



# NEWSLETTER

## ICEC Newsletter No 4 Towards a better understanding of “interethnic coexistence”

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Dear reader,

Welcome to the fourth ICEC newsletter, as we approach the end of the ICEC project. Since the last newsletter, we have made important progress and are pleased to be able to update you on our latest work, such as: Insights on our Policy Workshop in Vienna; key topics of interethnic coexistence in European cities and findings from our city comparisons; and the outlook of the final comparative cross-city report and our city-specific policy briefs.

Best wishes,  
The ICEC Team



*‘Breakfast in the parking lot’, a neighbourhood initiative in Breitensee, Vienna (Picture: Y. Franz)*

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## ICEC engages: The Vienna workshop with practitioners and policymakers

The Policy Workshop took place on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016 at the Volkshochschule Ottakring, the oldest adult education school in Vienna - a space of encounter which we also included in our research as an Urban Living Lab. Researchers, stakeholders and policymakers from Sweden, the Netherlands and Vienna participated in this thought-provoking one-day event.

The programme started with a presentation by Markus Steinbichler of the Viennese Urban Renewal Office 6/14/15, representing Markus Rumelhart, the district mayor of the 6th district in Vienna (Mariahilf) (one of the ICEC neighbourhood case studies). After his talk “Neighbourhood attachment: Approaches and potentials from a local perspective”, there was a lively plenary discussion with questions from the audience regarding outreach activities, inclusion of residents and the value of research cooperation at the local level.

Following this, Myrte (UvA), Julia (ISR) and Zeinab (KTH) briefly presented the research findings from Amsterdam, Vienna and Stockholm respectively. The presentations were guided by the message “**From interethnic coexistence to co-responsibility**”. A video message was shown from a ‘special guest’ from Stockholm: Aseffa Hailu, the founder of the initiative Mitt127 (see box on page 4), who spoke about the impact of his organisation on the lives of local youth (more info in the box), showed what ‘interethnic coexistence’ and ‘co-responsibility’ might look like ‘on the ground’.

In the interactive knowledge exchange on “**integration initiatives that work**”, participants brainstormed on how to improve some of the ICEC projects in a perfect world, and what (new)



Group work on innovative approaches to existing initiatives (Picture: D. Dutkowski)



Discussions with practitioners, policymakers and researchers (Picture: D. Dutkowski)

## ICEC Knowledge: Did you know?

### Vienna

Garteln ums Eck (Gardening around the Corner) is an initiative in Vienna that is organised in multiple neighbourhoods. The project started as a legalised continuation of activities by earlier ‘guerrilla gardeners’ and is now coordinated and also financially supported by the municipality through local urban renewal offices. Participants primarily want to beautify the neighbourhood and like to have their ‘own’ small garden. Because activities take place in public space, conversations with neighbours and passers-by ensue easily, as well as small-scale cooperation around watering and exchanging plants:

*“[Since I began taking part,] neighbours show me their garden or talk with me. That’s a nice side-effect” (participant).*

policy ideas come to mind when planning and designing successful initiatives. For instance, higher interaction amongst parents and kids of different ethnic backgrounds can be achieved in preschool services with more flexible operating hours and off-time leisure events. As for successful bottom-up initiatives, such as the Mitt127 festival in Stockholm, their success lies in their ability to create a different, and more positive image of deprived neighbourhoods.

After a great half-day full of inspiring ideas, participants were invited to get their delicious packed lunch prepared by an immigrant woman from Libya and organised through a local NGO, and to go out on the streets or to the nearby park, and start discussing what they had learnt and their ideas with people they met there. We received very positive feedback from the participants on our choice of location and catering, demonstrating the value of ‘**being close to everyday life**’ which is at the heart of the ICEC project.

## ICEC Explains: Key research findings in a nutshell

The following general findings are a selection of non-context-specific results as our analysis took place in neighbourhoods which are obviously embedded in specific urban and national contexts.

### 1. The type of initiative and its effect on (non)-participation

The type and design of an initiative influences who participates, why and to what effect. We distinguished top-down, bottom-up and hybrid initiatives according to their embeddedness in local governance structures. In addition, we distinguished initiatives focused on the neighbourhood (place-based) from those that are aimed more at people in group settings (group-based). A distinction was also made between initiatives that are free and those that are fixed cost or donation-based. While some initiatives require native language skills, it was irrelevant in others. Few initiatives have a balanced mix of participants from different ethnic backgrounds, in fact in most of our initiatives, participants with a native background were dominant. We discovered a variety of formal and informal exclusion mechanisms that hinder participation, especially for non-native residents.

There are formal and informal exclusion mechanisms barriers to participation. These include financial/time limitations, but also feeling unwelcome due to language skills or being excluded by fellow participants. In top-down spaces of encounter, e.g. neighbourhood centres or kindergartens, interactions are re-occurring and more sustained, and sometimes result in friendly and supportive contacts. These places aim to foster inclusion by emphasising homeliness and informality, offering trust-building opportunities. However, initiatives practicing 'sameness' based on ethnic background or participants' experiences of marginality and vulnerability can exclude those who don't share them. In this way, sustained encounters can deepen prejudice - for example, that children do not learn German in free pre-school - and result in conflicts or disengagement.

### ICEC's knowledge: Did you know?

#### Amsterdam

The Neighbourhood Centre De Handreiking by "Buurtwerkkamer Coöperatie" is an initiative by professionals and residents that aims to provide a meeting place for vulnerable residents and contribute to a liveable neighbourhood. Besides organising activities in place, another objective is guiding residents towards paid employment or voluntary work. 'Samen kappen' is one of the activities where hairdressing/crafting/sewing activities and socialising take place in the same room.

*"I've been at home [unemployed] for three years now. So I'm pretty happy that I can spend a few hours [here]" (participant).*



Activities in the neighbourhood centre De Handreiking, Amsterdam. See box below. (Picture: Buurtwerkkamer De Handreiking facebook page)

### 2. Public familiarity affects sense of belonging and distance to ethnic "others"

One theme that emerged as important was the role of initiatives in creating fleeting encounters. While neighbourhood initiatives often aim to create close contacts and social cohesion, participants do not necessarily desire close ties and may value more superficial contacts. They mention recognising each other on the street and greeting a fellow participant as positive consequences of participating in neighbourhood initiatives. Especially highly visible activities in public space, such as working in the garden, result in more positive perceptions of neighbours and feeling better in the neighbourhood. The strength of the analysed neighbourhood interventions therefore lies less in stated aims such as creating a 'neighbourhood community' or improving the social position of participants than in their contribution to public familiarity (recognising and being recognised by others) in the neighbourhood.

This public familiarity is created by fleeting contacts between participants and - when activities take place in public space - between participants and passers-by.

Although this can be considered a limited effect, other research on the role of public familiarity in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods supports our finding that this potentially increases neighbourhood belonging, especially because it decreases the perceived distance to ethnic ‘others’. The resulting situation, in which neighbourhood residents live relatively peacefully together without much contact between groups, can already be considered a valuable outcome.

### 3. Ethnic and socioeconomic difference both matter

The mechanisms of exclusion are not only due to ethnic but also to socioeconomic difference as well as the ability and motivation to participate. Education and employment, which are also related to ethnicity, represent key dimensions: the more highly educated feel more able to organise themselves; those not (regularly) employed have more time to participate but sometimes see participation as a barrier to finding a job rather than as a possible step towards labour market integration. At the same time, the design of initiatives and what they offer to participants influence whether residents are interested and willing to invest time and energy.

### 4. Formalisation hinders small-scale initiatives - and their outcomes

There are clearly positive and negative effects of local policy interventions. **Positives are, for example, chances of encounter and (superficial) contact that initiatives lead to and the low-threshold help that is offered.** Negatives are, among other things, the bureaucratisation of small-scale initiatives. Our analysis shows a tendency by policymakers and public stakeholders to overestimate the impact of local initiatives. Initiatives do not have the same meaning for all resident groups and the often limited reach of the interventions. We found in various cases “unexpected” outcomes such as empowerment of female migrant groups through sharing information



*Mitt 127 summer festival in Skärholmen, Stockholm (Picture: Mitt 127)*

on social services which are hard to measure in bureaucratic means. At each stage, from preparing, subsidising and implementing local initiatives, there is a need for a higher scope of action and trust while following requirements by the public administration.

### 5. Awareness and openness of initiatives affects participation

Most selected initiatives have a relatively small group of people who are active on a regular basis and only parts of the neighbourhood residents are reached. Non-participants often indicate that they would like to have certain services or meeting places but they are not aware of existing initiatives. Usually, non-active residents are either not interested in neighbourhood initiatives or they are interested but not aware of existing possibilities or do not feel called to participate in them. Improving communication through various channels could help to increase the reach of existing initiatives. In addition, continuous critical reflection on the scope of “openness” needs to be integrated into local initiatives.

## ICEC’s Knowledge: Did you know?

### Stockholm

Aseffa Hailu who grew up in Skärholmen himself founded the initiative Mitt 127 (My127). Mitt127 is a neighbourhood project that has put Skärholmen on the map as not just a ‘migrant neighbourhood’ but as a place to be: the festival organised by the initiative draws youth from all over Stockholm. Important to its success is the involvement of local youth in creating activities and initiatives, 90% of whom have a foreign background. They are assisted by local residents who function as role models.

*“The people of Mitt127 are people from the neighbourhood that the youth can relate to. The staff can relate to the youth and their experiences and the younger participants often trust people from the neighbourhood more than outsiders” (Aseffa Hailu).*

## ICEC's final output: Comparative cross-city report and policy recommendations

**For the scientific community:** The ICEC team is currently finalising the comparative cross-city report, integrating the overall findings of the nine neighbourhood case studies carried out over the last three years. This final report is primarily aimed at the scientific community and includes contextualised policy recommendations as well as generalised findings on how to approach the value of integration measures at the local level.

**For practitioners and decision-makers:** We have drafted a policy brief for every city that provides general as well as context-specific recommendations for improving interethnic coexistence at the neighbourhood level, see [www.icecproject.com](http://www.icecproject.com).

In addition, a policy-orientated publication is expected at the end of 2016.

## Policy Briefs

### Amsterdam

- Consider why inclusiveness is important for a specific initiative or activity, and how it can best be achieved. This might mean that limited or selective inclusivity is more worthwhile, or the goal is side-by-side diversity rather than achieving a complete mix.
- Participation and wider neighbourhood relations: Residents cannot always reach consensus on how neighbourhood budgets should be spent. Especially when subsidy allocations are unclear or there are budget cuts, existing communities and/or organisations can become competitors to the detriment of social relations in the neighbourhood.
- Provide active residents with durable institutional support and consider financial compensation or opportunities to professionalise or gain tangible skills.

### Stockholm

- Sustain the success of initiatives by ensuring financial support and strengthening decision makers' credibility among participants.
- Make unconventional use of existing institutions by extending the use of, and re-inventing new spaces to help reach target groups, increase sustainability of the initiative, and maximise the use of the resources.
- Exchange of experiences from best practices within Stockholm and Swedish cities needs to be encouraged and supported politically and financially.

### Vienna

- Use the potential of public space as a place of encounter and interaction since loose contacts in the neighbourhood improve the feeling of belonging, too.
- Integrate 'gate-openers' and multipliers for gaining access to ethnic communities and marginalised groups from the very beginning.
- Support bottom-up initiatives by reducing bureaucratic barriers which also applies to an improved cooperation among different responsible actors on the governance level.

## In the Press

ICEC researcher Myrte Hoekstra was interviewed by the website One World's research section series #HoodHero about the many factors that play a role in how at home people feel in their neighbourhoods.

For more press articles about ICEC and all our latest publications, visit: [icecproject.com/publications/](http://icecproject.com/publications/)

### Voel je thuis in een gemixte wijk



31-05-2016 Door: Charlotte Ehrhardt Bron: OneWorld

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INTERVIEW – Voel jij je thuis in je wijk? Het blijkt dat wijkprojecten zeker het saamhorigheidsgevoel kunnen vergroten. Maar sommige projecten zijn missers en zorgen voor uitsluiting en competitie. “Ik wil gewoon naar de bingo met mijn man.”

*Myrte Hoekstra spoke about the project to One World's #Hoodhero*



*Yvonne Franz presenting (Picture: D. Dutkowski)*

## Meet the ICEC team

The team members of the ICEC project were very active in disseminating research findings at diverse international conferences in the last months and will continue to do so in the coming months:

- Julia (ISR) will present ICEC findings at the “Sociology of Migration” ESA RN 35 Conference in Bucharest, Romania, in September.
- At the “VerDus Conference” in October in Breda, the Netherlands, Yvonne (ISR) and Jeroen (O+S Amsterdam) will provide an ICEC contribution.
- Yvonne (ISR) will represent the ICEC team at “University Day” by AESOP during the Open Days in Brussels, Belgium, in October and at the conference “Diversität in Städten Managen” by ILS in Düsseldorf, Germany, in November.

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