



HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE INTERCULTURAL CITY

Thematic Seminar

Oslo 14-15 June 2017

*“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin?
In small places, close to home—so close and so small that
they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world
of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or
college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works.
Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks
equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination.
Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning
anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to
home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.*

Eleanor Roosevelt

➤ Background

Intercultural Cities (ICC) is a coalition of municipalities that strive to ensure conditions that enable individuals and groups to live together (well) in their diversity, allowing the expression of pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness, within an overarching human rights framework avoiding at the same time both the stifling conformism of assimilation and the moral relativism of multiculturalism.

A human rights framework is a precondition to building more inclusive societies and achieve intercultural integration in practice. At the same time, intercultural policies contribute to the effective implementation of the human rights standards adopted by (European) States to comply with obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights¹, and enable the effective enjoyment of human rights by all residents.

¹ See : http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf



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Yet, the ICC coordinators, at their last meeting (September 2016) considered that the interlinks between human rights and the inclusive integration approach promoted by the ICC programme should be made more explicit, and that a deeper discussion on the matter would help sharing best practice, expanding knowledge, and delivering policy guidance to address relatively new intercultural dilemmas. Moreover, a thematic seminar on Human Rights in the intercultural city would help answering the question of the presumed disjuncture between an adherence to human rights and the cultural recognition that underpins interculturalism, and encourage intercultural cities to seek to form alliances and common understanding with the advocates of human rights.

➤ Preliminary considerations

The ICC programme was born out of an understanding that individual human rights are paramount to societies which are inclusive, fair and prosperous, and that safeguarding human rights and ensuring equity should be a prime policy goal for public authorities and, in particular, for any city which strives to be intercultural.

Yet, although the intercultural integration policy paradigm clearly needs an overarching human rights framework to be implemented, and despite the fact that the ICC programme has been developed within the Council of Europe, i.e. the the house of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law, cooperation between interculturalists and human rights defenders has not been always evident.

This might be explained mainly by a sort of criticism or lack of mutual trust between the two groups, with some interculturalists expressing scepticism towards the effectiveness of a legal environment. As a matter of fact, it is considered that laws alone do not ensure the full enjoyment of the rights and thus a legal framework alone doesn't not automatically entail effective protection. In addition, laws are presumed not to be flexible enough to allow for experiments and innovation. Finally, some theories have opposed human rights, considered to be inherent to the individual only, to cultural rights – being the latter specific to the “community” - as if it would not be possible to reconcile both.

And yet the positive value of diversity is today put at stake by a challenge that affects both the human rights regime put in place in Europe after World War II, and the intercultural policy paradigm, and this is the return to identity politics that threatens at the same time some of our fundamental freedoms and community cohesion.



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The main conclusions of this seminar have dismantled the criticism above, by showing that community cohesion cannot be achieved without legal and administrative frameworks that allows for interaction, participation without discrimination, equity and dignity, i.e. human rights. Still, the opposite is also true: intercultural policies can precisely enhance, make effective, and act as an enabling factor for the implementation of the laws on the ground, and stimulate the adoption of forward-looking legislation to adapt or sometimes even anticipate societal change. This is what the ICC programme has done through its ability to take high-level abstract ideals and pragmatically translate them into actions that make sense at the quotidian level to ordinary residents. It has shown that the outcomes produced by societal diversity depends on the governance of diversity, not on its presence (or not) in the first place.

➤ Human Rights in inclusive cities

*“There cannot be diversity without justice.
And there will be no justice without diversity.”*

*Mr Geir Lippestad
Deputy Mayor for diversity, City of Oslo*

The Seminar showcased examples of intercultural and human rights policies implemented by European cities, being they member of the Intercultural Cities programme or not. It also put forward the experience of civil society movements and organisations, active in the field of freedom of religion and of thoughts, gender equality, LGBTi rights, and anti-discrimination. All those contributions nurtured the discussions with concrete examples from the ground.

The seminar showed that there is a common framework for achieving more inclusive societies based on the following principles:

1) “The right to the city”: Recognition, participation, representation

Inclusive cities acknowledge diversity as a potential advantage, and recognise both the community (of residents) as a whole, and its different groups.

The official recognition of diversity and participation by the city political leaders and administration is essential for promoting social cohesion and urban safety; it also allows for the



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effective participation and representation of all groups and for building trust between the communities and in the “authority” (local, national).

As a result, it is important for local authorities to invest in this relationship-building process and not expect instant results. On the long-term, these policies - built on reciprocal and symmetrical recognition - will make the status of equal worth recognised by all residents.

2) “The right to belong”: ensuring full access to citizenship rights

Citizenship is often a matter of State competence, but it is also one of the key factors for a successful integration at the local level. Restricting permanent residence and citizenship leads to precariousness and exclusion, while access to residence without citizenship creates inequalities in both politics and social life.

When the national policies do not offer effective tools to address civic inclusion of foreign citizens, cities can innovate and test practices that – when successful - may even provoke changes in legislation including at state level. The local level is already testing new practices in the field of participatory democracy that enable foreign residents to participate in the political debate and, to some extent, even in political decision making.

For instance, some cities have opened up to the possibility of granting their own form of citizenship sometimes even to undocumented migrants. This “urban citizenship” derives directly from the residence as a fact, and from the relation with the territory.

Cities are also on the frontline for dealing with the situation of rejected asylum seekers or economic migrants who do not comply (or not anymore) with the legal and administrative conditions of entry and/or stay in the host country. Undocumented migrants are human beings that are in principles entitled to the protection of the European Convention of Human Rights, but that are in actual facts invisible at State level, without any legal recognition, despite being physically present on the territory.

Again, intercultural and inclusive cities have scope and room for manoeuvre to innovate and respond to pressing needs, and they are doing so by guaranteeing universal access to municipal public services – particularly health care - and by promoting access to the other services. Moreover, cities can provide assistance and encourage the regularisation of people living in the



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municipality in irregular situation, and stimulate dialogue and debate to promote amendments to (national) legislation to achieve a kind of recognition for the situation of undocumented migrants.

3) “The right to have rights”: Ensuring effective justice

Without democracy, human rights, and protection against discrimination, there would be no justice. Without mutual recognition, equal access to fundamental rights and freedoms, and participation, there would be no potential of diversity to be unlocked. There is no justice without inclusion, and no inclusion without justice. This is one of the key messages that emerged from the discussion on the need to ensure effective justice.

Although most of cities do not have competence to rule by law, nor to deal with justice matters (both prerogatives of the States) local authorities can adopt charters of principles, municipal orders, and guidance for city officers to build up a coherent corpus of “soft law” that helps comforting and reaffirming the rule of law, giving citizens effective tools to complain against injustice, and get satisfaction in case of breach of their rights.

Putting in place the mechanisms for denouncing discrimination, repairing, and assisting the victims, will enhance the feeling of belonging to an inclusive community, and make the experience of justice a reality for all.

4) “The right to a peaceful environment”: Ensuring sustainable and prosperous societies

The interrelation between interculturalism and peace is undoubtedly strong: the Council of Europe “White paper on Intercultural Dialogue” ² describes this as a tool to “learning to live together peacefully and constructively in a multi-cultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging”.

One of the conditions for a peaceful environment in a diverse society is the ability of local authorities not to avoid potential conflicts but to address them by developing intercultural and meditational competence for city staff, and intercultural understanding within the population. Actually the “diversity advantage” concept which is at heart of the intercultural cities policy

² See http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/policy_EN.asp



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paradigm builds precisely on the assumption that diversity can be a factor of development, sustainability and prosperity for communities if managed in a competent way. Indeed, migration management policies can either regard migrants as vulnerable groups in need of aid, or rather – and this is the ICC approach – consider them as people with talents and skills, providers of a know-how which may be different or complementary to the one of the host community.

Yet, prosperity and development cannot really thrive without a wider and tangible reality of equal access to opportunities, non-discrimination and human dignity for all.

A few examples of good practices from cities

Oslo: The OXLO-Charter is a sort of declaration of human rights for the city. The charter states that all citizens living in Oslo are equal in dignity and entitled to be treated with respect and trust. Its main guiding principles are: 1) tolerance and individual freedoms; 2) protection against discrimination; 3) social responsibility. The Charter grants to citizens from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds the same fundamental rights, duties and responsibilities. The Charter's principles define the city policy guidance, serve as a baseline for the delivery of equal municipal services, and inspire the relation and cooperation with the civil society. The latter is particularly relevant for the city because civil society is often a bridge for ensuring participation and inclusion of all residents, including those that are usually more difficult to reach.

Vienna: In 2014 the City Council adopted the declaration "Human Rights City Vienna" to embed human rights within the city structures. One year later, it established a Human Rights Commissioner for the promotion and protection of human rights in the city. Two more specific bodies have been created to address respectively gender equality and LGBTi issues. An action plan has been prepared in 2015 to identify relevant policy areas for intervention, namely participation, social inclusion and fair distribution of resources, security and safety, and education. In the last two years the city has been working at the implementation of measures in those policy areas.

Gdansk: In June 2016, after a participatory consultation process, the city of Gdansk has officially adopted a Model for the Integration of migrants to support foreign residents including refugees. The Model works as an integration strategy for the city that mainly follows an intercultural approach, and includes information related to the practical and administrative steps to follow for accommodation, access to education or health care, language courses, etc.

The implementation of the activities and plans contained in the model has been mainstreamed



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in existing city policies so that its financial sustainability is ensured. An important spirit of solidarity in the city, as well as a thorough knowledge base and partnership with the civil society, contribute to the fulfilment of the Model's objectives. The most challenging part of the process from now on will surely be to build intercultural competence for the administrative and technical staff of the city. Finally, to enhance participation and representation, the city has also launched a Council of migrants.

Barcelona: The "City of Rights Programme" was adopted in July 2016 to take stock and compile in a single document all human rights policies developed in the city, so to 1) strengthen the human-rights-based approach in public policies and linking it to interculturality; 2) and develop thematic lines of action. The Programme is based on the European Charter for Human Rights in the city. Among the thematic priorities the city has included actions to prevent and fight against the rhetoric of hate and discrimination, as well as access to civil rights and public freedoms in the public space.

Recognising and guaranteeing human rights to immigrants, is one of the biggest challenges for host cities, but at the same time it is a challenge that cities have confront to be able to build fairer and more cohesive societies, based on a frame of rights and responsibilities for all. The right to the city is one of the key aspects of the programme, as it recognises equal opportunities to all residents irrespective of their administrative status, thus disconnecting citizenship and access to rights from the concept of nationality or legal residence.

Reggio Emilia: the city is particularly active on access to citizenship rights, not only at the local level but also by instigating debate on changes to state legislation regarding the recognition of the *ius soli* and *ius culturae*. At the city level, the "ceremony of citizenship for new residents" is undoubtedly a powerful tool not only to foster the sense of belonging of new citizens, but also to convey a strong message from the institutions to the community as a whole, showing that the identity of the city is in constant development and that it is building its strengths upon its growing diversity. The ceremony is a way to declare the city open to diversity, but also to acknowledge the existence and the talents of the new residents that, by becoming "citizens", subscribe to the rights and duties of the local community.

Botkyrka: the city of Botkyrka has made of human rights and sustainable development its political priorities since 2007, with an emphasis on the following areas: the right to work, to education, to health, to identity(ies), to housing, and to participation. Since then, the human rights policies implemented by the municipality are linked to the local sustainability goals: the city considers that a sustainable society is only possible when human rights are respected for all and no groups are structurally disadvantaged. Nowadays, the Botkyrka is in the process of reviewing its local sustainability goals and the new programme of work will be enriched through a more explicit reference to the ICC intercultural lens and human rights. Among the main actions so far carried out there is the integration of human rights principles into the



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intercultural dilemma workshop concept; capacity building of new employed in the city administration, including directors; cross party awareness on intercultural policies and integration strategies. More recently, in May 2017, the city adopted a new strategy for equality framed by the principles of equality, participation, inclusion, non-discrimination, transparency and responsibility.

➤ Thematic Working Groups:

- 1) Civil Rights and Non-Discrimination
Referent and author: Toralv Moe, Oslo

Questions

Why civil rights and non-discrimination is a challenge for your city under an intercultural perspective?

The working group discussed this topic briefly. Civil rights and non-discrimination is a challenge for three reasons:

- The topic can put minorities up against each other – particularly LGBTi-people and also minorities within religious minorities
- Furthermore, this split can be broadened, when the discussion of civil rights turns to the rights of women and children within certain traditionally conservative minority groups.
- Lastly, the question of civil rights for minorities challenge the majority – in the labor market, in education, and in housing

For politicians – these challenges combine to make the question of human rights difficult. In Oslo, for instance, this has led to a rethinking of inclusion policy.

What has your city done to encourage that the voices of women/LGBTi/Migrants/Minorities are given prominence in construction of the intercultural city life?

In some cities minority groups have political power through voting, representation in city councils and in political parties. In Oslo, both ethnic minorities and the LGBTi community have a strong presence in city politics.



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In many cities, as in Barcelona and San Sebastian, there are statutory boards of migrant communities, who are consulted in the making and implementation of policies.

In these cities, as well as in Botkyrka (Mångkulturellt centrum) and Reggio Emilia (Centro Interculturale Mondinsieme), civic intuitions with an intercultural agenda have the role of meeting places for consultation and policy making.

What are the main challenges your city administration experiences in terms of inclusion of the topic of civil rights and non-discrimination into the city policies and measures?

The group discussed briefly.

There are three main challenges experienced by the city administrations, when raising the topic of civil rights and non-discrimination:

- The first challenge is political, as described above. By raising issues of civil rights for LGBTi-people, or women, for instance, politicians with a pro-diversity agenda fear fuelling the cause of xenophobic anti-migrant parties.
- The second is one of competence. Lawmaking, security through police, and protection of minority rights in courts, are normally throughout Europe the competence of states, governments and national parliaments.
- Thirdly, there are the constraints of city budgets and staff resources, both to finance city based civil rights institutions, document discrimination and human rights abuse, and staff them with people who have the necessary acumen to deal with delivering justice and protection.

Such factors have had a major influence in the Netherlands, among others, as the rights of women, children and LGBTi have been embraced by nationalist, xenophobic and islamophobic parties.

All cities in the group have come up with initiatives to bridge the gap between the injustice and lack of protection some people in our cities experience, and the national and international legal frameworks (i.e. the declaration of human rights enshrined in national laws on civil rights and non- discrimination).

The group shared city experiences extensively and came up with these solutions – political / legislative, administrative and informal - that have enabled cities to address the gaps identified:



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Political – Soft laws

- Botkyrka, Oslo and Barcelona have institutionalized principles of interculturality and human rights through city council decisions, producing soft laws:
- Botkyrka has worked ingeniously to create a comprehensive policy of sustainability – in terms of economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social cohesion – a policy that incorporates both human rights and interculturality.
- Oslo has made an inclusion policy based on the principle of equal opportunities – and opportunities pass by unused, if people are dissuaded by discriminatory practices and civil rights abuses.
- Barcelona has used the established institution of the “*padron*” (municipal register of citizens), to give migrants rights to municipal services

Administrative – offices for civil rights

- San Sebastian, Barcelona, Botkyrka, Rotterdam and Forli have established offices for non-discrimination, which give advice and help victims of discrimination to put their complaints to police and courts. In some cities, as in Rotterdam, such offices are run by civil society NGOs as RADAR, while in Spanish and Italian cities it is a mixture of public officers (ombudsmen) and NGOs. Other examples are Vienna, Stockholm, Paris and Reykjavik (not in this work group) , which have municipal offices for human rights.
- Most cities – as Oslo and Botkyrka also do – support advocacy NGOs which assist victims in court cases.

Informal and creative strategies – city networks

- In Italy there is a national intercultural city network who regularly meets to exchange ideas and coordinate joint initiatives. The cities in the network have given support to popular political movements for civic and political rights – as the right for migrants to vote in local elections, and the “*Ius Soli*” – the right for the children of migrants to become Italian citizens. In this work many cities are creative – from using internet based surveys as referendums, to youth democracy in schools where all can participate.
- A new agenda is set – for example by Senigallia – championing the rights of refugees: currently most migrants who are victims of displacement and civil war in Africa, are not recognized by the Italian state as refugees – leaving them without any rights.
- In Norway the national city network is used to gather city based political support for inclusive and intercultural policies, stating that some national measures meant to curb immigration, are harmful to integration and social cohesion in cities.

Informal and creative strategies – dialogue with state authorities



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In some countries – namely Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands – there are laws and state bodies set up to protect civil rights and vulnerable groups.

- In the Netherlands, the law on non-discrimination, provide cities with the legal means to cooperate with both advocacy NGOs and the police, to combat discrimination.
- In Norway, institutions as the Equality Ombudsman and the National Mediation Service, as well as the Directorates of Migration and Diversity and Children and Families (including the LGBTi Center) are allies in promoting civil rights for ethnic minorities as well as for the LGBTi community.
- In Sweden, the Ombudsman for discrimination, the Discrimination board, and the Participations Authority, can be seen in the same way by cities as partners.

What are the obstacles your city faced because of the national legal framework/and or policies?

See description of challenges.

The common city experience is that states protects borders and see granting migrants rights as an invitation to more (economic) immigration.

State policies and laws regulate citizenship as a kind of membership in welfare.

Cities policies of inclusion and interculturality regulate opportunities and a sense of belonging, which is central both to gaining the diversity advantage and to creating social stability and cohesion.

Can you suggest why and how the situation could be improved? And which measures should be taken under an intercultural perspective?

In Oslo there is a rethinking of the policies and diversity and inclusion, which takes into account the concept of the just city: intercultural policies make cities economically prosperous, attractive for people and business, and more dynamic and inventive. This is the argument of the diversity advantage. In the group discussion it was also recognized that intercultural policies also make urban societies stable, cohesive and safe, as described in the Botkyrka policy of sustainability.

In Oslo this line of arguments has led to appreciation of civil rights and non-discrimination. The obvious consequences of civil rights abuses and discrimination, is a loss of opportunities – for personal growth as well as city growth. Hence, the true marking of an intercultural city should be an abundance of opportunities. As the Vice mayor of Oslo stated in his welcome address: There



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can be no diversity without justice, and no justice without diversity – as this is contrary to equal opportunities.

See also discussions on questions above.

Should the ICC Index be enhanced to include a more rigorous investigation into discrimination in areas such as employment, housing and justice?

The group agreed the human rights, civil rights for LGBTi persons, and women, and the issue of non-discrimination should be made a main part of the Intercultural Cities agenda, and hence a part of the ICC index.

Is it possible to prove that the intercultural approach constitutes an effective way of preventing discrimination?

There are methods in social economics that measure alternative costs of decisions and use of opportunities – this can be used to measure the cost of lost opportunities due to discrimination.

See the argument on opportunities and the diversity advantage.

2) Democratic rights and participation

Referent and author: Solve Saetre, Bergen

There were about 20 people participating from cities as different as Klaksvik and Paris. Still the discussion on democratic rights and participation in an intercultural city was interesting. Intercultural cities view minorities as resources – and involving minorities in democratic representation and decision making is crucial. Democracy is about participation, and participation feeds democracy. This relates not only to the election processes but to people's participation in the community life, which is the focus of the ICC Programme. The Norwegian political scientist Stein Rokkan wrote in the 1960s that: "Votes count in the choice of governing personnel but other resources decide the actual policies pursued by the authorities." The cities in the workshop had examples on engaging residents that are banned from participating in the democratic election systems. Some of these examples will be mentioned here.

Nevertheless, the participants in the workshop found it problematic that a large number of the inhabitants in the cities were excluded from participating in elections and in the regular political system. Despite being active citizens and participating in NGOs as well as in activities initiated



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by the cities, they would eventually hit “a glass ceiling” by not having the citizenship of the city and country where they are residing. There are differences between the countries in Europe regarding voting rights for migrants. EEA migrants generally can vote in local and regional elections while third country nationals cannot unless they have been naturalized. In Norway third country nationals can participate in regional and local elections after obtaining a permanent residence permit (usually 3 years after receiving the first permit). This happened in 1983. In all countries participating in this workshop foreign nationals need to have been naturalized in order to participate in national elections.

The City of Vienna tried to overcome this obstacle by allowing foreign nationals that had resided legally in Austria 3 years or more to vote in their local elections. This was however not tolerated by the federal Austrian government. They challenged Vienna in the legal system and Vienna lost. Today around 25% of the population in Vienna are foreign nationals that are not allowed to vote in local elections. This is a major democratic problem.

Despite coming from different countries most of the cities participating in the workshop had similar challenges as a result of national legal framework/and or policies towards migrants/foreigners. A lot of the residents in the cities have problems obtaining work permits, residence permits or other issues related to immigration law. An active participation in the society is not necessarily followed by naturalization. It is difficult to mobilise people for active participation when they feel excluded at the same time.

There are ways the cities are working to engage non naturalized migrants in the democratic processes in cities. A good example was provided by the Italian town of Senigallia. They elect two councillors from the migrant’s community in the local elections. They have the right to speak on all matters in the council but do not have voting rights. Other ways of involving minority communities in the public decision making processes could be through: Migrants advisory boards, formal cooperation between authorities and migrant organisations, dialogue forums, workshops, public hearings, youth parliaments/ minority councils. Most member cities in the ICC network have established this kind of networks.

Speaking for 6 cities in Ukraine: as of today, people of Ukraine are becoming more and more aware about the democratic rights and freedoms; yet the challenge is often to convince them to get truly involved into participatory process and take responsibility for their community life. The civil society is still at an early stage of development and funds for specific actions are not always secured so social issues are often dealt with only pending availability of grants.



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Language

Several cities mentioned the lack of access to language training among migrants as a major obstacle to participation. Understanding and speaking the dominant language in the society you are living is key to be able to participate in the democratic process and many cities have established language courses despite receiving little or no state funding for this. Several cities offer language courses to all migrants and some provide courses in asylum reception centers as well. Paris has several programmes for this. In Bergen migrants whose status is legally recognised in the country have access to free language courses while the city also funds language courses for groups that do not have residence permits.

NGOs and migrants associations

Participation and exercising influence is not only achieved through traditional politics at local, regional or national level. NGOs and grassroots activity matter as well. But NGOs often depend on public funding for their activities. Very often the work of NGOs is determined by where there is available public funding. Typically funding is available for projects that have to do with prevention of radicalisation and extremism, combating FGM, fighting extreme social control etc. These are all very important and relevant topics but there is a tendency to design projects in a way that they fit into a certain narrative so to be eligible for grants, and this can be a problem for democracy.

Many cities and regions have established formalised cooperation councils between local authorities and migrants. Some places are working well; some other not. In Paris some years ago they established a migrant council. This created expectations that were not met. There were issues regarding who should be elected to this consultatory body. Should it be territorial, political or cultural? In Paris they have been more successful in engaging minority groups in participation through the school system.

Fuenlabrada in Spain received a lot of migrants from other parts of Spain in the post-war period. These domestic migrants (internally displaced persons) established several regional associations. In recent years the people moving to this city come from abroad and they have established new migrants associations. These new migrant's associations are today working together with the old regional ones in a Board of coexistence and are forming a vibrant intercultural environment in the city.



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In Barcelona they are working to involve the inhabitants in the day to day running of the city as well as in important decisions. The city is using technology and social innovation in order to mobilise the people. See: <https://www.decidim.barcelona/>

Some of the participants in the workshop also stated that it was difficult to engage migrants/minority groups. It was sometimes difficult to identify the issues that “triggered” them. It was said that migrants could appear to be complacent. An NGO from Norway mentioned that migrant women sometimes would say that they could not see the point in voting or being involved in political/community work because “everything is perfect here anyway”.

3) Conclusions working group ‘LGBTI rights under an intercultural perspective’
Referent person and author: Juul van Hoof, Movisie/Rainbow Cities Network

Intercultural cities have a diverse population including people of different nationalities and origins, and with different languages or religions/beliefs. These people have diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, which might not always be visible.

In several European and national researches, LGBTI citizens have been reported to face challenges, also on the local level. In the workshop we addressed those challenges and the opportunities and responsibilities for city policy officers to make a difference through inclusive policy development.

The number of participants in the parallel workshop on Democracy was much higher, but the people who attended were interested in the subject and determined to include LGBTI rights in their local approaches.

The workshop was formed around composing a so-called *persona*: a fictive person with an LGBTI background and at least another identity. This could be a disability, a religious background or a refugee status, anything that would be realistic in the participants’ cities. They had to come up with a name, an age, a gender identity, specifics about their *persona* social role (family role, employee, student, religion, e.g.). After composing a *persona* like this, we would look at different situations in the city through the eyes of this *persona*.

By means of this exercise the participants realised that no one is just or only LGBTI, that an individual’s identity is actually composed of many identities and social roles. Those roles interact within a person, but also externally. The exercise invited the participants to step into



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the shoes of these *persona* they created and to reflect on questions around inclusivity, safety and accessibility of their city.

This exercise led to some eye openers with the participants:

- LGBTI people are often or always calculating whether to be out and/or visible or not, and that causes stress. Choosing to be invisible means hiding (part of) your identity and not being able to completely be comfortable around other people;
- Not all people can come out and be visible, especially not with traditional cultural or religious backgrounds;
- Role models are very important; LGBTI people, but also straight allies. By positive speech and association, city officials and administration can make a difference;
- Some people do not identify as LGBTI, but they do engage in same-sex activity. Especially people with a non-western background do not always define same-sex activity as an identity. So for them, 'coming out' in the traditional western practice is not self-evident, and in some cases this might even be dangerous.
- Refugees who flee to safer countries might still not be safe amongst fellow refugees in reception centres or housing facilities;
- Life events such as moving in with a partner, becoming a parent, or becoming dependent on health care can be heavily influenced by the degree to which people can and want to be open as an LGBTI person.

In the capacity of service provider, cities hold a specific responsibility to safeguard equal treatment of all citizens. The most relevant conclusions and recommendations coming from this workshop on LGBTI rights under an intercultural perspective are:

- Involve regional and local LGBTI NGO's and advocacy groups in policy development (needs assessment, fact finding, legitimisation and effect of measures)
- Be aware of safe spaces for LGBTI people: are there areas in the city that are less safe than others? How safe is the public space in the city? Does the city know about neighbourhoods or areas with tensions related to sexual orientation and gender identity?
- Avoid heteronormativity in policies, and not only in language
- Homonationalism is on the rise (LGBTI causes being used to negatively frame other minorities - such as people with a migrant background or Muslims. In policy development, prevent groups being played against each other and encourage cooperation



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- Be aware of specific issues for LGBTI people with a traditional cultural or religious background: (the threat of) honour-related violence can have an effect on the wellbeing and safety of LGBTI people within certain communities. Service providers in the field of health and welfare should also be aware of this, for instance through education and training
- Don't assume certain groups cannot get along or that there will be tensions and misunderstanding, but check this with the people involved
- Support and engage organisations working on intersectionality and multiple discrimination
- Support and engage organisations representing a diversity of people
- Support and engage organisations cooperating on the regional and local level and encourage the forming of local and regional networks

➤ Overall conclusions

“One of the main reasons individuals are denied human rights is because they are discriminated against due to their cultural specificities, or because the state refuses to recognise them, thus the two are intimately linked.”

Charles Taylor

There are strong links between the inclusive integration approach of the Intercultural Cities (ICC) programme and human rights:

- ICC recognises that culture and identity are not static: it promotes policies for societies under permanent development and considers change as an opportunity;
- ICC is founded on the same underlining principles as human rights, i.e. equality and non-discrimination, justice, participation, inclusion, and cultural symmetry;
- ICC promotes openness and spaces for (physical) interaction, organisation and participation that are fundamental to the effective enjoyment of human rights;



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- ICC acts as an enabling factors for making human rights a concern for all, as it promotes dialogue, exchange and mutual learning which makes both societies and the legal framework progress and anticipate social change to respond to people's needs.

More and more cities are already working, more or less explicitly, on human rights implementation using the intercultural perspective as a tool. Yet, within the ICC programme there is a need to collect and share good practice in this field, and to expand knowledge and elaborate guidance on specific issues such as LGBTi rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, participatory democracy.

Besides, it is important to work at strengthening cooperation between the local and the national level: this would allow on the one hand for compensating gaps in implementation of commitments undertaken by States; on the other hand, for pushing national legislation further through the (pilot) soft law approach implemented by cities, and thus lifting some of the legal and administrative barriers that prevent local actors from implementing more forward looking integration policies.

Participants suggested that a strong statement on the links between human rights and interculturalism is made at the ICC Milestone event to be held in Lisbon on 28-29 November 2017; and that a permanent working group on "Human rights in the intercultural city is set up" for voluntary cities that would like to explore the issue further and contribute to the development of guidance in this field.



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