants to show their identification card because they are not informed that this is no longer needed, etc.). The NGOs interviewed advocated for outsourcing services that are critical for migrants to non-state actors with relevant expertise. However measures that are implemented in parallel from the universal system should be limited to respond to specific needs that newcomers have and aim at ‘accompanying’ them towards the general services at arrival as well as at specific ‘turning’ points of their lives. NGOs and third sector entities are very well placed to operate these measures at local level. For instance they could be contracted for offering guides or translators, ensuring equal access to public services over time. In the view of some of the public servants from Gothenburg municipality who participated in OECD interviews, the time has come for the city to externalise some competence in this area to external operators.

Partnerships with local migrant associations

Traditionally, cooperation between the municipality and migrant organisations has been organised primarily at the level of the districts. Beside sport associations many cultural associations exist in the city and are sometimes an expression of the cultural heritage of one nationality such as Kurdish, Iraqi, Assyrian and Somali organisations.

Sport clubs and organisations at district level often have explicit goals of integration, and offer youth a space to meet regularly and a unifying purpose. However, membership in many sport clubs frequently mirrors the segregation that exists at district level. Spaces

like the Angered Arena are attempts to make sport and leisure activities more accessible also for children with a foreign background who generally do not take part in organised sports or cultural activities as often as native Swedes (Göteborgs stad 2014: 75).

Ensure migrants and refugees democratic participation

This section focuses on immigrant civic engagement and what the municipality does to develop immigrants' knowledge of the local government system and participation opportunities.

Formal means of participation here encompass active and passive electoral rights, whereas informal means might include enrolment in political parties, keeping oneself informed of the news, participating in district or municipal consultative or decision making mechanisms and bodies, participating in grassroots initiatives, demonstrations, awareness raising activities, etc.

In terms of formal participation, differences in electoral turnout between those born inside and outside of Sweden have increased since the beginning of the 1990s. Voter turnout has been on the decline, overall, in Sweden; however, the drop is larger among foreign born than native born (SCB 2015: 62). In the parliamentary elections in 2014, 12% of those entitled to vote were born outside Sweden. The voter turnout was 89% among those born in Sweden, compared to 72% among those who were foreign born (SCB 2015). The turnout is, in general, lower among the segment of the population that was born in Asia, Africa or Europe outside of the EU. The shorter the time lived in Sweden the lower the likelihood that person will vote. Foreign-born women have a higher turnout than foreign-born men.

Differences in electoral turnout were observed during the local/municipal elections between neighbourhoods with high or lower concentrations of ethnic minorities. In the 2010 municipal election, 54% of the population that was entitled to vote actually did so in North Angered, whereas the corresponding figure for the Southwest areas was 89% (Göteborgs stad 2014: 103).

Although there aren't consultative mechanisms between the municipality and migrants and refugees communities, the city of Gothenburg actively encourages migrants to participate in both formal and informal ways in the political process. A municipal body, the Committee for Consumers Citizen Services, is tasked with improving democratic participation in the city. For instance, the Committee has identified three districts where inhabitants have a lower level of electoral participation and organised with civil society organisations initiatives to deepen democracy, trust and influence such as: mobile democracy buses, inhabitant's guides and dialogs with citizens.

Districts play a substantial role in encouraging residents' participation in planning of housing projects and residential areas, physical environment plans, security and leisure activities. All district councils have dialogues with their inhabitants depending on the topic via local advisory boards consisting of elderly, young or disabled. Some districts decided to set up participatory budget initiatives others decided to focus their dialogues around security, safe environments for children upbringing, or urban development. In order to encourage migrants' participation, information on different societal matters is provided by the districts in several languages, especially when substantial changes are meant to occur or are being planned. At the same time, the number of persons born abroad who have been politically appointed on boards and in decision-making organisations has increased.

With regards to asylum seekers, it emerged from interviews with representatives of the refugee Support group, that often this category feels cut off from any interaction with public authorities. They explained that there is little official communication from the government to asylum seekers throughout the decision on their status. For those who live in camps in isolated areas the extended time period they must go without communication can have consequences on their attitude to participate as active citizens in their new society once their claims are accepted.

Migration perception and Communication with citizens

The Swedish population is divided on issues related to migration and immigration, and the debate is heated in politics and in the media, like in many other countries. Immigration and integration have become contested and polarised issues, and according to longitudinal studies on opinions and attitudes immigration was *the* most important issue for the Swedish population in 2015 (Ohlsson, Oscarsson och Solevid 2016: 14). As previously stated, the large influx of refugees in 2015 caused a wave of empathy and large sectors of the civil society mobilised to provide assistance and organise demonstrations and marches under the banner *Welcome Refugees*. The Swedish population is generally accepting of refugees and only 40% of the Swedish population in 2015 said Sweden should receive fewer refugees, the lowest figure since 1990 (Demker & van der Meiden 2016). In 2016, there was, however, a sharp rise in this number, to 52% (SOM 2017). In parallel, there has also been an increase in attitudes of rejection of foreigners in Swedish society. This trend started since the 1990s, when so-called White Power mobilisation resulted in greater visibility for racist organisations and political groups, and took a sharp turn from 2010, with the rise of the Sweden Democrats. This is now the third largest party in the parliament (*Riksdagen*) with 13% of the votes in the parliamentary elections in 2014. In the local elections in Gothenburg in 2014, the Sweden Democrats received 7%. Different studies observed an increase in Sweden of violence against minorities (BRÅ 2016; Expo 2016, SVT 2017).

Further, the perception that criminality and violence are related to suburban areas, characterised by a high presence of ethnic minorities, increases tendencies of segregation and divisions as certain areas are then called, in the public discourse, dangerous ‘no-go zones’ (Forkby & Hansson 2011: 15). Statistics show that there is a certain overrepresentation in crime among people born outside of Sweden, but when this is correlated to socio-economic conditions, differences between Swedish born and foreign born almost disappear (Forkby & Hansson 2011: 60). The perception around the link between violence and ethnic minorities has been exacerbated in recent years by more spectacular modes of protest or violent behaviour among youth groups and gangs in Gothenburg suburb areas.

Against this backdrop, the municipality established specific joint programmes with the police to make the presence of the institutions more tangible in exposed areas as well as organising communication and information activities.

Box 3.2. Police and municipality joint project in exposed areas

In 2016, the Gothenburg municipality and the police launched the project “Safe in Gothenburg”. The municipality and the police cooperate to increase trust between residents and representatives of public institutions in exposed areas, reduce segregation and increase the areas’ attractiveness. The projects adopt a bottom-up approach: the residents define their most pressing security problems in the neighbourhood and the police address them through targeted activities in collaboration with the city’s social workers (Meeting with the Police, 16 March 2017). While building a common problem statement, the police establishes a space of confidence where residents can express their issues related to crime and safety. For instance, in Angered, residents considered littering and annoying traffic in the form of mopeds and motorcycles as problematic. The municipality and the police considered low school results, unemployment, criminality among youth, organised criminality and sales of drugs as issues to be addressed. All of those issues were then collected in a joint action plan. A municipal police officer is in charge of implementing the action plan, coordinating between the society, the municipality and the police so crime drops and residents feel safer.

During the peak in refugee and asylum seeker arrivals, the municipality dealt with negative attitudes and fears related to establishing accommodations for unaccompanied minors or adult refugees by holding information meetings in order to answer the concerns raised by residents (Meeting Gothenburg municipality, 16 March 2017). Accordingly, NGOs noticed that there was more resistance to activities for assisting refugees in neighbourhoods with fewer foreign-born residents rather than in the more diverse ones and that in rural areas the residents sometimes were willing to keep refugees who lived in the camps once they were closed (OECD interviews with CSOs 15 March 2017). In general, the municipality does not systematically react to the results of opinion polls on immigration; it tends to continue to implement its policies (Additional information provided by the City Executive Office, 9 May 2017).

More informal mechanisms influencing attitudes and public opinion have been set up by the civil society with new organisations engaging in creating positive attitudes and opinions vis-à-vis newcomers. Examples are Together for Gothenburg³ (*Tillsammans för Göteborg*), Agape’s activities for unaccompanied minors, Stop the Expulsions of Afghan youth (*Stoppa utvisningarna av afghanska ungdomar*) #wecan’tstandit (#vistårinteut)⁴, working to change the situation of unaccompanied minors, anti-racism campaigns initiated by the Swedish Red Cross. Many of these new initiatives are loosely organised, sometimes spontaneous. By using social media/Facebook they contribute to creating a positive attitude towards migrants and to mobilising different publics around various events. It has been observed by civil society organisations (CSOs) that through volunteer activities Swedish people can experience the advantages of having a diverse society (OECD interviews with CSOs 15 March 2017).

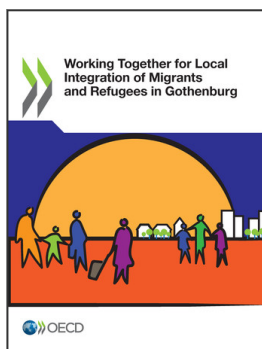
Notes

¹<http://goteborg.se/wps/portal/start/kommun-o-politik/kommunens-organisation/forvaltningar/forvaltningar/social-resursforvaltning/vara-verksamheter/integrationscentrum-goteborg>

² <http://supportgroup.se/index.html>

³ An organisation which exists in many cities throughout Sweden, under the umbrella “Together for...”

⁴ Initiated by professionals in health care, teachers and social workers.



From:

Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Gothenburg

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264299603-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2018), “Block 2. Time and proximity keys for migrants and host community to live together (Objectives 4 & 5)”, in *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Gothenburg*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264299603-7-en>

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