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Sustainable integration in Norway: A social systems design approach
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Suggested citation:

Sustainable integration in Norway: A social system's design approach
The current status of refugee migration to Norway

- Introductions Law of 2003
- The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) 2006
- Voluntary settlement by municipalities
- Self-assisted settlement
- Situation in the asylum centers
Mismatch bosettingsbehov-kapasitet

- Nøkkeltall for bosetting i Norge
  - 2011: 5.486
  - 2012: 5.742
  - 2013: 6.551
  - 2014: 7.900 (prognose)
  - 2015: 8.200 (prognose)
Austrheim Kommune (Municipality)

- Approx. 2850 residents
- Home to the only oil refinery in Norway, Mongstad
- Comprised of 489 island, islets and rocks.
- Settled refugees in 1996 and 2002, but only one family from these periods are currently living in the municipality.
- A big change from Mogadishu
Municipal Council
External communication/coordination
Settlement

My role as a Refugee Consultant
Multi-million kroner budget: 19 vs 8
Legal compliance across departments
Internal communication and information sharing

My role as a Refugee Consultant cont.
My role as a Refugee Consultant cont.

Departmental coordination
Focus on “integration”
Project leadership of the introduction program and a successful transition to economic self sufficiency.

My role as a Refugee Consultant cont.
Settlement predictability
Standardization of pre-settlement information
Expansion of services in the reception centers
Conflicting legal interpretations
Ownership
Expectation setting

Key areas for improvement
Interviews

- 11 interviews

Selection criteria:
- Municipality (8 interviews):
  - Decision making power
  - Decided role in the decision to take refugees
  - Decided role in the integration and reception process
  - Power relations vis a vie the first author
- External Actors (3 interviews):
  - Extent of contact and influence in the settlement and integration process
  - Time constraints and methodological issues

- The length of the interviews ranged from 15 minutes to over an hour, with an average interview time of 40 minutes.
Interview Participants

- Mayor of Austrheim
- Deputy Mayor
- Leader of the Opposition in the municipal council
- Deputy Municipal Councilor
- Head of the Department for Education and Culture (Kommunalsjef oppvekst) and headmaster of Adult Education.
- Attending physician in Austrheim municipality
- Municipal leader of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)
- Headmaster of the local primary/secondary school
- The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)
  - Austrheim municipality’s contact person
- Strand Mottak:
  - Head of settlement
  - Head of family settlement
Methodology

- Interviews aided by graphic elicitation tools, (Bagnoli, 2009, Crilly et al., 2006).

- Involved stakeholders in the integration program were identified and put down on small colored pieces of paper.

- The diagrams showed clearly which parts of the system were considered relevant for who and for what, and showed who are not connected.

- There were a total of 30 different institutions the participants could choose from, as well as the opportunity to write in new ones.

- They were divided into three categories: volunteers in green, municipal organs in yellow, and other private and governmental institutions in blue.
Methodology cont.

- The use of visual diagrams can be used as a way to communicate thought processes and also increases the understanding between interviewer and informant.

- The use of graphic elicitation in a systemic approach stimulates the informant to think about decisions and reflection in relation to components of the system.

- It has inclusive research qualities in that it lets the informant create their own diagram as an image of the holistic system as she or he sees it.

- Researcher and informant collaborate on the task of composing the diagram which trigger further reflection and decreases.


Mayor of Austrheim
Deputy Mayor
Leader of the Opposition in the municipal council
Deputy Municipal Councilor
Head of the Department for Education and Culture,
Headmaster for Adult Education
Attending physician in Austrheim municipality
Municipal leader of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)
Headmaster of the local primary/secondary school
The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)
Strand Asylum Center
Reflections

- While skepticism and doubts were expressed by the participants, it was to a much lesser degree than I experience on a daily basis.

- “They get the information they should.”

- It was surprising to note the absence of a stated economic incentive to take the refugees. This is in direct contradiction to statements made in private and those of other municipalities.

- The reticence to be overly self or system’s critical or seem “greedy” was likely affected by my personal/professional relationship with the participants.
Reflections cont.

- I assumed more conflict on the concept of integration.
- Broad consensus on the importance of language, work and voluntary/volunteer activities or “participation”.
- Main cleavage was between the municipal leaderships understanding of integration as tied to long term settlement in the municipality vs a country wide perspective of successful integration that others including myself have.
- Many departments thought of themselves as an island, and had little to no “buy in” in the settlement and integration process.
A dismal (economist’s) GIGA map
Conclusion

- There is a clear need for systemic thinking in the settlement and integration processes.

- Despite much talk of inter-municipal cooperation, working groups, and other communicative forums there is a clear gap in understanding both nationally (IMDi) and within the municipality.

- A participatory design process including all stakeholders both municipal, governmental and private could be a way to standardize and ensure a higher rate of “success” in the integration of refugees in Norway.

- The findings from this study while interesting need to be expanded upon especially given the variation in structure and implementation of the “integration” process in different municipalities.
Opportunities for improvement

- Time constraints

- Interview participants
  - The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)
  - Real actual refugees
  - More “direct implementers” of the introduction program: teachers, NAV employees who have direct contact with refugees, other refugee consultants, etc.

- Potential to scale up the project, inter-municipal comparison.
Questions?