



Nordregio

# Overcoming barriers to social inclusion in Nordic cities through policy and planning

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# Preface

As part of the Nordic Co-operation Programme for Regional Development and Planning 2017–2020, three Nordic thematic groups have been established in the following areas:

1. Sustainable rural development
2. Innovative and resilient regions
3. Sustainable cities and urban development

The groups have been set up by the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy (EK-R), under the Nordic Council of Ministers for Sustainable Growth, and the members are representatives of relevant ministries, national authorities, regional authorities and cross-border co-operation committees. One purpose of the thematic groups is to implement the co-operation programme by contributing to the exchange of knowledge and experience between regional policy stakeholders, by promoting Nordic perspectives and by highlighting the importance of regional policy issues for sustainable development and growth.

This report is the result of work done for the thematic group Sustainable Cities and Urban Development. The group focuses on: 1) social sustainability and gender equality; 2) spatial planning; 3) urban qualities in small and medium-sized cities, and the urban-rural relationship; and 4) the growth and development of Arctic cities. Within these broad themes the group decides what activities to conduct, and the researchers involved are responsible for the results.

The main purpose of this report is to increase the knowledge base regarding how Nordic governments and municipalities seek to overcome barriers to social inclusion and to counteract inequality and segregation through policy and urban planning. The authors wish to thank all of the interviewees, the respondents and the test group of the survey as well as colleagues at Nordregio who have read draft versions of the report and provided valuable support along the way.

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Chair of the Nordic Thematic Group for Sustainable Cities and Urban Development

# Summary

This report examines how Nordic governments and municipalities seek to overcome barriers to social inclusion and to counteract inequality and segregation through policy and urban planning. Overcoming barriers to social inclusion is understood as the desire to improve the terms on which different individuals and groups take part in society through urban policy and planning while counteracting the negative effects of inequality. Examples of policy and planning initiatives to create more inclusive cities and communities can be found in all the Nordic countries. However, inclusion is a multifaceted issue and the specific challenges, and approaches to dealing with these challenges, vary among the countries and cities. To capture this diversity, this report examines five different thematic and geographical cases detailing strategies for inclusion from different perspectives in varying contextual settings.

**Chapter 2** examines how area-based policies and practices targeting post-war housing in Pori, Finland have evolved from the early 1980s to the present. **Chapter 3** focuses on the city of Drammen in Norway and examines the area-based urban renewal measures that have been underway in the neighbourhood of Fjell over the past decade. **Chapter 4** addresses the so-called Danish 'ghetto policies' that have emerged as a key policy response to urban segregation during the 2000s. **Chapter 5** concentrates on the municipality of Reykjanesbær in Iceland and examines how the municipality has responded to challenges concerning integration and inclusion. **Chapter 6** deals with the topic of housing for newly arrived refugees and examines the experiences of Swedish municipalities in handling critical local reactions concerning this type of housing.

The report addresses two main themes. The first concerns urban regeneration, focusing on certain specific neighbourhoods that are considered to be confronted with diverse challenges and to require policy and planning intervention. The second theme concerns the integration of different types of immigrant groups and their descendants. However, these two themes should not be viewed in isolation and, as the examples studied in this report demonstrate, area-based policies for urban regeneration, in particular neighbourhoods, often also aim for the social integration of immigrants or people with immigrant backgrounds.

This report highlights that planning for inclusive cities is a complex and challenging task. The studied examples show that there is no universally applicable recipe for creating more inclusive cities and that different approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. Overall, it is evident that an inclusive city cannot be created in an individual project, instead, it should be pursued through long-term planning and continuous effort.

# Sammanfattning

Denna rapport fokuserar på hur man på statlig och kommunal nivå i Norden arbetar för ökad social inkludering och för att motverka ojämlikhet och segregation med hjälp av konkreta insatser i bostadsområden, policyutveckling och stadsplanering. Att undanröja hinder för social inkludering innebär att förbättra förutsättningarna för olika individer och grupper att delta aktivt i samhället och därtill minimera de negativa effekterna av ojämlikhet. I samtliga nordiska länder pågår en rad initiativ för att skapa mer inkluderande städer och samhällen. Hur initiativen ser ut varierar dock mellan länder och städer. För att illustrera mångfalden av åtgärder och policies har fem olika strategier för inkludering valts ut och studerats närmare.

Rapporten behandlar två huvudteman. Det första temat är stadsdelsförnyelse med fokus på särskilda områden där det anses finnas ett behov av policy- och fysiska planeringsåtgärder för att förbättra standard och service för de boende och minska arbetslösheten. Det andra gäller integration av utrikes födda och deras barn i majoritetssamhället. Dessa två teman är nära sammanlänkade och exemplen från denna rapport visar att stadsdelsutvecklingsinitiativ i särskilda områden ofta har mål som berör inkludering av utrikes födda eller invånare med utländsk bakgrund.

**Kapitel 2** granskar områdesbaserade stadsutvecklingsinitiativ i efterkrigstidens förorter i den finska staden Björneborg (Pori), hur dessa har utvecklats från 1980-talet till nutid samt vilka effekter initiativen har haft på lokalnivå i stadsdelarna. **Kapitel 3** undersöker stadsdelsförnyelse i stadsdelen Fjell i den norska staden Drammen under det senaste årtiondet där det har genomförts en rad olika insatser i den fysiska och sociala miljön. **Kapitel 4** behandlar den danska "ghettopolitiken" som har blivit ett centralt politiskt instrument för att motverka segregation i Danmark under 2000-talet bl.a. genom olika åtgärder för att förändra bostadsbeståndet och befolkningsammansättningen i särskilda områden. **Kapitel 5** granskar hur man i den isländska kommunen Reykjanesbær har gått tillväga för att lösa olika utmaningar gällande integration och inkludering av arbetskraftsinvandrare. **Kapitel 6** fokuserar på boenden för nyanlända flyktingar i Sverige och hur lokala kritiska reaktioner mot denna typ av boenden har sett ut de senaste åren – och vad protesterna resulterat i.

Denna rapport visar att det är komplext och svårt att skapa inkluderande städer. Exempelen som har studerats visar att det inte finns något universellt recept för hur städer kan bli mer inkluderande och att olika strategier har sina för- och nackdelar. Sammanfattningsvis argumenteras för att inkluderande städer inte kan skapas genom enskilda projekt utan genom långsiktig planering och kontinuerliga insatser som också inkluderar det omkringliggande samhället.

# 1. Introduction

By Mats Stjernberg

Nordic cities have traditionally been characterized by comparatively low levels of segregation and inequality. However, socio-economic inequality and other types of disparities have recently become of increased political concern. In the Nordic countries and more generally in Western Europe since the 1990s, urban policy agendas have increasingly been shaped by concerns about growing disparities between different population groups, which are reflected in increased socio-economic and ethnic segregation in many cities (e.g. Tammaru et al. 2015). Inequalities are often discussed in the contexts of labour market restructuring, welfare provision, immigration and integration, and growing divisions between neighbourhoods in cities. There is especially concern that certain neighbourhoods are developing unfavourably and, in some cases, falling into a state of decline. Against this backdrop, various policies have been designed to address problems of social exclusion in cities and neighbourhoods. In Western Europe, urban policies have tended to address social problems with a territorial focus within specific city areas (van Gent et al. 2009). Area-based policies have thus become widely used for combating poverty and social exclusion in cities of different sizes (Dekker & van Kempen 2004).

This report is part of the project 'Long-term planning for inclusive cities in the Nordic region' and it examines a number of policy measures aimed at overcoming barriers to social inclusion in Nordic cities. In this project, overcoming barriers to social inclusion refers to the desire to improve the terms on which different individuals and groups take part in society through urban policy and planning while counteracting the negative effects of inequality and segregation. Essentially, inclusive cities are those that are just and where people feel included regardless of their resources, lifestyle or ethnicity. In simple terms, many characteristics of an inclusive city are the opposite of those in a segregated city.

The main purpose of this study is to increase the knowledge base detailing how Nordic governments and municipalities seek to overcome barriers to social inclusion and to counteract inequality and segregation through policy and urban planning. The focus here is on small and medium-sized cities. Even though the debate about urban inequalities tends to focus on larger urban regions, many smaller cities face similar challenges and, although less documented, have taken action to counteract inequality and segregation. Such cities have received comparatively little attention in either research or policy terms, even though they house a significant share of the Nordic population (Smas & Grunfelder 2016). Hence, the important policy actions and measures towards inclusiveness being undertaken in the smaller cities should be recognized alongside the analyses of larger population centres.

Examples of policy and planning initiatives to create more inclusive cities and communities can be found in all the Nordic countries. However, inclusion is a multifaceted issue: the specific challenges, and approaches to dealing with these challenges, vary among the countries and cities. To capture this diversity, this project examined five different thematic and geographical cases detailing strategies for inclusion from different perspectives in varying contextual settings.

**Chapter 2** focuses on Finland and addresses a specific category of the neighbourhood, i.e. post-war suburban housing estates. These neighbourhoods became prominent in the Finnish urban policy agenda almost immediately after construction in the 1960s and 1970s, and they have become increasingly associated with socio-economic decline, profound demographic changes and other challenges. Over the decades, many of these estates have been targeted by state-funded regeneration initiatives seeking to enhance the vitality of these neighbourhoods through the refurbishment of the physical environment and, in some cases, to counteract segregation more explicitly. The city of Pori in Western Finland, where there is a long history of such regeneration initiatives, is examined in detail. The purpose of the chapter is to reveal how area-based policies and practices targeting post-war housing estates in Pori, and Finland more generally, have evolved from the early 1980s to the present. The successes and shortcomings of these projects are reviewed, and the potential futures of these areas examined.

**Chapter 3** deals with Norway, especially the city of Drammen, and examines the area-based urban renewal measures that have been underway in the neighbourhood of Fjell over the past decade. The chapter is linked thematically to chapter 2, as it also focuses on a specific municipality and local actions to revitalize a post-war suburban neighbourhood. This chapter, together with chapters 2 and 4, reflects the strong focus on post-war housing estates of measures to address urban inequalities and segregation in Nordic cities. However, one aspect that sets Fjell apart from many other Nordic area-based renewal projects is that this initiative has been initiated and designed locally to a high degree. Whereas these types of projects are commonly the result of national level policy measures and funding programmes, Fjell has received only limited state funding. With a focus on this local renewal project, this chapter examines how problems, policy measures and solutions developed throughout this project, while also relating the Fjell experience to the development of national policy in this field.

**Chapter 4** addresses Denmark and the so-called 'ghetto policies' that emerged as a key policy response to urban segregation and other problems associated with Danish post-war housing estates during the 2000s. Within this policy framework, the national government has proposed a range of planning and housing-oriented strategies and measures to increase the social mix in cities and overcome barriers between neighbourhoods. These policies are, however, not related only to housing and urban planning, they also deal with issues such as integration, crime and punishment, and education. Although the Danish urban policy approach addresses similar neighbourhoods to those prominent on the urban policy agendas of other Nordic and European countries, it clearly stands out from a Nordic perspective because of the term 'ghetto', which has sparked controversy and debate. The chapter examines how area-based urban integration policies have evolved over the past three decades and, in particular, how 'ghetto' has become an official category used to denote the most disadvantaged areas in Danish cities.

**Chapter 5** concentrates on Iceland and the municipality of Reykjanesbær, which has witnessed substantial changes over recent years and where integration and inclusion have emerged as key topics on the policy agenda. One major change has been a sharp increase in the immigrant population, which more than doubled between 2015 and 2018. Another change is a direct result of the US military ending its operations in the municipality in 2006, which meant that the former military base, with its entire housing stock, were suddenly incorporated into the municipality. This area, known as Ásbrú, has inexpensive rental housing, which attracted people with less financial resources, including many immigrants. Thus, the area has become a relatively low status neighbourhood. This chapter firstly examines how the local authorities in Reykjanesbær have addressed the challenges and opportunities brought by a sudden increase in the immigrant population and what strategies for inclusion and integration have been initiated. Secondly, it examines how the municipality has sought to prevent segregation while converting a former military base into an ordinary neighbourhood.

**Chapter 6** focuses on Sweden and addresses the topic of housing for newly arrived refugees. In Sweden, municipalities have the responsibility for arranging housing for these refugees. However, this has been a challenge because of both housing shortages in many parts of the country and critical local reactions. There was a sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers between 2012 and 2018, and the particular challenges faced by Swedish municipalities in the establishment of refugee housing during this period are examined. A survey of 60 Swedish municipalities determined the degree to which they contended with critical local reactions against refugee housing, what form these reactions took and how they affected municipal options when arranging this type of housing.

The examples discussed in this report are not intended as a best-practices collection for the creation of inclusive cities, rather, these cases from the five Nordic countries illustrate and problematise the various policy and planning approaches to inclusive cities and communities. The strategies for inclusion discussed in this report differ with the contextual settings and local conditions, but their ultimate aims are broadly similar, i.e. to counteract the undesired effects of inequality and segregation, while improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society.

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# 2. Neighbourhood regeneration in Pori, Finland:

Evolving regeneration policies and practices in post-war suburban housing estates

By Mats Stjernberg

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses a specific neighbourhood type in Finland, i.e. post-war suburban housing estates, known as lähiö in the Finnish language. In Finland, these neighbourhoods became prominent in the Finnish urban policy agenda almost immediately after construction in the 1960s and 1970s, and many have been targeted by numerous redevelopment initiatives over the decades. This chapter examines the regeneration initiatives in the city of Pori in Western Finland from a long-term perspective. The main objective is to reveal how area-based policies and practices seeking to revitalize these areas have evolved over time, both in Pori and more generally in Finland.

In Finland, the first regeneration projects were carried out in the 1980s, and questions concerning suburban housing estates were magnified in the mid-1990s in the aftermath of economic recession. Nationally, such neighbourhoods gained widespread policy attention in 1995 when the first extensive government programme for housing estate renewal was launched. Suburban housing estates have remained topical ever since, as this national regeneration programme was followed by three others during the 2000s. In these government programmes, state funding was provided to municipalities who were responsible for developing and carrying out local projects aimed at regeneration of target neighbourhoods. In recent decades, suburban housing estates have been increasingly linked to the segregation debate in Finland. This is exemplified by the most recent government programme, published in 2020, in which revitalization of these types of the neighbourhood, along with prevention of segregation, are key points of emphasis (Ministry of the Environment 2020). Suburban housing estates have also received wide political attention because many of the estates, dating from the 1960s and 1970s, require substantial physical redevelopment. Within this broad context, over the years, many Finnish post-war housing estates have been the targets of a variety of state-funded regeneration efforts. The aim has been to enhance the vitality of these neighbourhoods through a wide range of measures.

The main question discussed in this chapter is: how have area-based policies and practices seeking to revitalize suburban housing estates evolved over time in Pori and, more generally, in Finland? To address this question, a historical policy overview examines nine different regeneration projects and their associated national programmes that were carried out in Pori since the early 1980s. The chapter discusses the ways in which the aims and objectives of the projects and their implementation have evolved over time, as well as their main successes and shortcomings. It then examines how Pori's suburban housing estates have developed over time and what the future may hold for these neighbourhoods. While the primary focus is the Finnish context, these types of neighbourhoods and their challenges are not unique to Finland. Millions of people throughout Europe live in housing estates constructed during the post-war decades and these areas are prominent in the policy agendas of many European and Nordic countries (see chapters 3 and 4 addressing similar neighbourhoods in Norway and Denmark respectively).

## 2.2 The rise and demise of suburban housing estates

This section examines the long-term development of suburban housing estates over the decades since their construction beginning with the context that led to the widespread construction of such housing estates throughout Finland. It then discusses how public opinion quickly turned against these areas that were often criticized and associated with various problems soon after their construction. This is followed by an examination of the socio-economic and demographic changes in the 1960s and 1970s housing estates during the subsequent decades.

### 2.2.1 A brief history of suburban housing estates in Finland and Pori

Suburban housing estates in Finland date back to the decades following the Second World War: i.e. a time of great societal change. The welfare state was gradually being established, the importance of agriculture diminished and more and more people moved to the cities attracted by jobs in manufacturing and services. Compared to many other countries in Europe, urbanization started late in Finland. Then, in the 1960s and 1970s, the country witnessed extensive rural-to-urban migration and had one of the fastest rates of urbanization in Europe (Tanninen 2004). A substantial increase in housing production was required to provide adequate affordable housing for the growing urban population.

In the city of Pori, as in many other parts of Finland, the need to increase housing production during the post-war decades was largely met by building new residential areas outside the urban centre. Pori has a long history of industrial production and its development paralleled the growth and decline of the manufacturing sector. The population of Pori increased rapidly following the Second World War and it continued to grow until the mid-1970s (Statistics Finland 2020), which provided workers for the expanding manufacturing industry. In accordance with the planning ideals of the time, a significant share of the new housing units were built in the form of prefabricated housing blocks outside the urban centre. This solution was widely applied throughout Finland. The hundreds of estates that were mainly built during the 1960s and 1970 form a substantial part of the current Finnish housing stock and are home to approximately 1.5 million Finns, up to one fourth of the total population (Ministry of the Environment 2013).

The first housing estates from the 1950s and early 1960s were commonly regarded as modern and, according to the standards of the time, provided high quality living conditions. By the end of the 1970s, however, the public attitude to these areas was increasingly negative. Critical media coverage triggered a problem-centred public discourse about these estates and they soon became seen as problem-ridden areas that housed 'rootless' people, recently migrated from the Finnish countryside (Ilmonen 1994; Saarikangas 2002). By the mid-1980s, many housing estates throughout Finland had become associated with social problems and were seen as unattractive physical environments with poor amenities and services. As a result of these perceptions, many estates suffered from social stigmatization and were in a weak position in the housing market (Ministry of the Environment 1985).

Over time, public perceptions of Finnish suburban housing estates have come to resemble those of similar areas in other Nordic and Western Europe countries, where post-war housing estates are often synonymous with socio-economic and physical decline (see e.g. Hall 1997; Musterd & Van Kempen 2005; Rowlands et al. 2009). As a consequence, such neighbourhoods have gained widespread policy attention, not only in Finland, but in many countries throughout Europe where various measures have been directed to the revitalization of neighbourhoods.



Figure 2.1. Children in Pormestarinluoto, primarily constructed between 1967–1969, pictured in 1973. Source: Satakunta Museum; Photo: Sven Raita

## 2.2.2 Socio-economic and demographic changes in housing estates in Pori

This section examines the changes that have occurred since 1990 in five different housing estates in Pori: Impola, Pihlava, Pormestarinluoto, Sampola and Väinölä (Figure 2.2). Each has been the subject of numerous regeneration projects over the decades.

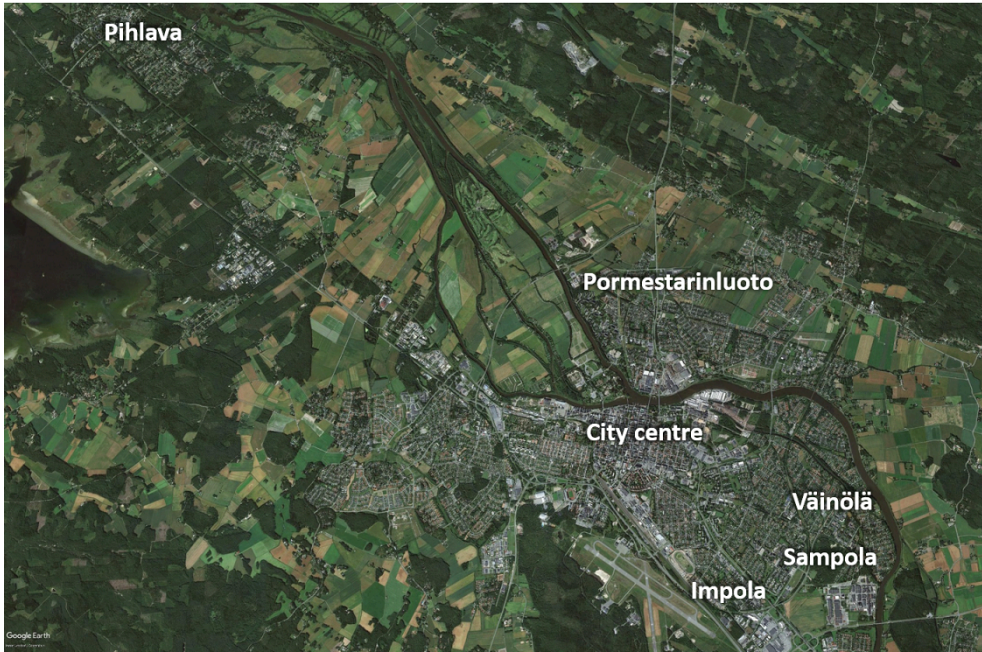
Population decline is among the notable changes in Pori's suburban housing estates (Figure 2.3). In each of the five estates, the population dropped by 20 to 30% between 1990 and 2014 as a result of changes in age and household structure. Figure 2.3 shows that population ageing is also a major demographic trend in these estates, with a significant increase in people aged 65 and over. In Pormestarinluoto, this age group increased from approximately 8 to 30% in this period, while it increased from roughly 14 to 36% in Sampola in the same period. Simultaneously, household sizes declined. Single-person households increased substantially in all five areas, particularly in Pormestarinluoto where their share grew from around 40 to 70% (Figure 2.3).

These changes are consistent with trends across post-war housing estates in Finland. When first constructed, these areas were typically settled by families with children, but as time has passed, the population has become increasingly comprised of elderly residents and fewer families (Stjernberg 2019). One demographic development that sets post-war housing estates in Pori, and Finland more broadly, apart from similar neighbourhoods in other Nordic and Western European countries, is the relatively smaller roles of immigration in the Finnish context. Whereas immigration is often considered to be the most prevalent factor influencing the demographics of post-war estates in other Nordic and Western European countries (e.g. Musterd & van Kempen 2005), in only one of the neighbourhoods in Pori, in 2012, did more than 8% of the residents have a foreign first language.

In addition to the previously discussed demographic changes, the socio-economic data for Pori's suburban housing estates show increasing disadvantage since 1990. This is most evident in the unemployment rate, which increased significantly in each of the five housing estates between 1990 and 2013 (Figure 2.3). The most substantial increase in unemployment occurred between 1990 and 2000, which coincides with the severe economic recession of the early 1990s, when unemployment rates in Finland skyrocketed from 6 to 22%. In Pori, unemployment increased from 9 to 27% between 1990 and 1993 (Statistics Finland 2020a). Pori is a city that has traditionally been dependent on industrial manufacturing; thus, the structural economic changes had a devastating effect on the local labour market (Lankinen 1998). As shown in Figure 2.3, there has been a general decrease in the share of people working in all areas of the manufacturing sector since 1990. This can be seen particularly in Pihlava where the share dropped from around 55% in 1990 to 33% in 2010.

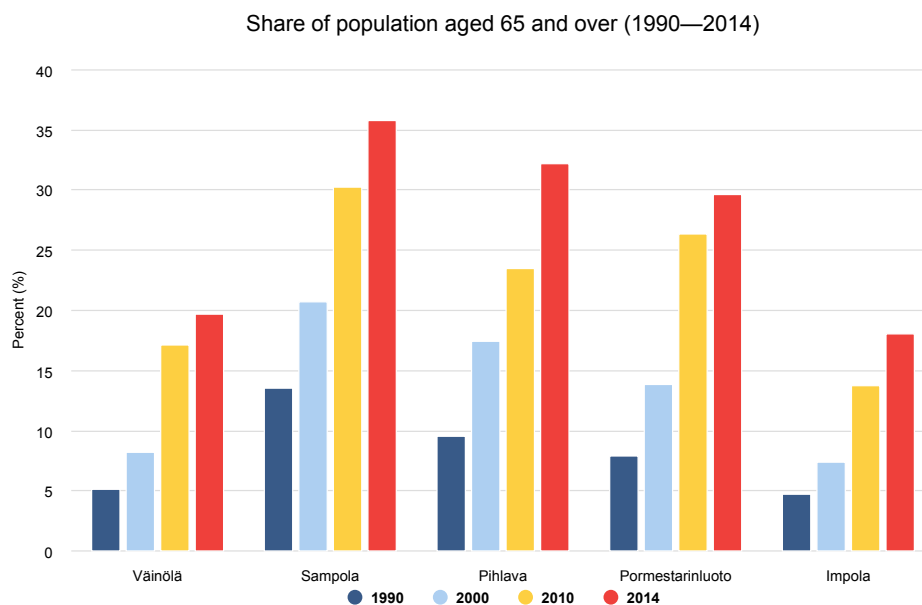
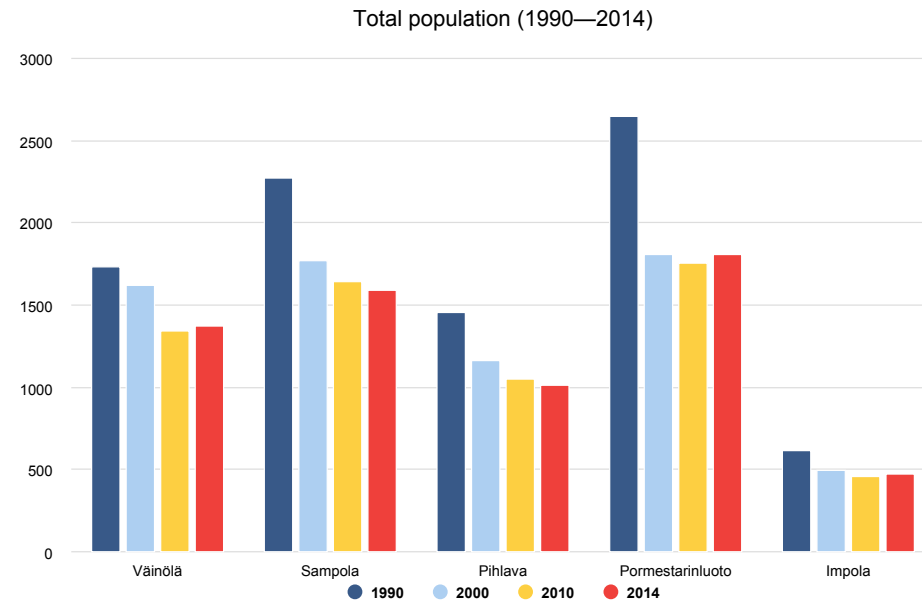
The general socio-economic decline evident in Pori's housing estates should be considered in the context of broader changes and processes of labour market restructuring that have occurred across the city. The city of Pori, including many of these housing estates, has been negatively affected by economic restructuring since the 1970s (Lankinen 1998). The sharp increases in unemployment in the estates suggest that their residents have been particularly vulnerable to deindustrialization in Pori and have faced difficulties in adapting to new occupational structures. Labour market restructuring has diminished the employment opportunities for many who live in these neighbourhoods. This accords with broader changes across Finland, i.e. the period after the recession of the early 1990s is characterized by increased unemployment and especially by reduced employment opportunities for those with lesser education (Myrskylä 2017).

The housing stock in these five neighbourhoods is primarily renter-occupied, but all estates include both renter-occupied and owner-occupied dwellings. The tenure structure varies between estates: Pihlava, Pormestarinluoto and Impola have been predominantly renter-occupied, whereas home ownership has been much more common in Sampola and Väinölä. In most cases, there has been little change in tenure structure, with the exception of Pihlava where part of the social-rented housing stock was sold to the private market and the share of renter occupancy decreased from around 80 to 60% between 1990 and 2010 (see part 3.3). There is also a broader trend from social-rented to more privately owned rental apartments. In Pori, according to Arponen and Immonen (2011), there were twice as many privately owned rental units as social-rented dwellings in 2008.



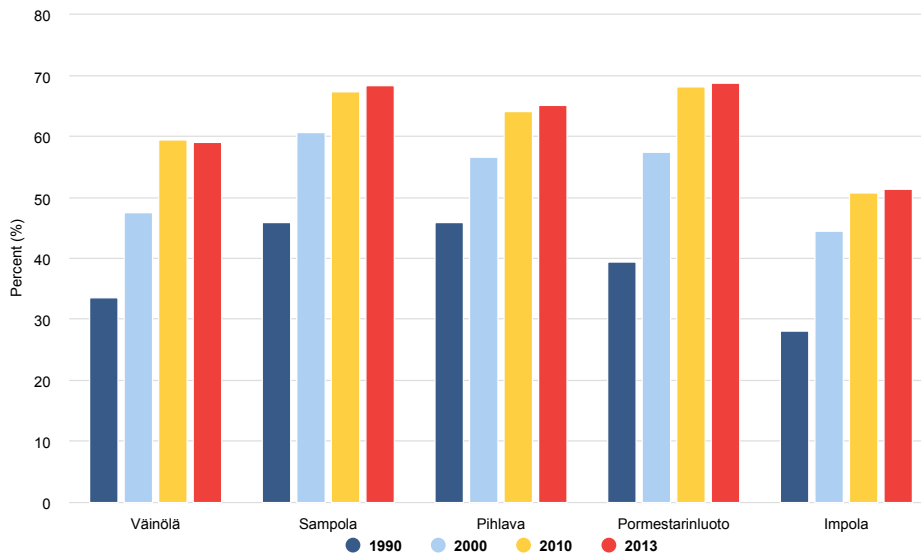
**Figure 2.2.** The location of Impola, Pihlava, Pormestariluoto, Sampola and Väinölä in relation to the city centre of Pori. Source: Google Earth

**Figure 2.3. Demographic, socio-economic and housing characteristics, and their changes over time in five post-war housing estates in Pori that have been frequent targets of regeneration projects. Source: Housing estate data aggregated from the Grid Database and YKR database by Mats Stjernberg for the study (Stjernberg 2019).<sup>1</sup>**

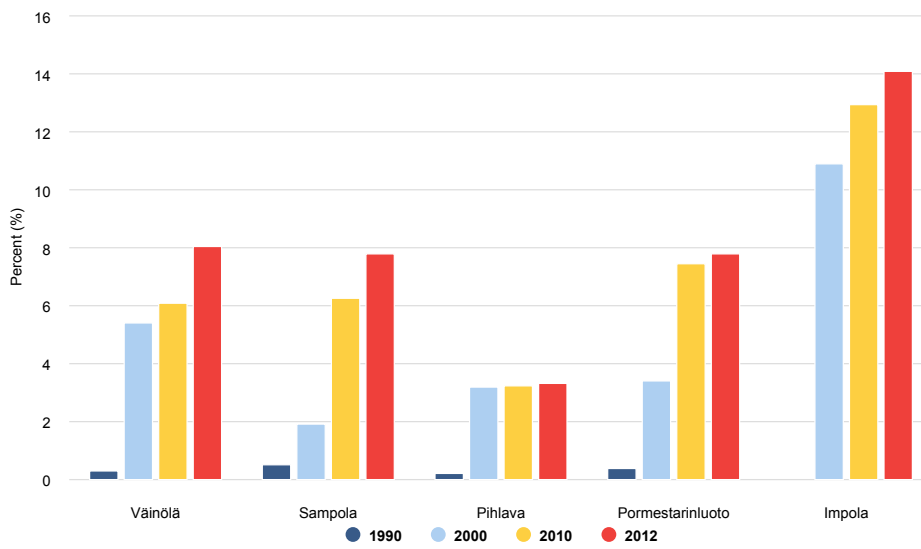


1. Data for these housing estates has been calculated for the purpose of Stjernberg (2019) from Statistics Finland's Grid Database and the YKR database maintained by SYKE (The Environmental Institute of Finland). These areas and their boundaries have been identified with a GIS-based selection method that was developed for locating post-war housing estates in the whole of Finland. These areas are located outside of the main urban centres of Finnish cities and towns. They are mainly composed of multi-story apartment buildings constructed during the 1960s and 1970s. The exact delimitation of these areas may differ from the official administrative boundaries of the areas. The five neighbourhoods displayed in the Figure have been targeted by various regeneration projects over recent decades.

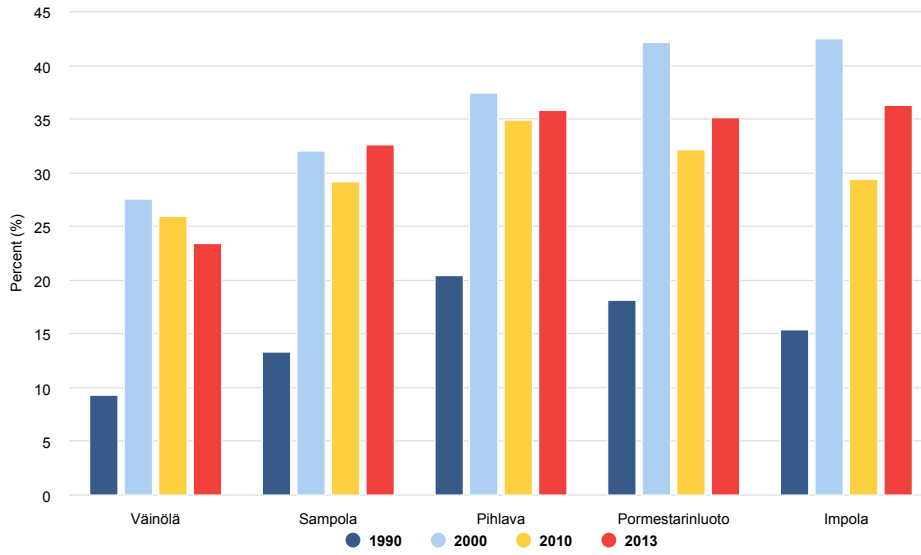
Share of single-person households (1990—2013)



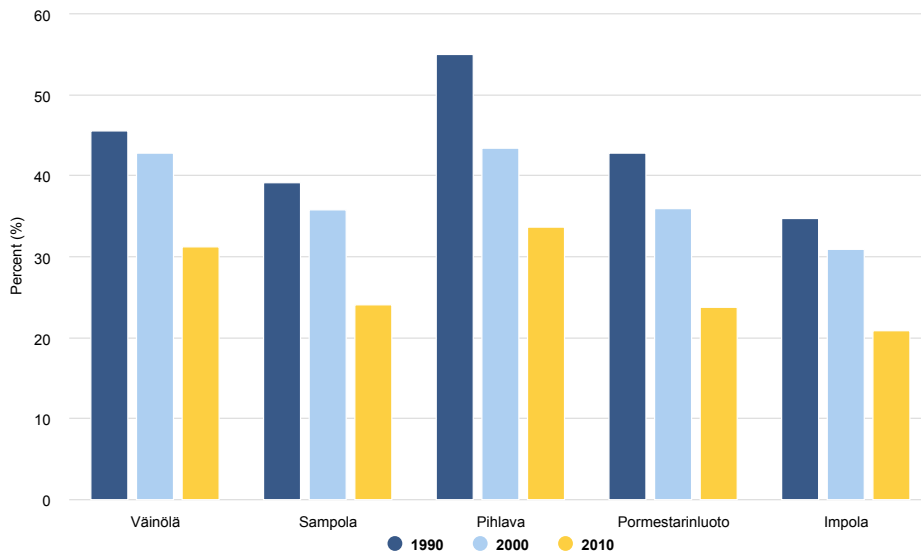
Share of population with a foreign first language (1990—2012)



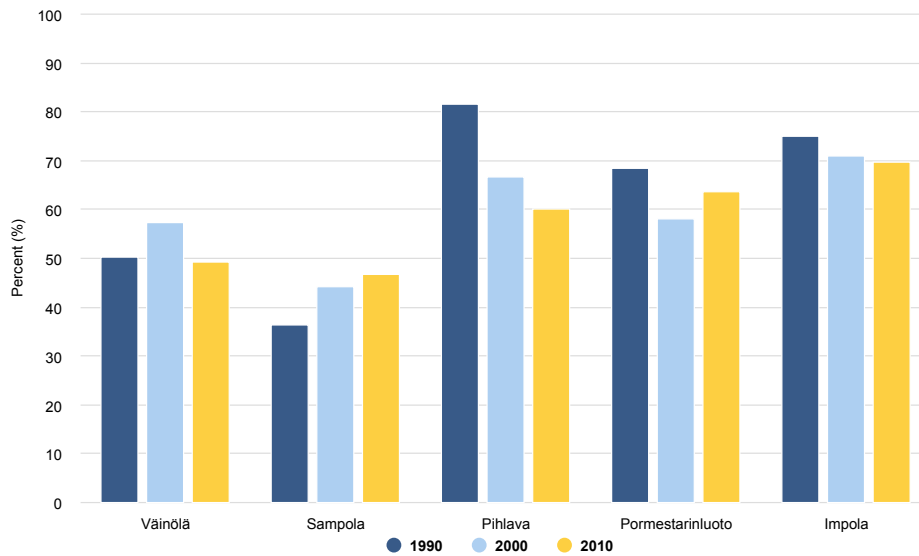
Unemployment rate (1990—2013)



Share of population working in manufacturing industries (1990—2010)



Share of renter-occupied housing (1990—2010)



## 2.3 Evolving policies for regeneration of suburban housing estates in Pori

As discussed previously, suburban housing estates constructed during the 1960s and 1970s were criticized soon after their construction. In Finland, there has been a problem-centred public discourse about such neighbourhoods since the late 1970s. These areas thus quickly gained political priority and became the subjects of numerous regeneration initiatives. Focusing on Pori, this section examines the evolution of these regeneration policies and practices, ranging from the first projects carried out in the 1980s to more recent initiatives. These projects, including their main focus and objectives are presented in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1. Historical outline of housing estate regeneration in Pori.**

Project name	Project focus and objectives	Targeted neighbourhoods	Years
Pormestarinluoto project ( <i>Pormestarinluotoprojekti</i> )	Revitalising the socio-physical environment of the neighbourhood	Pormestarinluoto	1980–1989
Redevelopment plan for Pihlava ( <i>Pihlavan kerrostaloalueen kehittämisselvitys</i> )	Dealing with vacant apartments; plans for altering the physical environment; considering possible new funding models for renovation	Pihlava	1995
Redevelopment plan for Sampola ( <i>Sampolan alueen kehittämissuunnitelma</i> )	Stage 1: Survey identifying residents' perspectives on the area and needs for improvement (report: <i>Lähiöasuminen ja perusparannustarpeet Sampolassa 1996</i> ). Stage 2: Redevelopment plan for Sampola (report: <i>Sampolan alueen kehittämissuunnitelma 1996–1999</i> ) Proposal of measures: e.g. improving public spaces and building new recreational facilities, increasing co-operation with residents, activities to promote youth engagement	Sampola	1996–1999
Competitiveness of housing estates ( <i>Lähiöiden kilpailukyky</i> )	Improving the attractiveness of the targeted areas; reducing vacancies in the housing stock. Report presenting place-based visions for the development of housing estates during the 2010s (including socio-physical measures)	Pormestarinluoto, Pihlava, Sampola	2001–2003
MALTTI project ( <i>Maakunnallinen lähiöprojekti MALTTI</i> )	Addressing long-term unemployment and mitigating risks of marginalization	Eight areas in the municipalities of Pori, Rauma and Kankaanpää	2001–2006
Compact City ( <i>Kompakti kaupunki</i> )	Plans for better connecting the estates into their surrounding urban structures; diversifying and upgrading the housing stock; installing elevators; and establishing new approaches to participatory planning. Concrete measures: e.g. construction of new pedestrian and cycle paths, improving lighting in public spaces	Pormestarinluoto, Pihlava, Impola, Sampola, Väinölä	2008–2011
Pori's suburban landscape ( <i>Porilainen lähiömaisema</i> )	Establishing an understanding of how residents view their living environments (through e.g. surveys and workshops); generating more positive publicity around the areas	Pormestarinluoto, Pihlava, Impola, Sampola, Väinölä	2008–2011
Pori for all ( <i>Kaikkien Pori</i> )	Enhancing participation; improving services and amenities; increasing well-being. Concrete measures: e.g. improving the physical environment by upgrading public spaces and arranging activities to promote a more diverse use of spaces	Pormestarinluoto, Pihlava, Impola, Sampola, Väinölä	2013–2015
Suburban spirit ( <i>Lähiön henki</i> )	Improving the well-being of residents; enhancing the attractiveness and generating more positive perceptions of the areas; understanding residents'	Sampola, Impola, Väinölä	2013–2015

	<p>perspectives of the qualities of the neighbourhoods and needs for improvement. Concrete measures: e.g. redesigning bus stops and park benches with residents, improving recreational facilities and playground with the users.</p>		
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### 2.3.1 Pioneering regeneration initiatives in the 1980s

As a response to some of the previously highlighted problems and negative perceptions, the first small-scale area-based renewal projects targeting suburban housing estates in Finland were launched in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Ministry of the Environment 1985). These projects focused on revitalizing neighbourhoods that in most cases had been constructed only one or two decades earlier.

The city of Pori has been at the forefront of area-based regeneration in Finland and the Pormestarinluoto project carried out between 1980 and 1989 was one of the first regeneration projects in the country (Karjalainen 2004). The project was launched based on an initiative by the Ministry of the Interior due to the perception that the physical environment of the Pormestarinluoto neighbourhood needed improvement (Arponen & Immonen 2011). The project initially focused solely on upgrading the physical environment of the neighbourhood but increasing concerns about various social problems led to later broadening to also include measures to improve the social environment.

With the objective of creating new channels of influence and local democracy, early regeneration projects in Finland tested new forms of community work in the targeted estates (Karjalainen 2004). However, these initiatives also included diverse design objectives, such as refurbishments and improvements to infrastructure, green areas, services and facilities, as well as social measures targeting socio-cultural and health services (Ministry of the Environment 1985; Tanninen 2006). According to Pitkänen et al. (2012) the objective of these pioneering housing estate regeneration projects was to enhance the liveability of the estates and improve services and functions. These estates were often initially populated by high numbers of families with children, and the aim was also to prevent problems related to adolescence and to alleviate the socio-cultural shock that residents who had moved into these areas from the countryside were confronted with (see also Ilmonen 1994).

As the 1980s progressed, neighbourhood regeneration in Finland increasingly involved cross-sectoral co-operation and engagement with the local community. For instance, the objective of the Sofy project, carried out between 1983 and 1993, was to develop new models for participatory planning and to incorporate socio-physical objectives into neighbourhood regeneration (Karjalainen 2004; Kokkonen et al. 2009). This project, and especially the principle of combining various perspectives and objectives, had an important influence on the more comprehensive area-based programmes targeting suburban housing estates that followed in the 1990s.



**Figure 2.4.** As seen in 1973, Pormestarinluoto was one of the first housing estates in Finland targeted by area-based regeneration measures in the early 1980s. Source: Satakunta Museum; Photo: Sven Raita

### 2.3.2 National policy attention in the 1990s

In the aftermath of the deep economic recession of the early 1990s, the first extensive national programme for housing estate renewal, *Lähiöprojekti* (1995–1999), was launched by the State Housing Fund (*Valtion asuntorahasto*). This programme provided state funding to the participating municipalities who were responsible for developing and implementing their own regeneration plans in the targeted neighbourhoods. While the municipalities were in charge of renovating the housing stock and built environment in the targeted estates, a central principle of the programme was that the initiatives were to be carried out through cross-sectoral collaboration and co-operation with local actors and residents. A total of 49 housing estates in 42 municipalities around Finland, including Pori, were addressed by projects carried out within the framework of this programme (Seppänen 2001; Karjalainen 2004; Kokkonen et al. 2009).

Several parallel developments led to post-war housing estates receiving widespread national policy attention in the mid-1990s. Firstly, many of the housing estates that were constructed a couple of decades earlier were in increasing need of physical renovation. In addition, the recession of the early 1990s had led to a halt in housing construction, which meant that the focus of the construction sector shifted from construction of new housing towards renovation of the existing stock, especially in suburban housing estates (Karjalainen 2004). Furthermore, the increasing number of vacant dwellings, especially in the social-rented housing stock of many housing estates, became perceived as problematic (Viirkorpi 1997). Perhaps most important was the emergence of objectives related to employment, including the national goal of cutting unemployment in half. Unemployment was an acute problem in many housing estates in Finland, including Pori, which was severely affected by high jobless rates in the early 1990s (see Figure 2.3). One of the key objectives of *Lähiöprojekti* was to create employment in a time of massive unemployment, of concerns about increasing segregation and of fears that some estates were in risk of falling into a spiral of decline (Seppänen 2001; Karjalainen 2004).

In Pori, Pihlava and Sampola were the targeted housing estates within the national *Lähiöprojekti* framework. A redevelopment plan was created for both of these neighbourhoods (Pyykkönen 2001; Arponen & Immonen 2011). The first was the redevelopment plan for Pihlava in 1995. The focus on Pihlava was based on the City Council's initiative, which had decided that the neighbourhood needed revitalization to address the high number of empty dwellings and an increasingly negative reputation. The need for policy attention was magnified by the recession of the early 1990s. This had further negative effects on Pihlava with a significant increase in unemployment and a further decrease in population (see Figure 2.3). Among the key topics addressed in the Pihlava redevelopment plan were options to improve the physical structure of the neighbourhood and possible new funding models for renovation (Pyykkönen 2001).

The other estate targeted in Pori was Sampola, for which a separate redevelopment plan was developed between 1996 to 1999. In 1996, a survey was carried out during the first stage to determine how residents perceived Sampola in terms of liveability, level of services, possibilities for recreation, quality of green spaces and traffic arrangements, as well as what their suggestions for improvement. This survey was the basis for a redevelopment plan for the neighbourhood. The measures that were proposed included hiring a planner tasked with developing the area, increasing co-operation between the local school and residents' organizations in the area, promoting activities to enhance youth engagement, building new sports and recreational facilities, and improving lighting in public spaces (Pyykkönen 2001).



**Figure 2.5. Aerial view of Sampola in the late 1970s. Source: City of Pori**

In evaluation of the first national regeneration programme, one of the main problems, according to Viirkorpi (1997), was the contradiction that while the main problems in the targeted neighbourhoods were seen as social, funding was primarily directed towards physical measures. In his view, the position and future of housing estates had been considered from a broader perspective in the 1980s but became increasingly local and area-based during the 1990s. One reason for this was that there were relatively few planners working at more general strategic levels involved in the projects. Another reason was that although a more comprehensive approach to neighbourhood regeneration was considered important in a time of scarce resources after the recession, the emphasis was on carrying out more practical and concrete measures that were less costly (Viirkorpi 1997). This meant attention was focused on certain specific housing estates, and in some cases on certain buildings in these neighbourhoods, while being less concerned by the broader underlying issues behind the socio-economic decline evident in many estates.

In addition to housing estates gaining more widespread political attention from the national government, funding from the European Union, specifically the URBAN I and URBAN II programmes, increasingly supported housing estate regeneration projects during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Regeneration initiatives were carried out with EU funding in cities such as Helsinki, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere and Oulu (Karjalainen 2004; Nupponen et al. 2008). Further, several municipalities launched their own projects focusing on suburban housing estates, independent of the wider national programme. Overall, these initiatives illustrate the emergence of Finnish lähiö as a key focus within urban and housing policy in Finland during the 1990s. As will be discussed in the next section, these neighbourhoods received even more widespread attention during the 2000s.

### 2.3.4 Regeneration in the 2010s: from housing estates to neighbourhoods

The third national regeneration programme named 'From Housing Estates to Neighbourhoods' (*Lähiöistä kaupunginosiksi – Lähiöohjelma*) was launched for the years 2008–2011. The main objectives of the programme were to improve the liveability and attractiveness of suburban housing estates dating from the 1960s and 1970s, physically renew and upgrade their housing stock and counteract segregation. More specific aims included making the targeted neighbourhoods more varied in terms of population structure, housing stock and functions, strengthening their image and better connecting the housing estates into their surrounding urban structures. The programme strongly endorsed the creation of partnerships and the use of a cross-sectoral approach for carrying out the regeneration efforts, and a further aim was to establish and spread new models for co-operation involving different sectors of the state government, municipal actors, residents' organizations and citizens, as well as private and third-sector actors. A total of 50 projects were funded by the programme, which were either redevelopment projects focusing on certain neighbourhoods or research projects with a thematic focus on post-war housing estates (Pitkänen et al. 2012).

In Pori, two parallel projects were carried out within the framework of this programme: a redevelopment project named 'Compact City' (*Kompakti kaupunki*) and a research project named 'Pori's suburban landscape' (*Porilainen lähiömaisema*). Compact City was closely linked to the wider aims of the national programme to better connect suburban housing estates into their surrounding urban structures and to support a diversification of the population and the housing stock and functions in these types of neighbourhoods. Essentially, the focus of the project was to analyse and envision how Pori's suburban housing estates from the 1960s and 1970s could be better incorporated into the surrounding city. This was set against the background that the targeted neighbourhoods, as for most Finnish housing estates from that time, were originally planned and built according to principles that physically excluded them from their surroundings. The project addressed several areas such as Pormestarinluoto, Pihlava, Sampola, Impola and Väinölä, several of which had been already targeted by previous regeneration initiatives. Instead of adopting a strict delimitation of the target areas, however, these neighbourhoods were considered in relation to their wider functional contexts (Arponen & Immonen 2011).

Compact City examined how the neighbourhoods were positioned and linked to the surrounding urban structure and how they could be better connected into the rest of the city in terms of services, sports and recreational facilities, green spaces and traffic arrangements. The project was linked to Pori's master plan for the central city 2025 (City of Pori 2007) and its thematic focus was to create a compact and vibrant city. Various plans for revitalizing the neighbourhoods were made within the project. For example, just in relation to housing, plans were made for diversifying the housing stock through infill development, upgrading the existing housing stock through renovation and installing elevators into buildings that had originally been built without them. Other concrete interventions included the construction of new pedestrian and cycle paths, improving lighting in public spaces and building new flower beds and gardening lots. So-called residents' houses established in the targeted areas played an important role by providing a foundation for local family support and for night patrols, which were credited with decreasing vandalism and theft (Arponen & Immonen 2011). The project stressed the importance of interacting with different actors such as residents, businesses and associations, and sought to develop new local networks structures linking the actors. One focal point was the establishment of a more participatory approach to planning within the city organization and stronger involvement of citizens in the planning of their own residential environments.

The Compact City project was carried out in close co-operation with the 'Pori's suburban landscape project' (*Porilainen lähiömaisema*), led by the University of Turku, which was part of the same national programme. Several of the measures were planned co-operatively by the project teams, who also organized joint events to enhance participation in planning in the targeted areas. Both projects primarily focused on the same five neighbourhoods. As a way of supporting the regeneration activities, the main objective of the suburban landscape project was to understand how residents in these areas viewed their own living environments. The project

also sought to generate more positive publicity around these neighbourhoods in local media. Different methods were used to reach different population sub-groups, such as conducting postal surveys and distributing email questionnaires targeting different age groups and household types. Additionally, workshops were organized with different thematic focuses ranging from topics such as safety and the development of green spaces to residents' perspectives on the local history of the neighbourhoods. One of the outputs of the project, e.g. was a report about how residents in Pihlava experienced their neighbourhood in terms of safety (Tella 2010). Other methods to engage with residents included establishing neighbourhood websites and involving residents in a university course in which the students studied how locals perceived their neighbourhoods (Pori's suburban landscape 2013).

In their evaluation of the programme, Pitkänen et al. (2012) state that the local projects had three main advantages in being part of a national level programme. Firstly, while external funding allowed hiring additional people for the projects it also had symbolic value for local decision-making and showed a sign of a commitment from the national government. Secondly, local actors considered being part of a nation-wide programme as giving projects more credibility and visibility. Thirdly, networking among projects was considered to be beneficial for exchanging ideas, enhancing mutual learning and spreading good practices. The evaluation also stressed that, compared to previous national programmes, the projects carried out within this programme took a step forward in linking regeneration efforts into a broader and more strategic planning perspective. Hence, the approach to neighbourhood regeneration shifted from being essentially based around areas to having projects that were more strongly connected with the broader planning strategies of the cities.

Despite the successes of the programme and the projects involved, the objectives were not entirely met. For instance, one of the central aims was to better incorporate the housing estates into their surrounding urban structures but this aim was evaluated as not being fully realized (Pitkänen et al. 2012). Also, while collaboration between different actors was successful in several projects, the aim of establishing solid links between different sectors of administration was not always achieved to the extent sought. In general, it seems that the projects had less success with the more complex challenges that were the main objectives of the national programme. In particular, in dealing with socio-economic disadvantages, the need to upgrade and diversify the housing stock, improve the attractiveness of the neighbourhoods and ensure an adequate level of services to maintain their vitality remain major challenges in many post-war housing estates.

### **2.3.5 Regeneration for more inclusive neighbourhoods**

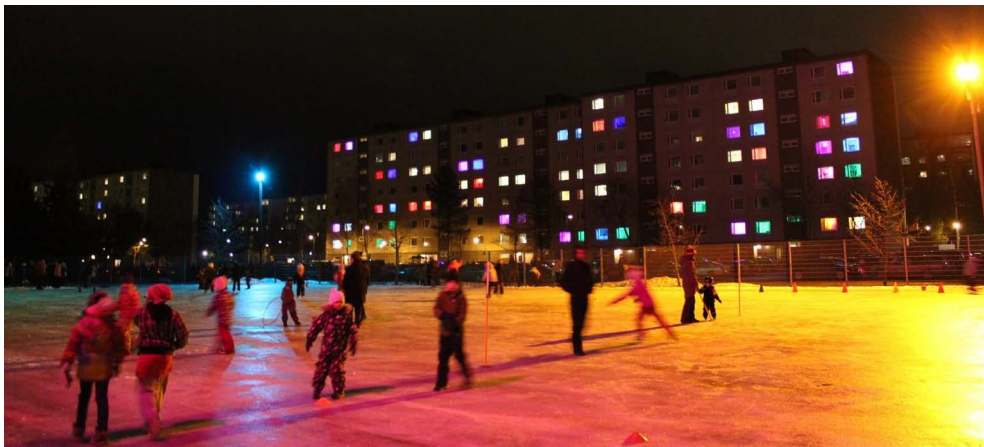
The fourth national regeneration programme for suburban housing estates, 'Development Programme for Residential Areas' (*Asuinalueiden kehittämisselma*), operated over the years 2013–2015. Unlike the previous three programmes that had included the word *lähiö* in the title, this programme simply referred to the target areas as 'residential environments' (*asuinalue*). The programme was managed by the Housing Finance and Development Centre (ARA) and the Ministry of the Environment, and involved most of Finland's largest cities, including Pori, as well as several universities and research institutes (Development programme for residential areas 2015).

The main focus of this programme was the prevention of segregation and enhancement of the vitality and well-being of the neighbourhoods. There were four specific points of emphasis. Firstly, the enhancement of participation and involvement by residents was considered important for improving safety and increasing residents' responsibility for their neighbourhood. The second focus involved the residential environments of the neighbourhoods, including the need to make the areas more accessible for the growing number of older residents and to enable older people to live longer in their own homes. The third focus was to strengthen the supply of services and promote new ways of using spaces. Cultural, library, exercise and recreational services and facilities were emphasized as important in the programme because they contribute to well-being and feelings of belonging. The fourth focus was to strengthen participation by, and

social cohesion among, young people by, e.g. investing in opportunities for recreation, education and employment, and involving schools in the development of the neighbourhoods (Development programme for residential areas 2015).

In Pori, two separate but interlinked projects were carried out with funding from this programme. The first one, 'Pori for all' (*Kaikkien Pori*), was a regeneration project carried out between 2013 and 2015, focusing on the same five neighbourhoods as the 'Compact City' project from the previous government programme, i.e. Impola, Pihlava, Pormestarinluoto, Sampola and Väinölä. This project was very much a direct continuation of the previous project with the same aim of creating a compact and vibrant city. The Pori city planning department co-ordinated the project and it was implemented in co-operation with other local authorities, third-sector actors and residents. It focused on both the social and physical environments of these areas, as both were considered vital for the well-being of residents and for counteracting socio-economic segregation (Pori for all 2015). Key objectives included enhancing participation and co-operation, improving services and amenities, and increasing the comfort of residents in the targeted neighbourhoods. Different measures were implemented, including upgrading of playgrounds and green spaces and improving cycle and pedestrian paths. Activities were arranged to enhance participation and to promote more diverse use of spaces and facilities.

The second project in Pori, within the framework of the third national regeneration program, was a research project named 'Suburban Spirit' (*Lähiön henki*), led by the University of Turku, which aimed to enhance understanding of the main contributors to attractiveness and well-being in these neighbourhoods. The methods included the use of cultural planning as a participatory approach to the neighbourhood in Sampola, Impola and Väinölä, as well as surveys to uncover residents' perceptions of the specific qualities of their neighbourhoods and the types of improvements they sought. The surveys showed that residents felt a need for greater social interaction among residents and for more cultural activities. In addition, a number of concrete measures were carried out to improve public spaces and recreational facilities and to enhance feelings of safety. These included involving residents in redesigning bus stops and park benches and engaging young people in improving sports facilities and playgrounds and a gardening project was carried out in collaboration with one of the local schools (ARA 2016).



**Figure 2.7. Light-art event organized in Sampola in 2014. Source: City of Pori. Photo Antti Wallin**

The fourth national programme conducted between 2013 and 2015 addressed many of the same themes of the previous programme from 2008–2011. The two new projects conducted in Pori were closely linked thematically to previous projects and also focused on the same neighbourhoods. In the evaluation of the programme, this is mentioned as an important factor in their success. It is also stated that their impacts would likely have been less without prior experiences (ARA 2015). Having a series of consecutive regeneration projects is seen as helpful in keeping neighbourhoods on the policy agenda while also promoting a cross-sectoral approach to regeneration and fostering new ways of thinking. According to the evaluation report, one of the

long-term benefits of ongoing regeneration in Pori is that the public image of Pormestarinluoto has become more positive.

Adopting a cross-sectoral approach to regeneration was a key principle of the programme, and according to the programme evaluation (ARA 2015), participants found that being part of the programme allowed better collaboration and exchange of experiences. This enhancement occurred both between the various actors and sectors and between, especially, municipalities in different parts of Finland. This was seen as beneficial because working with more fragmented individual projects was considered to have lesser impact. In Pori, the close links between parallel projects was considered to have been beneficial, as the research projects helped provide a more solid understanding of the neighbourhoods, their qualities and the needs for improvement reported by residents. According to the evaluation, another advantage of being part of a wider national programme was that state funding enabled regeneration initiatives to be undertaken where they otherwise may not have been launched. It is further reported that state funding for neighbourhood regeneration gave the projects higher priority in the municipalities involved.

The outcomes were evaluated as having been important for the targeted neighbourhoods in all the municipalities where regeneration projects occurred. The municipalities were generally satisfied that concrete results were achieved using relatively small resources. The implemented projects had more impact in cases where the regeneration initiatives were linked to the broader strategies of the municipality. The municipalities involved considered that the projects helped with development of models for regeneration that would be useful for on-going regeneration initiatives, thus ensuring continuity. Nevertheless, concerns were expressed about how Finnish suburban housing estates would be placed and prioritized following the end of the programme period, especially as these neighbourhoods are expected to continue to require substantial policy attention.

## **2.4 Reflections on the past, present and future of suburban housing estates in Pori**

As discussed in the previous section, suburban housing estates have been high on the policy agenda in Pori since the early 1980s, and there have been numerous regeneration projects addressing the same neighbourhoods over the last few decades. This section reflects on the successes of these regeneration projects and on the challenges that remain, according to four urban planners working for the Pori City Planning Department who were interviewed for this study (see list of interviewees in the references), for the post-war housing estates in Pori. This section also takes a look forward at what the future may hold for these specific neighbourhoods.

### **2.4.1 Past successes and remaining challenges**

According to the local urban planners interviewed for this study, the fact that there have been numerous almost continuously ongoing projects since the early 1980s, often in the same specific neighbourhoods, has had positive effects on the areas involved. A long history of successive projects is deemed to have contributed to more favourable development of the targeted areas, kept the neighbourhoods in the spotlight and stimulated dialogue over sectoral boundaries within the city administration. It is also felt that this accustomed residents in the targeted neighbourhoods to these types of projects, which contributed to increased active participation.

A specific success mentioned in the interviews was the renovations and improvements to the social-rented housing stock. This has been made possible by state funding, which has allowed the social-rented housing stock in some neighbourhoods to be upgraded to a greater extent than the privately owned stock. Measures to refurbish buildings, dwellings and the adjoining outdoor spaces are believed to have improved the quality and appearance of these areas and to have contributed to greater housing satisfaction among residents. Measures to improve the outdoor

environment, and especially green spaces, were reported as successes by the interviewees.

The interviews also highlighted a number of challenges in the implementation and organization of the regeneration projects. Ensuring longevity is a concern because the regeneration projects have typically been reliant on a few individuals. In general, the central administration of the city has been in charge of organising the projects, while the city planning department has been responsible for implementing the measures and activities. However, recent major organizational reforms within the city have slimmed the central administration. Those previously involved in administration and co-ordination of regeneration projects have departed and their vast knowledge has been lost, making it difficult to build on previous experiences and learnings.

While the regeneration projects carried out in Pori are considered to have been generally successful, it is evident that many of their aims have not been achieved. A number of the remaining challenges for post-war housing estates are tied to broader structural issues and seem to be difficult, if not impossible, to solve through area-based planning measures. A major challenge is related to the shift in population composition that has occurred in these neighbourhoods since their construction. Initially, the areas were often inhabited by families with children, but as the children have grown and moved out, the population has aged gradually (Figure 2.3). Simultaneously, the overall population has decreased because there are fewer family households and more households with one or two people, which is itself a challenge for maintaining neighbourhood vitality.

One of the greatest challenges in the neighbourhoods is said to be maintenance of services. This is at least partly connected to the changes in population composition. Because services depend on having enough customers, there are now fewer local services and communal meeting places within the neighbourhoods. In addition, the city's population now lives more sparsely, and both private and public services tend to have clustered into fewer, but larger, units located further away from the neighbourhoods. This is problematic because services are perceived as highly important for sustaining the vitality of the neighbourhoods.

Another major challenge in Finland is that many housing estates from the 1960s and 1970s must undergo extensive physical upgrading in the years to come (Dhima 2014). In a city such as Pori, with low property values in these neighbourhoods, it is difficult to finance expensive refurbishments. The interviews indicated a reluctance to carry out costly repairs in these neighbourhoods where real estate values are low; this can lead to a spiral of decline. In addition, diversification of the housing stock through infill development, which is often seen as a way for increasing the attractiveness of post-war housing estates in Finland, seems to be more challenging in Pori than in other growing cities with higher demand for housing.

## **2.4.2 Neighbourhood-specific characteristics and differences**

The previously discussed successes and remaining challenges refer to post-war housing estates and their regeneration in Pori in general terms. However, it is important to acknowledge that these estates are not all the same, neither in Finland nor in Pori, and that neighbourhood-specific conditions vary.

Pormestarinluoto was the first post-war estate targeted by regeneration efforts in Pori and among the first in Finland. The most notable success, as described in the interviews, has been improvements to the physical environment of the neighbourhood. Initially the area was lacking vegetation, partly due to the soil where nothing grew, but as early as the 1980s, efforts were made to transform the overly vast open spaces and parking lots into parks and green areas. This included arranging a landscape design competition in the area. These spaces are now highly appreciated by residents. Many measures have been applied to the housing stock, from extensive refurbishments to selling whole buildings to the private market. The interviewees feel that the reputation and attractiveness of Pormestarinluoto has improved considerably over the years and that demand for housing in the area is comparatively high, partly as a consequence of its rather central location. However, it was mentioned that private investors have bought many of the dwellings, which contributes to the high turnover of residents possibly hindering the attachment

of residents to their neighbourhood.

Sampola is another neighbourhood that has been the subject of several regeneration projects over the decades. A central focus has been on refurbishing and upgrading the housing stock and built environment, an example of which can be seen in the more colourful facades and glass coverings of balconies. It was also reported that, although the level of services has worsened in most housing estates, services in Sampola may actually have improved with a new school and new shops in the neighbourhood. The most recent regeneration projects carried out in the neighbourhood had a particular emphasis on strengthening participation and community life through different events and cultural activities. This was mentioned by the interviewees as successful and Sampola was described as having a relatively vibrant community life.

The Väinölä neighbourhood has been addressed in recent projects. Väinölä has traditionally been regarded as an area with a relatively high socio-economic standing and reputation compared to some other areas in the city, partly because the neighbourhood is less massive and more densely built. However, this may have a downside because the smaller scale of the neighbourhood may mean that there is a lack of critical mass for sustaining services and less potential for revitalization. For instance, many of the buildings in Väinölä are still without elevators, and according to the interviews, the level of services and the reputation of the neighbourhood seem to have declined over the years. While immigration is a recent development in Pori, it was observed that its effects have been particularly notable in Väinölä in recent years, largely because of the affordable rental apartments in the area. This was seen as possibly having a negative effect on the neighbourhood's reputation.

Another estate that has been targeted by several projects is Pihlava. The main difference of this area from the others is that Pihlava is around 15 km from the city centre, whereas the others are all 3–5 km from the centre (Figure 2.2). Pihlava, which was constructed in the 1970s to accommodate workers, has been highly dependent on the development of the local industry. It has also therefore been quite vulnerable, perhaps more so than other estates, to automation and disinvestment. Maintaining the attractiveness of Pihlava was seen as a major challenge, as the area is seen to suffer from a poor reputation. Local services have weakened considerably, and property values are so low that it can be difficult, if not impossible, to acquire loans for carrying out necessary refurbishments. However, one of the interviewees mentioned that if the local harbour and industry were to receive new investments and new jobs were established, this would have a positive effect on Pihlava, where the inexpensive apartments that would likely become more attractive.



**Figure 2.8. Aerial view of Pormestarinluoto. Source: Lentokuva Vallas**

### 2.4.3 Future prospects of post-war housing estates in Pori

Despite the long history of regeneration in post-war housing estates in Pori, there have been no regeneration projects specifically targeting such neighbourhoods since 2015. One reason could be that most of the regeneration projects addressed in this chapter have been part of state-funded programmes and there have not been any comprehensive national programmes for housing estate renewal since the end of 2015. Another reason, according to the interviewees, could be that housing estates from the 1960s and 1970s are no longer seen as separate entities, but rather as neighbourhoods within the wider urban structure. Areas that might have previously been defined as *lähiö* are not now considered as distinct categories, but as neighbourhoods among other types. In addition, as previously discussed, recent reforms in the city administration have made it challenging to build on the experiences of past projects. The interviews suggest that there now are few broad strategies supporting regeneration of these neighbourhoods, meaning that the post-war housing estates receive less attention.

Even though there has been less focus on post-war housing estates in recent years, projects focusing on other neighbourhoods have interlinked with the previous projects through their strong focus on interaction between actors and their emphasis on participation. These include two projects carried out within the EU-funded URBACT programme: SURE (2009–2013) and P4C (2015–2015). SURE relied strongly on various participatory methods and sought to develop strategies for regeneration based on local conditions (SURE 2012). Similarly, the subsequent P4C project relied on placemaking as a method; i.e. different actors worked collaboratively to activate and promote the use of public space (P4C 2015). These projects from the 2010s exemplify a progressive change toward increased emphasis on improving social participation through events and communal activities.

When considering the future, Pori's post-war housing estates have the advantage that they are more centrally located than similar neighbourhoods in many other parts of Finland. Most estates in Pori are located relatively near the centre and are not physically isolated from the rest of the city. According to the interviewees, people appreciate that they do not live in separate and secluded neighbourhoods. A relatively central location can also be positive for future development because remote housing estates tend to be more disadvantaged in Finland (Stjernberg 2019). Although the neighbourhoods in Pori are socio-economically disadvantaged, e.g. in terms of unemployment (Figure 2.3), the planners interviewed do not consider the neighbourhoods to be sharply segregated nor do they see risks of severe marginalization. It seems that the main focus in the city may be shifting from construction of new neighbourhoods to instead developing those already existing and densifying the overall urban structure. It was argued in one of the interviews that focusing on existing areas, and the people living there, can ensure and improve their attractiveness and vitality.

## 2.5 Concluding remarks

The key question addressed in this chapter is how area-based policies and practices to revitalize suburban housing estates have evolved over time in Pori, and more generally in Finland. More specifically, this chapter has examined, with a long-term perspective, how the aims, objectives and implementation of regeneration projects has evolved and then discussed the major successes and shortcomings of these projects. The evolution of Pori's suburban housing estates over the decades has been described along with a view to future for these neighbourhoods.

The nine different regeneration projects carried out in Pori between 1980 and 2015 were part of four national programmes. Although the exact scope of the projects and measures that have been carried out has varied from one project to the next, there are clear similarities between the projects and the approaches employed (see also Table 2.1). A wide range of measures have been carried out within these projects in the targeted neighbourhoods. Physical measures to renovate and upgrade the built environment and housing stock and to improve the outdoor environment, including public spaces, parks, streets and parking areas, have been prominent in nearly all projects. Social measures have also recurred, strengthening community activity and

participation have been especially prioritized. Other aims have included making the neighbourhoods more attractive, improving services and amenities, addressing long-term unemployment and marginalization as well as enhancing well-being. The aims and the implementation of the projects has not changed radically over time. This accords with Verhage's (2005) idea of path dependency, through which earlier regeneration initiatives are likely to influence later initiatives either directly or indirectly. This seems logical as the projects have been carried out within the same municipal organization, and projects have typically been led and carried out by the same individuals and actors. Furthermore, these projects have been part of wider national regeneration programmes, which to a great extent have had similar thematic focuses and been similarly organized. As the projects in Pori, and other parts of Finland, have been substantially influenced by these programmes, this has created a great deal of path dependency leading one project to the next.

Regarding the impacts and effects of these projects, it seems clear that they have generated several positive outcomes but not met all of the target aims. In Pori, these projects have apparently improved the local conditions in the targeted areas, but challenges that are connected to broader structural causes have proved more difficult. For instance, economic restructuring in Pori led to a significant increase in unemployment in the city's post-war housing estates following the deep economic recession of the early 1990s, and ever since unemployment rates have remained at considerably higher levels than before the recession. In general, it seems that an area-based approach can only have limited effects on addressed problems if there are broader causes of decline external to the neighbourhood. Previous studies of the strengths and weaknesses of area-based regeneration initiatives had related findings. For instance, while Andersson (2006) suggested that place-based initiatives cannot have a major effect on counteracting segregation, van Gent et al. (2009) argued that, instead, an area-based approach can be an effective way of addressing local problems and improving the market position of unpopular neighbourhoods. Hence, area-based approaches should not be simply deemed as ineffective; it is important, however, to acknowledge the limitations of these approaches in addressing specific neighbourhoods and their problems.

When considering the long-term development of post-war suburban housing estates in a wider Nordic and European perspective, there are both similarities and differences with other countries. A clear similarity, in Finland and elsewhere, is that such neighbourhoods were typically built for working class families in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, the estates have become increasingly characterized by a high share of older residents, while the share of families with children has dropped significantly (Dekker & van Kempen 2004; Hess et al. 2018). The socio-economic decline of Finnish suburban housing estates is similar to the overall situation in Western Europe, where post-war housing estates have become increasingly disadvantaged in terms of income level, educational level and unemployment rate (see e.g. Rowlands et al. 2009). A notable difference, however, that sets the estates in Pori and Finland apart from, e.g. many Swedish, Danish and Norwegian post-war estates, is the lower importance of immigration. Immigration has been perhaps the most important demographic development in housing estates in many parts of Northern and Western Europe (Musterd & van Kempen 2005; Hess et al. 2018), but in most estates in Finland it has not been a major driver of change. Instead, population ageing has been the most significant demographic trend in Finnish estates, which together with a significant decrease in population has been problematic for the maintenance of adequate services.

The issues of suburban housing estates have been a significant focus of Finnish urban and housing policy for decades and the most recent government programme for housing estate regeneration launched in 2020 (Lähiöohjelma 2020–2022) shows that such neighbourhoods are still considered to need attention and intervention. The programme addresses many of the same themes that have been highlighted in previous programmes, including preventing segregation, strengthening inclusion and enhancing the vitality of the areas. It also, however, stresses new themes such as promoting carbon neutrality, and making the neighbourhoods more age-friendly is more concretely stated than before. All in all, as a significant share of the population in Finland lives in these neighbourhoods, which also constitute a high share of the housing stock, it can be expected that the Finnish lähiö will remain central to within policy and planning in years to come.

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# 3. Planning for social inclusion in the neighbourhood of Fjell in Drammen

By Sandra Oliveira e Costa & Moa Tunström

## 3.1 Introduction

When looking at the Norwegian housing market from a Nordic perspective, a strong emphasis on ownership stands out, which limits the degree to which tenure form can be a tool for social mixing and inclusion (Kull Brofoss & Barstad 2006). In general, persons with high income levels tend to live in ownership housing while persons with lower income levels tend to live in rental housing and the distribution and mix of tenure forms can influence socio-economic residential patterns. In both Sweden and Denmark, housing tenure form is therefore an influential tool for addressing segregation. The preponderance of housing ownership in Norway is often considered a reason for the overall better situation in Norwegian post-war suburban housing areas. Although contested, it is often perceived that the co-operative tenure gives residents influence and responsibility that they do not have in public housing, and that this improves the local situation. Another reason for the overall better situation in Norwegian post-war suburban housing areas is thought to be the variation in housing types and sizes that encourages social mixing in the neighbourhoods (Kull Brofoss & Barstad 2006).

However, the challenges related to segregation in Norwegian cities are addressed using similar area-based strategies as in the other Nordic countries. Area-based programmes imply that both the problem and the solution can be found locally at the neighbourhood or urban district level. This does not mean that all initiatives, tools or decision-making are sourced at the local level; instead, the programmes are often formed as partnerships involving the state, local government and civil society. This chapter discusses an area-based programme focusing on the suburban neighbourhood of Fjell in the Norwegian city of Drammen. The problems identified and solutions constructed through this programme and the associated policy measures are revealed, in addition to relating Fjell's local policy development to the development of national policy in this field.

The redevelopment project called Fjell 2020 was chosen to exemplify area-based programmes in medium-sized cities in Norway. Urban integration efforts in Norway are often discussed from the perspective of Oslo, but smaller cities like Drammen are actually more representative of the Nordic Region because a clear majority of the population lives outside the few large cities (Smas and Grunfelder 2016). Fjell 2020 reflects the role and responsibilities of the local government to a high degree because the city is locally designed with less state funding than larger programmes in the Oslo region. Area-based programmes in the Nordic countries are often the result of national-level policy measures and funding programmes. Nevertheless, the local level roles and the tools at hand for cities are also important.

The empirical materials for this chapter are primarily local and national policy documents reporting perspectives on integration and urban renewal in Norway as well as on the Fjell 2020 urban renewal project. This material was complemented by interviews with both national and local actors.

## 3.2 The area-based approach to urban regeneration in Norway

Area-based interventions (*Områdesatsing* in Norwegian) are an important urban planning and policy measure or tool to address socio-economic and living standard inequalities in cities. Area-based tools are intended to create a better environment and improve housing and living conditions. They involve co-operation between state and local levels, and cover public spaces and the built environment, as well as social measures, e.g. the range of offered services and activities (Municipality of Drammen 2014: 11; Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation 2018).

Area-based neighbourhood regeneration initiatives have been applied in Norway since the 1970s. The focus in the early initiatives was primarily on certain inner-city areas in Oslo and mainly on physical upgrading of these neighbourhoods. Between 1974 and 1989, a range of physical regeneration initiatives were carried out in Oslo with both state and municipal funding. Their objectives included upgrading public spaces and playgrounds, improving local services, strengthening local democracy and improving local living conditions (Kull Brofoss & Barstad 2006). Although the experiences from past initiatives are mainly seen as positive, there have also been some problematic side effects, such as gentrification (Brattbakk & Hansen 2004).

According to Balke Staver et al. (2019), area-based policy interventions since the 1980s have been built on co-operation between government, the State Housing Bank (*Husbanken*), the immigration authorities and civil society. The area-based programmes were concerned with both central and suburban districts, incorporating both comprehensive urban renewal and ambitions for increased integration. The problems to be solved have varied over time and place depending on the local conditions, emphasizing various combinations of built environment, ethnicity or socio-economic issues. Both problems and solutions being targeted at specific urban areas remain local and localized; therefore, the suggested measures, which are primarily framed as addressing living standards and conditions rather than segregation, concern all residents in the target areas. However, since segregation has socio-economic and ethnic foundations and since differences in living standards and conditions often divide along ethnic lines, immigrants and descendants of immigrants remain a key target group (Balke Staver et al. 2019: 28).

Up until the 2000s, compared to the other Nordic countries, there had been relatively few area-based initiatives specifically addressing suburban housing estates. Unlike in Denmark, Finland and Sweden, such initiatives in Norway have generally not been part of wider government-funded programmes. They have been mainly smaller-scale initiatives carried out by co-operatives or municipalities as part of their regular tasks (Brattbakk & Hansen 2004). During the 2000s, the programmes were successively broadened both administratively and in their objectives, including not only built-environment-oriented measures but also social measures (Kull Brofoss & Barstad 2006). The case of Fjell illustrates this process – a local initiative that has been gradually incorporated into national programmes.

The largest urban regeneration initiative in Norway in modern times was launched in 2007 in the Groruddalen area in north-eastern Oslo, where more than half of the city's large housing estates are located (Brattbakk & Hansen 2004). The specific focus of this 10-year programme named *Groruddalssatsningen* 2007–2016 was on the four neighbourhoods of Alna, Bjerke, Grorud and Stovner, with a combined population of almost 140,000, that are the most ethnically diverse neighbourhoods in Oslo (Municipality of Oslo 2020). More than 300 socio-physical measures were carried out as part of the initiative. There were four themes: 1) sustainable transportation, 2) green structure and blue rivers, 3) housing and community development, 4) education, living conditions, cultural activity and social inclusion (Municipality of Oslo 2020). The initiative was a joint effort of the state and the municipality; the main objective was to achieve sustainable urban development and better living conditions in the targeted areas. Behind the initiative were societal changes evident in Norway and other countries, including increasing inequality and segregation (Gabrielsen 2014).

Current area-based programmes are co-ordinated by the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation. Since 2014, the Norwegian government has entered into agreements with five municipalities, agreeing on financial support allowing the municipalities to carry out area-based

initiatives. Six other ministries are also involved. The agreements have been developed co-operatively by the ministries and the municipality. They identify the challenges that exist and how the government and the municipality should approach them (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation 2019). Area-based initiatives are ongoing in Oslo, Trondheim, Drammen, Bergen and Stavanger. The programme in Oslo is by far the largest economically with a 2019 budget of more than 100 million NOK (approx. 9.8 million Euros). Trondheim, Drammen, Bergen and Stavanger are all considerably smaller, with government funding ranging from 3 to 13 million NOK (approx. 0.3 to 1.3 million Euros).

### 3.3 The neighbourhood of Fjell, a local example

Austad/Fjell is a district of 8,000 inhabitants in the Drammen municipality. Drammen is a city with 68,000 inhabitants within commuting distance south west of Oslo. Fjell neighbourhood was built to address the high need for housing in the 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, the built environment is typical for this era, consisting of 18 low-rise and 11 high-rise buildings (Municipality of Drammen 2010). This profile clearly contrasts with the otherwise dominant single-family housing in the surrounding Austad area (Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1. The location of Fjell in Drammen. Source: Google Earth**

Most of the residential housing stock in Drammen is either privately owned (62.4%) or owned by housing co-operatives (27.9%) (see Table 3.1). A small percentage rent directly from private landlords, while only 2% of the residential housing stock is municipally owned. The small share of public housing in the City of Drammen reflects the situation in the rest of Norway where municipally owned housing has been around 3% between 2015 and 2019 (Statistics Norway 2020).



**Figure 3.2.** The variable local topography shows big differences in height. Source: Drammen Live24

**Table 3.1. Ownership structure of housing stock in Norway and Drammen (2019) as percentage of total.**

Statistics Norway 2020

Type of ownership in housing stock (both occupied and vacant) 2019		
	Norway	Drammen
Private persons	73.5	62.4
Housing co-operatives	13.9	27.9
Private enterprises	7.3	7.2
Municipality	3.0	2.2
County	0.1	0.0
State	0.5	0.1
Other or not coded	1.9	0.4

The population of Drammen is diverse. About one third has an immigrant background from countries such as Turkey, Pakistan, Poland, Romania and the Baltic States (Statistics Norway 2020a). Across Norway, in 2016, 16% of the population were either born outside the country or were children of foreign-born parents (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation 2016–2017).

### 3.3.1 Challenges from the local perspective

In 2010, a report on living conditions in Austad/Fjell pointed to an increasing immigrant population, and a relatively high in-flow of young immigrants (Sørliie et al. 2010). Simultaneously, the inflow of people from other municipalities in Norway was decreasing (Sørliie et al. 2010). Moreover, the report showed that many of the inhabitants in Fjell had relatively low education. The proportion without upper secondary education had grown among young families. However, education levels among young persons of immigrant background were increasing (Sørliie et al. 2010). The report also showed that the area had a particularly high number of residents of non-immigrant background on social benefits and that average income levels were decreasing among both immigrant and non-immigrant residents. Simultaneously, the share of immigrants with low

income was growing (Sørli et al. 2010). All these trends indicated that Fjell was not attractive to Norwegian-born people and that the area showed negative socio-economic development patterns. The report was commissioned by the Municipality of Drammen and the results generated broad municipal agreement on the need to change the situation in Fjell (Project leader Fjell 2020).

A site analysis made by the municipality as part of its work toward the redevelopment of Fjell described the physical features of the area (Municipality of Drammen 2010). The analysis also defined the key challenges that should be addressed, including a lack of variation and a need to diversify the physical structure of the neighbourhood. The housing blocks in Fjell were described in the document as grey and monotonous with a somewhat impersonal character. Regarding transport and communication, walking paths were considered unsafe, car traffic and parking lots were dominating, and the location of the local bus stop was inappropriate. Deteriorating social services were also reported (Municipality of Drammen 2010). Other environmental challenges related to the lack of good quality green spaces and poor lighting. While there was sufficient access to small well-kept green areas for many people, some housing blocks were not within the recommended less than 500 meters distance to a large green space. Thus, there is potential to develop the green spaces in Fjell (Municipality of Drammen 2010).

All in all, the neighbourhood was seen as lacking the environmental qualities needed for a good everyday life and for general attractiveness. The suggested solutions were oriented both inwards, addressing internal connections, and outwards, addressing the connection to the rest of the city. The regeneration should also be seen in the context of high population turnover in the area. By refurbishing, the municipality has aimed to make the area more attractive so that residents stay in the area while new people also move in (Project leader Fjell 2020).

According to the plan for the area-based programme in Fjell (Municipality of Drammen 2014), the main challenges for redevelopment were the high share of persons on social welfare, the short life expectancy of the residents and their low level of education. All these issues require social measures that together address the main goals of Fjell 2020: i.e. to raise the level of employment and reduce the share of low-income people. Three main strategies were formulated: 1) develop services that encourage education and training, employment, community and public health; 2) improve the local environment; and 3) mobilize resources through co-operation among inhabitants, housing co-operatives, non-government organizations (NGOs) and governmental authorities.

According to Halvorsen Engeseth (2017), the predominant approach to social inclusion in Drammen is public health. The municipality had scored below the national average on indicators related to public health for several years and it had also become obvious that the health statistics followed a geographical pattern rather than an ethnic one. This finding suggests that area-based measures would be appropriate in addition to a combination of broader socio-urban renewal-oriented measures. According to Halvorsen Engeseth (2017), it has been recognized that public health should be integrated into the municipality's core tasks rather than being an additional task. As an example, public health was central to the municipal master plan and every sector was to be "measured on whether it has reached its public health goal" (Halvorsen Engeseth 2017: 65).

In conclusion, the main problems from a local perspective are related to the built environment, education, employment and public health. According to how immigrants or the foreign-born population are described and specified, their share of the population appears to play only a small role in these local challenges. The fact that housing ownership and new housing development are not primary local concerns can be understood as a result of the highly privatized Norwegian housing market. That is, the tools related to housing costs, affordable housing, etc. are national and primarily in the hands of the Norwegian State Housing Bank (Husbanken). Instead, the local perspective emphasizes the design and attractiveness of the area as the main problem, with the socio-economic situation and public health as relevant indicators.

### 3.3.2 Urban renewal begins

The area-based programme, Fjell 2020, was initiated by the municipal council in 2008 and highly prioritized by the politicians (Municipality of Drammen 2014). The municipality wanted Fjell 2020 to serve as a good example by developing co-operative models that could inspire other parts of the municipality and the country (Municipality of Drammen 2014). The project started to receive funding from the state in 2014 and ended in December 2020. At this point, all of the measures introduced as part of Fjell 2020 had been integrated into the municipality's daily operations (Project leader Fjell 2020).

In 2010, the first actions were taken by the municipality, including a site analysis as the basis for urban development and for an architecture competition. Moreover, local private and public actors as well as NGOs were invited to actively engage in the development under formal co-operation agreements. From 2013 onwards, the city council allocated 4 million NOK (0.4 million Euro) per year for upgrading of public spaces (Municipality of Drammen 2016). To implement the project, a project leader was appointed to a full-time position within the municipality. The project leader's office is located in Fjell 1 day per week (Municipality of Drammen 2014) which should be seen as an effort to establish a strong local connection to the neighbourhood. The overarching goal is to improve the socio-economic status of Fjell by raising employment rates and income levels in the neighbourhood. The target group for the project are the people living in Fjell. Three strategies guided the interventions (Municipality of Drammen 2017):

1. Service development, which refers to services that support increased employment opportunities, well-being and good health.
2. Mobilization of resources, which refers to co-operation with residents, housing co-operatives and national authorities.
3. Urban renewal, which refers to urban development for good living environments, good public spaces, activities and variety in housing opportunities.

A new project leader started in March 2019 and was responsible for co-ordinating the three strategies and ensuring communication between them. The strategies are intimately related in the sense that an attractive neighbourhood has good public and green spaces, a good supply of local activities and stimulates education and employment, all of which are seen as a basis for good public health (Municipality of Drammen 2016). Consequently, expectations are rather high for what can be achieved locally, and what an 'attractive' neighbourhood might realize by way of socio-economic improvements.

The Fjell 2020 project leader believes there are clear connections between the built environment, the kind of everyday life that happens and is enabled by the area and how other residents in Drammen perceive the area (Project leader Fjell 2020). She believes that the high population turnover can be reversed if the area becomes more attractive to live in. The interventions that occurred in the built environment in Fjell are specified in Text Box 3.1.

### **Text Box 3.1. Urban renewal measures performed in Fjell.**

Source: Municipality of Drammen 2014

- Strengthen the local centre
- Energy-efficient urban renewal
- Multipurpose sports centres/ 'activity houses'
- Renovations and extensions of the Fjell school building
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections in the district
- Improve spaces for activities and informal gatherings
- Paths to schools safe from traffic
- Increase use of green spaces, more varied green spaces
- Increase the variety of housing available in the Fjell school catchment
- Investigate new transport solutions including an access road to Fjell

There are plans to build 25 terraced houses and seven detached houses in Fjell (Municipality of Drammen 2017). The Fjell 2020 project leader reports that these are intended to add variety to the housing supply in the area. By building affordable terraced houses, the municipality's intention is to supplement the apartments that currently dominate the area with larger housing units. As the project leader points out, families have moved out of the area because of space constraints. Simultaneously, single-family homes in the surrounding area are too expensive for the low-income population in Fjell (Project leader Fjell 2020).

Another measure affecting the housing situation in Fjell is the national policy to increase housing ownership among immigrants. This has also been applied in Drammen and, in 2013, the city received a government award for social work in helping people move from renting to owning. Through so-called 'start loans', the project provided financial support to help public housing tenants to become owners of their residence. Over about three years, 111 households became homeowners through this project and 45 of these were in Fjell. The households either bought the municipality-owned housing unit in which they were residing as tenants, or they bought housing on the private market (Municipality of Drammen 2014).

Fjell 2020 plans to increase co-operation between service providers who support health developments among children and youth. Interventions must be based on research and they should be able to live on after the project ends (Municipality of Drammen, n.d.). Service development receives project funding of two million NOK (0.2 million Euro) per year and has been directed to a number of social services in the area, many of them taking place at the library or the Fjell volunteer centre (Municipality of Drammen 2014). One example is the active recruitment to children's day care through a no-fee policy for low-income families. This increased the number of children enrolled in day care. In 2010, the share of enrolled children increased from 49 to 88% in Fjell and in another area where the policy was implemented. In 2014, 97% of all children aged 3–5 years old were in day care with the additional benefit that the children's knowledge of the Norwegian language increased (Municipality of Drammen 2017). Since 2018, the no-fee policy for day care has become part of the national integration strategy.

Other important measures include collaboration with sports associations allowing children and youth in the area to try sports for free (Project leader Fjell 2020) and a school offering homework assistance with teachers available and an evening meal. The local employment agency (NAV) in Fjell is important and well known among the residents (Project leader Fjell 2020). There are, however, several reasons for unemployment that cannot all be dealt with via a job centre. Unemployment requires a more holistic approach that addresses diverse factors including the family situation, physical and mental health, and language skills (Project leader Fjell 2020).

An explicit strategy for urban renewal has been to include the residents and allow them to follow and be involved in the process through meetings and workshops. There has also been an emphasis on co-operation with different municipal sector offices and external actors. To ensure that the results of renewal become visible to residents, the city has implemented smaller projects in parallel to the larger infrastructure projects that take longer to carry out (Municipality of Drammen 2014). From the project leader's perspective, the participatory approach has engendered useful input, improved relations between the municipality and the residents, and given residents better opportunities for sharing perspectives on their own neighbourhood. The project has also been visible and, in particular, its emphasis on developing services in the area is well-known (Project leader Fjell 2020).

Between 2009 and 2013, housing co-operatives, residents and people working in Fjell, as well as pupils from schools and women from Norwegian language courses were targeted and invited to participate in Fjell development activities. One aspect of this participation was directed at the development of a park and activity space called 'Dumpa'. According to the Drammen Municipality, the development of Dumpa is a good example of a project where the residents, in addition to the housing co-operatives as landowners, have had a major say (Municipality of Drammen 2014). In 2012, there was an architecture competition for a comprehensive development plan for Fjell. In this process, the architecture companies presented their ideas on three occasions to about 100 participants to collect their early input and later feedback on the proposals (Municipality of Drammen 2014).

The renewal of the Drammen city centre is being inspired by the work carried out and lessons learned in Fjell. The focus on co-ordination and the participatory approach that were applied in Fjell 2020 is being transferred to the new project (Project leader Fjell 2020). As part of the national funding for area-based programmes, Drammen municipality received 11 million NOK (1.1 million Euros) in 2019 to continue their ongoing work, with local measures aimed at the built environment and public spaces and at developing employment opportunities, education opportunities and youth-oriented activities. According to the project leader, all of the measures developed during Fjell 2020 have been incorporated into the municipality's on-going activities. The project and its investments in the area have also generated increasing attention to Fjell as a neighbourhood, which can be both positive and negative for its reputation (Project leader Fjell 2020). In January 2020, the Fjell 2020 project was evaluated by Rambøll (Rambøll 2020). The report points out the difficulties of evaluating this kind of diverse area-based programme: i.e. many interventions, lack of quantitative measures and data, and uncertainty about long-term outcomes.



**Figure 3.3. Newly built terraced houses in Fjell. Photo: Drammen Municipality**

## 3.4 National integration policy from an urban renewal perspective

In this section, we return to the national perspective on urban integration to understand how national policies are addressing segregation, especially the challenges illustrated by Fjell 2020. We also consider how the work done during Fjell 2020 relates to current national policy.

### 3.4.1 Urban sustainability and rural strength

The Norwegian government's white paper on urban sustainability and rural strength (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation 2017) proposes that the government and municipalities collaborate in districts in the larger cities that face severe challenges relating to poverty and other social issues. Differences in housing prices are considered to be the main reason for the spatial concentrations of low-income households (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation 2017). The white paper reports that many of the residents in lower quality areas with worse living conditions are from an immigrant background. In contrast to area-based approaches, the wider urban development is discussed as an option for complementing the local focus with a more holistic approach. According to the white paper, however, the area-based programmes remain the way forward for encouraging inclusive and socially sustainable local communities through, in particular, improving services that support children's upbringing, increasing labour market participation, improving the built environment and increasing people's well-being.

### 3.4.2 A new integration strategy in 2018

In 2018, a new integration strategy was presented by the Norwegian government (Ministry of Education and Research 2018), which does not address urban segregation specifically, or discuss its causes, but points to the following problems to be solved through improved integration: 1) low labour market participation; 2) discrimination and 3) poor living standards (Balke Staver et al. 2019). In addition, the strategy refers to possible correlations between accumulated social problems and the characteristics of the housing market. In their analysis of the strategy, Balke Staver et al. (2018: 36) see this as "an indication that the way the housing market works and the way housing is distributed spatially is an important underlying issue". The strategy mentions geographically oriented area-based programmes (in Oslo, Drammen, Bergen, Trondheim and Stavanger) as a specific type of measure, but also proposes more general measures relating to housing, immigration, and sense of belonging and participation.

Housing is a central issue for urban integration. The spatial distribution of tenure forms and housing typologies influence the social pattern of a city, and research has shown that there is a strong connection between ethnic concentration in Nordic capitals and the distribution of tenure forms (Skifter Andersen et al. 2016). But, as mentioned above, a large majority of people in Norway own their own housing; therefore, residential segregation must be a direct reflection of economic divides rather than of different tenure forms (see the statistics in Table 1). Ownership is the norm and renting is considered a temporary solution. Public housing is only a very small share of the market and is targeted at vulnerable groups. The integration strategy emphasizes the importance of supporting the ownership of housing as a tool for better integration. A high share of owners leads to a good living environment, creates safety and belonging, and increases the care that people take of their area, according to the strategy. Balke Staver et al. (2019: 48) conclude: "The Norwegian experience, then, could suggest that increasing the diversity of tenure types in a particular area does not automatically reduce segregation along all dimensions, at least as long as ethnicity and lower incomes remain correlated and thus limit the choices in the open market (...)"

The integration strategy specifically targets immigrants and their challenges related to

integration into Norwegian society and, in that regard, the focus is primarily on education and qualifications. This implies that the immigrant group's situation especially needs to be addressed and that education is the key measure. However, the strategy also suggests measures for 'everyday integration', which means more area-based projects oriented towards housing, local community and social activities. In short, the policy proposals address housing (helping immigrants to buy their own home), refugee settlement (only settling refugees in areas with good integration results), safety (increased policing in certain areas, focusing on young repeat offenders and on crime prevention), labour market-oriented measures, free day care for children, more after-school activities and greater involvement of civil society and entrepreneurs.

Another important integration policy area is the national settlement strategy for newly arrived immigrants. Norway aims to spread these newly arrived immigrants around the country, thus avoiding increased ethnic segregation in cities. Together with the area-based programmes, this is considered a successful national strategy (Advisor at *Distriktssentret* 2019).

A goal of the integration strategy is to increase belonging and participation in society. Among the suggested measures are encouragement of meeting places and better understanding of values and norms in Norwegian society through language cafés, activities in the asylum centres, local social gatherings, mentoring, etc. (Ministry of Education and Research 2018). This also implies the involvement of local voluntary organizations in integration projects. The importance of a sense of local belonging was pointed out by one interviewee at *Distriktssentret* who emphasized its role in making newly arrived refugees feel at home and thus remaining in the municipalities where they were originally settled. From her experience, owning your housing contributes to establishment of this sense of belonging and is thus seen as an important step towards integration into Norwegian society (Advisor at *Distriktssentret* 2019).

### 3.5 Concluding discussion: Towards an inclusive city?

When looking at the diverse policies applied in Fjell during the 2000s, with funding coming both from the local government and the state, a complicated image appears. There are several overlapping interpretations of the challenges and the implemented response measures in Fjell. From local and national policy documents, we recognize perceptions of problems in the built environment, in the health status of the population, in the local housing market and so forth. The implemented policies have a greater focus on employment, public health and the local environment than on integration of immigrants or on inclusive housing policy. This is also clear from the project evaluation (Rambøll 2020), in which integration has very minor importance and the focus is instead on living conditions (e.g. health, employment), regardless of residents' backgrounds, and on the general attractiveness of the area for current and future residents and visitors.

Problems and solutions in the case of Fjell are, as in most area-based programmes, focused on the targeted neighbourhood. Measures oriented to the locality carry a lot of promises, such as increased attractiveness of the local environment, increased local engagement and improved situations for children. However, it is challenging to assess the specific effects of investments in a neighbourhood. In this case, Fjell is not an isolated laboratory and its local development is intimately related to wider societal development in the city of Drammen and in Norway as a whole. Issues such as employment availability, resources necessary to enter higher education, structural discrimination, and proximity to businesses, cultural institutions and services are all important to a feeling of inclusion but are all hard to solve at a neighbourhood level. There is a risk that area-based measures, like some of those implemented in Fjell, become largely symbolic, addressing symptoms of segregation in a specific locality while the city faces this challenge as a whole and needs to be addressed beyond the 'segregated' area. In the Norwegian case, there is also the risk that area-based measures only address the symptoms of the privatized housing market and not the segregated housing market.

Perhaps paradoxically, the lessons of the area-based approach are that urban development is more than local and more than spatial. It is simultaneously diverse, social, spatial, local and

regional. The tools available to local government are limited, particularly in the Norwegian case, by the privatized housing market. In a context where home ownership is the norm and rental housing is a scarce and often precarious resource, and considered as only a temporary solution, the local government has a limited ability to use housing development as a tool for inclusion.

As a neighbourhood, Fjell is already dominated by owner-occupied and co-operative housing, but it has had a high turnover of residents despite the belief that home ownership contributes to a sense of belonging and thereby more stability (Advisor at Distriktssentret 2019). Norwegian housing policy has been oriented to owner occupancy since the 1950s and efforts have been made to support specific groups to access housing, including as a part of the integration strategy (Søholt and Wessel 2010). The conditions for tenants in rental housing in Norway can be rather insecure with the risk of discrimination and evictions. Simultaneously, this temporary housing is very important for newly arrived immigrants when establishing their new lives in Norway. Despite this issue, affordability appears almost as a non-issue in the context of the key housing policy tool – the state start-loans (see e.g. Nordahl 2020). In 2014, 45 households in Fjell were helped to buy their own homes and the immigrant population is increasingly present in the owner-occupied market. The specific impact on inclusion and integration of 45 additional owner-occupied dwellings in an area is hard to measure. Such assistance addresses the symptoms of a segmented housing market,<sup>2</sup> but it does not reduce the need for secure rental housing for immigrants and other vulnerable groups trying to establish themselves in Norway. The Norwegian case is interesting since it further illustrates that, despite home ownership 'for all', socio-economic segregation still occurs. Privately owned housing does not necessarily solve social problems or prevent segregation. Instead the dominance of home ownership may deprive the city of a planning tool because it is unable to pursue social mixing through mixed housing tenure.

In addition to the inherent contradiction of using area-based programmes to solve city-wide and societal problems, the Norwegian case also highlights that although area-based programmes are time-limited, they tend to cover quite long periods, are difficult to evaluate and often need to be prolonged. Inclusion and integration require long-term engagement, which a project-based strategy cannot always deliver. The evaluation of the project (Rambøll 2020) clearly illustrates this. More than limited project-based efforts, a strategy must encompass long-term planning and maintenance. However, it is promising that several initiatives in Fjell have become permanent and that the city intends to transfer the lessons learned from Fjell to the renewal of the city centre.

The generally positive evaluation of Fjell 2020 (Rambøll 2020) finds that many of the set targets have been reached. However, it does recognize the challenge of evaluating such a diverse urban development project because of the shortage of data and statistics, and the difficulty of separating project developments from other developments. The evaluation claims that the area has become more attractive, but the documentation of this is rather vague. Many of the changes to public spaces and the built environment are reported as successful, but the evaluation does not make any clear statement about the main goal of the project: increasing the level of employment and decreasing the share of residents with low income.

The measures introduced in Fjell in 2014, even though many oriented towards supporting persons in a vulnerable position, were broadly directed towards all residents and to the everyday integration promoted by the 2018 national integration strategy. In the policy documents, the targets were 'families', 'children', 'youth' and 'low-income families', and did not specifically consider immigration background. The evaluation (Rambøll 2002) follows the same narrative, focusing primarily on the neighbourhood, its residents and their living conditions, and not on the neighbourhood as being segregated or its residents as in need of integration. The project indicators and goals were about health, employment and life quality rather than 'integration'. Using Søholt's (2010) terminology, and differentiating between integration and inclusion, this is an example of an inclusion strategy since it concerns a broader group of people. According to Søholt (2010), integration concerns newcomers, while inclusion concerns 'everybody in society'. In this way, inclusion also encompasses the descendants of foreign-born immigrants, who cannot

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2. The segmented housing market reinforces segregation since different social groups tend to be concentrated in different tenure forms which in turn tend to be clustered spatially. See e.g. National Board of Housing, Building and Planning 2007.

be considered as newcomers.

To conclude, Fjell 2020 illustrates that urban inclusion takes a long time and should perhaps not be seen as a project goal to be evaluated but rather as continuous work for planners and other public officials. It concerns all inhabitants in a city, not just residents in a 'segregated' area and not just those with an immigrant background. Finally, the integration is not strictly local and area-based, but instead city-wide.

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# 4. Urban planning policy in the Danish 'ghetto' – overcoming or creating barriers to inclusion?

By Sandra Oliveira e Costa & Moa Tunström

## 4.1 Introduction

In Denmark, a key strategy in response to urban segregation has recently been the so-called ghetto policy. Primarily during the 2000s, the national government promoted planning- and housing-oriented strategies and measures to increase the social mix in cities and overcome barriers between neighbourhoods. These strategies referred to the existence of vulnerable areas as ghettos. The explicit use of the term 'ghetto' in policy makes Denmark a unique case in the Nordic context since it is not generally applied in the other Nordic countries, and this chapter discusses the national policies focussed on the ghetto. How is the term used in this context? What are the consequences of usage for urban development measures related to segregation? By looking at the national strategy discourse, we scrutinize how the use of the concept of ghetto has developed and been made meaningful in the Danish policy context. Area-based urban integration policies in Denmark are often framed as 'ghetto policies', which has attracted attention and spurred debate both in Denmark and elsewhere. The concept of ghetto is used in policies, by the media and in everyday language in Denmark; therefore, it has a role in shaping the broader urban discourse and legitimizing specific governmental urban policy measures (Bakkær Simonsen 2016). In the Danish context, the term 'ghetto' makes it possible to talk about and create a common understanding of certain problems and measures as they relate to specific geographical areas.

The policies related to the ghetto are not only housing and urban planning related. They also address integration, social issues including education, language and social welfare, and crime and punishment. In particular, this chapter scrutinizes the housing and urban planning aspects of ghetto-related policies. However, the boundaries are fuzzy, and the policy areas often overlap in the sense that arguments for social intervention may be spatialized and area-based, or measures related to the built environment may be argued from a social perspective.

In Denmark, certain areas have been officially designated as ghettos since 2010, and these are the objects of area-based interventions. Even before 2010, there were discussions about useful indicators and about the types of areas needing special attention. At that time, these areas were referred to as *charged*, *exposed*, etc. (see Indenrigsministeren et al. 1994 which uses the Danish term *socialt belastede områder*). The terminology is not simple or strict, but it is important.

The French sociologist Loïc Wacquant (2013) argues that there are no ghettos in Denmark. He concludes this using a definition of a ghetto as a functionally, spatially, institutionally, culturally, economically and socially segregated area. He considers a ghetto as being an area with a socio-economic and institutional system of its own. In contrast, the Danish housing areas that are referred to as ghettos are, according to Wacquant, in many ways a part of the city as a whole because the population is ethnically heterogeneous and the borders to the rest of the city are porous and traversed daily (Schultz Larsen 2015). However, both Wacquant and the Danish sociologist Troels Schultz Larsen emphasize that even though there are no ghettos in Denmark, there are structural problems related to class, employment, housing and segregation that must be discussed and dealt with (Schultz Larsen 2015; Wacquant 2013). According to them, this could and should be done without using the term 'ghetto'. Schultz Larsen (2015: 415) calls the discussions about disadvantaged, deprived or multi-ethnic areas a "conceptual chaos" and he argues for the designation of "neglected housing areas". It is clear that designation matters and

affects how the areas, and their related issues, are understood and discussed. In this chapter we refer to ghetto policy, even though the concepts included in various documents or applied in distinct institutional and political settings can vary. We start our discussion with an understanding that the term and its use are contested. It will become clear that the use of the term as a policy concept varied during the 2000s, which further underlines its contested character.

This chapter begins with the understanding that official plans and policy documents are important as expressions of norms and values. They prescribe and decide, they give authority to certain actors, and they address certain places and social groups. Here, we have selected national policy documents concerning the 'ghetto' or 'deprived areas' in Denmark as our empirical material. We see this material as reflecting norms and values pertinent to the city and urban development, and also as contributing to the creation of norms and values. When studying these documents, we have specifically focused on the definition and use of the concept 'ghetto', and of concepts related to the ghetto. What problems and solutions do the naming of the ghetto or deprived area imply? What social groups and political actors are emphasized, and to whom is the responsibility for development appointed? How has the discourse changed over time? The selected policy documents are listed in Text Box 4.1.



Figure 4.1. The figure shows the locations of ghettos in Denmark in 2018. Orange indicates 'the toughest ghettos', dark blue indicates 'ghettos' and light blue indicates 'vulnerable areas'. A distinction between ghettos and vulnerable areas can be found in Box 4.5. Source: Adapted from Økonomi og Indenrigsministeriet 2018

**Table 4.1. List of tough ghetto areas at 1 December 2019 (numbers below the column headings are the criteria for ghetto designation)**

Source: The Danish Transport, Construction and Housing Agency based on excerpts from Statistics Denmark's research. Translated into English by Nordregio.

		Population	Unemployed	Descendants & immigrants, non-Western	Convicted	Primary education	Average income
		(>1,000)	>40%	>50%	≥2.03%	>60%	<55%
Area	Municipality	1 Jan 2019	2017–2018	1 Jan 2019	2017–2018	1 Jan 2019	2017–2018
Mjølnerparken	København	1.659	38.0	80.5	2.02	75.2	49.6
Tingbjerg / Utterslevhuse	København	6.626	25.7	73.0	2.04	75.4	52.8
Tåstrupgård	Høje-Taastrup	2.181	27.0	65.1	1.88	83.0	52.5
Gadehavegård	Høje-Taastrup	2.189	36.2	56.4	2.07	71.8	55.2
Agervang	Holbæk	1.414	41.7	56.2	1.38	67.4	61.7
Ringparken, Slagelse	Slagelse	2.008	41.2	57.0	2.07	70.2	57.7
Motalavej	Slagelse	1.674	38.6	51.7	2.20	72.1	60.1
Vollsmose	Odense	7.767	49.5	76.6	2.70	77.2	53.3
Stengårdsvej	Esbjerg	1.342	43.6	79.0	2.69	84.1	55.9
Sundparken	Horsens	1.588	47.8	69.1	1.21	78.4	54.7
Munkebo	Kolding	1.465	40.5	61.7	1.59	72.2	65.5
Skovvejen/ Skovparken	Kolding	2.324	39.8	65.9	2.35	72.7	59.4
Finlandsparken	Vejle	1.586	41.1	74.0	1.03	77.3	62.7
Bispehaven	Aarhus	2.237	43.9	67.5	1.96	71.9	56.8
Gellerupparken/ Toveshøj	Aarhus	5.191	49.3	80.8	2.96	82.0	53.9

**Text Box 4.1. The Danish national policy strategies for ghettos 1994–2018.**

Report from the Urban Committee, from the ministers responsible for Interior Affairs, Housing, Justice, the Church, Social Affairs and Education (Indenrigsministeren, Boligministeren, Justitsministeren, Kirkeministeren, Socialministeren og Undervisningsministeren 1994)

Report on well-functioning housing areas – new social tools, from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (By & Bolig Ministeriet 2000)

The governmental strategy against ghettoization (Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Invandrere og Integration 2004)

The ghetto back into society. Dealing with parallel societies in Denmark (Regeringen 2010)

Deprived areas – the next steps. The government's initiative for a strengthened effort from the Ministry of Urban Planning, Housing and Rural Affairs (Ministeriet for By, Bolig og Landdistrikter 2013)

A Denmark without parallel societies. No ghettos in 2030, from the Ministry of Finance and Interior Affairs (Økonomi- og Indenrigsministeriet 2018)

## 4.2 The 'ghetto' in the Danish context

The areas that are referred to as ghettos or deprived areas in Danish cities can be divided in two types. They are either 'degraded building blocks' located in urban centres, architectonically diverse and of different tenures, or they are suburban modernist public housing estates from the 1960s and 1970s, the era when prefabricated elements, industrialized construction and materials, such as concrete, were new. The second category is the largest, as most of the areas that are labelled as ghettos are modernist estates in suburban locations (Holek & Bjørn 2008). Today, the dwellings are generally in good shape, but the areas suffer from lack of services. They have a low status in some cases because of issues related to societal challenges, such as unemployment, social welfare and violence. A relatively large share of the inhabitants in these areas have an immigrant background. Holek and Bjørn (2008) argue that while there were investments in buildings and area improvements from the 1980s to the 2000s, a weak urban design perspective has made the results unsatisfactory. They further argue that there has been no comprehensive analysis of the built environment or the urban design of the areas and they, along with others, feel that large-scale interventions in the building stock, such as demolitions are appropriate (Bjørn & Holek 2014; see also Kabell & Sandberg 2014). In this analysis, the primary problem of the ghetto is urban design and the lack of physical integration with the rest of the city, not the immigrant population. As we will see later in this chapter, the governmental discourse offers a rather different narrative.

A predecessor to the ghetto policy in Denmark was the Copenhagen neighbourhood regeneration programme called 'kvarterløft', which was ongoing primarily during the second half of the 1990s. This policy package targeted dwellings and neighbourhoods, from either the early 1900s or the 1960s and 1970s, suffering from both social problems and deteriorated buildings. Despite this programme's focus on the built environment, Holek and Bjørn (2008) argue that the approach in Danish urban regeneration has been mainly social, whereas there has been a stronger emphasis on the built environment in other European countries. While supporting the demolition of houses in ghetto areas, Holek (2018) also points out housing blocks that are demolished must be replaced, since they represent affordable housing. Residents will otherwise be forced to settle in peripheral and even poorer parts of the country, exacerbating the existing urban-rural divide.

### 4.2.1 The concept of ghetto finds its way into Danish housing and integration policy

Mikaela von Freiesleben (2016) tracks the Danish use of the term 'ghetto' back to 1692, when it was suggested that Denmark should establish a Jewish ghetto. The next time the word appeared was in the 1900s, when there was a Jewish quarter in Copenhagen, populated by Jewish people that had escaped Russian persecution (von Freiesleben 2016). During the 1960s, the term 'ghetto' appeared in debate about labour migrants and their concentration in certain housing areas, and 'tendencies to ghettoization' are mentioned in the 1970s. von Freiesleben (2016) distinguishes between different understandings of the ghetto. In the historical discourse the term 'ghetto' refers to specific quarters inhabited by Jews, while in the American discourse, the term refers to ethnicity (black), class, socio-economic status and the degree to which individual voluntarily live in a specific urban area. In the immigrant discourse, the ghetto is a place where immigrants live (von Freiesleben 2016).

According to von Freiesleben (2016), discussions about the ghetto as a place with certain socio-economic characteristics where immigrants live, became stronger during the early 1990s. During this time, local Social Democratic politicians from municipalities west of Copenhagen, expressed concern about the risk of ghettoization. For instance, the Ishøj municipality started to apply restrictions on foreigners holding rental contracts. This was contested and led to Fremskrittspartiet (Progress Party) suggesting that housing organizations should be allowed to refuse refugees and migrants as residents (von Freiesleben 2016). As a result of protests from local politicians, a cross-ministerial committee was formed and their policy report stated that

the term 'ghetto' is a "misleading concept" (Indenrigsministeren et al. 1994: 1). Nevertheless, the term had a central position in debates during the 1990s (von Freiesleben 2016). Ten years after the cross-ministerial committee's report, the ghetto finally became a clear policy issue when the Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen spoke of the problem of 'immigrant ghettos' and related them to challenges of unemployment, crime, isolation and lack of language skills (Schultz Larsen et al. 2013).



**Figure 4.2. New residential houses for students on Karen Blixens Boulevard in Gellerup 2019. Gellerup is one of the largest ghettos in Denmark in terms of population size. Demolition of older houses has made space for new development. Photo: Sandra Oliveira e Costa**

#### **4.2.2 'Ghetto' – a misleading term for urban and social problems?**

The 1994 report (Indenrigsministeren et al. 1994) is primarily a documentation of the problems in socially deprived areas and an effort to contribute to the solution of those problems. The starting point is a concentration of socially deprived persons, either Danes or foreigners (this is explicitly stated), in certain housing areas or buildings. The report states that the areas in question sometimes are called ghettos, but argues the term is misleading (Indenrigsministeren et al. 1994). Instead, the areas are characterized by: expensive rents, high turnover of residents, many residents who are unemployed or on welfare, buildings in poor condition, problems with drug abuse, violence and vandalism, and a high share of immigrants and refugees, whose first language is not Danish, with limited access to the housing market. According to the report, these kinds of problem areas have existed in Denmark since the 1980s. The main indicators used to define deprived areas in the 1994 report are presented in Text Box 4.2.

#### **Text Box 4.2. Indicators of deprived areas in 1994.**

Source: Indenrigsministeren et al. 1994

Number of people from certain refugee countries (per 10,000 inhabitants)

Number of non-Nordic, non-EU (1993), non-North American inhabitants (per 10,000 inhabitants)

Number of residents

Number of families on social welfare (per 1,000 families)

Number of unemployed (per 1,000 inhabitants)

Number of early retired persons (per 1,000 inhabitants)

Public housing units

Criminal law violations (per 1,000 inhabitants)

Children and young placed in other homes (per 10,000 inhabitants)

In addition to these socio-economic indicators, immigration background and public housing tenure are also considered as indicators of deprived areas in the report. It is later stated that the social problems are connected to high-rise housing and to the 'urban built environment',<sup>3</sup> in addition to problematic concentrations of refugees, immigrants and families who are dependent on the welfare system (Indenrigsministeren et al. 1994). The report thus presents a complex social problem intimately related to urban planning and the characteristics of the built environment.

The report proposed various measures and some of them are specifically related to housing policy or the built environment:

- Housing councillors
- Renovation of the built environment and surroundings for better quality and to contribute to a better composition of residents in the area
- More private housing used as social housing
- Economic measures for upgrading of housing areas, social measures, etc., to make these areas more attractive for residents with resources.

According to Schultz Larsen (2015), this committee's report consolidated the perspective of area-based measures as being the solution to social problems in Danish cities. It emphasized the issue as a local problem connected to specific neighbourhoods, instead of as a problem of the housing market and the unequal access to housing of various social groups. Schultz Larsen claims that the area-based perspective transformed public housing from being considered a solution in the welfare state into, instead, being the producer of social problems.

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3. The 'urban built environment' (in Danish, «bymæssig bebyggelse») is identified several times as a factor related to immigrants and social problems.

### 4.2.3 Changing composition of residents – a planned process of gentrification?

In 2000, the Ministry of Housing (under a Social Democratic government) published a report suggesting tools by which municipalities could develop well-functioning housing areas (By & boligministeriet 2000). The risk of "ghettoization" is mentioned (By & boligministeriet 2000: 17) and the Ministry recognizes vulnerable areas, i.e. housing areas where socio-economically strong residents move out while vulnerable groups stay. A 'weak composition of residents' is used to describe the inhabitants of such areas, and the focus is then on socio-economic problems, high turnover and vandalism.

It is worth noting that this policy document expresses a holistic view of the city's social composition. It states that socio-economically strong residents are needed in vulnerable areas, and that housing actors in the more well-functioning parts of the city, and not only the public housing companies, should take on a social responsibility. As early as the preface of the publication, the Minister for Housing and Planning states that the aim of the introduced tools is to attract more resourceful inhabitants to the deprived areas (By & boligministeriet 2000). This could be argued to be conscious gentrification. Among the instruments presented are:

- *Flexible renting of public housing.* As a way to achieve a better social mix, up to 90% of the housing stock in a public housing association can be selectively rented out and the companies can define their own tenancy criteria.
- Up to 25% of both public and private rental housing should be in the form of social housing and it should be strategically located to create a social mix.
- Municipalities can set a limit on the maximum number of residents allowed in an apartment, to avoid crowding.
- *Economic support directed to deprived public housing areas* to, e.g. decrease rents, support renovation and strengthen work against deterioration and ghettoization.

### 4.2.4 The ghetto policy discourse is established

In 2004, a new conservative government came to power, a strategy against ghettoization was published (Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Indvandrere og Integration 2004) and the Prime Minister Rasmussen gave a speech in which the 'ghetto' was central. Thus, a key policy issue had emerged. Whereas ghettoization had been merely indicated as a possible development in 2000, in this new strategy, it was promoted to the title of the document, and there was both a change in terminology and an increased focus on the importance of ethnicity and immigration in the process. The use of 'ghettoization' indicates that it was seen as an ongoing process that needed to be arrested. In this process, areas are physically, socially, culturally and economically cut off from the rest of society. This is not intentional, but is the result of failed urban planning, integration and employment policies.

While the focus of this chapter is on housing and urban policy aspects of the ghetto policies, it should be noted again that social policy measures are also important. The ghetto refers to a specific type of place and while the policies are very much area-based, ghettoization is a process that is related to local housing and planning measures as well as to broader societal issues such as education, social welfare and community.

Mixed housing tenure is important in this strategy. Homogenous areas, in terms of tenure form, are considered to generate homogenous societies of residents. Ghetto areas are characterized by populations dominated by the unemployed, refugees, immigrants and their children. Essentially, these are stigmatized areas that are at risk of becoming enclaves, or parallel societies. Segregation is closely connected to place of residence and spreading at-risk groups more evenly across cities is a way of working toward integration and social inclusion. The strategy shows an understanding of the socio-economic barriers to the housing market that ghettoization creates for newly arrived immigrants. While there is an overall focus on immigrants and immigration as a reason behind ghettoization, urban planning is seen to have

contributed to a segregated city. A set of characteristics of ghettos according to the strategy are presented in Text Box 4.3. When exemplifying neighbourhoods that are possible ghettos, according to these characteristics, two statistical indicators are added: share of adults with social benefits and share of immigrants and children of immigrants (Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Indvandring og Integration 2004).

**Text Box 4.3. Characteristics of the ghettos in 2004.**

Source: Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Indvandring og Integration 2004

**Characteristics of ghettos in 2004**

1. High share of adults on social benefits
2. Low education levels
3. Size of public housing units
4. Residents with resources move out while residents lacking resources move in
5. Lack of private firms and investments
6. Share of immigrants and children of immigrants

The strategy states that there are five to ten ghettos in Denmark, and other areas at risk of ghettoization. The proposed area-based policies against ghettoization concern housing distribution, employment, crime prevention and the attractiveness of housing areas. The attractiveness to different groups of the built environment is important and some ghetto-areas are uniform and monotonous, and without the life that characterizes other urban areas. The goal is to obtain a social mix of residents. The measures to achieve this goal relate to both the social and the built environment: 1) the option for housing companies to deny a rental contract to people on social benefits; 2) a programme board that will track local developments; and 3) a set of interventions for integration. A budget of 100 million DKK was reserved for "social, labour oriented, cultural and physical interventions" (Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Indvandring og Integration 2004: 49). The instruments to change the composition of residents primarily relies on the ability to hinder certain groups from living in certain urban areas and mixing of tenure forms by, e.g. selling off public housing to private actors. The prior flexible renting policy is again emphasized in 2004 and is seen as a key measure for spreading 'weaker' residents more evenly over the city. Moreover, residents that live in social housing should not be placed in ghetto areas.

It seems that the strategy against ghettoization views social mix as a statistical endeavour, rather than as a step toward more diverse and inclusive cities. As in 2000, it is possible to label this policy as a form of planned gentrification by its focus on hindering vulnerable groups from residing in certain areas and by the introduction of owner occupation in areas that are dominated by public housing.



**Figure 4.3. Aerial photo of Gellerup, one of the largest neighbourhoods that fulfils the ghetto criteria in Denmark. Empty spaces where demolition has taken place can be seen in the figure. In some of these spaces, construction has already been finalized. The student housing seen in figure 4.2 is one such example. Source: Google Earth**

#### 4.2.5 The ghetto is becoming a parallel society

A change in Danish policy discourse occurred through the 1990s and 2000s, from a situation where ghetto is not considered a suitable term (1994), via ghettoization (2000 and 2004), to a situation in 2010 where ghettos definitely exist and are listed and measured. In 2010, a government under the same ruling parties as in 2004, released a strategy with the title *The Ghetto Back into Society*<sup>4</sup>. In this strategy, “parallel societies” are described as the threat rather than ghettoization and the title makes clear that ghettos do now exist. Bakkær Simonsen (2016: 86) notes that “[m]aking ‘ghetto’ a measurable and concrete thing (rather than a ‘fluffy word’)” was a step towards political action for the government.

By 2010, there were 29 ghettos; they are areas where Danish norms and values are not part of the societal structure. These ghettos are housing areas that ‘we’ - the government or the Danish society as the active voice in the strategy - call ghettos, and they are strictly defined (Regeringen 2010). Another difference from earlier is that in 2010, only immigrants, and specifically ‘non-Western immigrants’, and the children of immigrants are the groups in focus. Earlier, the majority population was also addressed in ghetto policy documents.

According to Bakkær Simonsen (2016: 83), it is the 2010 policy that gives the Danish ghetto an ‘official and state-sanctioned definition’ and she refers to the 2010 policy report as ‘The Ghetto Plan’. For the first time, the term ‘ghetto’ was officially defined in Danish policy and Denmark is the only country that has an official definition (von Freiesleben 2016). This definition, Text Box 4.4, is strictly statistical and lacks a theoretical background (von Freiesleben 2016: 127).

4. Translated from Danish: *Ghettoen tilbage til samfundet. Et opgør med parallelsamfund i Danmark*

#### **Text Box 4.4. The definition of ghetto in 2010.**

Source: Regeringen 2010

At least two of the following criteria must be fulfilled:

- More than 50% of residents are non-Western immigrants and their children
- More than 40% of residents are persons aged 18–64 years old who are not connected to the labour market or in education
- More than 2.7% of the inhabitants have been found guilty of selected criminal offences

A new topic appears in the introduction to the 2010 government policy: Danish values, which here refer to democratic aspects of society, such as equality between men and women and respect for the laws of society, and these values are contrasted to values in “parallel societies” with a high concentration of immigrants (Regeringen 2010: 5). It is a “spatialization of otherness”, according to Bakkær Simonsen (2016: 90). She also argues that “[...] the ghetto can be seen as an antagonistic identity that arises through the discourse on Danish identity invoked in The Ghetto Plan” (Bakkær Simonsen 2016: 96). The ghetto as a symbol is used to contrast with Danish national identity, hence strengthening the national discourse. Within this discourse, the ghetto can never be integrated into the Danish society, on the contrary, it has the effect of uniting Danish society against the threat of ghettos (Bakkær Simonsen 2016).

There are five types of interventions addressing the challenges of the ghettos. They concern the urban structure and physical environment, the social attributes of tenants, children and juveniles, employment and crime. The policies proposed for reducing the number of ghettos are similar to earlier policies: e.g. area-based measures related to housing policy, built environment and social policy. Similar to earlier initiatives, a central policy goal is the balanced composition of residents and the way to achieve this is to reduce access to the areas for people who are unemployed and refugees or immigrants from non-Western countries. Municipalities and housing associations can use flexible renting to influence the population composition and thereby give socio-economically stronger residents easier access to the ghetto areas. There is also the potential to give subsidies to residents who move out of ghetto areas, and to make it easier to evict unwanted residents. There is a somewhat stronger emphasis than previously on the built environment measures and the image of housing areas. Comprehensive plans for improving the built environment of the areas are encouraged and economically supported, isolation is identified as part of the problem, and the areas are characterized as not very inviting or attractive. Thus, in addition to tenure form and socio-economic and ethnic profiles, urban design is now seen as a reason for an area’s problems. It is stated that the ghettos need to open up more to the surrounding society, and the possibility of housing demolition is introduced and seen as economically appropriate.

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**“To demolish one or more blocks can encourage a positive development in deprived areas by making room for new forms of housing, new transport infrastructure or business spaces.”** (Regeringen 2010: 10, translated)

#### 4.2.6 The ghetto concept is downplayed

Policies from 2013 reflect the change to a Social Democratic-led government and also marks a rhetorical change with the term 'ghetto' no longer used in governmental policy directed to 'deprived areas' (*Udsatte boligområder – de næste skridt. Regeringens udspil til en styrket indsats*) (Ministeriet for by, bolig og landdistrikter 2013). The list of indicators for deprived areas is longer than before, with income and education level included; however, the policies are similar to the previous pattern. The list of ghettos still exists, although not explicitly, instead these are renamed *deprived areas*. In 2013, the urban planning perspective got somewhat greater emphasis, recognizing the importance of transforming housing areas into attractive urban districts with similar functions to the surrounding city, e.g. business, culture, education and commerce. Renovation, upgrading of public spaces, new infrastructure and strategic demolition will improve the deprived areas. Among the measures are other types of regulations including making it easier to open businesses in the areas.

Despite the change in government and rhetoric, it is clear that the right-wing governmental policy from 2010 set the tone for the discourse in this policy field. As threats to Danish society, cultural marginalization and deviant behavioural norms and values remain central aspects of the policy. While the Social Democratic governmental policy from 2000 on well-functioning housing areas gave the municipalities information about possible actions, the 2013 policy adopted a different approach, stating what *shall be done* and what *shall be achieved*. The government now pushes harder for implementation and result-focused interventions that accord with the prescribed goals.

#### 4.2.7 Reintroducing the ghetto and the parallel society

In 2018, the right-wing government reintroduced the term ghetto into the political discourse. Housing or urban design are not emphasized, but instead the problem is strongly framed as an issue of values, identity and immigration (Økonomi og Indenrigsministeriet 2018). However, these issues are spatialized as ghettos or parallel societies. The ghettos need to be "erased", and the parallel societies "broken down" (Økonomi og Indenrigsministeriet 2018: 6). Analysing use of the term parallel societies, von Freiesleben (2016) claims that it is primarily used in discourse about non-Western or Muslim immigration, and by positioning Muslims as the Other, a Danish community is created (von Freiesleben 2016). In the 2018 policy, the focus on non-Western migrants is explicit and they are made out as a threat to the Danish sense of community and a cost to society, and it is necessary to promote their integration. According to this document, the extensive immigration to Denmark and the individual immigrant's unwillingness to become integrated is primarily responsible for the existence of ghettos or parallel societies (Økonomi og Indenrigsministeriet 2018).

The criteria for a ghetto are once again updated, and there are now two categories of problem housing areas: deprived areas and ghettos. The ghetto definition is focused on the share of inhabitants with a criminal record, share of unemployed and share of non-Western immigrants and their children (Text Box 4.5).

#### **Text Box 4.5. Definition of deprived areas and ghettos in 2018.**

Source: Økonomi og Indenrigsministeriet 2018

**A deprived area** fulfils at least two of the following five criteria:

More than 50% of residents are non-Western immigrants and their children

More than 40% of residents are persons aged 18–64 years old who are not connected to the labour market or education

More than 2.7% of the inhabitants are guilty of selected criminal offences

More than 60% have only elementary school education

The average gross income in the age group 15–64 years is less than the average in the region

To be considered a **ghetto**, an area is on the list of deprived areas and fulfils at least two of the underlined criteria above, or has a share of non-Western immigrants and their children that is more than 60%.

The new measures were similar to those introduced earlier and focused on urban regeneration, privatization, strategic demolition of public housing and on development of new private housing. Again, the rather obvious ambition was to gentrify the targeted neighbourhoods, but the 2018 strategy offered a new set of powerful instruments to wholly reshape the ghetto areas in terms of both the residential composition and the built environment. With this policy, the state has the power to require housing companies and municipalities to decommission whole units owned by the housing company if it has not shown satisfactory results after years of interventions. The decommissioning will be done either by selling the real estate or by its demolition. If the housing company and the municipality do not fulfil the task, the state gets has the option to take over (Økonomi og Indenrigsministeriet 2018).

Demolition can also be argued for from an urban design perspective because it will reshape and open the ghettos to the rest of society. In addition to the urban planning-oriented measures, there are also stricter social policies. For example, changing the social composition is encouraged through steering mechanisms such as withdrawal of social subsidies in response to a lack of language skills or shutting local schools directing children to schools in other neighbourhoods.

The present government led by the Social Democrats took office in 2019, but they have already participated in various agreements, e.g. for fighting parallel societies in Denmark in 2018. These policy measures were retained in 2020 (Personal communication, Transport- og Boligministeriet, 26 March 2020), closing the political circle on the subject of ghettos in Denmark.



**Figure 4.4.** A new city park in Gellerup, in front of the buildings from the 1960s and 1970s. Photo: Sandra Oliveira e Costa



**Figure 4.5.** Part of the residential building block in the centre of the picture has been demolished to open up a new entrance to the Gellerup neighbourhood. The building has been kept because its prominent views give it great value. Photo: Sandra Oliveira e Costa

## 4.3 Conclusions and reflections

This chapter argues that terminology matters. To call a neighbourhood a ghetto, as has been done in national policy, is not an objective description of a place. The use of this term encourages people to look at these places as ghettos, and thereby, in some senses, also *constructs* the ghettos. The use of ghetto in public policy can be seen as a 'spatialization of otherness' (Bakkær Simonsen 2016) and while constructing the ghetto, the term also constructs an alternate Danish society outside of the ghetto where integration goes on, employment exists and families of more than one generation of Danish descent reside. This is not the case in the ghetto.

The chapter has built a temporal narrative by following the term 'ghetto' through several key national policy documents. The narrative indicates that since the 1990s, Danish national policy has gone from considering ghetto a misleading concept, to warning of the risk of ghettoization, to designating specific neighbourhoods as ghettos and then, instead, warning of the existence of so-called parallel societies, a rather strong term that tends to include whole neighbourhoods and not only specific demographics. The narrative has also made clear that political leadership contributes to the use of the term, with conservative governments using the term explicitly, while Social Democratic governments prefer to downplay it. Nevertheless, since 2018, political parties from both sides have agreed on on-going strategies for these neighbourhoods. Finally, the narrative has identified an increasingly heavy focus on immigrants and their descendants and even on certain groups of immigrants over time. Again, the problem of the ghetto is externalized and not part of what is supposed to define Danish society. The problem of the ghetto is seen as coming from other parts of the world, through immigration. Being born in the non-Western world or having parents in this group is seen as an inherent problem from a ghetto policy perspective, which risks creating barriers to inclusion. Danish-born citizens of such immigrants will have to relate to this conception of them, which means they will always, in some sense, be seen as outsiders, even risks, to the Danish society.

Many measures are part of the ghetto policy and some are very similar to steps taken in other Nordic countries. However, the Danish approach includes clear ambitions for gentrification and privatization. The research literature (see e.g. Hackworth & Smith 2001; Murphy 2008) refers to this as third-wave gentrification, a state-led or state-supported strategy occurring in city centres, and beyond, and following a neo-liberal urban governance logic. Public housing is seen as part of the problem that the policies aim to combat, and key measures are to give housing companies more ability to say no to housing applicants, to transform public housing to private ownership, to change the socio-economic composition of residents and to demolish public housing. The statement that was done in the strategy from 2010, relating to a more holistic understanding of segregation and expressing that wealthier areas should address the needs of the more vulnerable population, is not as visible in the following strategies. Similar considerations have been brought up in the debate by e.g. Holek (2018) who expressed a need to replace demolished housing units in the ghettos with other affordable alternatives.

Contrary to the opinion of Wacquant, who claims that there are no ghettos in Denmark, the policies, reviewed in this chapter, have showed that ghettos are reinforced in the discourse approach of the Danish government. As has been shown, this is not the Danish government's standpoint, since the term is explicitly used in several consecutive policies relating to area-based urban integration and inclusion. Referring to housing areas as potential or actual ghettos appears designed to emphasize certain socio-economic, ethnic or built environment-related characteristics and problems, and to support radical solutions. Thereby, the ghetto denomination of certain neighbourhoods has been normalized through clear, albeit changing, government definitions, ghettos do exist in Denmark. Additionally, the ghetto list is considered an important policy instrument. However, our review of policy making in the 1990s and 2000s identifies a growing list of ghettos and a growing list of indicators. Nevertheless, the ghettos seem elusive.

The reason for persistent use of the term 'ghetto' is not easy to understand. Danish policy does not treat the ghetto as a socio-economic and institutional system of its own but, as described above, uses several progressively changing indicators related to, e.g. employment and descent, to identify certain parts of cities as problematic. Perhaps the reasons are historical because the term has been used in Denmark for several centuries, and there was an actual Jewish ghetto in

the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the term is not completely alien to Danish society. A more contemporary reason may be that the term is useful in politics since it de-emphasizes responsibility. It is not clear who is making neighbourhoods into ghettos – is it the residents that are shutting out the rest of the city, or is it policy makers that are keeping the residents in? The statistical definition of the ghettos adds to this uncertainty. If the share of residents in a delimited area with non-Western descent becomes over a certain level, or if the share of residents in unemployment is reduced below a certain level, the designation as a ghetto, or not, can be altered. This means that the specific 'problem' (e.g. share of unemployed) does not have to be fully solved, but rather just a few residents need to move in or out for the situation to change. Further, ghettoization, referring to the process of (or risk of) becoming a ghetto, appears almost as something happening by itself. Other terms like 'deprived' or 'neglected' housing areas (Schultz Larsen 2015) point, to a higher degree, to a responsible actor that has actively deprived the area of something or neglected its responsibility of care.

This study of ghetto as an expression of Danish policy, with its focus on residents born in a non-Western country, invites reflections about the effect of the designation on the residents. Changes in the neighbourhoods, carried out as part of ghetto policy, may have had both positive and negative effects for the neighbourhoods, their residents and the people that have had to leave the neighbourhoods. But for non-Western born residents, whether residing in ghettos or not, how does being regarded as problematic citizens affect their experience of integration into the Danish majority society? This is a question that could be further investigated to help determine the effects of national ghetto policies on Danish society as a whole.

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# 5. From military base to neighbourhood or segregated area? Socio-spatial integration in Reykjanesbær, Iceland

By Hjördís Rut Sigurjónsdóttir

## 5.1 Introduction

The neighbourhood closest to Keflavik international airport in Iceland, recently named Ásbrú, stands out from others in the municipality of Reykjanesbær in terms of its built environment, housing stock and residential composition. These differences are largely a result of its unique history as a former American military base, which was a fenced area with restricted public access and sharp separation from the rest of the municipality for decades. However, a sudden change occurred in 2006 when the US military ended its operations in the town. This area and its entire housing stock suddenly became incorporated into the rest of the municipality. Another major change in Reykjanesbær in recent years is a significant increase in the immigrant population. This chapter explores two key issues arising from this background. Firstly, it investigates how the local authorities in Reykjanesbær addressed challenges and opportunities posed by a sudden increase in immigration and what strategies for inclusion and integration they initiated. Secondly, it examines how the municipality sought to prevent segregation while converting a former military base into an ordinary neighbourhood.

Among the central questions addressed are: how can a former military base, which greatly differs from the rest of the town, become an ordinary neighbourhood? What types of barriers to social inclusion in Icelandic society and the surrounding community are faced by residents of the neighbourhood? How well is the municipality prepared for fast population growth and does a rapidly increasing immigrant population demand special measures?

The town's mayor, Kjartan Már Kjartansson, has spoken openly about how the changed composition of the community has created challenges and how the new residents must be met with understanding and friendliness for their welfare and so they may thrive in the municipality. Simultaneously, this is also beneficial to the municipality of Reykjanesbær as immigrants are an important part of the society and carry out many important functions (Vikurfréttir 2018).

This chapter is based on interviews and desktop research. To better understand the municipality's challenges and actions concerning inclusion and integration, semi-structured interviews were conducted with various actors in Reykjanesbær, including the mayor, a project manager for diversity and inclusion, the director of environment and planning, a project manager for business development, the director of education, the director of welfare, employees from a labour union, immigrants,<sup>5</sup> teachers from the elementary school in Ásbrú and the upper secondary school in Reykjanesbær, and people teaching Icelandic to foreigners. In Reykjanesbær, and especially in Ásbrú, the question of inclusion has recently become a prominent subject on the municipal agenda. However, there is no prior research on these issues in the local context of Reykjanesbær; thus, the interviews play an important role in providing insights on the situation in the municipality and complement the municipal documents, reports and available literature that have also been used in this study.

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5. Five of the participating immigrants were recruited while visiting Miðstöð símenntunar á Suðurnesjum (MSS), a lifelong learning in Reykjanesbær. Two more were added after meeting during the case study. All participated willingly.

## 5.2 Background and context

The municipality of Reykjanesbær, located in south-western Iceland, has experienced one of the most significant increases in population in the country over recent years. Since 2007, the population has grown by 58% (Statistics Iceland 2019), and with a population of approximately 19,000 in 2019, Reykjanesbær surpassed Akureyri in population size and currently ranks as the fourth most populated municipality in Iceland (Reykjanesbær 2019).

The population increase in Reykjanesbær has been driven by a number of factors. One of these is the growing tourism industry in Iceland and Reykjanesbær's proximity to the country's main international airport, Keflavík, one of the largest workplaces in the country (KPMG 2018). As the number of travellers has increased substantially in recent years, the workforce has grown and influenced the development of Reykjanesbær. Also, rising real estate prices in the Greater Reykjavík area have made the available and relatively more affordable housing in Reykjanesbær attractive. Further, the level of services in Reykjanesbær is comparatively high, with a wide selection of stores, restaurants and recreational activities on offer. The educational institution, Keilir, established in the Ásbrú area of Reykjanesbær in 2007, offering preliminary university studies and free bus rides to the capital for university students, is another factor attracting new citizens to the municipality.

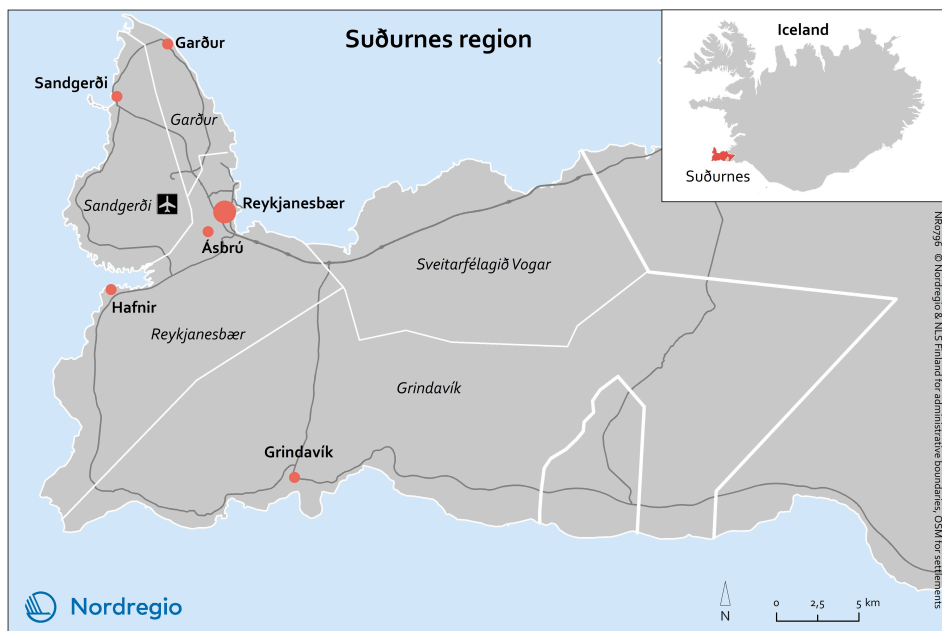
The fishing industry has traditionally been and remains economically important to the Suðurnes region, but its importance has decreased in Reykjanesbær with the growth of tourism. The US military base was also an important source of work in the region, but the 60-year US military presence in Iceland ended in 2006. Approximately 1,000 Icelandic employees worked at the military base for a long period of time, but the number of jobs had fallen to 593 in 2006 when it was closed (Guðmundsdóttir & Guðmundsson 2008; as cited in Eydal 2006). This significant loss of jobs provoked a greater economic shock. Around 500 jobs were also lost in activities associated with the military's presence (Guðmundsdóttir & Guðmundsson 2008; as cited in Júlíusson & Ísberg 2005). While the booming economy in Iceland at that time initially compensated for this shock, this boom was short-lived. Two years later, the global economic crisis struck Iceland, which experienced a great economic downturn. Unemployment reached a historical high of 8.6% in 2011, and the situation was even worse in the Suðurnes region where it reached 14.5% (Reykjanesbær 2018; Velferðarráðuneytið 2013). In addition, the number of passengers passing through Keflavík International Airport declined by almost 25% between 2007 and 2009 (KPMG 2018). Registration of new companies in the region and elsewhere also fell sharply following the economic crisis, hitting its lowest point in 2010. New registrations of companies in Iceland has since increased, mainly in the capital area and also in Suðurnes (Byggðastofnun 2017).

At times, the socio-economic reputation of Reykjanesbær has been relatively weak with comparatively low income and educational levels (Erlingsdóttir 2009). In 2016, the average salaries in the Suðurnes region were 90% of the national average and this region (with one other) had the lowest salaries in Iceland (Byggðastofnun 2018). In addition, the educational level of people seeking employment in the region has been considerably lower than the national average: e.g. in 2013, 72.5% of those seeking employment had only primary school education, while the national figure is 44%. The proportion of people in serious arrears has also been reported to be higher in the Suðurnes region than elsewhere in the country (Ministry of Welfare 2013). In response, boosting the image of the community and its infrastructure was considered important. Emphasis was placed on improving the schools, the environment and structures that can increase the residents' self-esteem. The authorities have also actively sought to diversify the labour supply in the area, but with varied success (Erlingsdóttir 2009). One major project that failed was an aluminium smelter on the town's beachside that was supposed to be functioning in 2010. The building is still unfinished, mainly because of the low market price of aluminium and the absence of an energy supply guarantee. It now appears unlikely that the plant will be realized (Kjarninn 2017).

An important step toward improving the socio-economic situation in Reykjanesbær following the exit of the US military was the establishment of the Keilir educational institute in the Ásbrú neighbourhood in 2007. One of the school's main aims is to increase the educational level in the

region by not only educating the children but also their parents. The preliminary university studies at Keilir have created possibilities for further education among those who have no more than compulsory school education. By 2018, over 3,000 students had graduated from the school during its 12 years of operation (Keilir 2018). About a third of those who have graduated are from the local area and close to 90% have continued their university studies (Keilir 2017). Hence, the school has successfully contributed to the objective of improving the educational level in the region.

After a period of depressed labour market, the tourism boom in Iceland has resulted in increased activities in Keflavík International Airport with positive impact on the local economy (KPMG 2018). The largest employment sector is now in transportation and storage (Byggðastofnun 2018), which was not foreseeable a few years ago. However, this could also swiftly change again (KPMG 2018). Of the Nordic countries, Iceland had by far the largest increase in visitor numbers from 2008 to 2014, with the highest average growth observed in the Suðurnes region (176%). Overall, Suðurnes seems to have overcome its greatest challenges and is now considered to be among the regions with the greatest potential for future growth and development in the whole Nordic Region (Grunfelder et al. 2020). Primarily due to its nearness to the capital, Reykjavík, it had the highest net immigration and the highest gross regional product per capita of all rural regions in the Nordics, at least prior to the bankruptcy of WOW Air in 2019, which had a negative effect on employment in the region.



**Figure 5.1. The location of Ásbrú in the municipality of Reykjanesbær in the Suðurnes region in Iceland. Source: Map by Eeva Turunen, Nordregio**

## 5.3 Ásbrú: a former military base turned into a neighbourhood

A key factor enabling the substantial population growth in Reykjanesbær over the past 15 years was the cessation of US military operations in the town in September 2006. After the US military left, its former base that had previously been a fenced area with very restricted public access suddenly became a public space with a vast number of vacant dwellings. All of the 1,250 housing units (i.e. apartments) that had previously belonged to the military suddenly became part of Reykjanesbær, which was a substantial addition to the previously existing stock of 4,600 dwellings in the municipality (Reykjavik Economics 2017). A development corporation named Kadeco was founded to administer the real estate on the former military base and the aim was to convert the area into civic use and to prevent the settlement that had once been the eleventh largest in the country from turning into a ghost town. In Kadeco's annual reports, this was called the largest 'recycling project' in Icelandic history (Kadeco 2009, 2011).

Following analyses and a marketing campaign, the goal was to build up a scientific knowledge community that could support new employment opportunities. There was considered to be great potential for developing the area, especially in relation to the international airport, and emphasis was placed on co-operation between different entities. To maximize the positive effects on the local community and not distort the local housing market, the residential properties were not offered for private sale (Kadeco 2007). The focus was on promoting education and knowledge in the area to bring the region up to the levels of other parts of the country. The previous educational deficit is seen as a product of the previous ample supply of well-paid jobs that did not require higher education, mainly in fisheries or in servicing the US military.

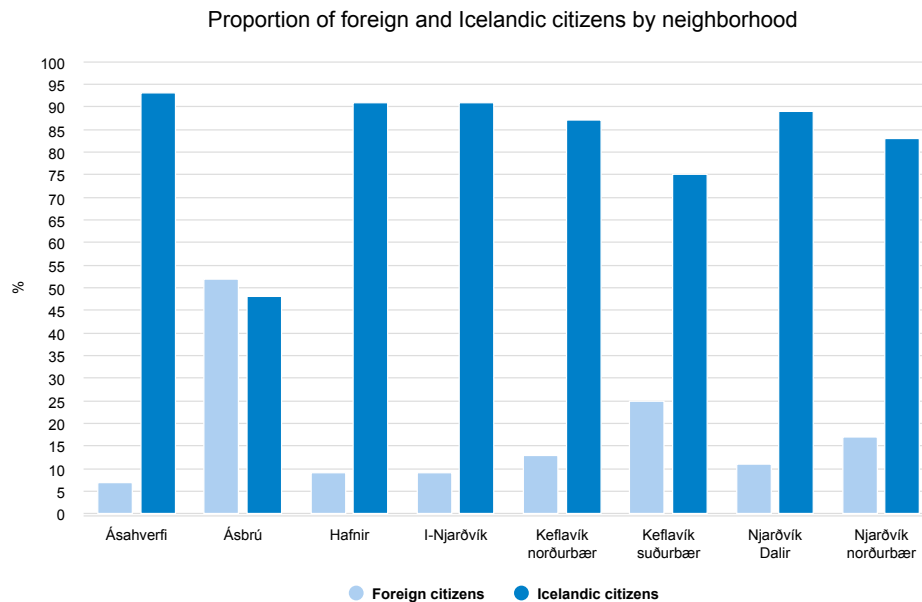


**Figure 5.2.** Ásbrú is situated in the lower part of the picture, while the rest of Reykjanesbær is located mainly on the other side of the road, closer to the sea. Photo: Reykjanesbær

### 5.3.1 Low rents attracted residents

The first inhabitants moved into the former military base in August 2007, and by the end of the year 1,100 students, many at Keilir, had settled in the area's rental apartments. Others were students in other schools, many studying at universities in Reykjavik and taking advantage of the lower housing expenses. Free bus rides to the capital area were included in the rent for several years (Kadeco 2007). However, the housing company decided to reduce costs and discontinued the free bus rides in 2015 (Vísir 2014). The number of students in Keilir exceeded expectations and contributed to the population increase in Reykjanesbær. The excess supply of rental apartments pushed down prices below those in other neighbourhoods in Reykjanesbær and much lower than in Reykjavík. Lower rents often attract people with low incomes and few possessions (see e.g. Van Beckhoven et al. 2009), and indeed, in the first years after the economic crisis, there were increased applications from people with lower incomes, individuals on disability pensions and single mothers (Ministry of Welfare 2013). The immigrant population has recently increased substantially in Ásbrú and it is now home to a larger proportion of immigrants (52%) than in other neighbourhoods in the municipality (Figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.3. Proportion of foreign and Icelandic citizens by neighbourhood.**



As described previously, the residential make-up of Ásbrú has changed rapidly. These changes were observed by Júlíusdóttir and Sigurðardóttir (2009) who studied single parents' living conditions in Ásbrú and found that financial and housing viability were the main reasons for their choice of residence. This study was carried out at a time of substantial increase in the share of single-parent households in the municipality, rising from 8% to 13% of all families between 1998 and 2008.

The population increase in this new neighbourhood was not without growing pains, especially for a municipality that faced severe financial complications following the economic crisis and is still the country's most indebted municipality. In Iceland, the municipality must provide the inhabitants with designated services. However, the housing stock in Ásbrú was given to the State and has been exempted from property taxes. These properties have now been sold for 10 billion ISK (approximately 73 million Euros). A member of parliament for the constituency argued in 2017 that the municipality should get a share of the profit to cover services, especially since its economy is under the supervision of a control committee and it has been unable to obtain credit (Friðriksson 2017).

### 5.3.2 Redevelopment of Ásbrú and future prospects

Ásbrú is unusual in Reykjanesbær because of its history and outlook. It is a unique built environment with an unusually high share of rental housing. The area is located up on the heath where weather conditions are quite harsh, and it is sharply separated from other neighbourhoods by the main road to Iceland's international airport. It is a young neighbourhood that came into public use overnight, and many residents may feel rootless, lacking attachment to the area, in contrast to people in longer established Icelandic neighbourhoods and towns. However, this is starting to change to some extent, according to the interviews, as there are now children who have lived there most of their lives, thus contributing to their stronger attachment.

The old military base was originally referred to as 'the old defence area' or 'the old military base', which were names that some experienced negatively because of the connection to warfare, as Kjartan Þór Eiríksson, the director of Kadeco, explained in an interview. To start a new chapter, the new name Ásbrú was given to the neighbourhood in 2009. The new name was appropriate to the area's new purpose as a community of entrepreneurs encouraging research and sustaining the labour market (Víkurfrettir 2015). The name comes from Norse mythology, where Ásbrú, also called Bifröst, is the bridge between Asgard where the gods live, and Midgard where the humans live. This bridge represents the rainbow.



**Figure 5.4. Ásbrú in November 2018. Picture: Hjördís Rut Sigurjónsdóttir**

Despite the major changes that this former military base has undergone, including a new name and purpose and the addition of new residents and workplaces, the neighbourhood still stands apart from its neighbours. Ásbrú consists only of apartment buildings and the share of rental apartments is very high by Icelandic standards. Representatives from the planning department of Reykjanesbær and former employees of Kadeco explained that the place has a particular legacy that has been difficult to turn around. From the beginning, it was acknowledged that it could be challenging to create a lively and positive atmosphere in the area. A generous amount of money was used in marketing, but little was achieved.

Ásbrú has many of the characteristics of low-density suburbs, separate land use and long distances between homes and services, which together promote car use (Alta 2018). To make

Ásbrú more attractive, the intention is to increase its density using a mix of building types and services, especially types of housing other than the currently available apartment buildings, add green spaces and create more shelter from winds and weather. Mixed settlements along with increased availability of recreational activities are expected to give the neighbourhood a more holistic feel. In addition, given its location, it is also considered important to connect the area with the rest of the town with better public transportation (Alta 2018). The municipal plan describes public transportation as needing to be a viable choice and that its development will be continued in parallel with the increasing population (VSÓ Ráðgjöf & Kanon Arkitektar 2017). The frequency of bus trips to and from Ásbrú will become every 20 minutes (Reykjanesbær n.d.) and a new route system was introduced in the autumn of 2019. Until recently, the time interval between buses was 30 minutes and up to 1 hour on weekends and evenings, but the plan is that passengers will also have more frequent access at all hours (personal communication, Sigurðardóttir, 2019).

### 5.3.3 A neighbourhood of temporary residence

Ásbrú has undergone regular changes since its establishment and can be described as a 'transient' area, i.e. a neighbourhood where many residents stay, or intend to stay, for a limited time only, until they can afford to move elsewhere (see e.g. Murie 2018). Murie (2018) has drawn attention to the connection between high population turnover and low neighbourhood attractiveness. This seems to be the case in Ásbrú, which is considered less attractive than many other neighbourhoods, according to employee interviews. A survey carried out among residents in 2018 reflects Ásbrú's transience: e.g. only 31.3% of the respondents have lived in Ásbrú for more than five years and only 23.3% believed they will still be living there in five years or more (Residential survey 2018).

The interviewed teachers from the grade school Háaleitisskóli in Ásbrú believe the neighbourhood is sometimes ignored and the children are somewhat isolated. However, around the time of the field work in late 2018, a new arrangement had been established with special shuttle transportation between Ásbrú and the youth centre in the town. The Háaleitisskóli teachers also believe that the atmosphere among the school children in Ásbrú is healthy and the environment is free of class division. Economically, everyone is fairly equal, and no one is really rich, which reduces economic pressure and label envy. Both municipality employees and the teachers believe that it will not be long until a group of young people have their roots in Ásbrú and hopefully have good memories of the neighbourhood.



**Figure 5.5. Walking home from school in Ásbrú on a Friday in the beginning of November 2018.**  
**Photo: Hjördís Rut Sigurjónsdóttir**

As described in interviews, the vision of the Reykjanesbær planning department is that Ásbrú will become a more mixed neighbourhood with denser settlement and more services, but this vision has met a few challenges. Until now it has, e.g. been a challenge to get grocery stores to open branches in the neighbourhood, despite some commerce and services operating successfully in Ásbrú, such as the Langbest restaurant and hotels. Companies such as the Verne Global data centre, Algalf which cultivates microalgae, the Advania ICT company and the GeoSilica start-up company all have operations in the neighbourhood.

However, the greatest barriers to inclusion appear to be the large private owners of construction rights, who require high financial returns and prioritize this over the long-term interests of the community (Interview 2). This means that even though the municipality has the necessary planning authority, and its intention and future vision is to create a lively urban district, the profit-driven agendas of private property owners and businesses need to be overcome. According to the municipality's housing plan (Reykjanesbær 2018), the number of apartments is expected to increase in Ásbrú by 650 by 2030, which is 30% of the planned apartments in the municipality. Of these, 250 are expected to be ready by 2021, 150 by 2025 and a further 250 by 2030. Not all of these apartments will be newly constructed, since there are still apartments within the US military housing stock that have not yet been rehabilitated according to Icelandic standards (Reykjanesbær 2018). However, the housing plan does not specify the type of housing to be constructed in Ásbrú.

## 5.4 Strategies for inclusion and integration in Reykjanesbær

The addition of the Ásbrú neighbourhood was not the only significant change in Reykjanesbær in recent years. As already touched upon, immigration has become a major influence on demographic development in the municipality, especially in the Ásbrú neighbourhood. The immigrant population in Reykjanesbær grew substantially, between 2015 and 2018, from 10.83% to 22.39% of the total. The number of immigrants<sup>6</sup> in May 2018 was 3,815 (Statistics Iceland n.d.) and projections suggest that this number will rise rapidly in the near future. Large employers have stated that their future structures and plans are largely based on immigrant labour (KPMG 2018).

Even though immigration has grown extensively in recent years, the Icelandic population remains rather homogenous. In Iceland, the proportion of foreign citizens grew from 1.9% of the population in 1996 to 7.6% in 2008 and then to 12.6% in 2018 (Statistics Iceland n.d.). Migrants started to arrive in the mid-1990s on temporary work permits, mainly to work in the fishing industry, food production and service industries. After the turn of the century, as citizens of the new member-states of the European Union in 2006 joined the labour market with considerable impact, job opportunities increased in construction, (Skaptadóttir & Innes 2017). At this time, immigrants were primarily viewed as a temporary work force with a governmental policy on integration of immigrants first introduced in 2007 (Skaptadóttir & Innes 2017).

In a study by Skaptadóttir and Innes (2017), participants reported that the Icelandic language was their main integration difficulty when moving to Iceland, followed by the weather and the dark winters. Language has an important cultural role and is one of the main symbols of Icelandic nationality, but it can also serve as a means for exclusion. Learning Icelandic opens doors to the society, but a segregated labour market gives limited opportunities for practice, leading to othering. The language becomes a tool to exclude rather than to include (Skaptadóttir & Innes 2017).

As the immigrant population has increased significantly and changed the composition, the population in Reykjanesbær and their needs, this has put pressure on social services, health care and educational institutions. However, local authorities found that immigrant residents did not use the available incentive payments for children's sport, recreation and art activities to the same extent as native-born residents. The tradition of sports and music is strong in Reykjanesbær as an important aspect of the community life; thus, the non-participation of the immigrant group raised concerns. Another factor of concern is the low participation in Reykjanesbær in the previous municipal elections. The voter turnout was only 57% compared to the national average of 67.6%. The election participation among people with foreign citizenship (other than Nordic) was only 15.3%, according to a survey conducted after the elections (Statistics Iceland 2018).

According to the mayor, Kjartan Már Kjartansson, it became clear early in 2018 that measures needed to be taken. Kjartansson suggested a special employee to be hired for multicultural affairs to ensure that these issues to get deserved attention (Vikurféttir 2018). The municipality's multicultural policy states that integration must be mutual, and efforts must be made for immigrants to have the same opportunities and services as others, and for them to be able to share their knowledge, education and experiences, for their benefit and for the community (Reykjanesbær n.d.).

There are more than 60 nationalities among the immigrant population in Reykjanesbær. Poles are by far the largest group. Over 30 languages are spoken in the kindergartens and elementary schools in Reykjanesbær. In recent years, according to the interviews, the makeup of immigrants coming to Reykjanesbær for work has changed (Interview 3). The educational level is higher than before and fewer seem to come strictly for economic reasons. In parallel, large companies with operations on the airport site, have increasingly demanded English proficiency. Further, large groups of foreign workers came temporarily for construction work at the airport. This is reflected

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6. An immigrant is a person who is born abroad and has parents who are also born abroad, as well as grandparents. The second generation of immigrants are individuals born in Iceland but have parents who are both immigrants.

in the relatively high proportion of men living in Ásbrú, where there are many small apartments and rooms for rent. According to planning analysis (Alta 2018), the increase in one-person households, in which men were 58% in 2017, has exceeded increases in other types of families.



**Figure 5.6.** Artwork in Háaleitisskóli, the elementary school in Ásbrú. Photo: Hjördís Rut Sigurjónsdóttir

### **5.4.1 The immigration population and separated communities**

Polish people are the largest immigrant group in both Reykjanesbær and Iceland as whole. In Reykjanesbær, around half of all immigrants are of Polish origin, but despite their prevalence, this group is rather invisible and does not actively participate in the community, according to the interviews. Hence, the local authorities are reaching out to the large Polish population in their efforts to encourage integration and inclusion. The first step, after some earlier unsuccessful attempts, was to meet the Polish ambassador and his wife to investigate how the municipality could better engage with the Polish population. The advice was to teach the youth of Polish origin about the Polish language and about Polish society and culture. In that way, the municipality could strengthen them as individuals and avoid their experience of being in disadvantaged positions in both Iceland and Poland. Since the meeting with the ambassador, the municipality has made efforts to increase interactions with the Polish population and promote their cultural heritage with a cultural festival to commemorate Poland's 100-year anniversary of independence in November 2020.

The project manager for diversity and inclusion joined the municipality late in the summer of 2018. Her focus has been to identify where immigrants' interests need to be addressed within the municipality. Since most immigrants in Iceland have come for work, they have therefore not been considered in need of special measures; thus, the development of multiculturalism in Iceland is less advanced than in the other Nordic countries. There is no Icelandic precedent for Reykjanesbær to follow. Therefore, the local authorities have learned from sister cities in the Nordic countries: Trollhättan in Sweden, Kerava in Finland and Fredriksstad in Norway. Based on the interviews, authorities are concerned about and wish to avoid segregation, prejudice and racism; thus, they are developing actions which focus on the children of immigrants as recommended by the sister cities.

One emphasis is to teach students from multi- and bilingual homes the Icelandic language in school. Through the exchange of experiences with the Nordic sister cities, the importance of the native language has become increasingly clear. Experiences within the municipality have shown that the value of a good knowledge of the native language is helpful for learning other languages and for education in general. It has been demonstrated that only knowing the informal language used in everyday communications is not sufficient for effective education in upper secondary schools and beyond. Low language skills are believed to be one of the reasons for a high school drop-out rate among students with foreign backgrounds. Even though teaching of the native language to residents with immigrant backgrounds is considered to be highly important, it is only provided on a volunteer basis, which may be problematic and inefficient. The municipality sees its main task as to provide facilities for the teaching.

### **5.4.2 Measures and needs in the educational system**

There are no integration programmes outside the school system for new immigrants in Reykjanesbær. This has not been considered urgent anywhere in Iceland, in part because most immigrants come on their own, usually after finding a job. As carried out by educational centres, Icelandic language teaching is subsidized (75%) by labour unions for people on the labour market, but otherwise integration is in the hands of the immigrants and their own network. In the interviews, immigrants agreed that learning the Icelandic language is the key for really integrating into the community, but that it is difficult to learn. People differ in their ability to learn and in the effort required; e.g. some accept having limited access to the Icelandic society and feel it sufficient to have most of their social interactions with their own countrymen. Many said it is easier for English speakers to get to know the natives since Icelanders can easily switch to English. However, this also makes it difficult to practice Icelandic. Even a native English speaker participating in a language course in Reykjanesbær interviewed for this study believed that command of Icelandic was necessary for real community integration.

The Department of Education in Reykjanesbær is more experienced and more sophisticated in working with multicultural issues than other departments in the municipality. A special

consultative committee with representatives from all elementary schools and kindergartens in Reykjanesbær has been established to address changes in the student body. This committee is supported by an employee from the town's educational faculty who oversees co-ordination of the work and provides a forum in which people can compare their notes and experiences in addressing the needs of students with foreign backgrounds. Around 24% of all students in primary schools come from multilingual homes, of which almost 64% need special tutoring in the Icelandic language (Interview 1).

An action plan on immigration issues for the years 2016–2019 adopted by the Icelandic parliament requires more native language education at all levels to be provided to immigrant children. A previous proposal that was not approved suggested that 75% of students with Icelandic as a second language should also access education in their native language by 2018. Instead, regular assessments should state whether and how a student is being taught in their native language (Alþingi 2018; Alþingi 2015–2016). The Ministry for Education and Culture is responsible for this provision for the period 2016–2019 with 4 million ISK allocated (approximately 29,000 Euros). No actions had been implemented by the end of 2018. However, in 2019, a working group began drafting a policy in this area, with consideration of diverse groups of students from different cultures.

According to the interviews, in most cases, tutoring in native languages depends on dedicated individuals who are willing to sacrifice their time for the cause. The Polish school in Reykjavík has good leverage and many from the Polish community in Reykjanesbær drive to Reykjavík on Saturdays for their children to participate. A teacher from Reykjanesbær has also voluntarily taught Lithuanian in Reykjavík for 15 years. The mayor and other officials in Reykjanesbær recognize that native language teaching must be emphasized and be on the political agenda. There have been discussions with the Polish school in Reykjavík about opening a branch in Reykjanesbær or purchasing Polish teaching for children in primary school, as has already been done in Hafnarfjörður municipality (Interview 1).

The upper secondary school in Reykjanesbær (Fjölbrautaskóli Suðurnesja or FS) started a pilot project to support students with foreign backgrounds and reduce high dropout rates. Laws on data protection made finding the target group problematic and student names were the only trail to follow. This search revealed relatively few students with foreign backgrounds, substantially less than the share of immigrants in the municipality. The students were invited for personal interviews to understand their situation and evaluate their status. This showed a clear need for special support. Their limited understanding of Icelandic, and also sometimes English, was found to be a major educational impediment. The background and experience of the group was varied; thus, support will need to be individual or through small groups. Time has been allocated in every week during which students can drop in to seek help with schoolwork. In addition to this special time, the students can contact the project leader whenever they need to during school hours.

Particularly challenging, according to interviews in the schools, is the situation of the Polish students, who are the largest group. They often group together, and many do not have adequate knowledge of neither Icelandic nor English. In the upper secondary school, it is obvious that many do not blend in with other students, are quick to find friends within the Polish group and are often reluctant to receive educational support. Teachers participating in an introductory meeting about the pilot project seemed to agree that many Polish students would have benefitted from tutoring in their native language during primary school as well as receiving extra support in English. However, many were doing well in mathematics. Representatives from the upper secondary school expressed the importance of keeping the Polish students in school to prevent them from stagnating in jobs requiring low qualifications. The support that can be provided is limited: the State is responsible for upper secondary schools and allocates only 700 thousand ISK (around 4,500 Euros) a year to assist students from a foreign background. The task is much more expensive in schools like FS because the school authorities must allocate funds from other areas to properly address the situation.



Figure 5.7. Happy girls playing between classes in Háaleitisskóli, the elementary school in Ásbrú. Photo: Hjördís Rut Sigurjónsdóttir



**Figure 5.8. Taking a break between classes at the upper secondary school in Reykjanesbær.  
Photo: Hjördís Rut Sigurjónsdóttir**

## 5.5 Discussion and concluding remarks

Reykjanesbær has undergone considerable changes in a relatively short time and the local authorities are dealing with multifaceted challenges in promoting inclusion. The municipality openly recognizes the need for action and has taken steps towards becoming a more inclusive city, although different terms are sometimes used in defining actions. This chapter has looked especially at the growing immigrant population and socio-physical inclusion in the Ásbrú neighbourhood.

Ásbrú is different and detached from Reykjanesbær in numerous ways: i.e. spatially, historically, in appearance and in terms of population composition. Various suggestions seek to make the neighbourhood more attractive, inclusive and integrated with the municipality. The high proportion of rental housing in Ásbrú has been considered unfavourable for its future development. More diverse ownership with an increased share of privately owned apartments has shown positive effects. After a marketing campaign, the new name Ásbrú has established itself in people's minds and the 'old military base' has become more distant. As time passes, the past may be increasingly forgotten to open up space for a new history of the area.

The local authorities have recognized the need to promote the inclusion of all inhabitants of the municipality. The first step was to hire a special project manager for diversity and inclusion with the authority to actively look for ways to avoid exclusion and to encourage everyone's participation in the community. The manager has started to analyse the situation and to open a dialogue with the large Polish community. Together they are planning a national celebration, which will increase their visibility in the local community.

Over recent years, a focus has been on high-quality teaching in Icelandic in grade school. Nevertheless, knowledge of Icelandic among many immigrant pupils is often not sufficient, causing difficulties and even drop-outs. The advice from the Nordic sister cities was that also teaching the pupils' native languages can be a way to avoid exclusion and to better increase the youth's future possibilities.

The outcomes of Reykjanesbær's efforts at integration and inclusion of its immigrant's population informed by the experiences of the Nordic sister cities and adapted to the Icelandic context remain unclear. Since the municipality turned its focus toward inclusion of immigrants, it has set an example for local-level action in Iceland, where there have been few other such initiatives. Many of the challenges are known and steps are being taken; however, the main barrier to greater inclusion seems likely to be funding to carry out the diverse ideas and progressive measures.

Another possible barrier in Ásbrú is that the developers interested in building new housing in the neighbourhood may be less concerned about social and housing diversity than about maximising profit by focusing property development on building apartments. This interest is contrary to the municipal vision of mixed housing and specifically not building new apartments. By increasing services, density and making the surroundings more attractive, the intention is that Ásbrú will become a neighbourhood where people will stay longer and envision their future lives. The potential for increasing local services will improve as the neighbourhood grows. According to the municipality's housing policy, 30% of new housing in Reykjanesbær up to 2030 is expected to be in Ásbrú (Reykjanesbær 2018). However, one of the challenges for the municipality is to encourage private housing actors to engage with long-term inclusion issues related to housing costs, service accessibility and better public spaces in the neighbourhood. Ásbrú's future development will depend substantially on how the municipality's emphasis on mixed housing will be integrated with the revenue-seeking agendas of the housing companies.

Future studies will have the opportunity to evaluate progress towards inclusion recognizing that actions are needed in more places than just Reykjanesbær. The bankruptcy of WOW Air in April 2019, and its effect on the Reykjanesbær community, is another interesting topic for future analysis since the airline was strongly involved in increasing activities at the airport, which is the largest employer. This could not be assessed during this study because the bankruptcy was too recent. According to first responses, the airline dispersal may have considerable consequences through direct and indirect job losses. It is unclear whether WOW's gap will be filled, or the

labour market impacts will be long term, affecting particularly the immigrant population in Reykjanesbær and Ásbrú's development.

However, the authorities in Reykjanesbær have previous experience in dealing with challenging situations: i.e. the disappearance of the US military and the later aftermath of the economic crisis. Changes in local demographics, population size and general development in recent years have had major impacts, but also provide opportunities. The local authorities are aware of this and are willing to reach still further to provide equal opportunities for all residents and to make the most of competences in the community.

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## Interviews

### Interview 1

Group interview with employees at the municipality of Reykjanesbær. 1 November 2018.

Participants:

Kjartan Már Kjartansson, Mayor

Hera Ósk Einarsdóttir, Director of Welfare

Hilma Hólmfríður Sigurðardóttir, Project Manager for Diversity and Inclusion

Helgi Arnarson, Director of Education

### Interview 2

Group interview with employees at the municipality of Reykjanesbær. 1 November 2018.

Participants:

Guðlaugur H. Sigurjónsson, Director of the Environmental division

Sigurgestur Guðlaugsson, Project Manager for Business Development

Hilma Hólmfríður Sigurðardóttir, Project Manager for Diversity and Inclusion

### Interview 3

Interview with employee of the VSKF Labour Union. 3 October 2018.

Participants:

Kristján Gunnarsson, Chairman

Guðbjörg Kristmundsdóttir, Vice Chairman

#### **Interview 4**

Group interview at the Compulsory school Háaleitisskóli in Ásbrú. 1 November 2018.

Participants:

Elíza M. G. Newman, Teacher and head of department for older classes

Jurgita Milleriene, Teacher

Gyða Björk Hilmarsdóttir, Teacher, supports children of immigrants in learning Icelandic

#### **Interview 5**

Group interview with staff at the Upper Secondary School Fjölbrautaskóli Suðurnesja (FS)

Participants:

Kristján Ásmundsson, Principal

Þjóðbjörg Gunnarsdóttir, Teacher, and a leader of a pilot project meant to assist students of foreign background

Kristrún Guðmundsdóttir, Teaches Icelandic as a second language

Interviews with seven Immigrants with different nationalities, who had lived in Iceland for various lengths of time, ranging from few months to seventeen years.

Telephone interview with Hilma Hólmfríður Sigurðardóttir. Project Manager for Diversity and Inclusion, Reykjanesbær. 25 June 2019.

# 6. Establishing housing for newly arrived refugees – experiences of critical local reactions in 60 Swedish municipalities

By Sandra Oliveira e Costa

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter regards integration as a two-way process, meaning that integration is a reciprocal adaptation between immigrants and the host or receiving society (Puranen, 2019). Klarenbeek (2019) offers a definition of 'integration as an end state': "A society in which there are no social boundaries between 'legitimate members', or insiders, and 'non-legitimate members' or outsiders" (Klarenbeek, 2019: 2). This chapter aims to extend our knowledge of the reactions from a receiving society, the 'insiders', towards the establishment of housing for newly arrived refugees, 'the outsiders'. When refugees settle in Sweden, this occurs in relation to a surrounding community which means this surrounding community can be considered part of the two-way integration process. The chapter discusses the occurrence of protests or critical local reactions, in Swedish municipalities, to housing for newly arrived refugees, around the years of the so-called refugee crisis in 2015. The study examines the nexus between the structural dimensions of the 'refugee crisis' and the openness of the receiving society.

The main empirical data used in this chapter are the responses to a survey that was sent to all 290 Swedish municipalities in September/October 2018. The survey of 20 questions concerned housing for newly arrived refugees and local reactions. It was addressed to the heads of the municipal units that are responsible for planning or building processes<sup>7</sup>. Sixty municipalities responded to the survey with 56 responding to all questions and this chapter discusses the majority of these<sup>8</sup>. The results show how the situation is perceived by the municipalities.

The questions in the survey aimed to gather knowledge on a few different themes related to the issue of arranging accommodation for newly arrived refugees: what type of housing was used to accommodate the newly arrived refugees in the municipalities; whether housing was met by protests or critical local reactions and to which degree; what type of arguments were used in these cases; was the localization affected by local reactions and how prepared were the municipalities to deal with local critical reactions towards housing for newly arrived refugees. The expression 'protest' was used in the survey questions to refer to critical local reactions. While half of the responding municipalities replied that they experienced protests to varying degrees, the detailed understanding of 'protest' can differ. Some comments from the respondents concerning the term 'protest' confirms this. One official commented that it can be difficult to distinguish between a 'protest' and an 'opinion', and as one municipality commented, only in 'extreme cases' do they not receive protests in planning and building processes. Hence a certain level of reactions also seems to be expected and is treated as normal.

The response options relating to types of housing solutions, character of local reactions and

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7. The questions in the survey cover the period January 2012–August 2018. In 2012, a general Swedish housing shortage was compounded by the arrival of over 40,000 asylum seekers. The survey shows clearly that the most intense years in terms of critical local reactions were 2015–2017, with a peak in 2016.
  8. A few questions are omitted either because of lack of space or uncertainties in the interpretation of the answers. Concerning the frequency of responses, Swedish municipalities receive a large number of surveys each year from Swedish authorities (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions 2020) and other actors. This is probably a contributing factor to that the low response rate of 20%. There is a rather high share of the responding municipalities that selected the alternative 'do not know/not relevant' in some questions. Twelve municipalities did not have the kind of solutions that the survey asked about, which would explain some of the 'do not know' replies. Other plausible reasons are that the person replying did not have the necessary information or, for some reason, found the question difficult to answer.

types of arguments raised locally were based on the variety of housing solutions and arguments that have been found in previous research as well as on the categories of arguments that have been portrayed in media articles about these events. The survey was tested with five public officials from three municipalities and from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. In addition, a literature review was performed, focusing on scientific articles, grey literature and student theses about local reactions to changes in the built environment in general and to housing for asylum seekers and refugees in particular. Official publications from public authorities provided background information.

Using the survey responses of 60 Swedish municipalities, this chapter asks the following questions:

- What kind of housing has provoked reactions?
- What kind of reactions have occurred?
- Are there any differences between these reactions and those to other planning and building processes?

This discussion is relevant for public officials involved in the settlement process for newly arrived refugees, whether at national, regional or local levels. It can be useful for local decision-makers, planning practitioners and building permit officers because it aids understanding of the sensitive issues for local communities in the settlement of newly arrived refugees. The study also reveals the commonly raised arguments on refugee housing and hence is relevant to facilitators engaging in related public meetings and citizen dialogue processes. Finally, this survey-based study can complement case studies on this topic.

## 6.2 Background

The type of housing offered depends heavily on the number of newly arrived refugees being placed in a municipality and on the availability of housing in the municipality. The reception of new refugees in Swedish municipalities is further dependent on various factors such as trends in international migration patterns and in Swedish immigration policy. The national settlement policy for refugees affects how their numbers are distributed among municipalities. As Wikström (2008) points out in her dissertation about local reactions to the establishment of a refugee centre, local and regional contexts as well as national discourse and politics all influence local reactions. This section briefly introduces the 2015 refugee crisis in Sweden, the national policy of settlement of newly arrived refugees and some brief facts about the general Swedish housing shortage.

## 6.2.1 The 2015 'refugee crisis' in Sweden

Between 1984 and 2011, the average number of first-time asylum seekers in Sweden was between approximately 10,000 and 40,000 annually (Rikspolisstyrelsen n.d.; Swedish Migration Agency n.d.; Swedish Migration Agency n.d.). In 2012, the number of asylum seekers began rising, primarily as a consequence of the war in Syria, but many people from unstable countries including Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq also applied for asylum (Myrberg 2019) (see Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1. Number of asylum seekers to Sweden from 2012 to 2017.**

Source: Swedish Migration Agency n.d.

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Total</b>	43,887	54,259	81,301	162,877	28,939	25,666

The increase means that both 2014 and 2015 were remarkable years, with over 80,000 and almost 163,000 asylum seekers, respectively. Sweden was among the EU countries to receive the greatest numbers of asylum seekers in 2015, both relative to population size and in actual numbers (Myrberg 2019). Consequently, Swedish national and regional authorities, with areas of responsibilities related to receiving the asylum seekers, were under high pressure. From a crisis management perspective, Myrberg (2019) argues that the situation brought about a "demanding crisis", transcending administrative levels, sectors and ministerial areas, while also being "unique, ambiguous, complex, and involv[ing] a lot of uncertainty" (Myrberg 2019: 151; with reference to Christensen et al. 2016: 888).

While the responsibility for accommodating asylum seekers during the assessment process lies within the Swedish Migration Agency, the responsibility shifts to the municipalities once an asylum seeker receives a residence permit and thus becomes a 'newly arrived refugee'. In 2016, Sweden granted first-time asylum to almost 70,000 people (Eurostat 2017) and the responsibility for their integration into Swedish society shifted to the municipalities.

## 6.2.2 Swedish policy on the settlement of refugees

During the period following the refugee crisis, considerable resources had to be mobilized within the municipalities to address the housing situation for their newly arrived refugees. Thousands of families and individuals had to be located somewhere and given a chance to start up new lives. However, the existing uneven distribution of newly arrived refugees in the country was exacerbated, with more pressure falling on integration systems in some municipalities, while others received very few new refugees (Dir. 2015).

The problem can be traced back to 1995 when newly arrived refugees became able to choose where to settle in Sweden and to arrange their own accommodation (Magnusson 2018). In 2015, around 80% of the newly arrived refugees arranged their own accommodation, resulting in many newly arrived refugees ending up in municipalities where they had social networks (Dir. 2015), leading to concentrations in the larger city regions (Grange & Björling 2020). The newly arrived refugees that on the other hand do not themselves chose where to settle are assigned to a municipality by the public system and will be provided housing by help from the public authorities. This gives municipalities a better chance to plan for their arrival. However, during a couple of decades it was not made compulsory for municipalities to receive newly arrived refugees, instead reception remained regulated under voluntary agreements between the state

and the municipality (Dir. 2015). This has further contributed to the uneven distribution of refugees among the municipalities.

Because of the uneven settlement of newly arrived refugees, a new law came into force in March 2016. The purpose was to create a more even distribution in the country, and so improve the opportunities for newly arrived refugees to become integrated in their localities (Magnusson 2018). To improve integration, distribution is now based on each municipality's labour market situation, population size, number of newly arrived refugees and unaccompanied minors, as well as the number of asylum seekers who are waiting (SFS 2016). However, available housing was not considered in this process because some municipalities had previously declined reception, arguing a lack of housing (Magnusson 2018). The 2016 law applies to refugees that are assisted to find accommodation by the public authorities, and municipalities are required to accept the number of newly arrived refugees allocated to them (SFS 2016), thus the reception of newly arrived refugees are no longer voluntary for the municipalities.

### 6.2.3 The Swedish housing shortage

There is an ongoing general housing shortage in Sweden, which is affecting long-term residents of Sweden as well as newcomers. However, being a newcomer typically means having even less access to housing both from the public rental housing system and from the private market. Due to the housing shortage, the National Board on Housing, Building and Planning in 2017 calculated that 600,000 new dwellings would be needed by 2025 (National Board of Housing, Building and Planning 2017)<sup>9</sup>. In the same year, 255 out of 290 municipalities reported that they specifically lacked housing for newly arrived refugees. The essential explanation was the shortage of existing rental housing stock. In addition, there were specific shortages of big and small apartments, difficulties finding apartments with affordable rents, landlords having high income requirements and reluctance among landlords to accept families with many children (National Board of Housing, Building and Planning 2017).

This general housing shortage in Sweden made it difficult for municipalities to arrange housing for the newly arrived refugees assigned to their municipalities, leading to municipalities devising temporary solutions (County Administrative Board Jönköping 2017). Municipalities also reported difficulty finding housing in appropriate locations, especially in sparsely populated areas remote from public transport (Public Housing Sweden 2018). As Myrberg (2019) points out, the reception of refugees at the local level was a massive undertaking for public administrations and policy makers.

## 6.3 Previous research on local critical reactions

The planning system in Sweden includes the possibility for people to manifest their opinion regarding new developments and local reactions to changes to the built environment or its functions are common. There are established procedures indicating when and how municipalities are obliged to compile and respond to incoming viewpoints. In addition, individuals can express opinions outside the formalized planning and building process. Hence, receiving and responding to views about ongoing planning is standard practice for Swedish planners. Even so, handling public opinion can still be a challenge for public officials and local politicians.

There are many different ways for citizens to express opinions to a planned change in the built environment. Common activities include sharing views through social media, publishing articles or opinion pieces in the news media, sending correspondence to the local planning authority or raising opinions in public meetings arranged by local public authorities. Making formal appeals against a detailed plan or a building permit can stop a project or delay its commencement (SOU

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9. In 2012, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning calculated that the number of dwellings had to increase by approximately 100,000 to 150,000 to meet the housing shortage. The shortage is not evenly distributed among municipalities (National Board of Housing, Building and Planning 2012).

2014).

Local reactions may be perceived as more intense and threatening if people participate in public meetings as a collective or carry out other activities as an organized group (Lindholm et al. 2015). During the heated period of 2015–2016, some extreme opinions were given additional weight by formation of groups with strong right-wing views (Grange & Björling 2020). There were several cases of arson against asylum shelters. Although, for many of the fires, the exact reasoning remains unclear (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency 2016), these were often regarded as clear violent expressions against housing asylum seekers. However, the extent of mobilization of popular support for establishment of the asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016, which has since reduced, had not been seen previously in Sweden (Myrberg 2019).

The perceived intensity of public feeling depends also on the frequency of action and the tone or content of the expressions, whether for or against planned facilities. It is common, e.g. for small numbers of opinions to be sent to a municipality about an ongoing planning project. This has a quite different impact from, e.g. the response in Gothenburg, Sweden's second-largest city, where 1,000 formal viewpoints were sent to the municipality over a few months. These concerned 12 suggested locations for temporary housing for newly arrived refugees (Grange & Björling 2020) and many critical voices were raised.

Debate about the processes of the settlement of newly arrived refugees is partly a debate about the processes of integration, which is often discussed in relation to immigrants' participation and performance in various sectors of society. As an example, the OECD (2015) suggested a number of international indicators of immigrant participation in the labour market: i.e. immigrant income levels, socio-demographic characteristics of immigrant households, immigrant health status, civic engagement of immigrants and their cognitive skills, to name a few (OECD and European Union 2015). How immigrant groups perform on these indicators was then commonly compared to the majority or non-immigrant population. The definition of integration by Klarenbeek (2019) presented in the introduction to this chapter suggests that attention should be directed equally to the newcomers and to the non-migrant residents. She promotes the concept of 'two-way integration', meaning that insiders and outsiders should integrate with each other with no boundaries between 'people who need to integrate' and 'people for whom integration is not an issue'. Hence, the integration of immigrants not only depends on efforts by the immigrants and their children, "but also on the structure and the openness of the receiving society" (Klarenbeek 2019: 1). It can then be argued that the receiving society, both nationally and in communities, has duties and obligations to create a welcoming environment (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform n.d.). Apart from the politico-structural factors that impact municipal capacity to arrange housing for newly arrived refugees, how the receiving community acts can, from this perspective, also be seen as part of the integration process.

Research into local reactions to housing for newly arrived refugees is commonly in the form of case studies. Some case studies have provided interview-based reports of a municipality's handling of refugee housing (see e.g. Le Roux & Sande 2016), while a number of student theses after 2015 have focused on the media discourse about the refugee crisis, especially the debate about the effort in Gothenburg municipality to locate temporary housing for refugees in wealthy city districts.

Eva Wikström, a university lecturer in social work, focuses her research on reception and integration of refugees with emphasis on their housing and employment. She argues that the national discourse and political debate, as well as the local and regional contexts, are in shaping local reactions. She holds further that these are similar to the inevitable reactions when establishments for physically and mentally disabled persons are to be located in residential areas. These reactions tend to be cyclic, local resistance is strongest during the planning phase, and then abates when the establishment is in place (Wikström 2008).

In 2020, Kristina Grange, professor of urban planning and design theory, and Nils Björling, senior lecturer in urban design and planning, published a report discussing the implementation of the law on the settlement of newly arrived refugees since 2016. The report considers various perspectives for three municipalities in the Västra Götaland Region and includes overviews of the public media debates about newly arrived refugees. It holds, e.g. that in Gothenburg, it is

probable that intense public opinion contributed to the end result: of 1,000 planned temporary dwellings, only 57 were realized (Grange & Björling 2020). Grange and Björling (2020) show that the media debate in the three municipalities was notably polarized and included quotes from asylum seekers who felt threatened when their asylum shelter was incinerated. Among further evidence are the expressed irritation that refugees were prioritized over others for housing assistance and the appeals against the temporary building permits (Grange & Björling 2020).

Klas Borell, a professor in sociology and social work, has studied social conflicts and the extent of prejudice towards Muslims and uses the concepts 'NIMBY' and 'NIABY' to understand local reactions against the establishment of mosques in Sweden. NIMBY is an acronym for 'not in my back yard' and is used to describe resistance towards the establishment of a facility in someone's immediate or close surroundings, but not to the facility as such. A NIMBY argument is often about practical and technical aspects of the establishment, such as impacts on green areas, additional traffic flows or negative impact on property values (Borell 2012). However, a NIABY argument, i.e. 'not in anyone's back yard', is principally against the establishment no matter where it would be located. That is, opponents would not like that establishment to exist at all. According to Borell (2012), the establishment of mosques in Western Europe is an example of frequent NIABY arguments. However, NIMBY and NIABY arguments tend to overlap and can be difficult to distinguish from each other (Borell 2012).

Both NIMBY and NIABY arguments can be used as pejoratively by people describing resistance. For example, NIMBY has been used by commercial industries in reference to socio-environmental rights movements in the US in the 1970s, whenever the rights movements expressed dissent about the industries' impact on socio-environmental dimensions (Eranti 2017). To refer to dissent as NIMBYism can then partly be an authoritarian reaction, undermining any opposition to changes in the built environment (Borell & Westermark 2018). Such usage can be seen as normative and moralizing (Eranti 2017). Labelling any kind of opposition to new facilities in the landscape as a NIMBY reaction adds nothing to understanding the issues and fails to capture the complexity in the protests, as discussed by Borell and Westermark (2018).

However, Borell and Westermark (2018) point out that social movements have become aware that they can easily be discarded as 'only NIMBY protests', which makes them adapt their arguments and strategies to deflect such criticism. For example, Borell (2012) investigated Islamophobic prejudices and hate crimes in the context of the establishment of mosques in Sweden and identifies what he calls sophisticated NIMBY. This type of argument points out that it would be better for the users of the facility (e.g. visitors to the mosque) if it was located somewhere else. One example concerns a mosque that was planned for Stockholm. Opponents held that it would be more beneficial to locate the mosque in a suburban area, with a high share of foreign-born residents, than in the suggested inner city location (Borell 2012).

Borell (2012) concluded that NIMBY rhetoric is effective for opponents to changes in the built environment since it makes it possible to avoid talking about what type of service is suggested (e.g. meeting needs of religious minorities). Instead the argument can focus on the physical building and its impact. In this way, NIMBY rhetoric can be used to avoid critique and discussions about, e.g. freedom of religion. Yet, the same effect will be achieved: i.e. opposition to the establishment of an unwanted facility (Borell 2012).

Below is a summary of the types of arguments that have been identified in previous research about critical local reactions to the establishment of facilities for special groups, such as the mentally or socially disabled and refugees.

*Worry that the facility would impact on property values, the private sphere or children's safety (Wikström 2008: 2015).*

*Worry about the impact of practical and technical issues, such as increased traffic flows or damage to green areas.*

*Sophisticated NIMBY arguments that it would be better for users if the facility was elsewhere (Borell 2012).*

*The notion that the process has not been correctly handled by the authorities (Hellqvist 2016) or*

*that it is not consistent with legal documents such as the detailed plan.*

*Causing of inconvenience, architectural arguments relating to changes to the cityscape or landscape or impacts on cultural heritage (Carlsson & Lindesson 2016).*

When testing the survey used for this study with public officials, they added an argument, also identified by Grange and Björling (2020) in their media overview, relating to the rights discourse:

*Resources go to 'them' instead of to 'us' or to other groups that should be prioritized.*

## 6.4 Survey of local reactions to housing for newly arrived refugees in 60 Swedish municipalities

Nordregio developed a survey to get an overview of local reactions to housing for newly arrived refugees in Swedish municipalities at the time of the refugee crisis. The survey was sent to municipal planning and building units to collect data about concern for changes in the built environment. The responding municipalities can be seen in Figure 6.1. They are geographically distributed, and vary in size, population size and density, economy and housing structure.

Based on the survey responses, this section discusses the solutions that municipalities have adopted to provide housing for newly arrived refugees, to what extent these solutions have been met by critical local reactions and protests, and the character of these local reactions.

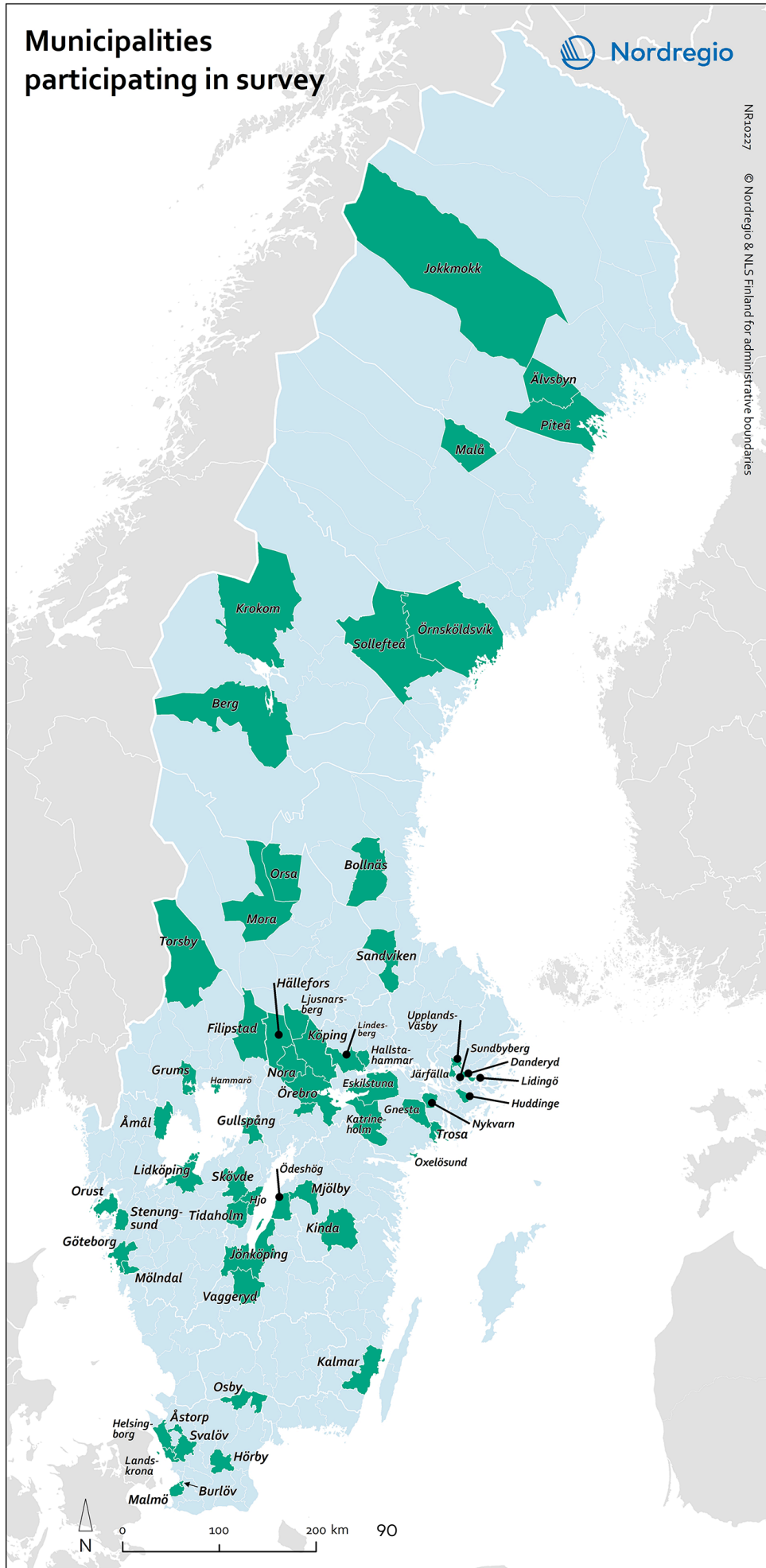
### 6.4.1 The scope of critical local reactions

In the municipalities that participated in the survey, housing for newly arrived refugees most commonly (57 of 60 municipalities) came from within the public rental housing stock (Figure 6.1). Existing housing, public or private, as well as hostels and hotels, are all options that can be organized without going through a planning or building approval process since they generally do not require changes to the built environment. Five of the municipalities purchased existing apartments as a solution. Many municipalities also added solutions that required planning or building review, such as the adaption of social service facilities (24 municipalities), modules with temporary building permits (21 municipalities) and adaption of special housing facilities (15 municipalities). Public Housing Sweden (2018) reports that municipalities that have received many newly arrived refugees, via agreements with the state, tended to use temporary solutions such as facilities not originally intended for housing.

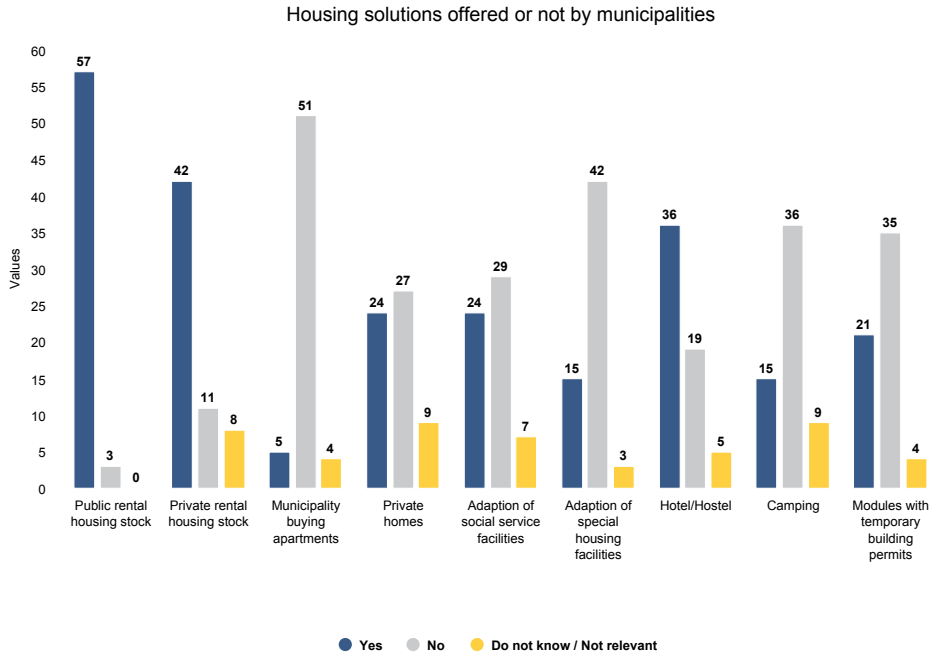
Of the 60 municipalities, 33 report that they have had, since 2012, one to five housing projects that required processing by the local planning or building units, ten municipalities had six to ten such projects and five municipalities had more than ten (Figure 6.3) Twelve municipalities had no housing projects for newly arrived refugees that required handling by the planning or building units. Out of the 48 municipalities that did have such projects, 29 replied that they had experienced protests. Twelve experienced protests in less than half of the cases, four in half of the cases, seven in more than half of the cases, and six municipalities experienced protests in all cases. Most of these municipalities had one to five projects.

**Figure 6.1. The municipalities that replied to the survey are marked in green. Sixty municipalities filled in the survey, with 57 replying to all questions. Source: Map by Oskar Penje, Nordregio**

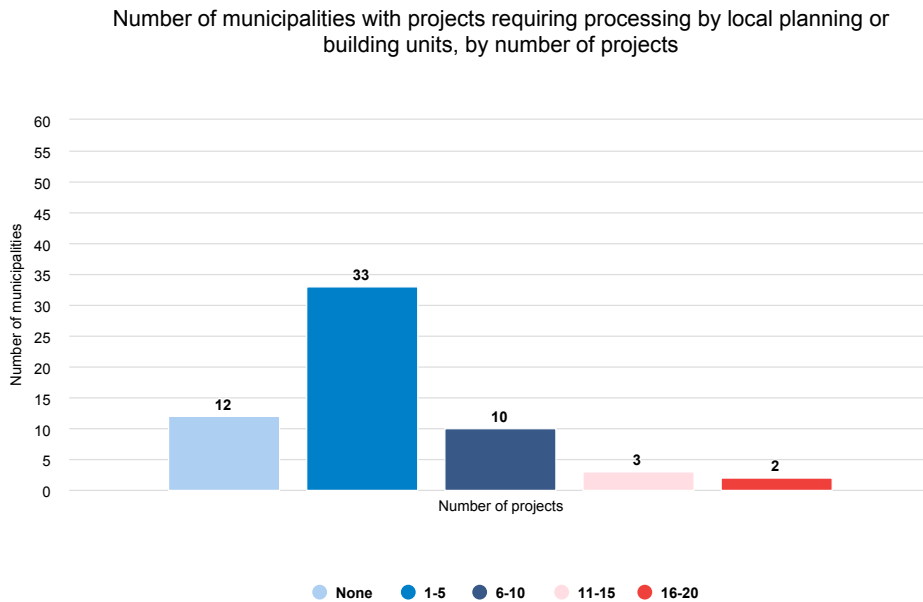
# Municipalities participating in survey



**Figure 6.2. The chart shows how many municipalities used a certain type of housing solution for newly arrived refugees between January 2012 and August 2018. Total: 60 municipalities.**



**Figure 6.3. The chart shows the number of municipalities with housing projects for newly arrived refugees that required handling by the local planning or building units during the period January 2012–August 2018. Total: 60 municipalities.**

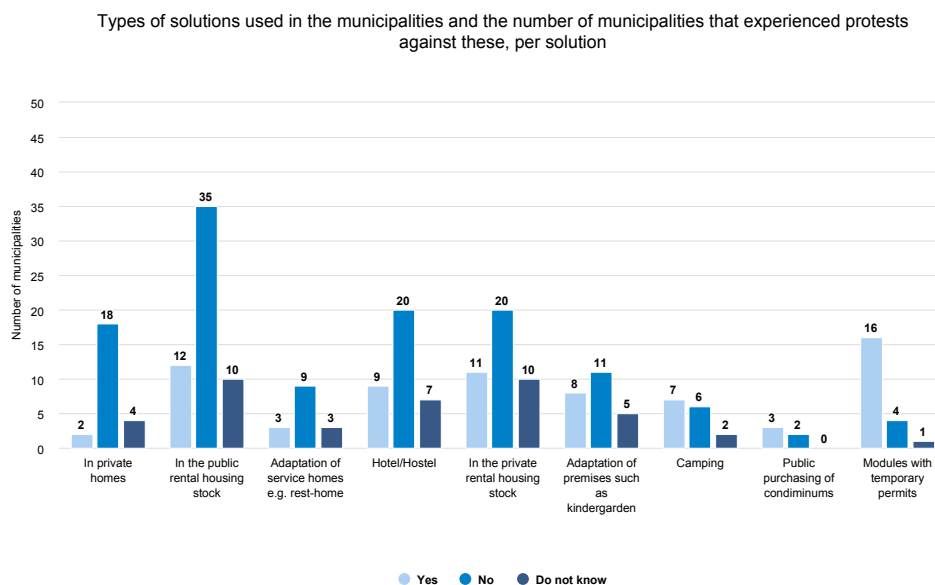


The survey showed that the most common location for the projects needed review were in connection to or integrated with already existing residential buildings. In a few municipalities, the most common locations were linked to social services, such as schools or preschools. In two municipalities, such projects were connected to industries, railways, traffic interchanges or similar, which may be less advantageous locations<sup>10</sup>.

## 6.4.2 Housing and local reactions

All the types of housing solution identified in Figure 6.4 have been met to varying degrees by critical local reactions. Accommodation in private homes was protested in only two municipalities. When newly arrived refugees have been accommodated in the public rental housing stock or in housing for other social purposes, such as homes for the elderly, these solutions were protested in around one-fifth of the municipalities. Critical local reactions were more common when newly arrived refugees were accommodated in private rental housing stock. Critical local reactions were even more common when municipalities used temporary solutions, such as hotels, camping grounds or adapted facilities not previously meant for housing. Purchasing of apartments, as done by five municipalities, generated protests in three of these municipalities. Modules with temporary building permits were met by critical local reactions in 75% of the municipalities that used this solution.

**Figure 6.4. The chart shows a combination of answers to two questions. The coloured bars show in how many municipalities a specific solution was met by protests. The numbers in brackets show how many municipalities in total offered the listed solution.**



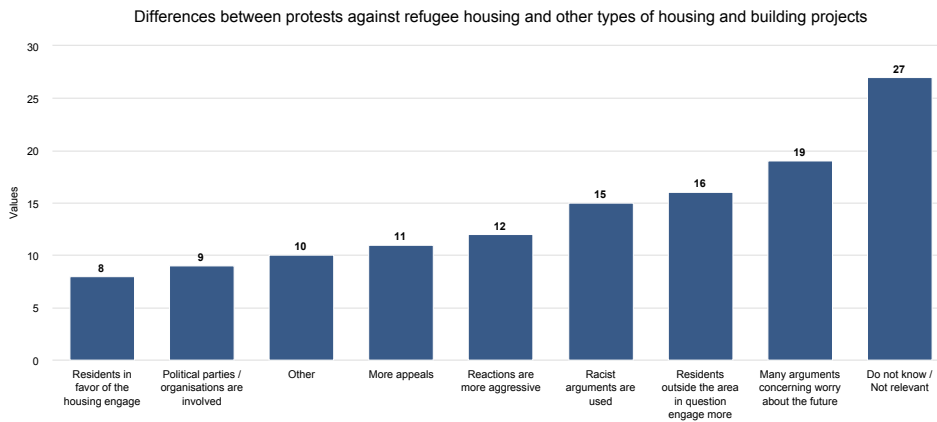
Nearly half of the municipalities reported that local critical reactions about housing for newly arrived refugees were either completely or partially different in character from expression of critical opinions to planning and building projects that were not related to newly arrived

10. Fifty-eight municipalities responded to this question, which referred to which localization had been the most common. Respondents could give only one alternative as an answer, which means that other localizations than the most common may have been used. Fifteen municipalities marked that they did not know or that the question did not have relevance for them.

refugees. Seven municipalities reported no differences and the remainder either did not know or did not find the question relevant.

By asking the municipalities in which way the local reactions differed in relation to other planning and building projects that are not about arranging accommodation for newly arrived refugees, we learned more about the character of local critical reactions (Figure 6.5). The main distinction in the opinions is the extent of worry about the future, which was reported by 19 municipalities. Two other common features are that people residing outside of the area in question are more engaged in the establishment of housing for newly arrived refugees (16 municipalities) and that racist arguments were used during the process of arranging the accommodation facilities (15 municipalities). Twelve municipalities reported that reactions have been more aggressive and 11 municipalities mean there had been more appeals. Nine municipalities said that political parties or organizations were more involved. Eight municipalities answered that people favouring the housing were more engaged as a counter-reaction to the protests.

**Figure 6.5. The chart shows in which way protests have been different from other planning and building projects in the municipalities. Respondents could mark more than one option. Total: 57 municipalities.**



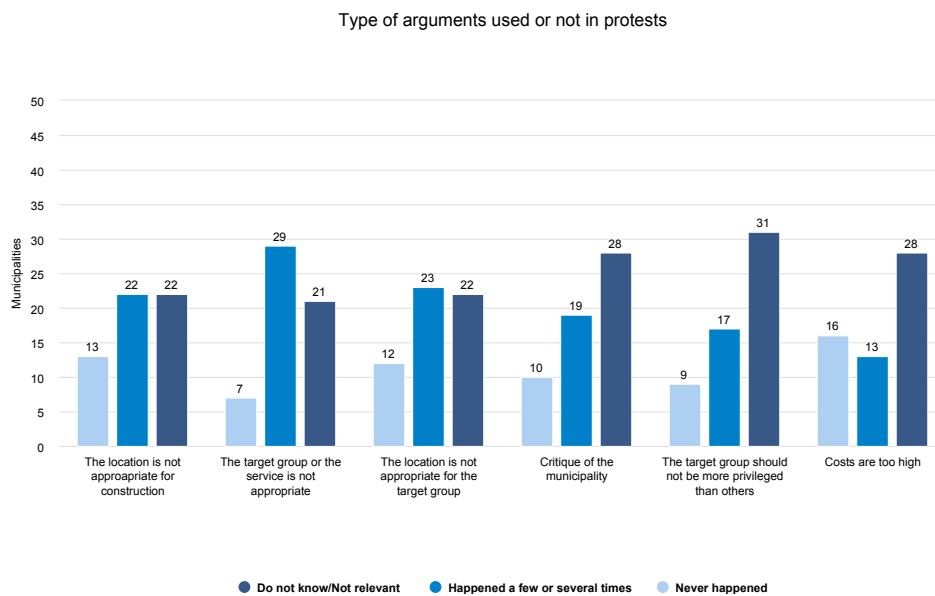
Protests impacted on the locations of planned accommodation in a third of the municipalities, either as the main reason for changing location (six municipalities) or as part of the reason (13 municipalities). According to the survey responses, the changes in location had both positive and negative effects on the quality of the housing in terms of distance to services, public transport, social interaction, noise, etc. However, it appears that negative effects (nine municipalities) generally outweighed positive effects (six municipalities)<sup>11</sup>. Also in relation to location, there was a high probability of protests when newly arrived refugee housing is integrated with other residential buildings (22 municipalities) or close to school, preschools or other social services (24 municipalities). No municipality reported a high probability of protests when such housing is connected to railway, industrial areas, highways or similar.

According to the municipalities, the most common type of argument used in critical reactions concerns the target group or the type of service itself, i.e. relating to the newly arrived refugees or to the planned facility that would serve as their homes, e.g. due to issues of security. This was observed by half of the municipalities (Figure 6.6). Another common argument also relates to the

11. Likewise, more municipalities (17) answered that a changed location never generated positive effects, than municipalities that reported a change of location never generated negative effects (13).

target group, but follows a different argument holding that the location is not appropriate for this group due to e.g. long distances to services. The third most common argument relates to the location itself and its contributions to the local area, e.g. the area is already being used for other purposes, like recreation, or the architecture does not fit in to the surroundings. In about a third of the municipalities, local authorities were criticized for their management of the processes, e.g. lack of information or possibilities to influence. In almost as many municipalities, local opponents argued that the target group should not be privileged over others by being supported by public authorities in finding housing. Thirteen municipalities received arguments concerning the spending of public resources, costs being too high or dwellings being too big or too alike.

**Figure 6.6. The figure shows whether the suggested arguments have been used a few or several times in protests against accommodation for newly arrived residents in the municipalities. Total: 58 municipalities.**



In terms of their preparedness to handle protests, 13 municipalities said they were not sufficiently prepared while 26 municipalities felt that they were partly or fully prepared. One respondent from a municipality that was partly or fully prepared commented that they were 'very unprepared' for the first protests, suggesting that it became easier to handle the situation upon gaining experience.

Twelve municipalities answered that protests did not impact on their work arranging refugee housing, while 23 municipalities reported a that they had a small impact. Three municipalities reported a significant impact, in one of these a building project was delayed at least one year and in another a project was halted<sup>12</sup>.

Seventeen of the municipalities already had in place or later developed a useful strategy for handling the protests. A public official from one of the municipalities explained that their strategy was based on collaboration between the public departments with support from the communications department. In addition, the municipality had representatives from various public departments attending public information meetings. Respondents from seven of the municipalities that had or adopted a strategy felt that they were somehow prepared to handle the situation in a way that was satisfying for all the parties, i.e. existing residents, the newly arrived and the public administration. However, officials from another seven municipalities still felt insufficiently prepared to deal with conflicts, despite having a strategy. Officials from 34 municipalities believed they have good prospects of effectively handling similar conflicts in the future<sup>13</sup>.

## 6.5 Discussion and concluding remarks

In Sweden, new constructions often elicit reactions from the local community. These may range from a discussion about prestigious projects in the city centre of the capital to a neighbour's new front porch on the countryside. However, the settlement of newly arrived refugees is rather different from other planning and building processes. The public process of finding housing for refugees makes abstract national immigration policy locally concrete. The settlement of these refugees is connected to politically sensitive issues including migration and integration policy, and it has provoked heated feelings in Sweden in recent years<sup>14</sup> and has raised questions about prioritizing between different social (and ethnic) groups. Among the questions that emerged from this debate is Should housing for new arrivals have a priority over housing for people that have lived in Sweden for many years in a housing market that is often overheated? The settlement of newly arrived refugees thus introduces questions about justice and priorities between the existing residents of a place, and newcomers<sup>15</sup>, or, using the terminology of Klarenbeek (2019), between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. While the reception of newly arrived refugees with few or no critical opinions raised in some municipalities, or even with strong support from the civil society, it caused major debates and heated reactions in other areas, a diversity in situations that is confirmed by this chapter. Through these debates, planning and building became an arena for the two-way process of integration. The planning and building process is then a platform for interaction between the receiving society and the newcomers, and intense local reactions in the form of unusual amount of worry manifest as appeals and racist arguments could, in cases where this occurs, be considered as the contributions from one side of the integration process.

The purpose of this study was to increase the understanding of critical local reactions to housing for newly arrived refugees in the years just before and following the so-called 2015 refugee crisis, and to explore the ways in which municipalities met these reactions. The study showed clear differences between municipalities in terms of the kind of housing arranged for the refugees, as

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12. Twenty-two municipalities marked the option 'do not know/not relevant'. Sixty municipalities answered this question.

13. Twenty-three municipalities marked the option 'do not know/not relevant'. Fifty-seven municipalities answered this question.

14. See e.g. Grange and Björling (2020) for a review of media articles discussing settlement of newly arrived refugees in three municipalities in the Västra Götaland region.

15. See the same report by Grange and Björling (2020) for a deeper discussion on justice and the legislation pertinent to settlement of newly arrived refugees in Sweden.

well as in the impact and character of local reactions to the process.

One important finding was that half of the municipalities had the view that critical local reactions towards housing for newly arrived refugees are notably different from responses to other planning and building processes. To a large degree, they differ in the degree to which local residents become worried about the future. This was seen as a common feature of the reactions and may be connected to some community views about newly arrived refugees as a group. Why do people near the new housing have such feelings about this group? What does this mean for the creation of inclusive cities? It was also found that, in this context, people living outside the place in question also become engaged. If these are NIMBY reactions, related to constructions that affect the local neighbourhood, the locally concerned would be open to the establishment of facilities somewhere else. Why then, do these processes provoke increased reactions from people living outside the immediate area? This may be because NIMBY-motives also play a part in the local reactions – people can be against the establishment of facilities even if not located nearby.

Racist arguments were used in a quarter of the municipalities, a further distinction from other cases. If newly arrived refugees are settled within the existing housing stock, they tend to become integrated with the majority population and not be as visible, as a group, in the community. Two municipalities using this approach have not experienced critical opinions worth mentioning. In other instances, special housing facilities arranged for multiple people from a specific ethnic group (which was common in 2015/2016, as most asylum seekers came from a few countries) give this group greater visibility. Arranging housing for specific ethnic groups is not common in the Swedish planning and building process, and in various cases this has been done, local reactions have gained some specific character. However, further studies are needed to deepen our understanding of what lies behind some of the frequently used arguments. Critical local reactions to the refugee situation also tend to be more aggressive than in other planning and building processes. The situation can be further heated by tendency for political parties or groups to take the opportunity to engage in the situation. In all, the reactions create an intense situation that puts high pressure on those handling the communications.

Given this, it is rather surprising that no municipalities reported lacking the means to handle similar situations in the future. However, 23 municipalities responded they do not know or found the question not relevant. Seven municipalities that initially had, or had developed, a strategy for handling protests responded that they were not sufficiently prepared for the actual protests. This may mean that some municipalities lack ways to satisfactorily handle the situation, even when there are clear procedures indicating how this should be done.

Twenty-three municipalities reported that protests had a small impact on their housing options for newly arrived refugees, which indicates that the reactions received attention from the municipality, but not to the degree where their choices were greatly affected. However, in three municipalities where protests had a big impact on refugee housing actions, the protests had direct impact on the housing situation for the new arrivals by, e.g. delaying finalization of their housing.

The municipalities indicated that the most common localities for refugee housing were in accordance with the prevailing ideal, i.e. integrated with existing neighbourhoods and with access to important infrastructure. However, the responses also showed that protests can have negative consequences for the localization of housing units and, importantly, for the quality of the living environment for the new arrivals. Even though protests are infrequent when the housing is located in connection to industrial areas, railways, highways or similar, it is important, in seeking to create inclusive communities, to avoid taking what could be the simplest way forward – choosing locations that might create less-critical local reactions.

Since a major reason for critical opinions relates to the type of people that will reside in the buildings, planning and building processes have to deal with sensitive questions arising from this polarization of population groups. Racism was explicitly identified as a reason for protest by one respondent. Thus, when planning housing for newly arrived refugees, a clear socio-ethnic dimension is added. Planners and other public officials are not generally prepared to handle these issues in their daily work or in dialogue with local residents. In 23 municipalities, protests purported to show concern for the new arrivals. It was argued that the location was not

appropriate for them. This might be understood as a type of sophisticated NIMBY argument, disguising the reality that opponents simply do not want the facility in their area. The opponents may be seeking to avoid being dismissed as a NIMBY movement, or they may have sincere concerns for the refugees. However, it is not possible to use the survey data to know whether that is the case. After all, such arguments could also give relevant local information to the public officials and potentially lead to a change of location with positive outcomes. As described previously, some changes in location have reportedly had a positive effect on the quality of the housing.

One argument that was not found in the research literature but was introduced by the test group for the survey, was that the target group should not be more privileged than other groups. This argument has been used in almost 30% of the 60 municipalities responding to the survey; therefore, an important contribution of this study is to understand the logic of the local protesters' argument. One municipality commented that newly arrived refugees were perceived as being prioritized over local youth. The same reaction appears in Grange and Björling (2020) when they refer to a media opinion piece in which someone contrasts the need for refugees housing with the need for housing of children in the community. This type of claim may reflect the general housing shortage in Sweden, which is particularly acute in some municipalities. Eranti (2017) calls for a less-judgmental view of local critical opinion makers suggesting that land-use conflicts are always shaped by the groups whose interests are considered and how these are valued. Such analysis requires understanding of the local structural dynamics; e.g. if the welfare system managed to fully meet the housing needs of youth and other vulnerable groups, would the reactions towards newly arrived refugees be different? This argument about privilege suggests that the integration process is rather immature at the point when newly arrived refugees first become settled in the municipalities via agreements with the state. If applying Klarenbeek's (2019) definition of an ideal-type of integration "a society without any social boundaries between legitimate and non-legitimate members" (Klarenbeek, 2019:2), the question arises, how long does it take before the 'non-legitimate members' will become 'legitimate'? If integration is seen as a two-way process, there are good reasons to consider the integration efforts of the receiving community as well as those of the newcomers.

This study has contributed to better understanding of critical local reactions to housing for newly arrived refugees and how municipalities have been able to manage these reactions. The focus was on the years just before and following the so-called refugee crisis in 2015. The analysis has strengthened the knowledge base about the character of such reactions, and it has also formulated the idea that the planning and building process can become an arena for two-way integration.

We have learned that critical local reactions have impacted the housing and integration work of the municipalities, in different degrees, and also that they can affect where refugee housing is located. We have also seen indications that a change in location, following critical local reactions, can worsen the quality of the housing or, in some municipalities, actually improve its quality. The survey method would benefit from complementary interviews with public officials in the municipalities, with local opponents and with newly arrived refugees. This would help us reach a deeper understanding of the applied processes and would shed light on many of the questions that arose from this study.

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# 7. Concluding discussion

By Mats Stjernberg & Sandra Oliveira e Costa

This report has focused on a variety of policy and planning measures for creating more inclusive cities in the Nordic countries. The starting point has been the notion of inclusive cities, i.e. cities where all people feel included in society regardless of their resources, lifestyle or background. As discussed in the five case study chapters, the ambition of creating cities that are more socially inclusive is closely connected to the aim of reducing socio-spatial disparities and segregation among neighbourhoods and between people. However, inclusion is a complex and multifaceted issue, and the specific challenges and approaches to addressing these challenges vary between countries and cities. To capture this diversity, five different cases, one from each of the Nordic countries, were examined. These focus on strategies for inclusion and countering segregation and on regeneration of neighbourhoods that are deemed to require policy attention and intervention. These chapters documented policies at national level as well as more local policies and planning practices used by local authorities in the cities. They also included examples where national- and local-level policies and practices coincide. A key interest has been to examine the measures taken in small and medium-sized cities in particular. Even though the debate about urban inequalities is predominantly focused on larger urban regions, many smaller-sized cities face similar challenges and, although less studied, play an important role in strengthening inclusion.

The focus of chapter 2 is the Finnish city of Pori, where a nearly 40-year long history of regeneration projects have sought to revitalize the city's post-war suburban housing estates built in the 1960s and 1970s. In Pori, a wide range of socio-physical and socio-economic measures have been applied through numerous projects aiming to enhance the vitality of these areas. Although the exact scope and approach has varied from one project to the next, from a long-term perspective, the aims and implementations of the projects have not changed radically over time. This suggests significant path dependency with earlier regeneration initiatives either directly or indirectly influencing later initiatives. The study identified a number of impacts and effects of these projects: i.e. they evidently had a number of positive effects and improved the local conditions of the neighbourhoods but, simultaneously, addressing challenges that are connected to broader structural causes has been more difficult. For instance, economic restructuring in Pori led to a sharp increase in unemployment, including in the city's post-war housing estates, following the deep economic recession of the early 1990s. Unemployment rates have remained at considerably higher levels than before the recession ever since. Previous studies concerning the strengths and limitations of area-based regeneration initiatives have made similar observations. For instance, it has been suggested that area-based approaches have only limited effects on problems when broader causes are located outside of the neighbourhood (Andersson 2006) and are better suited for addressing more locally based problems (van Gent et al. 2009).

Chapter 3 also addressed area-based urban renewal in post-war housing estates, but from a Norwegian perspective, focusing on the neighbourhood of Fjell in the city of Drammen and reviewing the measures carried out there during the past decade. Similar to Pori, the findings from Fjell suggest that many of the targets of the renewal project have been reached, but simultaneously, there was limited capacity to deal with city-wide and broader societal problems. As in Pori, the observations from Drammen point to the limitations of area-based measures in dealing with structural problems including lack of employment or educational opportunities. Thus, if the intention is to address the problem of segregation, there seems to be a risk that an area-based approach will merely address the symptoms of segregation in a specific area, rather than the more complex root causes that inevitably influence neighbourhoods and their development. A characteristic feature of the Norwegian housing market is a predominance of owner-occupied housing, particularly compared to Sweden and Denmark. In a context where home ownership is the norm and rental housing is considered to be a temporary solution, it can be argued that local government has rather limited options for using social rental housing as a

tool for promoting inclusion.

The focus in chapter 4 is on Denmark and its so-called 'ghetto policies' that emerged as a key policy response to urban segregation and the problems associated with post-war housing estates in Danish cities during the 2000s. The chapter examined how area-based urban integration policies had evolved over the previous 30 years in Denmark, and particularly how the term 'ghetto' became an official label given to the most disadvantaged areas in Danish cities. While the Danish urban policy approach addresses similar types of neighbourhoods to those prominent in the urban policy agenda of other Nordic countries, the measures that are applied are more radical than and promotes measures that are not very different from the area-based policies in the neighbouring countries, and in a wider Nordic, or even European context the use of the term 'ghetto' is exceptional. In Denmark, the 'ghetto' has a strong association with ethnic segregation and immigrants from the non-Western world, and this differs considerably from, e.g. the Swedish discourse. In Sweden, policies dealing with socio-economic segregation have successively moved away from using ethnicity as an explanatory variable for segregation (Tedros 2008). In Denmark, however, the focus over the past 20 years has increasingly shifted towards seeing immigration and a lack of integration as the main problems needing attention. While policies concerning segregation in Sweden have shifted towards treating segregation as a societal process and have recently had greater focus on a whole-city perspective, in Denmark, the term 'ghetto' refers to particular areas and their residents and is closely bound to territory as well as strongly connected to ethnicity.

Chapter 5 examined two key challenges in the municipality of Reykjanesbær, Iceland. Firstly, it reviewed the ways in which local authorities in Reykjanesbær have dealt with challenges and opportunities arising from a sudden increase in immigration, including their adopted strategies for inclusion and integration. Secondly, it examined how the municipality continues to meet the challenges of converting a former military base, known today as Ásbrú, into an ordinary neighbourhood. The chapter addresses both broader people-based policies seeking integration and inclusion and policies with a strong territorial focus dealing with a specific area in the municipality. The neighbourhood of Ásbrú shares a number of features with several of the other neighbourhoods, discussed in this report, that have been the subject of area-based regeneration initiatives. These features include: comparatively low socio-economic status, a high share of residents with immigrant backgrounds, a low level of services, a housing stock with little variation and that is largely renter-occupied and physically separated from the rest of the town. Similarly, the aims that are being pursued, such as developing the area into a more attractive, inclusive and integrated part of the municipality, also resemble the objectives of many area-based initiatives in the other countries. However, the case of Reykjanesbær stands out because while there are long traditions of policies to counteract segregation in the other Nordic countries, the main focus in Reykjanesbær is to prevent segregation before it emerges.

The focus in chapter 6 was on Sweden and specifically the topic of housing for newly arrived refugees. Swedish municipalities have the responsibility to arrange housing for those newly arrived refugees who chose not to make independent arrangements. However, this has been a challenge in many ways because of housing shortages in many parts of the country, and sometimes also as a result of critical reactions from the local community and others opposing the establishment of housing for the new arrivals. The chapter looked particularly at the establishment of refugee housing in Swedish municipalities between 2012 and 2018, a time of a significant increase in the number of new refugees. The chapter examined the degree to which the municipalities witnessed critical local reactions against refugee housing, the nature of these reactions and how they affected the municipalities' options for arranging appropriate housing. There was great variation in the extent to which municipalities experienced local reactions, whether or not there have been protests and the degree to which these reactions impacted the process of arranging housing. Some municipalities experienced the challenges of critical local reactions, while others did not. The study showed that critical local reactions in the municipalities against housing for newly arrived refugees are rather different in character to reactions against other planning and building projects. The chapter reflected on the attitudes of the receiving communities as part of the integration process and identified the potential role that planning and building processes can play in two-way integration.

These five chapters have addressed two main themes. The first concerns urban regeneration, focusing on certain specific neighbourhoods that are considered to be confronted with diverse challenges and to require policy and planning intervention. The second theme concerns integration of different types of immigrant groups and their descendants. However, these two themes should not be viewed in isolation and, as the examples studied in this report demonstrate, area-based policies for urban regeneration, in particular neighbourhoods, often also aim for the integration of immigrants or people with immigrant backgrounds.

The first of the two themes, urban regeneration, has been addressed through the thematic and geographical case studies from Finland (chapter 2), Norway (chapter 3), Denmark (chapter 4) and Iceland (chapter 5). According to Roberts (2000: 17), urban regeneration involves a comprehensive and integrated vision, and related actions, that aim to resolve urban problems and achieve lasting improvements in the socio-economic, physical, and environmental conditions of an area. This definition seems appropriate to the Nordic examples discussed in this report, as these cases all include a multitude of aims and measures aiming to achieve long-lasting improvements in the local conditions of the addressed neighbourhoods.

A common characteristic of the examples from Denmark, Finland and Norway is that the regeneration efforts have focused on suburban post-war neighbourhoods. This echoes the situation more generally in Western Europe, where area-based regeneration projects often address post-war housing estates, which are increasingly associated with socio-economic and physical decline (see e.g. Musterd & Van Kempen 2005; Rowlands et al. 2009; Hess et al. 2018). Hall (1997) suggests that the problems of post-war housing estates can be divided into four main types that are closely inter-related, i.e. physical, social, economic and amenity problems. In his view, physical problems are related to the planning and construction principles that were applied in the building of these areas, such as a lack of variety in building types and sizes, physical isolation and separation of functions. Social and economic problems are closely interconnected and include high unemployment, social stigmatization and high population turnover, while, in addition, many estates suffer from weak amenities and poor access to services. These problems are often intertwined and, in many cases, reinforced by broader societal developments. Dekker et al. (2005) argued that the problems of these neighbourhoods should be regarded as expressions of more general economic, demographic and socio-cultural issues. They exemplify the complexity of the many factors that influence cities and the ways in which different neighbourhoods develop.

Indeed, the neighbourhoods that are targeted by urban regeneration initiatives are often confronted with a multitude of challenges, meaning that several different objectives must be pursued simultaneously through various measures within the same project. Verhage (2005) suggests that there are three common sets of objectives in urban renewal policies, i.e. socio-economic, socio-cultural and physical-economic objectives. Socio-economic objectives seek to improve the socio-economic characteristics of an area and the opportunities of the inhabitants. Socio-cultural objectives include creation of greater social coherence among residents to improve the quality of life, and may involve, e.g. measures against crime, provision of social activities and the creation of meeting places. Physical-economic objectives seek to make the area more attractive and spark an upward spiral of revaluation and regeneration. These may include enhancing public transportation, improving public spaces and diversifying the housing stock to attract a population with more favourable socio-economic status.

Several of the previously highlighted problems, as well as objectives and measures to deal with these, are reflected in the Nordic examples discussed in this report. The neighbourhood regeneration initiatives in Pori's suburban housing estates, Fjell, Ásbrú, and the so-called Danish ghettos have all been initiated to address multiple interconnected problems. Several of these problems are considered to be directly related to the neighbourhoods themselves, their physical structure, housing stock and residents. However, it is also evident that several of the challenges in these neighbourhoods are tied to broader structural developments occurring in their wider urban, regional and national contexts. Essentially, these projects can be viewed as simultaneously aiming to achieve place- and people-based results; their aims and measures focus both on the physical conditions of the neighbourhoods and on their residents.

The second main theme through this report concerns policies for integration of immigrants and people with immigrant backgrounds. As demonstrated in several of the examined examples, this theme is often closely connected to area-based policies for urban regeneration which also seek to enhance social integration. This is evident in the strategies for Fjell in Drammen (chapter 3), the Danish national ghetto policies (chapter 4) and the revitalization efforts in the neighbourhood of Ásbrú in Reykjanesbær (chapter 5). These all contain elements of, or are supported by, broader strategies for integration of immigrants, although these are emphasized in different ways in the three examples. In the case of Reykjanesbær, there is a strong focus on the integration of labour migrants, particularly from Poland, which is the largest minority group in both Ásbrú and the municipality. The chapters about regeneration in Drammen and the Danish ghetto policies highlight clear differences between Norwegian and Danish discourse. In Norway, immigrants and non-immigrants are viewed as part of the same population, whereas the Danish discourse clearly points to non-Western immigrants as a problem and to Danish immigration policy as its source.

In the case of Denmark, there is a clear connection between local area-based policies, national immigration policy and national settlement policy. In Denmark, the national system of settlement distribution and the steering of settlement within municipalities are directly connected. In recent years, by law, refugees cannot be placed in areas defined as ghettos (Ministry of Immigration and Integration 2016). As refugees may not be settled in the neighbourhoods that are on the national ghetto list, Danish national settlement policy is essentially regulating local policy. Settlement policy and ghetto policy meet in these restrictions, meaning that settlement policy is used to influence the same issue as ghetto policy, i.e. the distribution of residents.

In general, settlement models for refugees vary between the Nordic countries. Norway was later than Sweden and Denmark in developing a settlement model, and this was done following an evaluation of the strategies of the neighbouring countries. In Norway, the Swedish model of not restricting refugees' settlement choices was rejected as this was seen as limiting their opportunities to find decent housing and access social environments (Borevi & Bengtsson 2015). The Danish model was seen as potentially facilitating integration with existing Norwegians, but Norway was not in favour of giving the total responsibility for distribution to the state. Local authorities in Norway have autonomy to decide on their refugee numbers, and the refugees themselves cannot choose in which municipality to settle, and if they do, they risk losing the right to language training and economic support provided during the obligatory introduction programme (Steen 2016). In Finland, regional centres negotiate with the municipalities who themselves can decide on the number of refugees to accommodate (Greve Harbo et al. 2017). In Sweden, following wide and lengthy debate on the issue of free or steered settlement, the Swedish government decided in November 2019 to restrict the settlement of asylum seekers. They can now lose economic subsidies if they settle in areas 'with socio-economic challenges' (Riksdagsförvaltningen 2019/2020). The purpose of this reform is to encourage refugees to settle in areas with a good expectation of 'a socially sustainable reception'. This shows that the Nordic countries, while applying different policies, have increasingly started to pursue similar models for similar reasons.

In Sweden, the policy of distributing newly arrived refugees to all Swedish municipalities may contribute to better integration. However, chapter 6 also shows that this may mean that planning and building departments in municipalities may need to deal with considerable conflicts related to two-way integration, especially if the settlement of newly arrived refugees takes place during times of housing shortage requiring unconventional solutions. In comparison, in Denmark and Norway there was no widespread opposition to the situation caused by the influx of asylum seekers in 2015, even though municipalities in both countries found it challenging to arrange accommodation for those who were granted residency in 2015 and 2016 (Udlændingestyrelsen 2017). While there was some sporadic critical local reaction in Denmark and Norway, this did not have a major impact in the municipalities, unlike in Sweden, nor did it raise national concern (Martens 2019; Gran 2019).

Through five different thematic and geographical cases, this report has investigated a variety of policy and planning measures for overcoming barriers to social inclusion in Nordic cities. The

examples discussed in this report should not be seen as a collection of best practices in the creation of inclusive cities, but rather as an exploration of how social inclusion has been addressed in the Nordic countries and cities through policy and planning. Although strategies for inclusion differ, depending on the contextual settings and local conditions, the ultimate aim of each of the examples discussed in this report has been to counteract the negative effects of inequality and segregation while improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society. The examples have generally had a strong territorial focus as they deal with specific neighbourhoods. Simultaneously, they have also discussed broader people-based strategies towards integration and inclusion. This report highlights that planning for inclusive cities is a complex and challenging task. The studied examples show that there is no universally applicable recipe for creating more inclusive cities and that different approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. Overall, it seems clear that inclusion cannot be created in an individual project, instead, it should be pursued through long-term planning and continuous efforts.

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