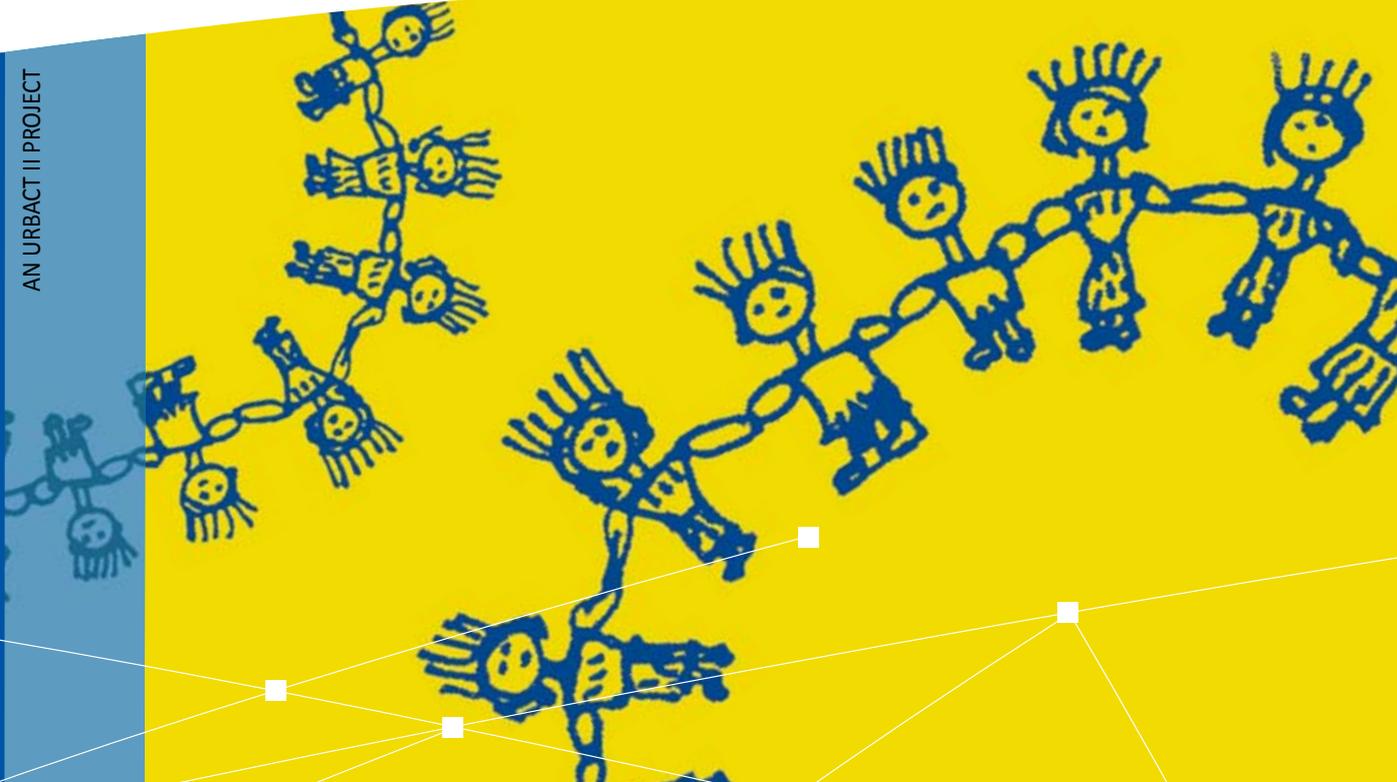


**Moving from innovation to everyday practice in public policy.  
Final report from the TOGETHER network,  
Botkyrka, Sweden**

AN URBACT II PROJECT



What is a good life?



It is not difficult to think in new ways.

What is difficult is to stop falling back into old ways of thinking ...

## THE BACKGROUND

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What characterizes a good life? How do we measure happiness? The indicators of what we consider to be a good life have changed throughout history, as have the basic values of each epoch. In the industrial countries the material standard of living has grown rapidly in the past hundred years. Increased consumption has long been accepted and used as an indicator of and the engine for economic growth and a higher standard of living. The measuring of what is to be considered as a good life has therefore become ever more related to increased levels of production and consumption. The wellbeing of societies is accordingly measured by their GDP levels.

Today, the GDP as an indicator has proven to be insufficient. Issues such as global warming, widening gaps between rich and poor countries, between wealthy and deprived areas in the large cities, the rise of stress-related illnesses etc. all represent serious challenges to GDP as an appropriate indicator of the level of wellbeing in a society. When basic needs like housing and food are secured, there is no longer any direct connection between higher material standard and an increased level of happiness. Furthermore, measuring GDP levels without taking the equal or unequal distribution of resources into consideration leaves out data of major importance to the individual and to the general wellbeing in a society. As has been shown by Wilkinson and Pickett “reducing inequality is the best way of improving the quality of the social environment and so the real quality of life, for all of us ... this includes the better-off” (Richard Wilkinson, Kate Pickett. *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*. Penguin Books 2010:4).

Since the mid 1990's the Council of Europe has targeted the insufficiencies of the GDP concept. It seems logical that these discussions emerge in an institution whose primary aim is to create a common democratic and legal area throughout the whole of the continent, ensuring respect for fundamental values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Beyond just posing questions initiatives have been taken within the Council of Europe to formulate alternative ways of thinking and

measuring. These discussions, revolving around the concept of co-responsibility, represent an attempt to negotiate and harmonize needs and visions between individuals and group perspectives. To be sustainable any calculation will also need to take into account future generations.

### Individual perspectives and the role of the state

Sweden, associated with concepts like the middle way and the welfare state, has a history of relative trust and transparency in relations between individuals and society. The very notion of ‘society’ has for long signified “Us”, more than “Them”. Much of state involvement in the lives of the citizens has been characterized by efforts to promote good living conditions for all. Central to many actions taken from the early 1900s and onward is the generalised implementation. The ambition to break away from dependence on charity is clearly visible in that for instance the child benefit did not, and does not, differentiate between rich and poor but is distributed to all families with children (since 1948). Likewise bad housing should not be anybody’s destiny – hence the massive investment in the one million houses programme of the 1960s.

Still, there are two sides to most descriptions. What has been much debated in Sweden over the last years is that many of these undertakings have had the inherent tendency to think in terms of “one size fits all”. During the last two decades there has been a major shift in the organisation of public services. It is quite clear that the position of the individual in a system that aims at respecting and guaranteeing the independence of everyone needs to be rethought.

The current situation for consumers of products and services is that they have much more information than before and many more options to choose between. The fact that this abundance of information options is available just “a click away” for anyone with an internet connection, has brought about fundamental changes in society. Services become individualized and more complicated, whether we see it from the production or the demand side.

Public authorities no longer hold a monopoly for the deliverance of services like childcare or care for the elderly. There is a growing consensus that the state might not be capable of addressing all needs of all citizens at all times. This realisation in combination with the economic recession of the last decade has created a need for a co-responsibility approach. Doing things together and relying on other individuals and groups: family, extended family, villages, neighbourhoods and still wider circles, in order to survive have been a key element in the building of communities throughout history. The last decades of relatively strong welfare states which took over the supporting role of family and community is only a short parenthesis

in the history of mankind. Economic recession and the weakening welfare state has again placed the co-responsibility approach high on the agenda of societies.

In this overall context – the global, the European and the Swedish – the TOGETHER initiative with its open discussions on needs and values is truly welcome. If people are able to voice their ideas and negotiate a common good this probably paves the way for a sustainable balancing of equality and diversity.

### Botkyrka – an introduction

The municipality of Botkyrka is situated in the south of Stockholm. With its 82 000 inhabitants Botkyrka is the fourth largest municipality in the Greater Stockholm region. The north of the municipality is connected to Stockholm by subway and it takes about 30 minutes to reach the city centre. From the south of the municipality the city centre can be reached by commuter train in 20 minutes.

Botkyrka has one of Sweden's most international populations. Alby is a district in the northern part of the municipality which became rapidly urbanized in the 1960s and early 70s. This urbanization was mainly the result of the famous "one million houses programme", the aim of which was to build one million dwelling across Sweden. Alby of today, with its 12 000 inhabitants, is a neighbourhood characterized by rapid and continuous demographic change – a large inflow and outflow of people. As a district Alby has the highest percentage within Botkyrka municipality, of inhabitants who wish to move elsewhere (in 2009 one in three inhabitants, compared with a municipal average of 20 per cent). The fact that many in Alby are newcomers, and that many are on their way out, mentally and/or practically, makes the district socially instable.

*"Alby is a pretty typical 'million program area' with the usual battery of problems often associated with such areas. But it is also an area with an interesting development potential, with quite a number of active citizens and with Subtopia as a creative engine. We wanted to formulate a program for Alby that had a holistic approach (physical transformation + social development). As far as possible we also wanted it to be designed by Alby locals (or at least see to it that it was consistent with the views and wishes of the majority). Thirdly we wanted it to have a reasonably long perspective. I see all these factors as necessary for a program like this to be more than another quickly forgotten municipal document."* (From a questionnaire comment)

Northern Botkyrka and Alby has been involved in many national initiatives with the main target of solving the problem of segregation. The most comprehensive of these initiatives was the “Urban initiative” between 1999 and 2005. The complexity of segregation was of course bigger than what could be solved within a short term limited initiative. This experience together with other factors motivated the municipality to adapt instead a sustainability approach. Dealing with complex problems demands long term structures and should build on basic resources within the municipality rather than being initiated and finance outside of the mainstream structure.

### **Political and administrative structure in Sweden**

Governance in Sweden is mainly divided in three level; state, county and council. There are 290 municipalities in Sweden and 20 counties. Foreign policy, national security and general welfare system are examples of issues belonging to the state level. Public transportation and general health care are taken care of at county level. Issues like education (up to academic level), child care, care for the elderly and social welfare are responsibilities of the municipal level. The relatively high independence of municipalities in relation to the central government is a main characteristic of the Swedish political system. This division of responsibilities is mirrored also in the taxation system. County and council taxes amount to around 30 per cent of the income. State taxes are progressive which means that those with low income pay less.

### **Municipal administration in Botkyrka**

Municipalities as major providers of welfare services are organized in different departments, each of them specialized in their particular fields of service. Every department is governed by a political committee. This traditional organization however, has shortcomings. The complexity of contemporary society calls for long term planning, an integrated approach on development and a tight dialogue with citizens. To meet these challenges Botkyrka municipality decided to create so called District Groups consisting of representatives for municipal departments, for the housing company, the police and other relevant local actors, irrespective of whether they were representatives of the municipality itself or branches of state or county institutions. In the beginning of the 1980's, the ambition was mainly to exchange information and to coordinate some initiatives for children and youth. As challenges have become more difficult and complex the district groups have been given a higher status and a broadened responsibility. At present the ambition is to coordinate strategic planning and efforts towards



local development in dialogue with the citizens. Every District Group creates its own working groups based on needs in the community.

Today Botkyrka has five geographically defined District Groups, each of them with a head of department as chairman. Also, each district has a District Development Officer who secures the continuity and carries out work between the meetings of the district group.

## Sustainable development

On the council level, the Botkyrka framework for sustainability can best be captured with reference to the following international milestones and key words for sustainable development:



- [The Rio Agreement with Agenda 21 \(1992\)](#)
- [The Aalborg Charter on Sustainable Urban Development \(1994\)](#)
- [The Lisbon Strategy for Sustainable Growth and Employment \(2000\)](#)
- [The Gothenburg Sustainable Development Strategy \(2001\)](#)
- [Aalborg +10 \(2004\)](#)

Gradually, these agreements and documents have all gained national and local interpretations. In Botkyrka, a first step to formulate a concrete local application for these overarching policy documents was launched in

March 2007 with the “Sustainable Botkyrka” long-term plan for the local implementation of the Aalborg Charter. Alby was the first district to produce a holistic programme for long term local development. After three years of intense work and extensive dialogue with citizens, the programme was approved in the municipal council in May 2009 . The programme put up five main challenges for the sustainable development of Alby:

1. Ensuring a decent setting for girls and boys to grow up in
2. Improving the employment opportunities of women and men
3. Renewing the urban environment
4. Modernising Alby's identity
5. Trying out the new working methods at the municipality

### Botkyrka's history in the network

Botkyrka became involved in the TOGETHER network in its second phase. After a meeting in Mulhouse, January 2010, Botkyrka was invited to join. With the original five partners (Mulhouse, Braine l'Alleud; Covilha, Pergine and Salaspils) and



the other two newcomers alongside Botkyrka (Kavala and Debica) the network was thus completed.

Seen from the local horizon the composition of the group of cities was interesting since it contained so much diversity in history and current situation between partners and countries. Differing past and present relations between authorities and citizens, as well as different economic situations have the potential of allowing each partner to look upon its own conditions and assumptions in the light of all the others'.

Another interesting feature of the network is the active involvement and support from the Council of Europe. Discussions over the last decade on the updating

and broadening of the measuring of standard and life quality, has lead the Council of Europe to developing and trying out new criteria and indicators. The underlying philosophy states that it takes the active participation and involvement of all citizens in order to evaluate a situation and choose the ways of action that can best cater for improvements in the wellbeing for all.

## DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES IN BOTKYRKA – ALBY

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A representative democracy always runs a risk that the degree of active citizenship decreases with people delegating the power of forming the society to the politicians in elections. If this “contract” of confidence is tested and renewed only once every four years it risks undermining the legitimacy of the government and the system. Therefore, maintaining a vivid citizens’ engagement is crucial for the democratic development of a country. Sweden has a very strong tradition of relative independence of the municipalities in relation to the central government. Stimulating citizen’s political and democratic involvement is a responsibility that lies mainly in the hands of the local municipalities. Botkyrka is one of the most progressive municipalities in Sweden in conducting and developing participatory methods for the democratic involvement of citizens.

The municipality of Botkyrka has a classical, top-down organization divided in departments. Departments operate on annual and multiannual plans, the latter having a perspective of three years. These plans are produced and approved by political department committees. The strategic development programme introduced above constitutes the framework for a geographically based holistic perspective, across the departments’ fields of operation.

The responsibility for the implementation of the “Future for Alby” development programme rests with the council, in particular **The District Group**. The group however has limited means at its disposal and no real decision making power. The method chosen was to address the programme, district by district, in the departments’ basic annual action plans. After three years of implementation and evaluation, there are still many shortcomings in this way of working. When Botkyrka was invited to join the TOGETHER network it was a natural choice to place the project in Alby, as a continuation and follow up on processes already at work. The participation in the TOGETHER network meant an injection into some of the local processes, it infused new energy by opening up to the perspectives and questions of both partner cities and LSG members. The following is a chronological overview of some of the work with citizen involvement in Botkyrka and Alby:

- **1997**: The municipality gives support to associations to create a **Council of Associations** in each district, aiming at a closer dialogue with the associations through their representative council. The first Association Council was established in Fittja, the second one in Hallunda-Norsborg, two districts in the northern part of Botkyrka.
- **1998–2000**: As a result of a Democracy project within the Citizen Service Department, **The Politicians’ Café** was established. Once a month politicians from different parties came to meet and talk with citizens in the One Stop Shops. A leaf-

let “Make your voice heard” was printed and distributed in order to make it easier for the citizens in Botkyrka to send in their complaints, ideas and opinions about different issues to the various municipal departments.

- **2001:** The first initiative is taken to establish an **Alby Youth Council** in order to strengthen youth involvement in community development. The Council was realised in 2002. Later on, a Youth Council for the whole of the municipality followed.
- **1999–2005:** During the national so called Urban Initiative, a key element was that all activities initiated within the programme had to have a bottom-up perspective and be based on a dialogue with the inhabitants. This demand intensified the activities in the municipality to create an infrastructure for dialogue. One outcome of this process was the **District Development Officer** profession, initially also funded within the Urban Initiative. In Alby, different networks of citizens were created. One of them was “The Enthusiasts’ Group”, a group of very engaged people in Alby that worked together with the District Group. This group was later transformed to the Council of Association in Alby.

During this period, based on The Politicians’ Café experiences, a new institution was created: **The Dialogue Forum**, one in each of the five districts of Botkyrka. A Dialogue Forum has 11 members appointed by the Municipal Council who also appoints the chairman and vice chairman. Most members live in the area and approximately half of them are elected representatives to the Municipal Council. They invite citizens to open meetings 4–6 times a year.

The Dialogue Forum is an institution for the continuous interaction with residents. It is not a decision making body. Instead, the purpose of the Forum is to constitute a connecting point between inhabitants and elected representatives. Local politicians as well as the inhabitants all benefit from an open-ended and unconditional exchange preceding discussions and decisions based on affiliation with specific political parties. Dialogue should occur at an early stage in the process to give residents real possibility to influence and enable the trustees to take political initiatives. Initiatives from the Dialogue Forum meetings are supposed to be brought to the Municipal Council when relevant and there is also an expectation that the further development of an issue be reported back to the residents.

Dialogue is not restricted to the Forum meetings. All boards and administrations are responsible for raising their own issues for dialogue in sufficiently good time. Every **District Group** is responsible for organizing regular dialogue, local consultation with residents on important issues, open enough to allow a holistic perspective. Finally, all members of staff and elected officials in charge of concrete dialogues are supposed to see to that issues that require political decisions are brought up or sent to where they belong. The Dialogue Forums do not take over that responsibility.

## Developing Development work

The Council has been involved in many development projects, some of which have had systematic evaluation as an inherent part of the process, e.g. as a condition for financial support. In other cases different municipal departments have commissioned on their own initiatives studies to be used for example in in-service training. Evaluations as well as documentation studies offer opportunities both for internal self-reflection and for external exchange, between municipalities and with the field of academic research. Different kinds of dialogue on both work processes and analytic perspectives can help spur the further development of strategies and methods. The rhythm of the process leading up to the Future for Alby Programme can be described with the help of a few simple key words:

inquiry – dialogue – proposal – dialogue – decisions

All activities were planned with the concrete local setting as the given point of departure. Familiarity with earlier actions, with parallel processes and with the people of Alby were all necessary ingredients. The processing of this Development Programme was later documented by The Multicultural Centre (Ramberg 2011). This locally based know-how was essential also when introducing the TOGETHER project. Producing a Development Programme with its long term approach was a new challenge despite of a rich experience in the field of democracy work. The challenge was to make an abstract theme concrete enough for the residents to relate to, while at the same time maintaining an open framework for the dialogue. The focus group method was used in both processes (for the Development Programme as well as for the TOGETHER project inquiries) and the people invited to take part were in some cases the same. The broad experiences from both processes were later fed into a study on urban development issues, which also had a section laid out as a methodological handbook (Lindholm 2011). The analysis in the Handbook of different levels of exchange and interaction between residents and the council links very well with the scale worked out by Lead Expert Jon Bloomfield. This we will come back to below.



## **BOTKYRKA URBACT LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP**

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Geographically speaking Alby is fairly small. It consists of 'the hill', 'the valley' and in between them the underground station and a small shopping centre where the One Stop Shop is located and where also the District Development Officer has his office. Population-wise Alby alone is the size of an average Swedish municipality. There are many different and overlapping social networks among the inhabitants, some of them closely-knit. At the same time, Alby is part of an urban area where many people have widespread networks and where anonymity can be a way of life. An ambition with the LSG was to get a diverse representation of people born and raised in the neighbourhood, in-migrants, people working in Alby and people belonging to different kinds of networks.

At its first meeting in January 2011 The Local Support Group in Botkyrka counted 24 participants. When forming the group the first step to find candidates was to scan existing formal and informal networks. Key persons within different fields of activities were invited. The group that met comprised of 13 men and 11 women. Half of the group lived in Alby. 2 persons were retired and 4 were around 20 years of age. 2 were researchers, one of them from Stockholm University the other belonging to the Multicultural centre. 4 came from the NGO sector, 1 was a politician. 1 was an architect, 1 came from the local housing corporation. 5 worked in the mayor's office, 3 came from the school sector and 1 was the local librarian.

The group as a whole has had some reunions. Invitations along with Newsletters have been sent out twice a year, in spring and in autumn. At the kick-off meeting the focus was put on relations to and visions for Alby. That was also an occasion to get acquainted with the idea of the methodology. Another major meeting was held in connection with the visit of the Lead Expert in May 2011, another one was a joint meeting with the whole of the TOGETHER network during the Botkyrka session in September 2011. A small working committee has met more frequently and the group has been invited to events related to the pilot project on security and related activities. Small and informal meetings have been frequent around the participation of a group of young people in the Youth Project, initiated by the Belgian partner in Braine l'Alleud.

Members of the LSG contributed actively to the realisation of the Focus groups. Suggestions for possible groups to address were brought up during spring 2011. At some occasions LSG members helped in establishing contacts and with explaining the idea to the participants. Two of the NGOs represented in the LSG (The Alby Youth Club and Fanzingo) also formed focus groups. They also participated in the Youth Exchange Project arranged by the network's Belgian partner.

In Botkyrka both civil servants and residents are used to being invited to consultative meetings with different levels of interaction and exchange. It has therefore been challenging at times competing with other activities to attract an interest for the activities of the network. This makes it all the more important to find ways to move from talking to acting. Not necessarily by using new funds but thinking more innovative with the means already at hand.

## FOCUS GROUPS IN BOTKYRKA

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In Botkyrka, nine groups collected a total of 1035 observations. All meetings took place in settings familiar to the participants and in constellations that they would interact with independently of the focus group exercise. This contributed positively to a good atmosphere during the meetings. Below follows a brief presentation of each group along with comments on the outcome of each focus group's work with the questions on well-being, ill-being and prospects for making a change.

- **Suburbian academics.** A local NGO established in 2010, wanting to act as rolemodels and change the negative image of "the suburb".
- **Mothers at the Open Pre-school.** Women aged 25-40, all with small children and all regular visitors.
- **Teachers at the Grindtorp school in Alby.** A municipal school with 480 pupils from preschool to grade 9, many of them newcomers in Sweden.
- **The Alby Dialogue Forum.** Part of the regular outreach work among elected politicians.
- **OPAD, Organisation for poverty alleviation and development.** A local NGO, established by people of African background but open to all. One of OPAD's aims is to fight discrimination.
- **The Alby Youth Club.** Located in Kvarnhagsskolan, run by the educational association ABF, an NGO. Currently involved in the planning process for a new Centre for young adults. Also involved in the Youth Project.
- **The Alby District Group.** A group of civil servants meeting across municipal department borders. Tasks include exchange of information and shared planning.
- **The Civic Office in Alby.** A One-Stop Shop for citizens, offering information and assistance related to public administration.
- **Fanzingo.** A local NGO, a film and media centre for young people. Also involved in the Youth Project.



## Comments on the focus group process in Botkyrka

As far as data go, the focus group work confirmed a lot of what earlier formal and informal exchange with inhabitants and other stakeholders had generated. For Botkyrka, where an intense dialogue process was completed only a year before the introduction of the TOGETHER project, this was by no means a disappointing outcome. The very fact that no big issues contradicting the essence of the development programme emerged can be taken as a first confirmation that the direction of this programme is valid and relevant. The time lapse between the development programme process and the TOGETHER focus groups was quite fortunate in that the latter could revisit and contribute to the revitalisation of the former.

If one looks at the outcome of the exercise, the profiles of the nine groups do not differ dramatically from one another. This in itself is something worth reflecting on. How come that people with considerable differences in their daily lives and living conditions do not give more diverse answers and input? Does this mean that we all have the same bottom line? Or does it tell us something about the method that needs to be taken into consideration? Two of the three groups of young people (Suburban academics and Fanzingo) however do differ from the others in that they gave more input on personal relations than on essential resources. The Alby leisure centre group, the third group of young people, does not follow this pattern because of the great number of details they delivered on essentials. If one should summarise in just one-liners how the different categories were treated across the focus groups the following is what stands out:

- **Essential resources:** A reflection of an unsecure future, and sometimes present. An area that mirrors different living conditions, locally & globally.
- **Living environment:** Relatively few comments.
- **Relations with and between institutions:** Few comments.
- **Personal relations:** Family and friends outrule everything else within this category.
- **Attitudes and initiatives:** Here we find personal improvement and goals as well as commitments to society, to engage with things beyond the immediate personal agenda – for the benefit and well-being of all.
- **Personal balances:** Under this headline health is the single most important factor. Second comes time, mostly stress and lack of time. Religion is with few exceptions invisible.
- **Social balances:** A focus on respect, tolerance, violence and peace.
- **Relations with and between organisations:** Most focus on issues of human rights.

As is shown above, living environment and relations with and between institutions were devoted less interest and generated fewer comments relatively. One hypothesis here could be that the dynamics of the exchange made people concentrate upon issues that could be discussed independently of e.g. budget matters and formal mandates for decision making. This line of thinking makes sense also in relation to how the pilot actions later developed, with a more concrete exchange over what actions to be taken, how and with what means.

There are other possible effects of the concrete situation that are worth mentioning. As mentioned above, in all groups in Botkyrka the atmosphere of the meetings was coloured by the fact that people that had already some kind of relation met in this new setting– the focus group workshop. It is inevitable in such situations that small talk accompanies the writing process. This in turn tends to influence people's associations, something that in turn plays a role for which areas receive more interest. It is also likely that some areas might have been avoided because they are too private or sensitive. So, the fact that essential resources receive a lot of attention and score high can be partly the result of shared associations, partly an effect of the fact that the issues under this headline are found possible and meaningful to share.



The most important output of the focus group process as a whole is that it revitalised earlier exchange with some groups and individuals. It also broadened the scope of people involved in the exchange of views and visions. And above all – it has served as a reminder of the essence of the co-responsibility approach. It has been a valuable exercise in adjusting the mind-set of civil servant so as to take in inhabitants and other stakeholders in planning processes on a more fundamental level.

The open-ended questions of the methodology have a particularly important function in a society undergoing change. In the case of Botkyrka and Alby there is the insecurity generated by recession, austerity and unemployment, and there is the fluctuation generated by the dynamics between centre and periphery, resulting in a high turn-over in the population. In Alby people move in and out more often than in any other part of the municipality.

## PILOT ACTIONS ON CO-RESPONSIBILITY

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The following pilot actions have emerged in the spirit of co-responsibility and as a result of dialogue in focus groups and other dialogues:

### Action 1 – Together for a more secure Alby

Started in September 2011 involving

- Different departments from the municipality
- The Council of Associations in Alby
- OPAD (Organisation for poverty alleviation and development)
- The local Police
- The Alby Youth Club

What and why. Security is a crucial issue for the development of Alby. During 2009 - 2010, there were an increasing number of violent situations, even incidents with shotguns involved. Civil society and local associations have been involved in discussions on how to join forces against violence and improve security in the neighbourhood, with a special focus on preventive measures. On May 23th 2011 an anti-violence seminar took place in Alby, based on an initiative from the NGO OPAD.



*"I cannot express strongly enough the importance that the Night Walkers have had and continue to have for us and our visitors here at Alby library. You act in true civic spirit. Thank you!"* (Laura Purdy, municipal official working in the Alby Library, at the one year anniversary of the Night Patrols.)

Among the participants were representatives from different municipal departments, from the local police and a great many residents and other from the civil society. They all congregated in order to discuss the situation and how to improve it. The working group which prepared the seminar works further to identify possible specific actions to be taken with co-responsibility between those actors involved in the seminar and citizens.

Potential to generalise. Security in such communities with a very heterogeneous population cannot be provided by police only. Cooperation with municipality and civil society is needed. If any model of working with this issue in co-responsibility with others grows in this pilot action, it would be useful in other communities with same structure.

Progress report. The Night Patrols quickly became the main ingredient and a connecting point for the activities around security. This pilot action has consolidated and improved since the start in September 2011. The number of people patrolling has increased from 8–10 to 35–40. Alby night patrols have been able to help another district in the municipality and they have even provided support to other municipalities. There have been different views about the role of night patrols, the right degree of involvement in different kinds of trouble occurring during patrolling, not acting as security force but like engaged adults in community. There have also been some tensions between the different associations involved in night patrolling. The positive progress is mostly the result of efforts made by engaged individuals in mobilizing other individuals in the neighbourhood. This is also the vulnerable side of the action; to keep the level of enthusiasm high and steady with the individuals involved. The main issues to be discussed in network group are:

- How can we maintain the spirit of co-responsibility and help making the Night Patrols sustainable?
- What framework and direction will the Night Patrols and other security efforts have in the years to come?
- How can we provide some morale boosters and infuse energy to keep the level of motivation up among people who actively participate in these efforts?



## Action 2 – Finding practical ways to implement social economy at the neighbourhood level

Started in January 2011 involving

- Relevant departments in the municipality
- The Public Housing Company
- The Council of Associations in Alby

What and why. Social economy as an idea has been discussed and investigated in the Mayor's office for a long time, without any concrete and practical ways towards implementation having emerged. Parallel to this, at the neighbourhood level in Alby, there have been associations who maintain that they can perform some tasks in the area better than the companies that are at present hired to do these tasks. In relation to the focus group work this topic relates to essential resources (primarily job opportunities), to personal relations (safety and general situation for the young generation) and to attitudes and initiatives (in that it highlights a commitment to society).

In 2011 a more active process was initiated in response to this discussion. The aim is to investigate how to improve the procurement process in the municipality in order to increase the chances for civil society organisations to be hired by the municipality. Initially, discussions have targeted some specific tasks with focus on security and cleaning. The main motivation for this is the belief that local actors have a better know-how and better networks in the neighbourhood than external companies. There is also an assumption that hiring associations to perform these tasks will maintain and increase their engagement and commitment for Alby. Furthermore it would most likely also increase job opportunities in the area.

Potential to generalise. TOGETHER has provided the stimulus to develop this thinking – a sense of belonging to a community and a readiness to share the responsibility for managing common tasks in a way that creates a win-win situation – this is the basic idea behind the implementation of a social economy. The municipality wins because certain tasks will be performed as required and as usual – but with the possible added value of efficiency and sustainability originating from the local know-how and self-interest on the side of the performer. Civil society and NGOs win because this system opens up for the creation of new job opportunities for their members and increases the chances of associations to influence the life in the community.

If it succeeds this action has a huge potential to strengthen the empowerment of civil society, in ways that could multiply the positive effects on the development of the neighbourhoods as physical and social environments.

The reviewing of procurement rules opens up for new relations between the municipality and the local NGOs. It paves the way for new situations in which there can be mutual interests. Local NGOs will be able to expand beyond leisure time activities, which means that negotiations will concern bigger issues than just premises and economic support based on numbers of participants in specific activities. As providers of services to the neighbourhood the associations will need to take a broader responsibility in relation to both the administration and fellow residents.

The administration is the tool of the elected body, i.e. part of the functioning of the representative democratic system. Therefore, expanding the group of providers of public services is a challenging task. To accommodate the structure to include also the active participation of local NGOs demands a high degree of transparency in order to give all potential partners the chance to participate on equal conditions.

Progress report. This pilot action proved to be a very difficult task. It challenges traditional ways of working in a municipality. Insecurity over losing control over processes that have traditionally belonged to the municipality is one dimension. Funding of the project is another complicated matter. In addition to this general complexity, during the time of preparation there have been some changes in the administration, both within the municipal administration and in the Municipal Housing Company, two main actors in the project. Some of those who were initially involved and committed to the idea of social economy are no longer working with the project. The economy for the project is supposed to be based mainly on a redirection of the budget for cleaning and security within the Municipal Housing Company. At present however, the housing company has the regeneration of the million programme block houses as a top priority – a huge task for both the municipality and the housing company. Most likely this will influence the efforts within other fields, such as for instance social economy.

Still, promoting a closer co-operation with civil society is one of the high priority issues for the politicians in Botkyrka. Looking back and analysing the process, chances for a quicker and more steady process might have been better, had we involved more politicians in the steering and follow-up of this innovative process.

The future of this action is not yet clear. Either it continues according to the plan or it will be developed as an agreement between municipality / housing company and associations without touching the procurement rules.

In a meeting with the steering group in September 2012, the conclusion was that the essence of the project is still innovative, relevant and important for a positive development in the municipality. The budget however, needs to be enlarged. The anticipated positive side-effects of the project on e.g. unemployment, reduced vandalism and youth delinquency, must be evaluated in economic terms and get a price tag. Those municipal departments which will gain from positive side-effects in terms of reduced costs should contribute in funding the project. Also, the project as a whole should be handled within the overall budget process of the municipality. A final report from the District Group and the steering group will forward this recommendation.

### Action 3 – Intercultural Alby

Started in February 2011 involving

- The District Group
- The local Anti-Discrimination Agency
- The Council of Associations in Alby
- OPAD (Organisation for poverty alleviation and development)
- Fanzingo

What and why. There are more than 50 different ethnic groups in Alby, living side by side in a small area. With so many different religious and cultural perspectives present in the same neighbourhood it is at times quite challenging to create, or maintain, a cohesive local community. This is all the more true in a national context where over the last decade xenophobia and racism has gained momentum. When the municipality in 2010 formulated an Intercultural Agenda it had the recognition of all members of society and the strengthening of democracy as its ground pillars. When formulating an aim for Intercultural Alby this concerns in the first place the stimulation of curiosity between groups with different background. It is also a way of mobilizing different ideas to deal with issues in society.

Potential to generalise. Migration is a critical issue for many European countries. In many countries migration is described in negative ways and it is often used by opportunistic political parties as the explanation for problems like unemployment and

crime. Turning this negative approach into a positive context, not only by words but by developing models for moving from “multicultural” to “intercultural”, promoting interaction and exchange between groups in community and mobilizing different ideas in solving the common problems is needed and will have a large impact in any European city.

Progress report. What began as an anti-discrimination seminar in February, has developed into a network for tolerance and for an intercultural Alby, with activities like workshops, film productions with young people about tolerance, as well as intercultural evenings. Some of these activities have already taken place, others are yet to come. The local engagement is good and the political support is substantial.



## SPREADING THE CO-RESPONSIBILITY APPROACH

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- *What is it that makes the Alby Network Group work so cooperatively? It seems that the members of the group are satisfied with the support they get from each other ...*, asked Clarissa Kugelberg, a researcher who studied the dialogue work in Alby and Tullinge (a neighbourhood in the more well-off south of the municipality).
- *I think the approach of co-responsibility is a great help in stimulating this cooperation*, answered Frank Kanu Kanu, a member of the Network Group and the association OPAD which is coordinating the Night Patrols in Alby.

This conversation took place during “Albydagen”, the day of Alby, in May 2012, an annual event in the Alby square. The co-responsibility approach is much more present today compared to how it used to be a few years back. Community work in Alby has always had an aspect of cooperation and partnership. This has been further inspired by the TOGETHER project.

The most important issue for Botkyrka, related to our reality at present, is to design and improve a governance model that integrates the short-term, top-down planning process with a long-term holistic planning philosophy based on active citizenship and the active involvement of both individuals and groups of citizens. The municipal administration had a comprehensive dialogue with civic society, inhabitants from different groups and categories as well as officials, while producing the Development Programme for Alby. After the programme was launched, the task of implementation was addressed to and shouldered by the internal municipal administration. The co-responsibility approach integrated with a network governance model will help us to design ways to better involve civic society in a systematic implementation of the programme.

Departing from this philosophy, specific case studies can be used to try out the model. These could be e.g. social economy or supporting young people on their way to an independent adult life. The potential for success depends on finding a structure which optimizes the outcomes of efforts done by the municipality for the benefit of its citizens. Accumulated experience will help to take the existing structure for dialogue to a higher level. When an idea comes up, improves in dialogue and gets transformed into an activity, the question will be “How do we realise this together?”

There have also emerged some ideas addressing other forms of increased citizen involvement. One is to invite a group of citizens to critically review some policy areas and give feedback to the municipality. This is meant to secure quality of policies and actions taken in the municipality.

Alby, being the first district to produce and work with a strategic programme for development, is an experimental workshop in the municipality. The experiences of working with co-responsibility, initiating activities to improve the quality of life in the community through citizens' participation in both initiating, planning and implementation of activities will spread to other districts. The district of Fittja, situated next to Alby in northern Botkyrka, has also got a strategic programme, approved in May 2012 by the municipal council and now waiting to be implemented. The District Group in Alby has suggested a workshop to evaluate the first three years of implementation of the Alby programme, together with the Mayor's office. This will result in valuable knowledge which will certainly be useful for Fittja as well as for all other districts.

### Night Patrols

The Night Patrols in Alby are not unique for Sweden or even for Botkyrka, but the project has its special character, both as a citizens' initiative (the coresponsibility approach) and with regard to the attitudes and ambitions informing the activities. Therefore, when it comes to spreading and sharing this is much centred around the philosophy.

What has been shared and discussed so far with parents and others involved in other areas is both the practical arrangements but even more so the attitude and approach to the overall mission – securing a safe environment at weekend nights. The Alby group of parents have invested their energy in creating a trustful relation with the young people of Alby. In other areas it seems that some have adopted a more police-like attitude. This shows that exchange and learning can happen on many levels.

In one district in the south of the municipality there has recently been a new initiative for Night Patrolling – coming from one of the local schools. One local headmaster has addressed the parents asking them for help and suggesting the formation of some kind of Night Patrol. This is again another way of sharing experiences between neighbourhoods. The initiative of the headmaster can be interpreted as truly co-responsible. Having identified a need or an upcoming problem, he turned to the parents, sharing his worries and asking them for help.

### Schools and co-responsibility

The quality of schools is a very important factor for the wellbeing of a community and for its development potential. As mentioned earlier in this document, a considerable part of population in Alby plan to move out of the district. Parents with

children in school-age often refer to the quality of schools as a reason for wanting to move. Since the free school reform, which allows parents to choose other schools for their children than the municipal schools in the neighbourhood, the amount of students in municipal schools in Alby has decreased. This means reduced budgets since students who choose another schools take their school-budget to the new school. Schools in Alby have a huge challenge to increase the level of performance among students in order to reach the national goals. Still, measuring output needs to take into account the point of departure: One



of the schools in Alby hosts newly arrived students who study Swedish in parallel with other subjects. However well they may perform this linguistic challenge will affect the statistics of school results.

Since schools and education has such a pivotal role for the neighbourhood – demographic changes, willingness of parents to invest in the local setting – a trustful relation between schools, children, parents and other stakeholders is a key factor. High ambitions and good results need to be communicated to stop the student-drain. In establishing this trustful relation the coresponsibility approach and methodology can be very useful.

Inviting the schools in Alby to take an active part in mobilizing parents for night patrolling and using the schools as a platform for this could be a first step to tighten the relations between schools, NGOs and other stakeholders in the community.

## Mulhouse “Journey”

The handbook which is under production in Mulhouse about the methodology and the experience of implementing it is a good initiative for dissemination and multiplication of both the philosophy and its application. But if the book is supposed to be used by officials and NGOs, it needs to be simple and concise. We will follow the “Journey” with interest and consider the possibility of its translation into Swedish.

## LINKING WITH OTHER METHODS

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Botkyrka has a long-standing tradition of dealing with change and development – including actively promoting new ways of thinking on the side of the municipal institutions. This remains however, a never-ending undertaking that requires constant awareness about the balance between continuity and openness to change.

In response to the demographic changes from around 1970 and onwards – a major growth of population together with increased diversity as a result of migration – the municipality first undertook projects to increase the capacity of the administration and the coherence and community spirit of the municipality as a whole. In 1987 a more permanent response to the need for continuous capacity building and dialogue was established in the form of an independent municipal foundation: the Multicultural Centre.

Right from the start the Centre has acted as a junction point for exchange and learning around life in contemporary society – the urban diverse setting, where people of different backgrounds need each other’s resources in order to form a sustainable shared future. Concrete activities at the Centre include research and evaluation projects addressing e.g. education, language, health, labour market issues, discrimination, to name a few. One recent project at the Centre was to be the National Focal Point of the European Urban Knowledge Network – an international network originating in an URBACT project.

International researchers’ seminars alongside exhibitions focusing issues such as e.g. Blood, Hair, Death, Local Community History has established a venue that invites a multitude of voices to meet and meddle around question of importance in today’s society. One exhibition that was produced during the project period of TOGETHER carried the same name as the URBACT project. The mission statement and introductory words of the exhibition read:

If you want to go fast – go alone.

If you want to go far – go together.

*The exhibition “Together” focuses challenges on the social, economic and environmental arenas. We need to change! Change things around us as well as ourselves. Together we make use of more resources than planet earth can supply. Together we need to find long term solutions.*

*But not all countries or individuals in the world contribute equally to the over-consumption and over-exploitation. Everywhere there are differences between rich and poor, men and women, whites and blacks, young and old. Therefore, we must address also distributional issues – justice, solidarity and democracy – when dealing with questions about what is sustainable.*

*The exhibition touches upon living conditions, behaviours and opportunities for change. We want to connect global issues to local conditions, and we try to explore strategies for sustainability where cultural and social diversity is taken into account and utilized.*

*Globally, there is a lot of mistrust between rich and poor countries. And in today’s Sweden feelings of social cohesion reduce as segregation increases. Who is it that needs to act and that can act? Is another world possible? Everyone can do something, no one can do everything alone. But how much responsibility you can carry depends on how much power and strength you have.*

*We must learn to think together, practice from an early age and never stop practicing. We must also listen to others and be heard ourselves. This is what it takes to be able to live together.*

The Multicultural Centre has played a special role for the TOGETHER project, but it is far from the only institution in the local setting that promotes change, development and new thinking within the municipal administration and among the inhabitants of Botkyrka.

The Subtopia cluster with its big and small enterprises centred around creative industry businesses and activities has become a key actor on the local, the regional and the national/international scene. More than a decade ago the council recognised the need to stimulate and encourage new economic activity and chose as one of the arenas the cultural and

creative industries. Today around fifty organisations and companies are based on the Subtopia site in Alby. Job opportunities, education, seminars, cultural performances – Subtopia has infused new energy on many levels. At present activities include the housing of international film productions alongside providing a hub for young entrepreneurs. Thus, the council acts as a springboard for economic development in a way that builds on participants' shared interests and ambitions to work together – a coresponsibility approach under development.

## **THE LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP IN THE FUTURE**

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Botkyrka has right from the start been in tune with the TOGETHER project focus on incorporating inhabitants as an invaluable resource for the everyday and future life in the municipality. The keyword co-responsibility has tied into and deepened on-going processes and discussions. As we have already touched upon in this report there are many structures in the municipality that address citizens, asking for their views, participation and active engagement – permanent structures as well as more project specific. What has been the qualitative specificity of TOGETHER is the focus on open questions and subsequent activities. This approach represents an important reminder that not all needs and not all ideas can be foreseen by municipal initiatives. There has got to be real space for citizens' initiatives.

This openness, however, has got to be combined with realism in the sense that ideas and initiatives need also to be connected to existing resources – time, money and other. Legal obligations, commitments from election campaigns, fair and equal treatment of all citizens – these and many other steering factors cannot be ignored. Open agendas demand transparency in relation to what is actually possible to change and choose, and how. In Botkyrka, much effort has been put into improving the quality of all kinds of dialogue interventions, emphasizing specifically the need to be clear and realistic in both invitations to citizens and in the actual performance of hearings, meetings, etc.

There are several general considerations that representatives of the municipality must consider beforehand, in all contacts with citizens. These considerations include time horizons and amounts of information, what to share, how and when ... The issue at stake is not about hiding anything but about relating invitations to circumstances, i.e. facilitate conscious, careful and systematic thinking around processes of shared interest. It is important, for instance, not to separate money matters

from other questions. The following key questions can help to summarize what needs to be taken into account when planning a meeting of some kind.

- **Who participates?**
- **Who chooses the questions?**
- **Which context is the dialogue part of?**
- **What influence do the participants have?**

(From Botkyrka Municipal Authority's *Guide to dialogue*, Adelly & Eliasson 2007)

Another set of useful keyword that can help structuring processes of both planning and evaluation is the following. How coresponsible is (any one activity or process) with regard to the following:

- **About what?** Focusing topic of discussion, activity etc.
- **For whom?** Focusing target group.
- **With whom?** Focusing those involved in an activity/process
- **By whom?** Focusing those that decide, deliver and charges
- **How?** Focusing choices of presentation etc.
- **Where?** Focusing choices of venue etc.

(From *Tid för mångfald* [Time for diversity], Pripp, Plisch & Printz Werner, Botkyrka: The Multicultural Centre, 2005)

Realism also includes an awareness about the multitude of invitations and subsequent expectations that the average citizen is confronted with. As a parent, a tenant, a voter, a neighbour, a NGO member, a user of municipal services – all these roles and relations regularly generate invitations and expectations for engagement.

When planning for how to take the TOGETHER experience ahead it is in the Botkyrka context there are both these kinds of strategic considerations and the more deep-reaching questions about attitude. In this respect TOGETHER has been a valuable reminder and a training session for reflections on attitudes.

The coresponsibility approach will continue to inform the working processes. But with due respect to the complexity of life, both the everyday lives of citizens with all their complementary roles and identities (as parents, employees or unem-

ployed, neighbours, association members etc.) all competing for their fair share of time and interest. And, likewise, the complex tasks of the municipal council circumscribed by regulations and related to short- and long-term plans. There can be no one constellation of people to cater for all questions at all times. Such a scope would be at one and the same time too wide and too narrow. Hence, there will continue to be many groups, different constellations with different agendas. Still all of them informed by the same open co-responsible attitude towards shared concerns and aims.

## CONCLUSIONS

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### 1. Participating in an URBACT project

On the positive side there is the international exchange, bearing with it the possibility to gather new inspiration on current issues. Seeing the same questions answered / treated in other settings can be a mind-opening experience, and has been at a number of occasions.

On the negative there is the administrative over-coat. Participating in an URBACT has at many times been a heavy administrative burden. This part of the work, unfortunately has taken a bit more than its fair share of energy and attention.

### 2. The TOGETHER network

The exchange between the TOGETHER partners has been a great opportunity for learning. Different geographical situations, being parts of rural or urban setting, being situated in different metropolitan regions, having different political histories and different economic situations – all these factors have been forces at work throughout and discussions.

The meetings have made it possible to use the freshness of the looks of others to see old and well-known activities and places through new lenses. This was a very rewarding part of the Botkyrka network meeting in September 2011.

Quite specific to the TOGETHER network was also the Youth Project – a valuable extra! It was conducted under the leadership of Braine l'Alleud but became something that six of the partners (among them Botkyrka) was able to benefit from.

The report written by Jon Bloomfield (2011, Swedish translation 2012), that formulated the challenge behind the network's coming into being was very helpful for the internal discussion of the network. Translated into Swedish it also

became a valuable resource for presenting the project in the local and Swedish context. The report put together the joint experiences from the focus groups and presented a first, tentative analysis. In order to present the TOGETHER network on the URBACT arena an essay in the tabloid for the Annual Conference was equally useful (The URBACT Tribune, August 2011)

### 3. The Methodology

No theory and no handbook alone can change traditional working methods or attitudes. It takes training and practice to establish new habits, new routines and new ways of looking upon things.

Furthermore, it takes courage and patience to step back from old, established positions, in particular if they are associated with power and money. To develop an attitude of co-responsibility among the municipal administration takes time.

In this process, a project for international exchange can be helpful in that it infuses energy and opens doors to other realities. First-hand experience from other settings, other problems and other solutions can give new perspectives on the everyday at home ...

Our experiences of TOGETHER and of interacting with other partner cities indicate that transforming knowledge developed within an URBACT-network into structures of everyday work in each municipality is a fragile process. It is very much dependent on the individuals involved. In some partner cities the mayor's commitment to the project and the methodology has been a decisive factor for running the project. How will a possible change in a mayor's office after an election effect the further implementation? Will the space for the co-responsibility approach and citizen involvement will be the same with a new administration? The involvement and support from the political level is equally important since there is such an interdependence between different activities and priorities.

Continuing with the methodology and widening the Territories of coresponsibility which will remain an issue on the agenda for the Council of Europe after the TOGETHER network is finalized, is something worth thorough consideration. It is also very important that civil society organisations and NGOs are invited to take part in training and spreading the methodology in order to increase the chances for sustainability of the Territories of coresponsibility. The methodological guide published by The Council of Europe (2005) could probably benefit a lot from the experiences of the last few years, not the least the work undertaken by the TOGETHER network partners.

Another challenge for coresponsibility approach is the fragility of volunteerism. Members from NGO's want concrete results if they are expected to take active part in initiating and running different actions. Keeping the spirit high among participants demands efficiency in the municipal administration and some moral boosters.

Many years of experience in working with citizens' involvement and improving the ways of interaction and dialogue was the solid ground to run the TOGETHER project in Alby – Botkyrka. Taken as a whole, the TOGETHER project opened new approaches for the promotion of a sustainable community. The open ended questions about wellbeing and ill-being, the coresponsibility basis for groups' formations, actions and activities, became complementing parts in the existing structures.



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