Botkyrka’s character, context, challenges and basic principles

Montreal May 22, 2014: Building Intercultural Cities: From Practice to Policy and Back

helena.rojas@botkyrka.se
Botkyrka - Stockholm - Europe
Character – the territory

The majority of the municipal square kilometers are rural. But Botkyrka is also one of the most urban areas of the Stockholm region.

20 km from Stockholm city, in the shadow of the capital.

One of the main spots in Sweden for international migration and also as one of the creative clusters in the Stockholm region with the greatest arena for new circus, film making and creative entrepreneurship.
Character – the inhabitants

The Municipality of Botkyrka is the most ethnic diverse municipality in Sweden.

160 nationalities out of 193 in the world are represented in Botkyrka. Over 100 languages. This process started with the migration of workforce to Sweden in the 1960´, the migration of political refugees in the 1970’ & 1980´ and the migration from civil war and armed internal conflicts in the 1990´and forward.

The majority of the inhabitants in Botkyrka with immigrant background are born in Sweden (2013).

Around 70 % of our inhabitants live there lives in a multilingual environment.

The majority of the youth in Botkyrka is trilingual.

55% of the inhabitants in Botkyrka have immigrant background (statistic term). 25% of this persons have origin in a Middle East country.

19 % of the inhabitants in Sweden have foreign background.
The current situation

Stockholm is one of the most segregated regions in Europe (OECD).

Poverty and visible diversity correlates and question the Swedish self-image as anti racist.

The income difference per capita (average) between Botkyrka and others is 164.000 kr/229 000 kr/year.

The situation is inherited to the next generation.

The main problem is opposite to many countries. No big clashes, people from different backgrounds don’t meet (isolation, alienation).
Our steps from multicultural to intercultural

1987: The Multicultural Centre is established by Botkyrka with mission to reflect diversity in the national self image and migration-related phenomena in the Swedish heritage.

1997: Bad reputation and low self esteem – We needed a change. A successful process started of strategy making to change our situation and self image (political leadership).

2002: Youth Council and Shoo established - Youth reactions to the stigma of the place as an engine.

2004: Political decision to use antidiscrimination as main strategy of change (from relate passively to diversity to prevent or handle discrimination).

2005: The political focus is operationalised at the Municipal Head Office.

2007: Members of ECCAR (European Coalition of Cities Against Racism).


2014: Revised strategy for democracy and strategy for creativity (with an intercultural lens). Soon to be decided upon in the MC.
Steps taken: The intercultural approach as one of the major strategic focus of the municipality

5 year goal: The municipal administration. Goals in annual plans and multiannual plans supported by dilemma concept, assigned process managers, guidelines, capacity building on web, dilemma concept to support the paradigm shift concerning the concept of intercultural skills and the role of inhabitants and local stakeholders in the solutions. Annual follow ups of department goals.

10 year goal: Botkyrka as a place and Stockholm region. Anti Rumour Campaign, Intercultural democracy and human rights activities at local level, i.e. scientific circles, Botkyrkas röster, Youth Council, Culture and leisure activities, interreligious activities against violence, neighbourhood mobilisation (successful counteract of riots) equality data with stakeholders from the civil society. Libraries, One stop shops, Multicultural centre and other public spaces as engines.

Adaptation of principles - The intercultural approach as one major strategic focus of the municipality

1. Political leadership across party lines (big effort).

2. Mainstreaming – all employees and leaders are expected to do their share.

3. Annual goals.

4. Multiannual goals.

5. Annual follow ups.


7. Unesco LUCS – as the engine of the paradigm shift.
Main intercultural challenge: The current situation in the region and the Botkyrka youth perspective on Swedish identity

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Botkyrka Youth Council: The new generations must be aloud to be proud of the family's history and identity and still be Swedes. Above all, we do not want to be considered "non-Swedes". This makes special demands as Sweden's most ethnically mixed municipality.
Main institutional challenges

1. Stability of the political will and technical team.
2. Cross-departmental work.
3. Training

At all levels: A work force that see complexity and individual differences as the normal state.

The ability to relate to and handle the unexpected, a flexible social and organizational structure that has the ability to manage and absorb the pressure of "reality" in the every day work.
Recomendations to go from a multicultural to an intercultural approach

1. The political initiative towards an intercultural strategy.

2. A cross political declaration of intent/definition of the change from multiculturalism to interculturalism.

3. The design the intercultural strategy through an interaction between politicians and officials, inhabitants and local stakeholders, participate and determine the content in an open process (first time).

4. Inventory and integration of the intercultural strategy in ongoing activities in the different departments. Used to give visibility to good examples and to identify dilemmas – everyday challenges – and to discuss how to solve them.

5. Identify both quantitative and qualitative goals and measures to be adopted in order to be able to regulate and evaluate the intercultural strategy.
Botkyrka – Far from average