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FROM MARGINS TO MAINSTREAM: FOSTERING INCLUSION IN SWEDEN

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Title: From Margins to Mainstream: Fostering Inclusion in Sweden

Date: September 2016

Published by: Interpeace

Produced in Switzerland

The views expressed in this publication are those of the key stakeholders consulted and do not necessarily represent those of the sponsors.

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ABOUT
INTERPEACE

Interpeace is an independent, international peacebuilding organization that is recognized for a proven methodology to help resolve conflict and build peace. Interpeace believes that peace is possible. From 20 years of experience in peacebuilding, Interpeace knows that peace cannot be imported from the outside and must be built from within a society. Interpeace tailors its methodology to each society, together with local partners on the ground. It helps to establish processes of change that connect communities, civil society, governments and the international community.

Interpeace supports peacebuilding initiatives in more than 20 countries and regions in Central America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. As a strategic partner of the United Nations, Interpeace is headquartered in Geneva (Switzerland) and has offices in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), Brussels (Belgium), Guatemala City (Guatemala), Nairobi (Kenya) New York (USA) and Stockholm (Sweden).

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RISING SOCIAL TENSIONS IN SWEDEN

For the last few decades, Sweden has been seen to embody the principles of openness and inclusion. Today, it is facing challenges of social inclusion and integration.Like many other European societies, Sweden saw an increase of violent incidents associated with socio-economic exclusion and discrimination across the country, especially in the suburbs of large urban centers.

The arrival of large numbers of migrants and refugees on the European continent in 2015 captured the attention of the media, and sensational reporting reinforced negative perceptions and stereotypes of immigrants among the public, reviving and polarizing the debate on the effectiveness of integration policies and practices.

Such debates have shed light on existing tensions and divisions in Swedish society, including a widening gap between those considered "native" and "non-native" to the country. This divide is particularly noticeable between communities living in the suburbs of major cities and Swedes living in 'well-off' neighborhoods. While Sweden has taken great steps towards building an inclusive society, critical challenges remain. The growing discrimination and marginalisation of immigrant populations prompt need for further reflections about the state of inclusion in Swedish society.

INTERPEACE IN SWEDEN

The work of Interpeace in Sweden is grounded in the idea that peace may also be built in societies commonly considered as peaceful. Social cohesion and inclusion need to be at the core of all societies, regardless of geographical location or levels of development.

Interpeace engaged with more than 200 stakeholders across Sweden in 2015-2016 seeking to capture views and better understand how inclusion can be increasingly fostered. Research and participatory consultations were carried out in four different locations of Sweden (Älvsjö, Tensta, Luleå and Rosengård) seeking to explore the role that individuals can play in making their societies more inclusive. This report presents the results and reflections from the research as well as showcasing the stories, frustrations, hopes and enthusiasm of various groups of citizens from across Sweden.

MAIN FINDINGS

Exclusion and marginalization of societal groups sow the seeds for misunderstanding, mistrust and potentially violence. Inclusion serves as a base to build bridges of understanding across groups and segments of society. Fostering inclusion also allows for communities to increase local ownership and responsibility over the challenges they face.

Findings from Interpeace's research reveal that inclusion is understood and experienced very differently by communities, who are influenced by perceptions and stereotypes, but also by their individual and collective identities and their socio-economic backgrounds. During the research, three fundamental and overarching aspects emerged as cornerstones of inclusion: acceptance, dignity and diversity. The findings highlight how acceptance, dignity and diversity contribute to greater inclusion, as shared by the communities of Älvsjö, Luleå, Rosengård and Tensta.

- **Acceptance:** It was found that people first need to accept who they are, then accept others, and finally feel that they are themselves accepted by the people around them. Achieving these three levels of acceptance

provides an individual with the necessary means to promote inclusion. Moreover, understanding and strengthening the factors that can have a positive impact on acceptance, such as an inclusive national identity, equalitarian norms, language, interactions, self-confidence and role models, are key to fostering inclusion.

- **Dignity:** It was noted that when conditions are met for individuals to participate meaningfully in society, have a role that is recognized and valued by others, and develop and fulfil their potential, greater inclusion can be achieved. The consultations revealed that having access to education, finding work, sustaining yourself and your family, gaining recognition for playing a role and making a contribution to society emerged as important factors that contribute to dignity. This sense of well-being was said to provide a strong sense of self-value that reinforces inclusive perceptions and behaviors.

- **Diversity:** Celebrating diversity was identified as a fundamental factor contributing to inclusion. It was observed that diversity generates positive outcomes such as social justice, economic competitiveness and prosperity. The findings also revealed that stakeholders in the four communities believe that greater inclusion can be achieved despite the widespread prejudice and negative stereotypes that currently exist in Sweden. Participants showed how the power of positive stories of collaboration, respect and appreciation between individuals and groups from areas considered either as marginalized and non-marginalized fosters inclusion.

CONCLUSION

While the findings reveal a large gap between areas considered as marginalized and non-marginalized with regards to inclusion, the report shows that that the principle of inclusion is an aspiration sought by all citizens. The consultations showed that there are many people who already go to great lengths to foster inclusion in their lives and communities. The numerous initiatives and individual efforts that promote diversity attest to a growing movement of citizens who want to contribute to greater inclusion.

Despite these initiatives and efforts, it was noted that inclusion can only be effectively fostered if a systems-approach is adopted. All actors should play a constructive role and combine efforts at all levels – from local to national – by involving key stakeholders and including ordinary

citizens, civil society, municipalities, the private sector and institutions of the state.

Sweden has long been seen as a 'humanitarian superpower' that avoids military conflict, but stands on the front line of helping the world's dispossessed. Today is an opportunity for Sweden to show how it can build on its years of experience and set the example for other European nations to follow. Sweden has the opportunity to construct the foundations for a society that is richer in empathy, and promotes openness and solidarity at home. Failing to take these steps, the country will see poorly integrated immigrant communities continue to grow in size and scope, and social exclusion will increase accordingly. After all, a surplus of compassion is not the worst vice for a country to have.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the research, suggested recommendations were made that can be taken up by various stakeholders working on this topic.

- **Inclusion: from local to national ownership.** Fostering inclusion requires that everyone takes ownership and collectively redefines inclusion at all levels of society. This requires efforts to make inclusion explicit in the policy agenda, and to adopt a holistic view of policy-making for inclusion. This also requires extensive awareness-raising efforts to sensitize ordinary people about the state of inclusion in Sweden, so they can understand the different realities that people face and take action to foster inclusion in their daily lives.

- **Adapting to local needs to achieve greater impact.** Efforts to foster inclusion at the local level need to be adapted and tailored to specific individuals and groups as a way to achieve greater impact. In particular, this means that those that lack the skills, knowledge and self-confidence to become active citizens should be given specific support, such as capacity-building trainings, which can be a real trigger for individuals who feel disempowered. Moreover, in order to better understand the barriers to inclusion and interactions within communities, citizen's dialogues could be introduced to map the needs and priorities of local communities.

- **Promoting a culture of dialogue, openness and solidarity.** Swedish society needs to create the conditions that will make it less likely for segregation to grow in the future. Specifically, this means that ordinary citizens must be engaged and willing to

meet with new people. There is a wealth of initiatives, structures and organizations that facilitate interaction between ordinary citizens. Specific actions should be implemented to raise awareness about these initiatives, and sensitize people about the benefits of interactions and diversity.

- **Tackling barriers to exclusion in the schooling and employment systems.** Schools are critical environments where actions must be taken to lay the foundations for better inclusion. This could be done by encouraging exchanges between schools where students come from different cultures, but also by investigating what can be done within the 'free school choice' framework and identifying innovative solutions to existing challenges. In the labor market, certifications and labels for inclusive and non-discriminatory recruitment processes should be created.

- **The business sector committing to meaningful partnerships to support local actors.** The business sector and external actors could assist local communities in developing and strengthening local assets by sharing their expertise, using their visibility and investing financial means in social responsibility and projects. The business sector and local actors should find new models of collaboration to ensure multi-sectoral engagement.

- **Changing the media narratives.** Media must commit to telling and show-casing different stories about the realities of Sweden and create parallel narratives by giving a more nuanced image of marginalized neighborhoods. This could be complemented by perceptions surveys, which would attest people's views on the state of inclusion. This could serve as an effective tool to take people's perspectives on board and implement more targeted solutions.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, many European countries have witnessed a rising number of youth-led social protests and riots. These events have generally been viewed as a reaction to increasing economic inequalities, a lack of meaningful opportunities in life, and social marginalization. With aspirations and expectations seemingly unattainable, many young people turned to social protest to express their grievances. The growing number of incidents of social unrest in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas with large resident immigrant populations highlight challenges facing European societies today, including the gaps between those considered "native" and "non-native" to a country.

The arrival of large numbers of migrants and refugees on the European continent in 2015 captured the attention of the media and sensational reporting reinforced negative perceptions and stereotypes of immigrants among the public, reviving and polarizing the debate on the effectiveness of integration policies and practices. Amidst ongoing debates on immigration and wide media coverage of violent incidents associated with socio-economic exclusion and racism, there is an urgent need to promote a more inclusive culture in European societies.

For decades, Sweden has been seen to embody the principles of openness and inclusion. The country has a long tradition of humanitarianism, including generous asylum policies. However, in early 2016, the country began to change its policies towards refugees. Tougher measures and legislation to deter asylum seekers were adopted[1].

Subsequent debates on immigration have exposed the fragility of current integration policies in Sweden. They have also shed light on existing divisions in Swedish society, and a widening gap between mainstream Swedes and those living in the suburbs of major cities that hold large immigrant populations. These areas are increasingly seen as the 'physical' representation of the limitations of integration in Sweden.

The challenges that marginalized groups face in the suburbs of Sweden are a combination of socio-economic inequalities, geographical segregation and discrimination. These challenges fuel a sense of frustration, especially among many young people, who do not feel socially accepted nor valued in Swedish society. These feelings of marginalization and exclusion are further compounded by negative media coverage, which portrays marginalized areas and its residents as violent and dangerous[2].

However, the suburbs of Sweden are filled with individuals that have very different histories, experiences and lives. Beyond the frustration and disillusionment are many stories of hope, ambition and a longing for success. Residents from these areas strive to advance and achieve a positive outcome for their lives like any other citizen.

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1   Sweden introduced border controls in January 2016, significantly lowering the number of people who could enter the country to apply for asylum. In June 2016, asylum legislation was further restricted and adapted to the minimum standards of the EU. The new laws will limit the possibilities for family reunification in Sweden and end the granting of permanent residence permits.

2   These areas are often reported as dangerous due to perceived high rates of crime. However, statistics show that the numbers are in fact quite similar to the national average (see table 6). As such, perceived danger seems to be linked to the way these areas are portrayed in the media.

STRENGTHENING SOCIETIES TO BUILD GREATER INCLUSION

Building on its extensive experience working with marginalized groups, and drawing on lessons from its work with the youth sector, Interpeace has been working in Sweden since 2013. With 22 years of experience of working in various contexts and fragile countries, Interpeace initiated the engagement in Tensta, a suburb of Stockholm, to assess whether its participatory and inclusive peacebuilding approach could help to address rising social tensions and episodes of violence in Sweden's suburbs[3].

The work launched in Sweden was based on the premise and demonstrated experience that there are new ways of thinking about 'building peace' in places that are commonly considered peaceful. The universal principles of inclusivity and participation, which are at the core of peacebuilding, have the potential to contribute to laying the foundations for more cohesive and inclusive societies, regardless of their geographic location and level of development. This was clearly demonstrated in the initial work Interpeace carried out in Tensta where involving the population, and youth in particular, in the definition of their community's future generated positive and constructive attitudes and behaviors.

'WE ARE *SVERIGE*'

Building on the positive outcomes of the work in Tensta, Interpeace expanded its commitment by launching the 'We are *Sverige*' project. This initiative sought to capture views on what makes Sweden inclusive, and explore the role that individuals can play in making their societies more inclusive and cohesive.

The project was designed as an inclusive and participatory process with a strong emphasis on local perspectives. The aim was to further understand issues of inclusion through an interactive process of participatory research, consultations with key stakeholders and dialogue. This new phase of the project was implemented in four different locations – Älvsjö and Tensta (Stockholm), Luleå (in the far north) and Rosengård (Malmö) to ensure that perspectives of groups characterized by very different demographic, socio-cultural and economic backgrounds were represented and included.

Throughout this second phase of the project, Interpeace consulted with more than 200 individuals from all walks of life, including teenagers, young adults, former youth criminals, parents, women's groups, police and municipalities. It facilitated dialogue and offered a platform for voices to be heard and stories to be shared. The dialogue on the main impediments to and opportunities for a more inclusive society triggered a broader reflection on the possible actions that people can take, at all levels of society, to strengthen inclusive practices.

The findings of this research were collected from September 2015 to March 2016. This report presents the results and lessons learned from the project, and showcases stories, frustrations, hopes and enthusiasm of diverse groups of citizens across Sweden.

The report starts with an overview of the methodology of the project, followed by a discussion on the concept of inclusion. This is followed by a presentation of the findings, divided into three main sections that represent key aspects of inclusion – acceptance, dignity and diversity. Finally, the report considers options for the way forward.

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3   The results of the pilot can be found in the report *Voices from Tensta* http://www.interpeace.org/resource/voices-from-tensta/ and the movie Dreams from Tensta http://www.interpeace.org/resource/dreams-from-tensta/

METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

Interpeace believes that dialogue, understood as a process of fostering mutual understanding and the development of a shared vision, is a key tool to address exclusion and marginalization. Providing a neutral space for multiple, diverse, and sometimes conflicting voices to be heard and understood is the starting point for building greater trust and cohesion in all societies.

Using its proven methodology in facilitating action-oriented dialogue, Interpeace engages communities and local actors in consultations, and allows them to share concerns, foster common understandings, create visions and develop concrete solutions for a more inclusive society.

The work of Interpeace in other parts of the world has shown that focusing on strengthening the existing capacities and assets of a society has an added value compared to interventions that solely aim to address challenges and divisions (box 1)[4]. Our experience has shown that focusing on what brings and holds people together and the capacities found in a society fosters ownership and builds confidence among very diverse stakeholders.

Without overlooking the barriers to inclusion in Sweden, the project sought to stimulate a constructive and forward-looking dialogue by inquiring about the strengths and capacities that exist in the communities. Questions such as: "What do you like best about living in your area?" and "What do you do to make others feel included?" were used to trigger the reflection and dialogue. This approach required identifying both the factors that create tensions and the capacities of groups to confront them.

Box 1: Resilience for inclusion

The concept of resilience has gained significant attention over the last decade. Developed initially in the field of engineering and physics for the study of specific qualities of materials, the concept was later applied to psychology for the study of the capacity of individuals to recover in the wake of traumatic situations. Subsequently, various fields within the social sciences have explored the concept to understand the capacity of social groups to overcome devastating situations such as natural disasters and wars.

Interpeace's work on resilience has studied the capacities that societies have developed to confront challenges imposed upon them by violence, conflict or the fragility of their context. By looking at how societies cope, anticipate risks, resolve problems in non-violent and collaborative ways, and respond creatively to crises, Interpeace's work has shown that societies have developed the ability to transform themselves to achieve greater social cohesion and lasting peace.

Applying the concept of resilience to other contexts facing exclusion and marginalization, such as Sweden, sheds light on existing strengths and capacities developed by communities to overcome social challenges. Exploring how those capacities can be leveraged to foster greater inclusion may be a way to create innovative and lasting solutions to social exclusion that build on the inherent potential of those most affected by the problems.

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4   For more information about the Frameworks for Assessing Resilience (FAR) project and its findings, see
http://www.interpeace.org/programme/far/

GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Interpeace concentrated its efforts in four areas of Sweden: Älvsjö and Tensta[5] in Stockholm, Rosengård in Malmö and Luleå in the far north. These areas all have distinct demographic, socio-economic and historical characteristics and were chosen to represent the diversity of Sweden (table 1)[6].

The two first areas consulted, Tensta and Rosengård, are often presented in the media as socio-economically disadvantaged, violent and dangerous. With large immigrant populations, these neighborhoods have common socio-cultural characteristics, and face similar low levels of education, employment and democratic participation (table 2). Tensta and Rosengård are also among the fifteen areas that are part of Sweden's Urban Development Plan[7].

Luleå and Älvsjö, on the other hand, are representative of mainstream Swedish society, with levels of education, employment and voter turnout in line with the national average. The populations in these areas are largely made up by a well-educated middle-class.

Understanding the dynamics of inclusion in areas considered as both marginalized and non-marginalized was key for the project[8]. It allowed the views of groups at the margins of society to be captured while learning about their frustrations, experiences and visions for inclusion. It also allowed the perspectives of groups in mainstream society to be better understood. These groups are often not confronted with exclusion, but have a key role to play in defining and fostering inclusion in Sweden.

Table 1: Main geographical and socio-economic characteristics

Älvsjö	Located in the south of the capital, Älvsjö is the smallest of Stockholm's fourteen City Districts. The neighborhood hosts many communications firms and can be described as a typically well-off Swedish middle-class neighborhood.
Luleå	Luleå, located close to the arctic circle, is a city inhabited by a large student population and international IT business community, contributing to the city's demographic diversity and economic wealth. Despite its geographical remoteness from the rest of Sweden, Luleå is prosperous and perceived as an attractive and welcoming city.
Rosengård	Home to the famous international football player Zlatan Ibrahimović, Rosengård is a neighborhood of the City of Malmö, in southern Sweden. Despite its geographical closeness to the city center, Rosengård is socio-economically distant from Malmö. It has a large immigrant population with origins mainly from Eastern European countries.
Tensta	Tensta is located on the outskirts of Stockholm in the Järva area. Part of the "Million Program"[9], Tensta and its dense apartment blocks contrast with neighboring Spånga, a wealthy area where residents live in individually designed houses. A large part of Tensta's population originates from Somalia, Iraq, Syria and Eritrea.

5 While Tensta is administratively linked to Spånga, consultations concentrated solely in Tensta. The findings are representative of the views of the Tensta residents only.

6 For the purpose of the research and for practical reasons, Interpeace selected four areas that presented contrasting and complementary characteristics of Swedish society. The views of those consulted do not represent those of the entire Swedish population, and are not exhaustive.

7 The Urban Development Plan is a government initiative that seeks to improve the general living conditions in fifteen urban areas in Sweden with low levels of education, high unemployment rates and high dependency on social welfare.

8 It should be noted that the term marginalization, understood as a "*process whereby something or someone is pushed to the edge of a group and accorded lesser importance*", will be used throughout the report to refer to geographical areas or groups that are socio-economically "on the margins" of Swedish society. While this term is often linked to immigrant populations, as in many cases, those affected by marginalization are of foreign origins, there is no causality effect between being of foreign origins and being marginalized. It is known that marginalization also affects large numbers of people who have lived in Sweden for generations.

(source of the quote: http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/marginalization.html)

9 See page section on *Immigration to Sweden* for more details.

Map of Sweden and areas of work

The four areas of consultations.

Table 2: General statistics of the four areas consulted[10]

Latest figures	Älvsjö	Luleå	Rosengård	Tensta	Sweden
Population	34,736	76,088	23,628	20,501	9,884,000
Share of the population with a foreign background (1st or 2nd generation immigrants)	22,2 %	16,5 %	88 %	87,4 %	22,2 %
Share of the population active in the workforce in the ages 20 - 64	83,0 %	78,5 %	38 %	54.5 %	80,5 %
Share of the population that pursued education beyond high-school	54,9 %	44,6 %	24 %	26,8 %	39 %
Voter turnout in 2014 election	83,7 %	85,3 %	51.9 %	58.4 %	85,8 %

10   All sources for the statistics can be found in the bibliography.

REACHING OUT TO ALL GROUPS

With a view to engaging key stakeholders and ensuring that all key groups were included and represented, Interpeace started its research by mapping relevant local community leaders and organizations in the chosen areas[11]. This was key to ensuring that the local stakeholders involved brought first hand and in-depth knowledge of local dynamics. This also helped build awareness of the project and research, and bring people together in each locality of implementation.

In line with the Interpeace approach, consultations were led by a team of local Swedish facilitators. Throughout the process, Interpeace consulted with more than 200 individuals from all walks of life to ensure that a diverse set of voices were represented (table 3).

In addition to consultations with various youth groups (teenagers, young adults and young former criminals) other demographic groups were included, such as parents, women's groups, the police and the municipality.

From the outset, the project sought to capture the voices of a diverse number of citizens in order to ensure broad representation and avoid bias. As previously stated, including the voices of both marginalized and non-marginalized communities was key to deepen our understanding of the dynamics of inclusion, and to analyze the similarities and differences among perceptions of various groups.

The team noted during the consultations that in areas considered and perceived as marginalized, such as Tensta and Rosengård, it was easier for residents to talk about grievances and experiences of exclusion than it was to talk about opportunities for creating better inclusion. On the contrary, in Älvsjö and Luleå, most participants did not see themselves as being deeply excluded and therefore the need for more inclusion and social cohesion was not deemed as urgent and critical to their lives. The different experiences of exclusion influenced people's willingness to discuss how to achieve better inclusion, and affected dialogue dynamics. These observations are further discussed in other sections of the report.

Table 3: Number of participants in the consultations[12]

	Individual interviews	Focus group discussions	Total number of participants
Älvsjö	10	3	30
Luleå	20	2	30
Rosengård	2	12	80
Tensta	5	12	80
Total	37	29	220

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11   Interpeace developed a set of criteria to select local organizations in the four chosen areas. Organizations should: be well-established and registered; hold a good reputation and legitimacy among the population; offer activities or spaces that the local community could use; have in-depth knowledge of local dynamics; and be geographically and strategically relevant for the research.

12   A balance was struck between the different areas to the greatest extent possible, yet it must be noted that there is an imbalance between marginalized and non-marginalized areas in terms of the amount of data that was collected. This is explained by lower levels of interest in non-marginalized areas, where fewer organizations and individuals engaged in the consultations.

A REFLECTION ON THE CONCEPT OF INCLUSION

A REFLECTION ON THE CONCEPT OF INCLUSION

While there is no single understanding of the concept of inclusion, experts and practitioners agree on its all-encompassing and positive nature. Inclusion describes a positive state that societies strive to achieve, and is often associated with terms such as cohesion, equality, integration or participation.

The concept of inclusion has been adopted as a fundamental principle of policy-making and legislation in many countries around the world[13]. With the incorporation of inclusion as an explicit goal in various government strategies and programs, achieving inclusion is increasingly considered a responsibility of the state and its institutions.

One of the core principles of inclusion at the national level is the state's responsibility to ensure that all citizens have the same formal rights and obligations. However, recognizing that some groups are more vulnerable to exclusion, inclusive policies and legislation also aim at improving the position of disadvantaged groups, to protect them from discrimination and other forms of exclusionary practices[14]. Used as a protective policy-instrument, inclusion can be an effective strategy to combat exclusion, discrimination and marginalization.

Exclusion and marginalization of societal groups sows the seeds for misunderstanding, mistrust, and potentially violence. By adopting and implementing inclusive policies and supporting processes that ensure a shared sense of ownership and responsibility for strengthening social cohesion, inclusion can serve as a base to building bridges of understanding across groups and segments of society.

INCLUSION AT ALL LEVELS

Achieving inclusion also requires working at the individual level as it involves preventing or dealing with the stereotypes and prejudice that facilitate discrimination and exclusion. Such individual efforts are much more likely to be effective if they are supported by institutions of the state and local authorities. As such it is recognized that "*the process of […] inclusion needs to take place simultaneously at multiple levels, from the individual, community and local levels, to the regional and national levels, as [it] concerns all stakeholders in society*"[15].

Interpeace's research specifically sought to understand inclusion from the perspective of individuals. While acknowledging that inclusion involves and requires different levels of engagement from both the state and its institutions, as well as from individuals, this research focused on individuals' perceptions and experiences. Learning about the way individuals in society think and feel allowed us to understand what behaviors and attitudes could be transformed or strengthened in order to foster inclusion[16].

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13   UNDP, "Fact Sheet on Youth, political participation and decision-making", 2012.

14   Examples of groups that are typically more vulnerable to being excluded are ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, indigenous people, persons with disabilities, women, youth and the elderly. (Source: UN, "Creating an Inclusive Society: Practical Strategies to Promote Social Integration", DESA 2009, p.13).

15   *Idem.*

16   *Idem.*

INCLUSION AS A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CONCEPT

Inclusion is a multidimensional concept that can have a wide range of meaning for people in different contexts. Many research papers reveal that inclusion is a complex and challenging concept that cannot be reduced to only one dimension or definition. One way of dividing the various aspects of inclusion is in thinking of *social, economic, democratic* and *cultural*[17] inclusion.

Social inclusion can be described both as an outcome and as *"a process of improving the terms on which people take part in society"*[18]. While this can include all and any aspects of inclusion, social inclusion is most commonly used when describing processes and initiatives targeted at empowering the groups most affected by exclusion and marginalization to have a say in decisions that affect their lives[19].

Economic inclusion refers to the *"equality of opportunity for all members of society to participate in the economic life of their country as employers, entrepreneurs, consumers, and citizens"*[20]. Policies that enhance economic inclusion include redistribution through taxation, the removal of bureaucratic obstacles to start businesses, special support and benefits to vulnerable groups that incentivize entrepreneurship and promote equal access to welfare and social benefits.

Democratic inclusion is often studied by looking at representation and voter turnout. Assessing representation helps in understanding whether the views and voices of different groups are equally represented at the political level[21]. Voter turnout is often used as an indicator to assess the trust of citizens in the state and government representing their interests. If the interests of certain groups are not represented by their elected representatives, it can result in political apathy and a feeling of powerlessness, which decreases incentives to vote[22].

Cultural inclusion is about providing equal access to

the cultural sphere and equal opportunities for cultural expression. According to UNESCO, cultural inclusion *"promotes laws and policies that ensure cultural participation, access, and the right to express and interpret culture […]"*[23].

FROM INTEGRATION TO INCLUSION

Inclusion has also often been closely associated with the concept of integration. The two terms involve helping people fit in, be accepted and share a sense of belonging. They are similar and overlap in many ways, but there are also important differences. While integration is often referred to in relation to immigrants' ability or willingness to adapt to a new society and culture, inclusion concerns everyone.

Inclusion targets and affects all people, and not just immigrants. It puts less emphasis on the ability of newcomers to adapt and focuses on everyone's right to be accepted, as well as a society's ability to accommodate differences. Inclusion emphasizes the importance of embracing difference as an asset: the more diversity a society can accommodate, the more inclusive it becomes[24].

As such, promoting inclusion reflects a proactive, human development approach to social wellbeing which calls for more than the removal of barriers or risks. It requires investments and action to bring about the conditions for positive transformation of relationships between groups and people in society.

DEFINING INCLUSION

For the purpose of this research, a definition needed to be adopted as the basis for engaging stakeholders in a dialogue about inclusion. Therefore, the following definition was developed based on desk research and interviews with experts:

"Inclusion is about being able to take part, to count and to be recognized as someone that belongs to a context. Being included means to be recognized as a participant and as someone whose presence is not questioned."

This definition was chosen because it incorporates the various aspects of inclusion considered crucial for each individual,

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17 While the list of various aspects of inclusion is not exhaustive, we have chosen to limit it to four categories as they cover the core elements of inclusion for the purpose of our research.
18 World Bank, "Brief on Social Inclusion", 2013.
19 *Idem.*
20 K. E. Bettcher, T. Mihayloya, "Economic Inclusion: Leveraging Markets and Entrepreneurship to Extend Opportunity", *The Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE)*, 2015.
21 The underrepresentation of women in parliaments around the world, which was on an average of 22,7% in 2016 despite the fact women make up half of the global population, is often used as an example to illustrate the lack of democratic inclusion in a given context. (Source: Inter-parliamentary union, "Women in National Parliaments", 2016.
22 A. Rehnvall (ed.), "Migrationsinfo för alla", Fores, 2015, pp.77-83.

23 UNESCO, Social and Human Sciences Page.
24 A.-K. Håkansson, "Integrering eller Integration? Det är frågan!", Studentlitteratur, 2016.

including economic, social, cultural, democratic or any other factor that enable or prevent the individual experience and feeling of inclusion.

INCLUSION IN SWEDEN

In Sweden, social, economic, democratic and cultural inclusion have been integrated as core principles of policy-making. Despite the country's remarkable achievements to create an inclusive society, making Sweden a model for many countries around the world, the nation faces critical challenges to social cohesion and inclusion.

Social exclusion, economic inequalities, and isolation of immigrant populations have created high levels of frustration among groups of people, contributing to their gradual marginalization from Swedish society. These challenges prompt questions about the current and future state of inclusion, integration and social cohesion in Swedish society.

These issues have their roots in Sweden's history and patterns of immigration, the evolution of national integration policies and the larger transformation of Sweden's economic landscape during recent decades. Taking a closer look at these intertwined factors allows us to better understand the challenges to inclusion in Sweden today.

Immigration to Sweden

Immigration to Sweden started following the Second World War, and has continued with varied intensity to the present day (table 4). For decades, Sweden has welcomed large numbers of immigrants and asylum seekers and the share of the population with an immigrant background reached 22.2 % in 2016.

A large share of the immigrants that arrived during the 1980s settled in the suburbs of large cities, in areas that emerged as products of the "Million Program"[25]. Like in many urban centers around the world, these suburbs became transitional locations where migrants initially settled, and then moved out when reaching a more comfortable social status, replaced by less well-established residents. In a few decades, these neighborhoods became home to socio-economically disadvantaged groups with immigrant backgrounds who had limited knowledge of the Swedish language and low levels of education, contributing to their gradual exclusion from mainstream Swedish society[26].

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25   From 1965-1975, one million new apartments were built on the outskirts of major cities in Sweden, responding to a growing need for affordable and modern housing for Swedish families moving into the cities to work in the industries. However, the areas did not attract the Swedish middle-class as intended because of both geographical and esthetical reasons. This period coincided with the influx of immigrants to Sweden, who settled in these areas, as rents were affordable and housing available.

26   Up to 75% people of non-European descent today populate many of these areas. C. Westin, "The Effectiveness of Settlement and Integration Policies towards Immigrants and their Decedents in Sweden," *International Migration Papers,* Geneva, Migration Branch International Labor Office, 2000, p. 38.

Table 4: Chronology of immigration to Sweden[27]

Year	Type of immigration	Main countries of origin
1945-1960	Refugees from states in crisis in the aftermath of the Second World War.	Eastern Europe and the Baltic states.
From the 1960s	Labor immigration to the booming industries. The foreign-born population quintupled from 1945 to 1970.	Mainly from the Nordic countries but also from other European states.
From the 1980s	Refugees fleeing war and political persecution.	Iran, Chile, Lebanon, Turkey, Poland.
From the 1990s	Refugees fleeing war and political persecution.	From countries affected by the wars in former Yugoslavia.
From the 2000s	Refugees fleeing war and political persecution. An increase in foreign students as well as labor immigration after Sweden joined the EU in 1995.	Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Eritrea and labor immigration from European states.
Since 2011	Mainly refugees fleeing war and political persecution but also labor immigration and economic migration from outside of Europe.	Syria, Somalia, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Poland.
In 2016	The share of the population with a foreign background makes up 22,2% of the Sweden's inhabitants.	The biggest group, making up more than 10 % of Sweden's foreign born population come from Finland, followed by Iraq, Syria and Poland.

Integration policies

Responding to growing immigration and integration needs, the government developed policies that strived to integrate the principle of multiculturalism. These policies reflected the belief that integration should aim to incorporate cultural difference rather than erase it[28]. Measures striving towards this aim received much praise for their good intentions, but have also been criticized for their limitations in practice, especially in light of the growing segregation and marginalization of many immigrant communities across Sweden[29]. Since the late 1990s, the emphasis on multiculturalism has slowly been replaced by a discourse promoting assimilation and integration. New policies have

emphasized the responsibility of the individual to learn Swedish and find employment.

The last decade saw a shift in political discourse over immigration, with the election of a right-wing government in 2006 after twelve years of rule by the Social Democratic party. The growing support for the Sweden Democrats, a political partly whose main goal is to limit immigration to Sweden, which soared in the election of 2014, also attests to this[30]. In 2015, with the rising influx of refugees to Europe, and Sweden in particular, the debate around immigration became increasingly polarized. In 2015-2016 Sweden initiated border controls and imposed restrictions regarding asylum policies[31].

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27 Migrationsinfo.se website, researching: "*Födelseland*" and "historiskt".
28 Instead of focusing on assimilation to Swedish culture, the government has encouraged immigrants to maintain their own culture and languages as they integrate into Swedish society. S. Fredlund-Blomst, "Jantelagen and multiculturalism: a dynamic dual", *Berkeley Undergraduate Journal,* 2010, p. 26.
29 Measures to promote cultural difference included the recognition of religious and cultural associations, the promotion of immigrant journals and media, the provision of the right for immigrants to vote in local elections, and support for a policy of bilingualism in public schools. Ibid, p. 26-36

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30 The Sweden Democrats party first entered parliament in 2010 and won 12,9% of the votes in the 2014 elections, making it Sweden's third largest political party.
31 In 2015, more than 160 000 refugees applied for asylum in Sweden. The country introduced border controls in January 2016, and in June 2016, asylum legislation was further restricted and adapted to the minimum standards of the EU, limiting the possibilities for family reunification in Sweden and ending the granting of permanent residence permits.

Growing economic inequality

Since the end of the Second World War, while receiving larger numbers of immigrants, Sweden has constantly increased its status as a prosperous state with a generous welfare system and redistribution through high social taxes, providing a strong base for an egalitarian and inclusive society[32]. Despite a global reputation for being one of the most economically equal countries in the world, Sweden has steadily become more unequal. Even though it experienced almost constant economic growth and improved well-being since the 1990s, when economic equality was at its peak, Sweden's economic inequality increased by 33% between 1985 and 2010, the highest rate in all OECD countries[33]. This increase in socio-economic inequality has disproportionately affected the socioeconomically disadvantaged, a group where those with a foreign background are overrepresented. In 2011, while 14% of the overall population was considered to be living in relative poverty, the percentage reached 33% for those born outside the EU[34]. Other studies further attest to this with findings indicating that people born outside of Sweden faced a higher risk of ending up in poverty than the native population[35].

Inclusion today

Numerous immigrant communities in Sweden's marginalized areas feel excluded from wider Swedish society. While this sheds light on the limitations of integration policies and practices, it also prompts questions about how best to capitalize on the successes, the willingness to engage and existing potential of these communities in a view to foster better inclusion.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, and in particular Goal 16 on "just, peaceful and inclusive societies" provides a platform to discuss the challenges to inclusion in Sweden and other seemingly peaceful Western states[36]. While Sweden is estimated to be one of the developed states most likely to reach the goals of the agenda on time, the challenges of marginalization and social exclusion require a reassessment of the way inclusion can be meaningfully interpreted and effectively implemented in the Swedish context[37].

32   Fredlund-Blomst, "Jantelagen and multiculturalism: A dynamic dual", 2010, p. 11

33   During the 1990s, the revenues of the top 10% income earners were on average 4 times the amount of the bottom 10%. In 2012, the ratio had increased to 6.3 to 1. Source: OECD, Income inequality data update: Sweden, 2015.

34   The EU definition considers that those with an income below 60% of the median income in a country live under conditions of relative poverty. Migrationsinfo.se website, researching: "*Relativ fattigdom*".

35   P. Andö. "Fler i Sverige i risk för fattigdom", Statistika Centralbyrån (SBC), 2013.

36   UNDP," Goal 16: Peace, Justice and strong institutions".

37   Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Switzerland are considered as in a good position to reach the goals, according to C. Kroll, "Sustainable Development Goals: are the rich countries ready?", *Bertelsmann Stiftung Publication*, 2015, p.5.

THE CORNERSTONES OF INCLUSION:
ACCEPTANCE, DIGNITY AND DIVERSITY

Rights Acceptance Equality Rights
Citizenship Equality Acceptance Inclusion Rights
Diversity Dignity Rights Equality Dignity Self-defi
Possibilities Integration Citizenship Inclusion
Values Diversity Rights Integration
Values Self-definition Inclusion Diversity Equal
Welcome Rights Equality Dignity Inside Integration
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THE CORNERSTONES OF INCLUSION: ACCEPTANCE, DIGNITY AND DIVERSITY

The participants in the project and consultations used a variety of words to express their understanding, experiences and visions for inclusion. They discussed the importance of self-definition, integration, equality, community, rights, acceptance, possibilities, values, diversity, citizenship and dignity, to talk about inclusion. While all these elements are interrelated, three main fundamental and overarching aspects emerged as cornerstones of inclusion: **acceptance**, **dignity** and **diversity**. The findings presented in the following sections have therefore been divided into these three main areas, looking at how they contribute to fostering inclusion in Sweden.

The findings of the research are presented and based on participatory consultations and not the subject of extensive academic analysis. The following sections aim to shed light on the main cornerstones of inclusion, as understood, perceived and voiced by the communities of Älvsjö, Luleå, Rosengård and Tensta.

ACCEPTANCE

"Acceptance must come both from within yourself and from people around you."

A youth from Rosengård, 2016

According to the stakeholders consulted, accepting and being accepted are the foundations of inclusion. It was found that in order to be included, people first need to accept who they are, then accept others and finally feel that they are themselves accepted by the people around them. Achieving these three components of acceptance provides an individual with the necessary means to include themselves and others, as illustrated in Diagram 1.

It was noted that in moments when acceptance was denied, for example in the form of discriminatory practices, it contributed to the development of negative feelings and attitudes, built frustrations, and cultivated the seeds of resentment. Understanding and strengthening the elements that can have a positive impact on acceptance, such as an inclusive national identity, norms, language, interactions, self-confidence, and role models, are key to fostering inclusion.
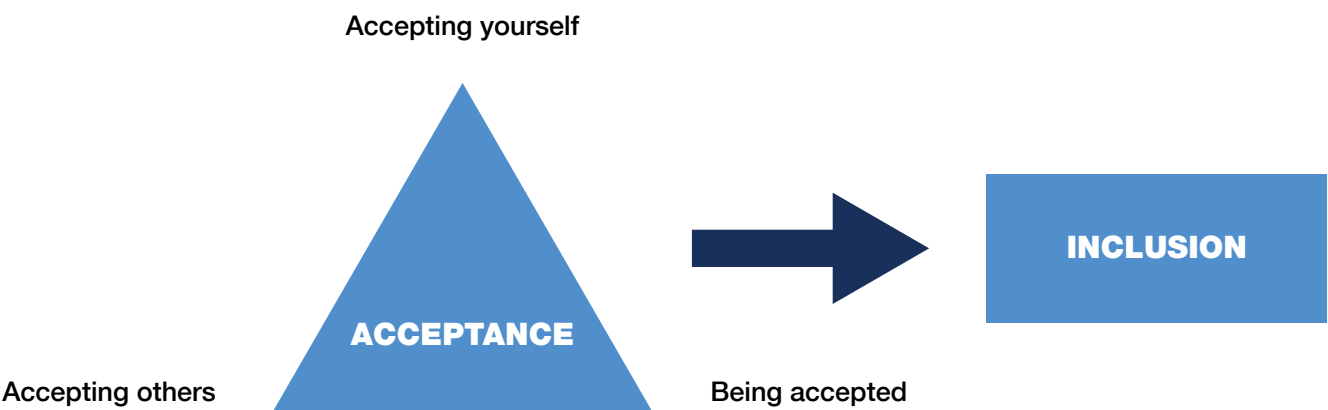
Diagram 1: The cornerstones of acceptance

Accepting yourself

ACCEPTANCE

Accepting others

Being accepted

INCLUSION

Diagram 2: From identity formation to inclusion

| SELF-DEFINITION & IDENTITY | → | ACCEPTANCE | → | INCLUSION |

IDENTITY FORMATION AND SELF-DEFINITION

The connection between identity, acceptance and inclusion came out clearly in the consultations, as illustrated in diagram 2. In order to feel free to develop as individuals and together with others, interviewees from all backgrounds and generations highlighted that it was critical to feel that those around you accept you. If a person fears or anticipates rejection by family, friends or even society because of who they are or who they strive to be, it makes the process of finding one's identity a difficult balancing act between the expectations and hopes of external actors and one's own. Many people spoke of the importance to freely find and define one's identity as a person, in order to feel accepted for who they are. Accepting that people are different and allowing them to take part in the social setting on their own terms, giving a place to a variety of different identities, was seen as a fundamental first step towards inclusion.

The identity of individuals determines who they are, as a part of different groups and in relation to others. Identity is a fluid concept and forming a person's identity means getting to know yourself, a process which evolves during one's life, but one which is often most intense during adolescence and young adulthood. Forming an identity also means understanding who you are as a person and where you belong in relation to family, friends, your place of upbringing, culture and society. Identity is not fixed but changes and evolves throughout life and a person can have many different identities and group affiliations.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

It was found that holding Swedish citizenship is seen as a positive factor that contributes to inclusion as it means that you formally belong to a society with the same rights and obligations as everyone else. The Swedish welfare system, and the application of egalitarian and democratic values, were broadly recognized as important foundations to ensure equal treatment of all citizens by the state.

"Being Swedish is a good point of departure, there are many possibilities to reach your goals. The roads are open."
A youth from Rosengård, 2016

Unanimously, participants said that they were proud to hold a Swedish passport and citizenship, especially when travelling abroad, where Sweden has a well-thought-of international reputation. In addition, it was highlighted that the general well-being that Swedish citizens enjoy, living in a safe, respectful, welcoming and secure environment with low crime rates, allows everyone to live peacefully and pursue their goals in life. Despite the challenges that many interviewees living in marginalized areas experience on a daily basis, these factors were broadly seen to contribute towards making Sweden an inclusive country.

SWEDISH VALUES

The Swedish values of respect and egalitarianism were particularly valued. In this regard, the concept of *Jantelagen*, the Law of Jante, was frequently mentioned as a foundation of Swedish values and the basis of socialization in Sweden[38]. *Jantelagen* is an informal set of rules that were formulated by the Danish-Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose in his book *"A Refugee Crosses his Path"*, first published in 1933[39].

The essence of this social code, today seen as part of the norms and value-systems that govern Scandinavian societies, puts emphasis on the superiority of the collective sphere over the individual, and discourages standing out with individual forms of expression and success. In his book, Sandemose paints a picture of a society where conforming to the collective "middle way" is praised.

Conformity and egalitarianism are at the core of Swedish national identity. While conformity is most clearly visible in social codes such as *Jantelagen*, egalitarian values are founded in the welfare system that has long provided a promising foundation for inclusion in Sweden[40]. Both sets of values were interpreted positively by those consulted, as illustrated in the quote below. Youth in Tensta and Rosengård equally referred to *Jantelagen* as promoting the idea that no one should be above others and accordingly encouraging inclusive attitudes. It was a surprising observation, as this cultural norm, which is generally understood in negative terms of holding people back in Swedish society, was seen as positive and contributing to inclusion.

"For me, being Swedish means that we stand with each other instead of thinking about who is like this or like that."
A youth from Luleå, 2016

THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

Similarly, the research also found that a person's ability to be included is closely connected to other elements of identity such as language, origin, and physical appearance. These factors were mentioned by several participants coming from Tensta and Rosengård, who described how discrimination based on their accent when speaking Swedish, their visible foreign origins and physical appearance, affected their feelings of acceptance.

Language as a means to communicate is an essential tool for individuals to integrate and be included in society. Many commented on the difference between Swedes who have the opportunity to grow up learning Swedish within family circles, and those who struggle to reach language proficiency because members of their family who migrated to Sweden do not master the Swedish language. This gap in opportunities to learn Swedish is further reinforced by the geographical separation between communities in marginalized areas and established Swedes, who rarely meet and interact. As a mother illustrated, the limited opportunities for people to interact can lead and dissuade people to learn or improve their Swedish language skills.

"In the past, more ethnic Swedes lived here, and that forced us to get out of our comfort zone and interact. But now, because of the segregation [of our community], we don't feel the need to learn the language."
A mother in Tensta 2016

The lack of interactions and exposure to mainstream society pose additional challenges to inclusion as they limit some groups from acquiring strong language skills and understanding the social codes and norms of Swedish society. Consultations clearly showed that the growing distance between marginalized and non-marginalized communities can generate entrenchment, and has the potential to fuel frustrations and reinforce mistrust between groups across society.

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38 Socialization – "*the lifelong process of inheriting and disseminating, norms, customs, values and ideologies, providing an individual with the skills and behaviors necessary for participating in society*" – looks different depending on how familiar an individual is with the norms and codes at work in a particular context. (Source: J. Clausen, (ed.) "Socialization and Society", *Little Brown Company*, Boston, 1968, p. 5).
39 S. Fredlund-Blomst, "Jantelagen and multiculturalism: a dynamic dual", *Berkeley Undergraduate Journal*, 2010, p. 11-12.
40 According to Fredlund-Blomst, conformity can present a challenge to multiculturalism, because *"[in] a host society relentlessly striving to conform to the middle, multiculturalism presents itself as a visible deviation. Op.cit.*, p. 12.

CULTURAL IDENTITY

While language, nationality and cultural background are only some of the factors that influence a person's identity and sense of belonging, they are important references that shape people's perceptions and attitudes and gives individuals the social understanding and awareness they need to operate in a given context. The question of one's origin and the degree to which this affects the feeling of being included was strongly debated amid participants, especially among youth with a foreign background. Although many felt that foreign origins make it more difficult for young people to find their identity in Swedish society, the majority of youth said they were proud and thought it was an asset to belong and identify with various cultures.

"Everyone has had some ancestor from a different country at some point. So if you're considered Swedish based on parents and forefathers, there are very few Swedes in Sweden."

A youth from Luleå 2016

A small number of interviewees coming from Luleå and Älvsjö examined the concepts of identity and origins, highlighting that no one is "fully Swedish", as illustrated in the quote above. The downplaying of the importance of origins signals a desire and a willingness for inclusion. Participants from marginalized and non-marginalized areas alike expressed this willingness for greater inclusion and the view that origin and background should not matter. However, the research also revealed a contrasting reality where questions of identity and origin do matter in ways that presents obstacles for many people living in Sweden today.

EMBRACING DIFFERENCES

Many young people in Tensta and Rosengård spoke about how they felt that 'their differences' were not accepted, especially with regard to their physical appearance, as an additional factor contributing to exclusion. Physical features and skin color were deemed to play a role in how people define what makes a person a Swede. In fact, many

participants associated "swedishness" with specific physical traits such as skin, eye and hair color, describing the typical Swedes as white, blond and blue-eyed. There is a perception that the definition of today's Swedish citizen has not yet fully evolved to include those who don't fit into this stereotype. Participants also highlighted that this perception reinforces the feeling that diversity and difference are not valued by everyone in Swedish society.

"I would allow myself to feel more Swedish if it was accepted that we can look different. When someone asks me where I'm from, it's a sign of not having accepted that society can look diverse."

A youth from Rosengård, 2016

While voicing concerns about mainstream society and its perceived lack of acceptance for difference and diversity, some youth from Tensta and Rosengård acknowledged the self-limitations and self-exclusive behaviors that they have imposed on themselves. Self-exclusive behaviors, defined as "*the internalization of self-depreciating beliefs by members of disadvantaged groups as a product of relations with dominant groups, and the impact of these beliefs on their actions and outcomes*"[41] are known to limit people's actions and reinforce existing stereotypes.

Some youth said they were conscious that their perceptions of acceptance were based on how they think others perceive them. In some cases, this can lead to unfounded beliefs and negative attitudes. Participants from marginalized areas testified that peer pressure also played a large role in fueling such behaviors, reinforcing the perception that they are not accepted by Swedish society. Some admitted that while they had not personally experienced discrimination, having people in their immediate surrounding who experienced it, was enough to change their attitude and increase their feeling of mistrust towards mainstream Swedish society.

"You must be willing to change your approach and let go of your victims' clothes. We must stop having prejudices and start being nice instead of upset."

Youth from Rosengård, 2015

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41   D.-J. Omtzigt," Survey on Social inclusion: Theory and Policy", *Oxford Institute for Global Economic Development*, Oxford University, 2009, p. 20.

Recognizing that self-imposed limitations as well as peer and community pressure add yet other obstacles to inclusion, many young people called for a change in their own attitudes and perceptions, and those of people in mainstream society.

BALANCING EXPECTATIONS

The development of a person's identity is a process of negotiation which involves balancing different interests and expectations, primarily your own, but also those of your family, community and society. When parents bring expectations from other cultures and traditions, this can result in cultural clashes, especially for adolescents. Although many of the families we met had lived in Sweden for many decades, with their children born in Sweden, it was found to be very difficult for young people to balance the different norms and expectations coming from parents and those from the wider society.

"Parents have completely different perspectives from young people. The younger generation is more aware of today's society, they understand the codes and can integrate themselves if they want but they also have to take two sets of values into account: that of their parents and that of society."

A parent from Rosengård, 2016

It was clear that many young people in marginalized areas, largely from an immigrant background, see the expectations of society as a possible obstacle to developing a positive self-image and to being accepted. It was reported that they are often under the impression that mainstream society expects them to underperform or fail. As such, many feel like they have to 'fight harder' and perform better in order to be granted the same acknowledgement and acceptance as someone with Swedish roots.

The perception that society has little faith in, and low expectations of, citizens with an immigrant background is devastating. It couples with other challenges related to exclusion and socio-economic marginalization, and generates strong feelings of demotivation and hopelessness. Consequently, some individuals believe that they will never

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be able to achieve their dreams and goals in life. This feeling was especially strong among groups of youth interviewed in Tensta and Rosengård.

INSPIRATION AND MOTIVATION

Unanimously, participants referred to the importance and need for role models to inspire, motivate, and generate positive attitudes in the younger generation. Local and national role models can play a crucial role in shaping the direction of young people from marginalized areas who might lack positive references in their own family circles. In fact, in areas like Tensta and Rosengård, many parents have suffered severe psychological trauma from war and conflict in their countries of origin, which has an impact on the family environment and on their children. These complex dynamics have created a need for engaging with positive role models and leaders that young people can aspire to become.

"Role models are a great source of motivation for the youth in Tensta. When you see that those with whom you can identify yourself are successful and achieve their goals and dreams, it makes you want to do the same."
A youth from Tensta, 2016

With the growing influence of "negative role models" who attract youngsters by showing their wealth accumulated through petty crime and drug dealing, participants called for more investments in initiatives that attract ambitious and successful youth that can inspire others. Moreover, many spoke of the need to promote the stories of inspiring and charismatic political leaders, who embrace the values and diversity of the nation. Olof Palme, an influential Swedish politician and Prime Minister, was frequently mentioned as a respected political leader and role model for all of Swedish society.

For many youths in Rosengård, the international football player Zlatan Ibrahimović is a role model who achieved great success despite his foreign and modest socio-economic background. In his hometown of Rosengård people referred to him as a great source of inspiration and motivation. An anecdote shared by social workers in Rosengård, shows the extent of how Ibrahimović is considered a role model for many young people: *"Some months ago, the press announced that the King was coming to visit Rosengård. Youth at the center*

got really excited but their excitement immediately faded when they realized it was King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden. They thought that Ibrahimović was in town".

Making acceptance possible: a two-way process

The importance of acceptance in order to build an inclusive society was highlighted by all participants. Any person who perceives a lack of acceptance from those in their direct surrounding, or in society as whole, may fall into attitudes and behaviors of self-exclusion where passiveness becomes the natural response to thoughts such as "why try when everyone knows I will fail?" Addressing such behaviors are essential to overcome social exclusion. It requires strengthening the self-confidence of young people who feel excluded, especially in marginalized areas where such attitudes often transcend the individual level and plays a role in shaping the collective self-image of groups of young people.

The stories that were shared also highlight how the different cornerstones of acceptance are closely interrelated and cannot be addressed in isolation when examining issues of inclusion. It was evident that positive and inclusive behaviors have the power to challenge negative perceptions and attitudes and contribute to making people feel accepted. Addressing the obstacles to acceptance and building on endogenous capacities and skills will be key to fostering inclusion in Sweden. While acceptance is often perceived as an issue that affects those who feel excluded, it concerns everyone. In fact, those in mainstream society need to also take ownership of the concepts of acceptance and inclusion and promote it in their daily interactions.

"I don't think it should matter what others believe in or what they look like, everyone should be allowed to take part."
Youth in Älvsjö, 2016

DIGNITY

The research revealed that the starting point for achieving inclusion is the ability to live a life with dignity. It was noted that when conditions are met for individuals to participate meaningfully in society, have a role that is recognized and valued by others and develop and fulfil their potential, inclusion can be achieved.

SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

A person's sense of dignity is based on several factors and is perceived and experienced in different ways, depending on historical, cultural and socio-economic factors. All interviewees highlighted that education and employment influence people's sense of dignity and inclusion. In fact, education and employment greatly determine an individual's status and place in society as a means of self-fulfillment and affect the way people are valued by others.

Some parents from Rosengård and Tensta illustrated the importance of education and employment in Swedish society by referring to their own experiences, where low levels of education and difficulties finding employment contributed to their gradual exclusion from society. Beyond the immense benefits of education and employment as opportunities to learn and sustain oneself, it was recognized that studies and professional experiences shape people's perceptions and ability to grow and advance in life, as well as building self-esteem and confidence.

"My studies increased my opportunities to get a job and that made me feel more like a part of society."
Luleå church group, 2016

While underlining that education is the foundation that allows people to develop professionally, economically and socially, a large number of participants commented on some of the weaknesses of the Swedish educational system. Reference was made to Sweden's policy of "free school-choice", allowing students and families to freely choose the school they would like to attend independent of its location[42]. In many cases this has led to an outflow of high-performing students from marginalized areas with the consequence that the students with most difficulties are concentrated in the same schools[43]. People also spoke of the lack of cultural and socioeconomic diversity in schools, further widening the gap between marginalized and non-marginalized areas. Many students said that they tend to choose schools and classmates with whom they could identify and easily socialize, limiting the interactions and socializing between young people from different backgrounds.

As illustrated in Table 5, in Tensta and Rosengård, high-school eligibility is strikingly lower than in Älvsjö and Luleå, and lower than the national average. This significantly decreases the likelihood of young people from these areas being able to access higher education and well-paid jobs that would ensure a higher socio-economic status later in life.

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42 This policy is called *fria skolvalet* which literally translates to *the free choice of school*. It is a policy that has been widely debated in Sweden and criticized for contributing to marginalization, both on the basis of origin and class.

43 The Swedish school-agency (skolverket) has stated that "*the free school choice is likely to have contributed to increased performance differences between schools and greater socio-economic school segregation and thus to a reduction in the equality of education.*" (http://www.skolverket.se/statistik-och-utvardering/nyhetsarkiv/nyheter-2013/skolverkets-slutsatser-om-likvardighet-och-det-fria-skolvalets-effekter-1.211468)

Table 5: Education levels in the four communities consulted[44]

	Älvsjö	Luleå	Rosengård	Tensta	Sweden
High-school eligibility	91.5 %	91.4 %	47 %	62 %	87.6%
Share of the population that pursued education beyond high-school	54.9 %	44.6 %	24 %	26.8 %	39 %

Young people with foreign backgrounds also spoke of the difficulty of finding jobs regardless of the level of education. Many indicated having the impression that their job applications were not selected because of their foreign-sounding names or physical appearance. This perception is confirmed by many studies carried out that show evidence of discriminatory practices in the labor market[45].

Nonetheless, the workplace and university were mentioned as being among the few places where people come together from different backgrounds. Pursuing common interest through studies, or working towards common goals as colleagues, are powerful ways to focus on one another's similarities and confront prejudice.

"I noticed that there is very little difference between ethnic Swedes and us [with a foreign background]. At work, my colleagues [who are ethnic Swedes] are just like me."

Young adult from Rosengård, 2016

CONTRIBUTING IN A MEANINGFUL WAY

Dignity is also strengthened by the sense that people contribute to society in a meaningful way, both through their professional occupation and during social and leisure activities. However, limited numbers of spaces and structures where young people can socialize and practice leisure activities, was found to be a barrier to greater integration and inclusion. Youth consulted from all areas confirmed this limitation.

"There should be more places where people can meet and exchange stories. It creates a different feeling when you get to know about other people and talk to each other. You don't get the same negative image of 'others'."

A youth from Älvsjö, 2016

Overcrowded living conditions for those living in marginalized areas partially explain why young people, especially young boys, look outside the home for a meeting space. However, the lack of facilities and the restrictive opening hours of the few centers that are operating, were perceived as a major problem. The dark winters and harsh weather conditions in Sweden make it especially important for young people to find constructive ways to use their spare time, and keep them away from the streets and boredom. During interviews, many local actors working with youth spoke of the lack of opportunities for them to initiate productive and meaningful activities where they are given responsibilities. Beyond the need for more facilities, people talked about how important it is to make young people feel that they have a role to play and can contribute to their community in a meaningful way.

"It's important to give young people and those who do bad things more responsibility. Involve more people in society so that they feel useful."

A woman from Rosengård, 2015

However, in the absence of state support, there were many examples of alternative and creative initiatives that seek to address this gap. For example, in Luleå a parent group formed a sports library where youth with limited financial means can come and borrow sports equipment free of charge. This initiative was said to successfully create an environment and space that stimulated confidence and mutual respect

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44   All sources for the statistics can be found in the Bibliography.
45   Migrationsinfo website, researching: *Diskriminering på arbetsmarknaden*.

and encouraged youth to pursue personal goals. The many examples and personal stories shared by young people and the feelings of gratification and increased self-esteem when making a meaningful contribution, attests to the importance of engaging young people in the development of their community.

"One day, my family and I helped the homeless. Even if it was a small gesture, I felt that I was able to help others. This made me realize that for once, I was not being assisted but the one helping others. I felt privileged."
A young adult from Tensta, 2016

in finding solutions to social exclusion and defining a vision for their future. However, when asked about their views on concrete solutions, many participants from Tensta and Rosengård highlighted that they did not know how to translate this into action as their contributions have never been sought. The perception that their views are not valued and taken into account can lead to further frustration and dangerously impact the relationship between marginalized youth and state authorities. Nonetheless, the clearly articulated willingness to be involved and engaged is an important asset to build on. While involvement and dialogue is not an end goal, the process has the potential to foster active participation and empower members of marginalized communities to demand and contribute to the change they want to see.

BEING INVOLVED

Some participants from marginalized areas highlighted the need for more investments in education, job-creation and youth centers as a way to lower the perceived feelings of inequality between those who grew up in marginalized and non-marginalized communities. Moreover, a number of youths from Tensta and Rosengård expressed their frustrations towards the authorities, who seemingly dedicate efforts and resources on preventing, curbing and limiting perceived problems in marginalized areas, rather than making investments to strengthen existing capacities to engage and inspire young people in participating in their society.

"The municipality is spending resources on crime prevention and police but they should spend more on initiatives that could attract those who feel hopeless. There is a risk that those who want to do good things get influenced by those who do bad".
Youth from Tensta, 2015

While calling for more investments to create opportunities to contribute in a meaningful way and to tackle exclusion, participants underlined the importance of being involved

EQUALITY

The police, young people and parents from Tensta and Rosengård often referred to the 'perceived' difficulty of accessing public information in marginalized areas. Some youth and women spoke of the need for more information about how to reach out to authorities, look for jobs or learn about their rights in society. Participants said that accessing this information would help them achieve their aims, and eventually feel more included.

"It came as a shock for me when [members of the Somali association] asked if they could have a dialogue with the police. I think that information is missing, and in that regard, Sweden has truly failed with integration."
A policeman in Rosengård, 2016

Many initiatives and actors work to provide such information and make it available to all citizens across Sweden, including information in different languages for immigrant communities. Understanding the reasons why the information does not trickle down to marginalized areas, or why some residents do find information but do not use it, are questions that need to be further looked into.

THE WEIGHT OF PERCEPTIONS

The idea that those with an immigrant background do not have the same chances and opportunities to succeed as the population with Swedish roots was a recurring one in the consultations. There is a sense that society has forgotten the suburbs as their residents do not feel they have access to the same services as residents of other areas[46].

Many young people consulted in Tensta and in Rosengård attributed these perceived inequalities to marginalization, racism and structural discrimination against immigrant communities. Residents in marginalized areas spoke of feelings and perceptions that society does not believe in their potential and contributes to low levels of self-esteem. These feelings are often amplified by frustrations built from the negative and distorted picture of certain areas by the media[47].

"There is a minority group in Tensta that gets a lot of attention by media. When these people do something bad, the whole neighborhood gets the blame."

Youth from Tensta, 2016

The perception of Tensta and Rosengård as dangerous areas has also been researched by official studies, including the Swedish agency for crime prevention (BRÅ) through a yearly National Security Investigation[48]. While the findings from the survey reveal higher levels of perceived fears or feelings of insecurity in the "Urban 15" areas than at the national level, the figures show that criminality in these areas is slightly lower than at the national level (Table 6).

The discrepancy between actual and perceived vulnerability brings into question the role of public perceptions in fueling feelings of fear and insecurity, contributing to feelings of exclusion. This also raises questions on the disproportionate attention given to the "Urban 15" areas and their residents at

the national level, generating feelings of frustration towards the media in particular.

Table 6: Findings from the National Security Investigation[49]

Share of survey participants who:	"Urban 15" areas	National
Reported violations of individual (assault, sexual offenses, threats, muggings, fraud and harassment	10.4 %	11.3 %
Reported violent crime (assault, threats and muggings)	6 %	6.1 %
Felt very or fairly insecure when outdoors late at night in their own area	48 %	15 %
Feared to be attacked or assaulted	21 %	11 %

In fact, the portrayal in the media of marginalized neighborhoods as violent and dangerous has contributed to creating a negative collective self-image of its residents, and has diverted attention away from the strengths and positive aspects of living in multicultural neighborhoods[50]. Nevertheless, some media actors have put policies in place to mainstream cultural diversity and are present in marginalized communities[51].

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46   A large majority of interviewees in Rosengård mentioned that the health system was poor in their neighborhood and that it is difficult to get health care when they need it. There is also a perception that residents in other areas in Malmö have access to better health services.
47   See for example DN, 2016-02-09: http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/har-ar-sveriges-mest-utsatta-bostadsomraden/ and Aftonbladet, 2016-02-09: http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/krim/article22232202.ab
48   The National security investigation's findings show a comparison between statistics collected at the national level and in fifteen areas that are part of the Urban Development Plan, characterized by low levels of education, high unemployment rates and high dependency on social welfare. Tensta and Rosengård are two of the fifteen areas.

49   The statistics presented are the most recent numbers available. The statistics can be downloaded from: https://www.bra.se/bra/publikationer/arkiv/publikationer/2013-03-27-brottsstatistik-och-resultat-fran-ntu-i-urban15-omraden.html The National security investigation, used as a reference in many official publications, was carried out through surveys. In 2015, the total sample size was of 21,505 individuals. Out of this sample, 86 individuals from the "Urban 15" areas were actually interviewed.
50   *"If over and over again, a person is met with ready-made stories about themselves, it will sooner or later have an effect on one's self-image. At least one is forced to adopt an approach, a strategy, to confront the difference between the personal perception of belonging and the categorization attributed by one's surrounding."* (M. Vallström, "Mörkade platser: Stigmatisering och ryktesspridning i urbana utvecklingsområden", FoU Söderhamn, 2015, p.3.)
51   Public service broadcasting (Sveriges Television, SVT, and Sveriges Radion, SR) has replaced its multicultural policies, aiming at providing specific services for minority groups, with integrationist policies designed to mainstream cultural diversity. (Source: K. Horsti, G. Hultén, "Directing diversity: Managing cultural diversity media policies in Finnish and Swedish public service broadcasting", *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Volume 14 (2), 2011, pp. 209-227.) The recent opening of a SVT office in Rinkeby, a neighboring suburb of Tensta, attests to this.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LAW ENFORCEMENT

Many spoke of the need for better communication, improved relationships and trust building between the police and the communities, especially in marginalized areas. Despite the many challenges with the relationships between some communities and law enforcement, consultations revealed that most participants have a positive image of the police. This was particularly true for parents of foreign origins, who drew a contrast with negative experiences involving the police in their home countries. Young people in Tensta, Rosengård and Älvsjö spoke of the mistrust between the police and some youth groups based on a sense that police do not like young people with an immigrant background. Despite the sometimes tenuous relationships, positive examples of collaboration were cited by some young people that generated feelings of inclusion. For example, when a group of teenagers in Tensta attended the 'Man Behind the Uniform' (MBU) training during their studies at the Ross Tensta Gymnasium, this enabled a change of perspectives about policemen and law enforcement[52]. This initiative was seen by both youth and police officers interviewed in Tensta as a good opportunity to improve the image of the police, and their relationships with residents.

GROUP BELONGING AND SOLIDARITY

Participants also underlined that dignity comes from the recognition that people have a role and place in their own social groups, in their families, friendships, and in their community. In Tensta and Rosengård, residents expressed very strong bonds with their community and areas, a feeling that did not emerge as strongly in Älvsjö and Luleå. These powerful feelings of belonging were explained by a broad sense that people in marginalized areas, because of the cultural diversity and horizontal power relations between residents, do not have to prove or assert themselves to be accepted. Residents of Tensta and Rosengård also talked about the welcoming atmosphere and small size of their area, in making it easier to know and support each other. Many participants indicated that this feeling of collectivity and common community make their areas unique and different from other parts of Sweden.

ASPIRATIONS AND VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

When asked about their aspirations, participants from all generations and backgrounds emphasized that everyone strives to achieve personal goals and dreams in order to have a dignified life. Despite the differences between experiences and feelings of exclusion, everyone strived to be included in society.

"We must all be able to be part of society despite having different visions and different reasons for coming here in the first place."
Youth from Luleå, 2016

However, it was observed that first and second generation immigrants have different expectations and aspirations of life in Sweden and this is shaped by experiences and achievements. For example, those from the first generation who migrated or fled to Sweden in search for a better life were very vocal in praising Swedish society for the opportunities, freedom and safety they found here in Sweden. This was also true for those who have more recently arrived. However, second generation youth in Tensta and Rosengård spoke of the importance of feeling included as a way to be able to fulfil their aspirations. Having been born and raised in Sweden, these young people strive to achieve their dreams and live a dignified life like all other Swedish citizens. Despite the feelings and experiences of inequality, discrimination and self-exclusive behaviors that have built frustrations, it has not deterred young people's desire to be included and achieve their dreams. The vast majority of youth in the consultations spoke of the future, their dreams and aspirations in positive terms and emphasized that all youth, from margins to mainstream, strive to live peaceful, happy and fulfilled lives.

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52   "Man Behind the Uniform", or MBU allows police officers to tell their personal stories and provide a more human perspective on their work and lives, beyond their uniform.

Dignity:
a goal and a right for all

While dignity emerged as a key factor contributing to inclusion for all stakeholders in the consultations, there were differences in the way people experienced it. Findings highlighted that instances and perceptions of discrimination that affect those with a different origin and culture have a strong and negative influence over people's sense of dignity, and affect their level of inclusion. Nonetheless, there are also positive and encouraging factors contributing to people's dignity, in both marginalized and non-marginalized areas.

Having access to education, finding work, sustaining yourself and your family, gaining recognition for playing a role and making a contribution to society emerged as important factors that contribute to having dignity. This sense of well-being therefore provides a strong sense of self-value that fosters inclusion. The feeling of leading a dignified life was found to generate greater tolerance and respect of differences.

Box 2: A poem on happiness

In his slam poem "Think Again", Simon Mattiwos unpacks the realities of marginalized areas. In his dialogue with his consciousness he reminds us of the importance of happiness, a key component to live a dignified life.

Think again

"Hey, what if I forget what I wanted to tell them?

No Simon, Think again. - There is something important you want to tell them.

Okay, but what if I mess it up and look like a fool?

No Simon, Think again! - Someone will think:
"I recognize myself in him".

What if SL tickets were not so expensive?

What if single mothers had money left after paying their rent?

What if Husby's library stayed open until 10 and not 4 pm?

What if adults listened more to their children so they did not have to sneak?

And what if I need happiness?

Huh?! - What if I need happiness?

Do you hear me? - What if I need happiness!?

No, Simon, Think again!

I - is your ego

Need - is your desire

*And then what remains? - **HAPPINESS**!*

DIVERSITY

Celebrating diversity was identified as an important factor contributing to inclusion. It was noted that if individuals and the society at large valued difference and embraced cultural diversity as a strength of Swedish culture, positive outcomes could be generated. Participants from all generations and backgrounds highlighted that people's commonalities are stronger than what divides them, and that together and with their differences, diversity contributed to a rich and strong Swedish society.

VALUING AND INCLUDING DIFFERENCE

While Sweden has long been considered a homogenous country, the population is today diverse and influenced by a great variety of cultures, languages and traditions. As many as 193 nationalities are present in the capital of Stockholm alone, and a few hundred languages are spoken throughout the country, including recognized minority languages[53]. This cultural wealth was highlighted by many participants, who spoke of the need for all individuals, from margins to mainstream, to be valued as a way of ensuring a strong country at the social, cultural and economic levels. The extent to which a society accommodates and celebrates difference was said to foster inclusion.

THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY

The positive attributes of a diverse society have been broadly recognized by experts and practitioners. Cultural diversity has become a central issue for policy-making in the European Union. Many of the current debates and research seek to understand if culturally diverse societies are more efficient than homogenous ones. Empirical studies carried out have found that diversity in Sweden is positively correlated with productivity, brings profitability and competence in workplaces, addresses social justice concerns, and has the potential to foster social cohesion[54].

During the research, many examples and stories were citied that demonstrate how diversity brings benefits to communities and contributes to fostering of inclusion. In Tensta, many entrepreneurs have successfully built on the growing trend and interest for international food by opening restaurants and expanding their activities outside their neighbourhood. Other expressions of culture such as art have the power to attract and incentivize people from mainstream society to come to areas where they would not usually go, including neighborhoods like Tensta and Rosengård. This has the potential to stimulate the local economy, but also to create opportunities for communities to interact[55].

53   SVD, 21/8/2005 http://www.svd.se/har-finns-193-nationaliteter and SR, 29/10/2014 http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=3993&artikel=6003931

54   E. Bellini et al., "Cultural Diversity and Economic Performance: Evidence from European Regions", *Hamburg Institute of International Economics*, Research Paper 3-14, 2008.
D. Power, "Cultural Industries in Sweden: An Assessment of their Place in the Swedish Economy", *Economic Geography*, Volume 78 (2), 2002.
K. Hamde, "The Current Debate on Cultural Diversity in Sweden", Journal of Cultural Diversity, Volume 15 (2), 2008.
55   The economic benefits of diversity do not necessarily generate positive outcomes for everyone. Evidence shows that in the labor market, the integration of some first generation immigrant groups has not been

The research found that in all four areas there is a wealth of activities and initiatives that already exist and that seek to bring people together from mainstream and marginalized areas around common interests around leisure activities, sports or food[56]. These initiatives and strategies aimed at promoting inclusion, which rarely break the local and national news threshold the same way violence, represent a promising opportunity to be strengthened and built upon.

INCLUSION IS FOR EVERYONE

Inclusion as a concept and an experience includes individuals and groups regardless of their differences. Participants were vocal in emphasizing the value of diversity and the opportunity to learn from each other and from their differences. This hope and general positive outlook on diversity were voiced in all the four areas of the research. A youth from Luleå noted:

"I think that people should get included on all levels and when I say include I mean it for everyone, not just immigrants, everyone has to be part of society."
A youth from Luleå, 2016

Importance was also placed upon appreciating commonalities rather than merely focusing on differences. Marginalization and social exclusion build barriers between people and make it more challenging to find opportunities to meet and interact. Participants in all consultations acknowledged that focusing on differences sows the seeds for prejudice and mistrust between communities.

"People shouldn't be focusing on their differences but on what they have in common. We are all humans and have much more in common than what we think. "
A youth from Tensta, 2016

PERCEPTION CHANGE TO FOSTER INCLUSION

Participants from all communities were convinced that fostering inclusion can take place despite the widespread prejudice and negative stereotypes that currently exist in Sweden. They noted that a change in people's perceptions, combined with a willingness to accept and learn from other cultures, is a key step towards a more inclusive society. It was largely agreed that perception change is essential in distilling fears between individuals and groups and promoting inclusion through simple acts of kindness, such as smiling and being generally polite and kind. Participants also noted that everyone has a role to play to counter a "fear of the unknown", break stereotypes, and improve the image of those living in marginalized neighborhoods.

"I try to greet people when I'm in town. I want to give a positive image because I feel that some people are scared and influenced by media. I want them to have a positive and true image of us [young people with a foreign background]."
A youth from Rosengård, 2016

While acknowledging that there are no quick fixes to changing perceptions, the consultations showed that there are many people who already go to great lengths in order to foster inclusion in their lives and communities. But the willingness to include others requires efforts both at the individual and collective level. While participants believed that simple everyday gestures are a first step for perception change to take place, they recognized that efforts to break down stereotypes and embrace diversity should also be strengthened at the local, regional and national levels involving decision and policy-makers.

While discussions around inclusion are mostly associated with immigrant communities and those living in marginalized areas, it was noted that inclusion concerns everyone, including ordinary citizens from mainstream society. If those in mainstream society "*feel more comfortable in embracing those who are excluded, feel less insecure for their*

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successful due to a lack of country-specific skills for Sweden, but also because of discriminatory practices. (Source: M. Nordin, D.-O. Rooth, "The Ethnic Employment and Income Gap in Sweden: Is Skill or Labor Market Discrimination the Explanation?", *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, Volume 111 (3), 2009, pp.487-510.)

56   Organizations such as Kompis, Individuell Människorhjälp, or Invitationsdepartementet create opportunities for people with very different backgrounds to meet, interact and eventually build relations.

participation, and are ensured that the inclusion of individuals and groups with different cultures, beliefs or values does not pose a threat to them"[57], inclusion will be fostered. For an inclusive society to prosper, both those who feel excluded and those in mainstream society with Swedish roots need to take an active role in promoting inclusive attitudes and behaviors.

Embracing diversity to foster inclusion

The findings emphasized that diversity is a strong basis for greater inclusion. It was noted that diversity generates positive outcomes – such as social justice, economic competitiveness and prosperity, which have not fully trickled down to benefit some of the areas that are widely considered as the most marginalized in Sweden. It was also revealed that stakeholders in the four communities believe that greater inclusion can be achieved despite the widespread prejudice and negative stereotypes that currently exist in Sweden. Participants showed how the power of positive stories of collaboration, respect and appreciation between individuals and groups from areas considered either as marginalized and non-marginalized, fosters inclusion.

While it is difficult to assess how many individuals and groups among Swedish society already celebrate diversity in their daily lives, the numerous initiatives and individual efforts that promote diversity attest to a growing movement of citizens who embrace diversity. However, the growing polarization as a result of the recent immigration crisis has shed light on the growing far-right movements that perceive diversity as a threat.

Ensuring that diversity is understood as enriching and beneficial for all citizens will be key in distilling fears and prejudices among those groups. Moreover, raising awareness about the benefits of diversity, and promoting initiatives and individuals who champion diversity in their personal and professional lives are simple examples of how diversity can be promoted and positively fostered.

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57   UN, "Creating an Inclusive Society: Practical Strategies to Promote Social Integration", *op.cit.*, pp.32-33.

INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"The only way to fail is to not do anything."
A teenager from Älvsjö, 2016

WHAT WE LEARNED

Marginalization, discrimination and socio-economic inequalities are not new issues, and while Sweden has been more successful than most other nations, it has yet to find the right balance with its various initiatives, investments or programs in reversing the structures that create and continue to reinforce the process of separation between the margins and mainstream.

This report showed a diversity of perspectives on how inclusion is understood and experienced. It also showed that inclusion will only be effective if a systems-approach is adopted and combined with efforts that are aimed at all levels: individual, civil society, municipalities, the private sector and institutions of the state. While the findings reveal a large gap between marginalized and non-marginalized areas, the report also highlighted that the principle of inclusion is an aspiration sought by all citizens of Sweden.

Fostering inclusion must involve everyone; by strengthening the confidence and capacity of marginalized groups and individuals but also by empowering those in mainstream society to welcome those that are excluded and removing the notion from mindsets of the 'danger' immigrants may represent and that they are an asset to the development of their society. Inclusion provides opportunities for policy-makers, and all actors engaged in overcoming marginalization, to look at the needs of different communities and tailor accordingly responses to truly achieve societal inclusion.

But achieving societal inclusion requires taking action on many issues such as the concentration of high rates of unemployment in marginalized areas, the absence of meaningful engagement for young people, and the psychological effects of exclusion leading to disempowerment and self-exclusion, to name a few. While these are not simple challenges to address, if left unattended frustrations and resentment will continue to grow and continue to cause social turmoil.

Sweden has long been seen as a 'humanitarian superpower', a country that avoids military conflict, but stands on the front line of helping the world's dispossessed. The nation has for more than 20 years been admired and imitated for reasons that are still valid, and today is an opportunity for Sweden to show how it can build on its years of experience and set the example for other European nations to follow. It is not by taking more restrictive measures on immigration that Sweden will resolve the growing distance and tensions among its residents. Sweden has the opportunity to construct the foundation for a society that is richer in empathy and culture. Failing to take these steps, the country will see poorly integrated immigrant communities continue to grow in size and scope, and social isolation will increase accordingly. After all, a surplus of compassion is not the worst vice for a country to have.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the research, a number of suggested recommendations were made and have been grouped into five sections and that can be taken up by the various stakeholders working on this topic. The recommendations are presented in no particular order.

Inclusion: from local to national ownership

While demonstrating the importance of discussing and understanding experiences of inclusion from local perspectives, the research highlighted some of the gaps and underlying challenges in achieving greater inclusion. Fostering inclusion requires that everyone take ownership and collectively redefine inclusion at all levels of society: from local communities to policy and decision-makers at the national level.

Implications:

- **Making inclusion explicit in the policy agenda.** The concept of inclusion has been adopted as an implicit principle of policy-making in Sweden[58]. In order for Sweden to become a champion in the implementation of policy goals for inclusion, more targeted and explicit goals should be designed and implemented. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular goal 16 on inclusive and peaceful societies present an opportunity for Sweden to implement a vision for inclusion that is valid and meaningful for tackling the challenges of exclusion in highly developed settings and to inspire other countries.

- **Adopting a holistic view to policy-making** for inclusion by engaging relevant ministries (Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of Justice, among others) to collaborate in a working group or committee for inclusion, which would have the aim to influence the agendas of their respective ministries to implement policy changes.

- **Sensitizing ordinary people about the state of inclusion in Sweden.** Some citizens interviewed in the research indicated that because they had not experienced exclusion or discrimination, it was hard for them to define a vision for a more inclusive society. On the contrary, people in marginalized areas were very clear about the challenges to inclusion and the vision for Sweden. In order for all citizens to define and take ownership of the concept of inclusion, they need to understand the challenges and different realities that people face in their everyday lives. Extensive awareness-raising efforts to promote a culture of dialogue, openness and solidarity are therefore needed.

Adapting to local needs to achieve greater impact

While recognizing that inclusion concerns everyone, the findings from the research showed that inclusion is primarily an individual process. Efforts to foster inclusion at the local level therefore need to be adapted and tailored to specific individuals and groups as a way to achieve greater impact.

Implications:

- **Building capacities and empowering those that lack the skills, knowledge and self-confidence to become active citizens**. Workshops and trainings could be organized in local communities to increase the active citizenship of residents. For example, having regular seminars to learn about the functioning of the municipality, starting an association and raising funds, or engaging politicians can be a real trigger for individuals who feel disempowered and lack this specific knowledge. To be successful, these workshops and trainings need to be facilitated by local actors from the specific areas. When workshops are inclusive, participatory and encourage individual learning, they tend to create the conditions needed to strengthen self-confidence and boost self-esteem among participants.

- **Introducing citizen's dialogues** as a starting point to map the needs and priorities of Swedish society at the local level as a way to build trust, share knowledge and develop common visions between residents and local decision makers. These should be promoted in both areas considered as marginalized and non-marginalized to better understand the barriers to inclusion and interactions within communities.

- **Creating a pool of role models** from different areas and backgrounds who will inspire young people in their community. With the use of technology and social media (through the development of applications that are easy to use for younger generations), role models could be reached by young people in need of guidance and provide support accordingly.

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58   Except for the inclusion of Roma people, which has been an explicit policy goal for many years.

Promoting a culture of dialogue, openness and solidarity

The world is changing fast, and so is Sweden. Solidarity was seen as an important responsibility of the state to provide support to those in need abroad, and the Government of Sweden took a leading role in foreign assistance for many decades. Today, solidarity is increasingly more relevant at home. In light of the large influx of migrants in recent years, the growing terrorist threat and numerous youth who continue to leave for the Middle East to join extremist groups, more attention needs to be given to cohesion "at home". Swedish society needs to create the conditions that will make it less likely for segregation to grow in the future, and for inclusion to flourish.

Implications:

Ordinary citizens must be engaged and open to meet with new people. There is a wealth of initiatives, structures and organizations that allow interaction between ordinary citizens. Some of these example include inviting foreigners to their house to share a meal and learn about other cultures and culinary habits; making new friends through friend-matching platforms; meeting, coaching newly-arrived immigrants and teaching them Swedish language; meeting with other young parents at child-mother day-care facilities; and participating in lectures, seminars and movie festivals to get familiarized with new cultures. By engaging on a personal level and allowing foreigners to enter in the personal sphere, people can start breaking down stereotypes and barriers to inclusion.

Specific actions can be implemented to **raise awareness about these initiatives**, and sensitize people about the benefits of interactions and diversity. However, these awareness-raising efforts need to be jointly implemented by those who have the means to do so, such as large private sector companies and government structures. While it is proven that tools such as campaigns, social media and promotional materials have the power to raise awareness about specific topics in society, it is only by engaging in collective efforts that greater impact will be achieved.

Tackling barriers to exclusion in the schooling and employment systems

As the findings show, the schools and the labor market are critical environments where actions must be taken to foster inclusion and increase people's sense of dignity.

Implications:

- **Establishing regular exchanges among children and youth** from different neighborhoods by organizing school exchanges and encouraging mentoring between students with varied school results. Regular exchanges can generate better understanding and create friendships at a young age between youth from different cultures and create the foundation for better inclusion in the long-term.

- Given the demonstrated effect of the free school choice as a catalyst for segregation between schools, **investigating and identifying innovative solutions for an inclusive Swedish school system,** where diversity is accommodated and celebrated, must be taken up.

- **Ensuring that recruitment processes are inclusive and non-discriminatory** by delivering certifications to employers who hire qualified and diverse candidates. Efforts to encourage diversity in the work place will only be effective if employers and employees (both native and non-native) develop a common vision of the workplace where respect, fairness and trust thrive.

The business sector committing to meaningful partnerships to support local actors

There is a growing recognition of the role of private companies in building more cohesive societies. While some companies have already embarked on a number of partnerships and collaborations with local actors, there needs to be more deliberate efforts by the business sector to contribute to greater inclusion.

Implications:

- **Building authentic partnerships with governance structures and local actors and residents** aiming to integrate partners in various stage, starting from the identification and analysis of community needs to implementation of activities by the residents and communities. Exploring with local actors how the business sector and external actors can assist in developing and strengthening these assets would also be very beneficial.

- **Private companies committing to invest more in 'local' social responsibility and 'local' social missions**. Finding new models of collaboration where private companies invest in local efforts will be key to ensure multi-sectoral engagement. By sharing their expertise, using their visibility and investing financial means in social responsibility and local projects, greater impact can be achieved.

Changing the media narratives

Often seen as "the one to blame", media plays a role in building stereotypes and conveying a negative image of marginalized areas. As the findings show, the negative portrayal of marginalized areas affects the collective self-image of groups in marginalized areas, further reinforcing exclusion and self-exclusive behaviors.

Implications:

- **Telling a different story about the realities of Sweden** by portraying stories in the media of ordinary citizens from all walks of life, generations and cultures, who contribute to enriching Swedish society. The media has the potential to shape perceptions and create parallel narratives by giving a more nuanced image of marginalized neighborhoods in their reporting by describing and sharing the positive as well as the ordinary and successful stories that are seldom showcased.

- **Generating quantitative local information by conducting regular surveys** that attest people's perception on the state of inclusion. Independent polling agencies could lead regular surveys and collect stories and experiences of residents on identifying what problems exists and what can be done to address these. They could use media channels as a way to communicate the stories of those affected by marginalization to mainstream society but also to decision-makers. This could serve as an effective tool to take people's perspectives on board and implement better targeted solutions.

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