JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
School of Education and Communication

Research Report

Civil society initiatives for integrating refugees into Swedish society

– Sustainable over time?

Karla Escobar & Helene Ahl

Research Report

Civil society initiatives for integrating refugees into Swedish society

– Sustainable over time?

Karla Escobar & Helene Ahl

Preface

This report analyses the progress of various initiatives initiated by civil society organisations in Sweden in 2015 to facilitate the integration of refugees. The report is part of a larger study funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council in Canada, which aims to compare the role of civil society in integration systems in Canada and Sweden. The study was conducted by Karla Escobar, who has a master's degree in political science, and Helene Ahl, a professor of business administration. We would like to express our gratitude to Marco Nilsson, an associate professor of political science, for his review and comments on the text. We would also like to thank Professor Benson Honig and his colleagues at McMaster University in Canada for their valuable cooperation.

Furthermore, we extend our thanks to our reference group, which consists of representatives from the municipality and local associations. Their genuine interest in promoting sustainable integration activities has greatly influenced the focus of this study. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to all the respondents who generously dedicated their time and commitment to this research. Lastly, we would like to acknowledge Sara Bref for her assistance in administration, and proofreading, and her valuable contribution in providing an excellent overview of the Swedish reception system.

The Authors

Contents

1. Introduction

The war in Syria, which began in 2011, contributed to a major refugee crisis, reaching its peak in Sweden in 2015. Figures from the UN refugee agency showed that four-fifths of all those who sought refuge in Europe at that time were fleeing Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia, and Iraq. By November 2015, 800,000 refugees had reached the borders of Italy and Greece (Sunderland, 2015). In Sweden, 163,000 asylum-seeking refugees arrived, with 70,000 of them being children. Skåne County, located at the southern border, received up to 54,000 asylum seekers, while Stockholm received 46,000 asylum seekers in a very short period (SOU, 2017). The Swedish refugee reception system was not prepared for such a large number of asylum seekers. In October 2015, a cross-party migration policy agreement (SOU, 2017) was reached, which included various measures. One of these measures involved providing financing for "early intervention" projects during the asylum period to give refugees something constructive to do while waiting for a decision from the Swedish Migration Agency (SOU, 2017). In addition to project funding for early intervention, the Government tasked the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency with coordinating the management of refugee reception, with involvement from civil society. Civil society's efforts were extensive, with volunteers lining up at central stations and ferry terminals to receive refugees and offer them food, clothing, or temporary shelter (SOU, 2017). Civil society's involvement proved indispensable for the early reception of refugees, and associations were encouraged to apply for funding for projects under the "early intervention" measure (TIA).

By the time this study was conducted, several years had passed, and project funds were no longer available to the same extent. The study focuses on how civil society's significant interest in the reception and integration of refugees has been addressed and examines the impact of integration work on civil society organizations. The study also includes immigrant associations and municipally run integration projects. The report is based on research on integration and investigates whether and how the organizations have continued to work on integration beyond the initial phase.

1.1. Purpose

The purpose is to analyse whether civil society's efforts to integrate refugees after the refugee wave in 2015 have gained a long-term foothold in the organizations or not, and whether this varies between different organizations and, if so, why. The report is primarily aimed at voluntary organizations from civil society but also at municipal units that work with integration efforts. The study was conducted in a medium-sized

Swedish municipality where civil society's commitment to refugee issues is extensive. The report aims to answer the following questions:

1. What initiatives or activities have been carried out in connection with the refugee wave in 2015 and how do these differ between the organizations?
2. How do civil society organizations (CSOs) and units within the municipality continue with activities in integration today?
3. Why do some organizations and others not continue with integration activities?

1.2.   Disposition

The report consists of nine sections. Section two provides a historical review of how integration was handled in Sweden during the 1900s, while section three offers an overview of previous research on how civil society has worked with integration. Section four details the analytical framework, and section five describes the methodology of the study. The following three sections present the results: section six describes the organizations and their activities, section seven utilizes the analytical framework to analyse why they either continued or discontinued their activities, and section eight summarizes the results by addressing the research questions. Section nine includes a discussion, which encompasses recommendations, suggestions for further research, and a conclusion. The interview guide can be found in an appendix, following the reference list.

2. Immigration and integration in Sweden during the 1900s

2.1. Immigration policy

Civil society organizations have a long history of involvement in immigration and integration in Sweden. Tracing back to the time before World War I, Sarstrand Marekovic (2011) provides an excellent historical overview of how immigrants were received at the local level in Sweden. This section is based on her comprehensive overview. Before World War I, the responsibility for the reception of immigrants mainly fell on the police authorities. As there was no state support available, immigrants had to rely on their relatives, friends, and voluntary organizations for assistance. During World War II, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the State Unemployment Commission took charge of foreigners. Open and closed accommodation centres were established, with able-bodied individuals being placed in open reception centres and provided with help in finding employment. Those who were considered more difficult to integrate were transferred to closed areas. Fleeing Jews initially received support from their compatriots and Mosaic assemblies, as well as from organizations such as the Labour Movement's Refugee Council, the Committee for the Fundraiser and Red Aid, and private organizations, which provided subsistence and work assistance (ibid, pp. 32-34).

The rapid industrialization that followed World War II created a high demand for labour, resulting in significant labour immigration. This shift meant that immigration primarily consisted of workers, with a large number coming from Finland and southern Europe. By the late 1950s, it was estimated that there were 50,000 foreign workers in Sweden. Some companies recruited workers directly, but the National Labour Market Board (AMS) played a major role in recruiting foreign workers for companies and providing support for refugees who had remained in open reception centres since World War II.

In the 1950s, immigration policy began to be linked to labour market issues (ibid, pp. 36-37). During this period, the most influential civil society organizations were the numerous immigrant associations that emerged in the late 1960s and were actively involved in labour market issues until the 1990s.

The post-war labour migration led to the development of new political ideas. Previously, the focus had been on permits and work, but now there was a desire to include foreign workers in society. The government established an immigration commission that proposed the creation of a permanent agency for immigration matters. In 1969, the Swedish Immigration Board was established with the overall responsibility for the reception of immigrants. The Swedish Immigration Board replaced a previous work function that had been under the Task Force on Immigration Issues while the immigration inquiry was ongoing. The task of the working group had been to identify social and cultural problems among immigrants

(ibid, pp. 38-39). In a new investigation in 1968, Sweden adopted an official immigration policy that emphasized multiculturalism, with the goals of "equality, freedom of choice, and cooperation". It was during this period that immigrant associations became increasingly central to the lives of immigrants (ibid, pp. 39-40).

The immigration policy of the 1960s brought immigration to the forefront of public discussion. Since most of those who had fled during World War II had returned home, the state had not developed a long-term immigration policy, and there was no action plan for managing future refugee flows (ibid, pp. 82-83). Some criticism was directed towards adaptation problems, deficiencies in Swedish language skills, and other obstacles that were believed to hinder the integration of immigrants into society. Others argued that a more inclusive immigration policy was needed, one that took cultural differences seriously to counteract segregation.

As the interaction between immigrants and society primarily occurred at the local level, municipalities began implementing local strategies to address immigration-related issues. Labour migrants tended to settle in industrial cities, and the companies that employed them collaborated with municipalities and local study associations to facilitate integration. Municipalities established local immigration agencies that served as information centres. These agencies played a central role for foreign workers as they provided both verbal and written assistance, helping workers navigate their interactions with society. Study associations received financial resources to teach Swedish, which was also in the interest of the companies. These municipal initiatives were not connected to national strategies or directives, as such frameworks did not exist. The establishment of immigration agencies was based on political decisions within each municipality, to introduce foreign workers to Swedish society and facilitate their interactions with authorities (ibid, pp. 92-96).

During this time, when immigration offices collaborated with social partners and study associations, immigrant associations played a significant role. Immigrant associations were seen as a bridge between the municipality and other parts of society, providing a platform to reach individuals who did not visit immigration offices. These associations were also viewed as spaces where immigrants could maintain their language, identity, and culture. Municipalities recognized the associations as venues for discussions on political and other important issues, and therefore provided association grants. Immigrant associations were also crucial for the implementation of a new immigration policy that aimed to preserve cultural diversity. The state encouraged collaboration between immigrant associations, authorities, and other local associations. However, Swedish local associations were hesitant to cooperate (ibid, p. 147).

It was not long before new social problems emerged, challenging the existing immigration policy. During the 1990s, there was a large influx of refugees from the Balkan region coinciding with Sweden's economic recession. This shift influenced the immigration policy, with a focus on refugee immigration and creating conditions that could lead to employment. Immigration policy was redefined as integration policy, aiming to treat immigrants no differently from native-born individuals (ibid, pp. 41-44). Throughout the 1900s, the state set the framework for integration policy

through various measures, but the actual work was carried out at the local level, sometimes by these frameworks and sometimes in opposition to them, often by various civil society organizations. The role of civil society organizations in the present day is therefore discussed below.

2.2.   The role of civil society in integration and reception

The current reception of refugees in Sweden is primarily the responsibility of the state, municipalities, and regions, in line with international human rights commitments (SOU, 2017). The goal is to establish a migration policy that upholds the right to asylum, facilitates mobility, promotes labour migration based on needs, considers the developmental impact of migration, and strengthens European and international cooperation. Additionally, the reception of refugees is governed by various directives from the EU and international bodies (SOU, 2017).

The number of asylum seekers in Sweden has fluctuated over time. In 2015, a significant number of unaccompanied children, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia, sought refuge in Sweden (SOU, 2017). This influx was much larger than in previous years, and the public sector was ill-prepared to handle the reception. As a result, an inquiry was conducted by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), leading to the implementation of several measures by the government to improve refugee management. One of these measures was to promote early intervention for new arrivals in society, including Swedish language instruction (SOU, 2017). Civil society organizations received substantial financial assistance to support refugees, and the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) was tasked with producing a guide for the integration of asylum seekers and new immigrants (SOU, 2017).

According to MUCF (2016), civil society demonstrated its value and importance in Swedish society during the large-scale humanitarian effort in response to the refugee wave in 2015. MUCF (2017) also highlights that the public sector has faced criticism for its inadequate response and lack of understanding regarding the significant role of civil society in refugee reception and integration. While newcomers primarily interact with the local context, civil society has now assumed a prominent role, surpassing municipalities and companies as the key actors. Over half of Sweden's population is involved in voluntary organizations in some capacity, a proportion that has remained stable over time and is high compared to other countries (MUCF, 2017). According to MUCF's investigation, civil society organizations have provided services to their members and the general public, delivered public welfare services, acted as opinion leaders, and given a voice to the groups they represent (MUCF, 2017).

Civil society efforts for integration encompass both targeted and general measures. Targeted measures include emergency response and integration-promoting initiatives. In terms of emergency response, civil society has assisted in addressing urgent needs such as clothing and temporary accommodation. In terms of integration efforts, voluntary organizations have long-term support and assistance to help

newcomers integrate into society and the labour market (MUCF, 2016). Successful outcomes have been achieved when nonprofit and public sector organizations have collaborated systematically to facilitate the inclusion of refugees in the labour market (Escobar, Nilsson, & Ahl, 2021). In general, civil society has provided a platform for new arrivals to have their voices heard by politicians, becoming voice carriers and opinion leaders (MUCF, 2016).

However, the formal responsibility for labour market integration of individuals with permanent residency lies with the Swedish Public Employment Service, in collaboration with municipalities, companies, and organizations through the establishment program. Since 2010, the Swedish Public Employment Service has been responsible for this program, which was previously managed by municipalities. This program applies to refugees who have sought protection in Sweden and to relatives of refugees, but not to asylum seekers awaiting a decision from the Swedish Migration Agency. The establishment program aims to facilitate faster integration into the labour market. According to a regulation from 2018, individuals lacking compulsory school qualifications and with a low level of education are required to attend education. The establishment program also offers various subsidized employment opportunities (Migrationsinfo, 2019).

However, the Swedish Public Employment Service's involvement in the integration process begins only after a residence permit has been obtained. The Swedish Migration Agency is the initial point of contact for refugees upon arrival in Sweden, where they apply for a residence permit. During the application period, refugees can apply for a coordination number that grants them the right to work. While awaiting a decision, refugees can also seek assistance from local associations that offer Swedish language instruction and other stimulating activities (Bref, 2018). Alongside the public sector, the nonprofit sector has proven to play a significant role in integration work and refugee reception, and the government has recognized the importance of civil society involvement.

Despite the significant contributions of civil society, challenges persist. In the past, the challenge was managing integration, whereas today, the challenge lies in the pace of integration. A study conducted in 2018 revealed that it takes 15 to 20 years for an immigrant to reach a level of employment that enables self-sufficiency, which is considerably longer than in the early 1980s when it took two to three years for men and five years for women to achieve the same level of employment (Ruist, 2018). In the following section, we will explore international research and discuss different perspectives on integration work related to civil society.

3. Previous research

3.1. The influence of politics, history, and ideology

As the account of the Swedish development showed, the integration issue is affected by how local government is designed and regulated in relation to other levels of governance. A significant part of integration research focuses on how the integration issue has developed under different levels of governance, while other studies show how discourses through "previous perceptions" influence the development of the integration issue in politics and how politicization affects local actors. Scholars argue that preconceived notions of integration affect how the issue should continue to be pursued (Hadj Abdou, 2020; Mourad & Norman, 2020). This study therefore pays attention to how previous perceptions of integration affect the design of projects and activities.

The depth of institutionalization of integration also depends on history. Integration as an institution is often considered to have begun when the Refugee Convention was introduced after World War II. However, the Refugee Convention is now considered an institution born out of the politics of the time. As times change and migration flows change in nature and needs, there is a risk that previous agreements will negatively affect new decisions and strategies (Mourad & Norman, 2020). History shows examples of political blocking and in some cases, countries, such as Turkey, have benefited from a "previous" policy (Fakhoury, 2021; Gois & Falchi, 2017). Policies that have created ambiguities in integration are border controls, complicated and resource-intensive asylum procedures, and the lack of a solidarity refugee policy. Based on current international legislation, politicians today also find it more difficult than before to decide which refugee groups should be considered asylum seekers (Mourad & Norman, 2020).

Political ideologies are also important for the understanding of integration as an institution. In Sweden, for example, civil society has changed its shape and character depending on political governance. Conservative governments have had closer contact with non-socialist associations, while social democratic governments have turned to civil society for the delivery of welfare services (Trägårdh, 2019). The understanding of integration and the policies for it thus affect whether and how the integration issue takes hold in organizations that decide to work with integration. It is therefore important to gain an understanding of how governance models influence the formal organization of civil society organizations.

3.2. Informal or formal integration policies

Important for the design of integration is whether integration policy is informal or formal. These different forms give civil society different conditions to act. Informal integration refers to the integration of refugees without formal rights. It usually occurs in countries with weak governance of the state apparatus and without a clear

integration policy (Kuch, 2017). Informal integration does not mean that integration issues are completely excluded – on the contrary, local power structures become more important for the newcomer (Polzer, 2009). Informal integration processes are governed by local structures rather than by political control from above. Factors missing in informal integration processes are financial support and labour law conditions that provide opportunities for jobs. The relations between the host population and the refugee group become more important than political control (Kuch, 2017). Local government thus becomes a key prerequisite for refugees to have the opportunity to contribute to their integration process. The disadvantage is that refugee groups become vulnerable because national governance does not guarantee safety or protection through human rights (Polzer, 2009). Studies show that refugees are nevertheless integrated under informal circumstances – which leads researchers to ask how, since formal rights are important in integration processes (Kuch, 2017). Examples of factors that can provide a positive outcome for integration are local cultures and social interactions that provide conditions for inclusion. Examples of factors that do not lead to a positive outcome are discrimination due to the informal status that people have in the country and problems in obtaining necessary documents, which may prevent people from travelling (Kuch, 2017).

Formal integration consists of top-down processes including rights in the form of education and welfare, as well as opportunities for social interaction and networking (Beversluis et al., 2017; Eby, Iverson, Smyers, & Kekic, 2011; Moreira, 2017; Ritchie, 2018). Formal integration is common in countries with more liberal ambitions and greater cooperation between countries, regions, and civil society. Canada and the United States, for example, have formal systems that enable private individuals to sponsor refugees or assist civil society in supporting refugees in entering society. In both countries, Catholic churches also have a central role as humanitarian as well as political actors, thus contributing to the further institutionalization of integration (Eby et al., 2011; Ritchie, 2018). Sweden is a country with a formal refugee policy, which nevertheless seeks help from civil society. Attempts are thus being made to integrate civil society involvement into the formal processes.

3.3.   The different roles of civil society

The discussion above has shown that formal integration policies, such as those in Sweden, regulate integration, which in turn affects the involvement of civil society in integration activities. Research indicates that civil society, both in Sweden and internationally, is primarily active in welfare services (Diedrich & Hellgren, 2018; Garkisch, Heidingsfelder, & Beckmann, 2017). This is particularly evident in the role civil society plays during the initial stage of refugee arrival in a new country (Escobar et al., 2021; Sunata & Tosun, 2019). A study conducted in Turkey in 2015 on refugee reception demonstrated that civil society organizations interacted horizontally across different organizations, forming complex networks that filled

gaps in governance where the state was lacking (Sunata & Tosun, 2019). This highlights the active role of civil society in integration issues. However, there are challenges associated with horizontal collaboration in refugee reception, including the tendency to focus on short-term agreements and immediate needs such as food and housing (Fry & Islar, 2021).

Similar challenges of short-termism also apply to religious organizations. Church organizations, for example, often reinforce the perception that civil society organizations primarily engage in humanitarian aid. Ideström and Linde (2019) discuss the role of church organizations in the reception of refugees in Sweden in 2015. The motives and commitment of these organizations were largely based on the core values of the church to support and assist those in need. This aligns with the public's expectations of churches. The authors also found that the municipality they studied held similar views on the role of churches, expecting them to provide support and assistance during the initial phase of reception (Ideström & Linde, 2019).

Long-term interventions aimed at structural change, which can be found in immigrant associations, may also face limitations due to political control. Without support from national governance, these associations' efforts become indistinguishable from any other civil society organization (Sahin Mencutek, 2021).

International research indicates that there are strong expectations regarding the role civil society should play, although these expectations vary between countries. In South Korea, for instance, there is a strong emphasis on what constitutes a "good" citizen. Self-sufficiency through work and contributing to society through voluntary activities are seen as prerequisites for citizenship. Both the state and civil society work towards integrating North Korean refugees into society and encouraging their productivity, which can also be seen as a form of "disciplining" refugees (Lee, 2015). However, the research also reveals that welfare services and initiatives addressing immediate needs dominate in this context.

Another aspect of research focuses on civil society organizations as actors in the labour market. For example, social enterprises aim to reduce unemployment among long-term unemployed individuals, particularly newly arrived women. Due to various factors, newly arrived women are at a higher risk of long-term unemployment, often due to assumptions that they should prioritize family responsibilities. A study on social enterprises in Canada highlights the positive experiences of participants in terms of probationary work and social networking for labour market integration (Walk, Greenspan, Crossley, & Handy, 2015). While social enterprises have been shown to contribute to labour market integration, a case study from the US demonstrates how voluntary organizations can also hinder newcomers from developing and establishing themselves in the labour market (Martin, 2012). The study reveals that although immigrant associations offer work opportunities, these opportunities may delay newcomers' ability to seek regular employment, ultimately leading them to remain within the association.

In summary, previous research indicates that the issue of integration is politically charged and holds significant importance for civil society. The research highlights the influence of politics on integration and the predominance of acute,

short-term welfare efforts within civil society. However, the research does not fully explain the challenges faced by civil society organizations in their integration efforts, nor does it explore the extent to which these efforts are sustained in organizational activities. It remains unclear whether the government's formal integration policies, such as the "early interventions" examined in this study, provide short-term assistance or long-term solutions for asylum seekers and refugees with residence permits. By studying the impact of government measures on civil society actors involved in "early intervention," we aim to contribute to filling these knowledge gaps.

4. Analytical framework

The section presents the theories we have found useful for analysing why some CSOs continued with their activities and why some did not. We explore the theories of social constructionism, institutional theory, and the theory of "loose coupling" between the formal structure of the organization and its actual activities.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) introduced the theory of reality as socially constructed as a fundamental building block for understanding institutionalization processes. The fact that reality is constructed socially does not mean that an objective reality does not exist, but knowledge of social reality is created in social interaction between people. Furthermore, knowledge is interpreted or mediated through language – people therefore have no direct and unfiltered access to reality. Since people have different experiences and exist in different social contexts, their perceptions of the nature of reality also vary. Our knowledge of reality affects our behaviour, and also how we relate to people and things. A social scientist is therefore interested in studying people's experiences and perceptions. We have thus asked the interviewees about their perceptions and previous experiences of integration work.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), the formation of knowledge follows a specific process: Someone claims something about reality; they *externalize* knowledge. Others listen and think, and engage in discussion. If it makes sense, it is agreed that this is how it is. Maybe books or manuals are written about the topic. In this step, the knowledge *is objectified*. New generations listen, read, and learn. They *internalize* knowledge. Over time, the first and second stages are forgotten. Knowledge is taken for granted, and actions based on it have become a habit. The knowledge has then become *institutionalized*. An institution is defined as a habitual pattern of action with an accompanying explanation. The explanation can be cognitive (this is how you do it), normative (this is how you should do it) or regulated, i.e. enshrined in laws or regulations (this is how you must do it). Scott (2001) speaks of these as the three different pillars of the institutions.

In this understanding of institution, the Swedish Migration Agency is not considered an institution but an organization. However, the asylum process is an institution. It is regulated by law and therefore a formal institution. How civil society organizations perceive the best way to assist asylum seekers or refugees with residence permits can be seen as an informal institution based on cognitive or normative assumptions. However, it is also influenced by formal rules accompanying project grants or regulatory systems related to asylum seekers. Thus, our focus of analysis is integration activities within various civil society organizations. We are interested in how institutions impact their activities and whether integration work is institutionalized within these organizations.

According to Meyer and Rowan (1977), modern organizations are almost entangled in institutions, many of which are not immediately necessary for the organization's core business, but they are needed for the organization to be perceived

as legitimate. The organization must therefore adapt to the institutions. Legitimacy serves as a resource, which in turn provides access to other resources. For example, a limited liability company must comply with corporate law and produce annual reports according to an established (institutionalized) pattern to operate on the stock exchange. Associations must register to sign contracts, rent premises, and open a bank account. This requires the creation of a formal organization with statutes stating the association's purpose. A board with a chairperson, secretary, and treasurer must be formed, minutes must be taken at meetings, and annual reports must be prepared and approved by members at annual meetings. Many publicly-owned or partially publicly-funded organizations must carry out detailed quality follow-ups and reports to ensure continued access to funds. This process consumes time and resources, and sometimes the various institutional requirements clash, hindering effective core business operations. Organizations address this issue through what Meyer & Rowan (1977) refer to as loose coupling. In simple terms, organizations do what is necessary to ensure effective operations, even if it means not fully complying with the institutional framework. At the same time, they proclaim that they meet all institutional requirements. Auditors are hired, annual reports are written, and quality evaluations are conducted. Thus, the actual activities are partially decoupled from the formal organizational structure, which can be seen as a form of myth and ceremony. Meyer & Rowan (1977) argue that everyone involved knows how this works, making it a public secret and a game. The perpetuation of this myth occurs through the commitment of leaders, the collective efforts of members or employees, and networking between organizations and societal groups.

Considering the Swedish government's long-term efforts to involve civil society, such as through support for sports or popular education, we view the funds allocated for integration projects as an attempt by the public sector to institutionalize integration work within civil society organizations. Since the public sector cannot directly control these organizations (which would require public procurement of welfare services), the organizations are free to define their projects within certain frameworks. This makes the institutionalization process particularly interesting to observe. The government cannot institutionalize through regulation alone, so normative and cognitive changes remain. Initiatives started by enthusiasts within organizations, even without public funds, can also be seen as attempts to institutionalize integration work within the organization. In this study, we are curious to see how these efforts have progressed. Has integration work initiated in 2015 become a habitual pattern of action with accompanying normative or cognitive explanations, in other words, has it been institutionalized? Have the temporary activities become integrated into the regular activities of the organizations, or are they decoupled from them? Therefore, we utilize the concepts of institutionalization and loose coupling to interpret the results.

5. Material and method

5.1. Case study

Our case consists of civil society organizations and relevant units in a medium-sized Swedish municipality with a rich association life, where the work of civil society has received recognition in local politics. Church organizations have a strong and historical foothold in the municipality, and their commitment to helping and supporting people in difficulty, as well as their community involvement, is widely recognized. The local council has tasked its administration with maintaining and deepening contact and cooperation with local associations, demonstrating a political will to strengthen and collaborate with civil society. Local civil society has collaborated with us as researchers through a reference group, and our research questions are a direct outcome of the reference group's desire to create sustainable forms of integration-promoting activities over time.

We interviewed representatives from a strategic selection of organizations. Our sampling frame consisted of the municipality's association register. From this register, we selected organizations that had carried out integration projects in connection with the refugee wave in 2015. These organizations were of three types: social enterprises, non-profit associations, and immigrant associations. We ensured that all three types were represented in the sample. Furthermore, we chose organizations that both used public funds and those that did not, with the latter mainly being immigrant associations. We also interviewed representatives from two different integration projects within the municipality.

Through our selection, we can make comparisons between the actors and assess the degree of cooperation between them. The organizations agreed to be interviewed after email contact, and some were recruited via the snowball method, where one organization tipped off another. We interviewed one or more representatives from sixteen different civil society organizations or municipal projects. These organizations have different backgrounds in integration issues and different links to integration. Some have been working on this for a long time, while others started after the County Administrative Board announced funds for early intervention projects.

The study is a qualitative case study that used semi-structured interviews as a method for data collection. Interview studies provide opportunities for answers to questions about the "why" and "how" (Yin, 2007). Comparative interviews can focus on specific issues (ibid. p. 49) and provide the opportunity to find patterns – in our case, patterns in whether and how the integration issue persists in organizations. For example, we ask questions about the organizations' current work in integration projects and their previous work in integration. Since gender equality initiatives were requested in the calls for proposals for the TIA projects, we also asked about their

thoughts on integration activities for women and men. The full interview guide can be found in Appendix 1. The interviews took place either at the premises of the various organizations or in a neutral location. In some cases, we used Zoom. Table 1 shows the activities of the interviewed organizations in connection with the refugee wave in 2015.

The study follows the Swedish Research Council's ethical guidelines. The interviewer introduced herself and informed the participants about the purpose of the study. The participants showed great interest in the research question and agreed to participate. The research subject is organizations and organizational processes, not individuals, so no personal data has been noted, and we have ensured that no interviewee can be identified. For the same reason, we gave the various organizations fictitious names. The interview material is stored securely, and only the authors of the report have access to the transcribed material.

Table 1. The organizations and their activities

Organizations	Activities
The municipality	
Municipal project 1	Early intervention
Municipal project 2	The health project
Non-profit associations	
The aid association	Language café, Refugee support, Textile integration
Church 1	Language café
Church 2	Language café, Volleyball
Church 3	Coordination of integration projects
Church 4	Language café, Homework help, "Word and Fika"
The friends association	Language café, Lectures on job-seeking
The study association	Stress courses, Online Swedish instruction
The workshop	Meeting place
Social enterprises	
The cooperative	Practical training in entrepreneurship for women
The cleaning company	Offers jobs in the cleaning industry for women
Immigrant associations	
Immigrant association 1	Homework help. Sports activities, Cultural events
Immigrant association 2	Help with time management, Advice
Immigrant association 3	Meeting place, Cultural events, Lectures on social topics
Immigrant association 4	Cultural events

5.2. Thematic analysis

The material was analysed using thematic analysis, which is a practical and flexible analysis method used in different epistemological and ontological fields. In thematic analysis, topics are central in the search for themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The topics focused were based on the interview structure, which during the interviews was deepened depending on the answers from the interviewees. The approach is abductive, which means that our previous knowledge of the field informs how we interpret our data, but in the interpretation of data, a new understanding also emerges. The result is a product of newfound patterns that complement already established theoretical insights (Alvesson & Sködberg, 2017). We have structured the analysis of the interviews according to the six-step method proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006).

1) Get to know the dataset and 2) transcription

The interview material was first transcribed. The printed interviews were then read through several times without taking notes and without marking parts of the text into different categories. This step is about gaining an understanding of the text material.

3) Coding

Coding is a central step in the analysis. Words are to be selected and categorized. In the report, words and sentences were encoded. The codes were collected in several different columns for each organization. The codes were not collected in a certain order but were collected in columns to identify themes. Table 2 shows examples of the encoding.

Table 2. Examples of encoding

Association	Code			
Immigrant Association 3	Not a money-driven association	Receives money for the support of certain activities	An open association for all	The association helps and supports
The cooperative	It is needed to get money for the projects	Working with consulting	They want to find entrepreneurs among newly arrived foreign-born	Not only entrepreneurship in focus but also people

Once codes have been collected from the material, the search for themes begins. By comparing the columns, themes were identified for immigrant associations, civil society organizations and units from the municipality. Since there were similarities but also differences between the organizational forms, we report the results for each organizational form under separate headings. Table 3 shows examples of themes from civil society and social enterprises.

Table 3. Themes by organizational form

Civil society themes	Themes for social enterprises
• Looking for project grants that run out • Adapts programs to the needs of their audience	• Practical entrepreneurship is working with the whole person in integration • Grants affect opportunities for practical entrepreneurship • Practical entrepreneurship is part of job training • Job training in the private market • You work together to work with the whole person

The next three sections report what we found. Section 6 is mainly descriptive and focuses on the first research question: "What actions or activities have been carried out in connection with the refugee wave in 2015 and how do these differ between the organizations"?

In section 7, we use the analytical framework to reason about research questions 2 and 3: "How do civil society organizations and units within the municipality continue with activities in integration today" and "Why do some organizations and others not continue with integration activities"? In section 8, we then summarize the results by answering the research questions.

6. The organizations and their activities

In the following, we describe the organizations and their activities in three different sections. The first section describes the mission and activities of the CSOs to provide a picture of the formal frameworks. The second part focuses on the design of the interventions to find patterns in how the daily activities differ from the organizations' formal frameworks. This section also includes the municipal projects. The last section describes the interviewees' previous experiences of integration to more fully understand why the design of integration activities varies.

6.1. Mission and activities

Social enterprises

The study includes two social enterprises, a cooperative and a cleaning company". Both work towards gender equality and primarily target foreign women who are distant from the labour market. The cooperative applies for projects from the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth about entrepreneurship and business development. Their mission is to provide entrepreneurial opportunities and strive for a sustainable democratic entrepreneurial spirit. In response to the 2015 refugee wave, the cooperative applied for project funding to work with women who are distant from the labour market. The interviewee believes that the project aligns with their core values, which aim to contribute to the inclusion of individuals who are not yet part of the labour market.

The cooperative closely collaborates with other organizations, including the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth for project support, as well as other organizations to reach their target group. The organization also collaborates with the local employment agency and utilizes more general platforms to attract participants to their projects.

> *We are stronger when we do things together in the business promotion system... if everyone is going to contribute, and different business offices and municipalities take different directions, we will not reach out (Interviewee, the cooperative).*

The interviewee believes that there are challenges in promoting entrepreneurship among foreign women with limited labour market experience. This is partly due to their short work experience and partly to their low education level. The company adapts by mixing theoretical elements and practical exercises to make learning interesting and easy.

The cleaning company was started on the initiative of the cooperative and the church of Sweden. The purpose is to offer real jobs to women who were previously participants in the cooperative's projects. The philosophy of the cleaning company is

to work with the whole person and strengthen women's participation in society by offering work that creates opportunities for self-sufficiency and social community.

> *Then we want to build on what you already have and bring it into a context where products and services are created. That's the whole philosophy, and in the process, you'll learn a lot. The women who are hired must be supervised and grow in their work tasks (Interviewee, the cleaning company).*

The interviewee believes that health was an important issue to prioritize as the participants' health status tended to be affected by their conditions at home. The interviewee noticed that the lack of gender equality at home could be an obstacle to women's performance at work. Therefore, the organization chose to have activities ranging only between four and six hours a day.

Non-profit associations

The study includes an aid association, a friend association, a meeting place in the form of a workshop, a study association and four churches. The aid association initially worked to coordinate help from different organizations and was involved in the start-up of a local network for refugee support. During the work on refugee reception in 2015, various non-profit associations in the municipality collaborated systematically. The interviewee says that the network collaboration began on the initiative of the County Administrative Board, which called for crisis meetings. The network was first created at the county level and then developed locally. The network is a platform that opens up for the exchange of experience and dialogue between organizations, says the interviewee. By learning from each other, cooperation indirectly contributes to integration.

> *In this way, we collaborate and work indirectly with integration, you can say (Interviewee, the aid association).*

Regarding the organization's background, the interviewee replied that the association strives to reflect society and that work with integration therefore comes naturally. At the same time, the interviewee considers integration issues to be complicated, especially when it comes to the question of when newcomers are integrated.

> *We stick to lots of different concepts that make it difficult to identify the group that we expect to be integrated (Interviewee, the aid association).*

An important principle in the aid association is voluntary participation; volunteers or board members do not charge for their commitment. The aid association is also not politically bound. Members with a foreign background make up approximately 10 per cent of the 650 members. Some members have also been beneficiaries of support.

> *Many feel great gratitude for the support and help they have received from [the association's] side and then they have also in return become a member (Interviewee, the aid association).*

The association's income consists of sales from their charity shop where the surplus is sent to international aid. In addition to income from the store, the association receives grants from the authority Sida, which is Sweden's government agency for development cooperation. The association is run by volunteer workers.

The friend association has income from the county council and other public sector sources. The association has activities that aim at creating ties between people from different countries, including Sweden. The association has existed since 2006 and has, over the years, adapted its activities to the changing needs of the target groups. Recently, the association has been active with job-seeking activities for newcomers.

The workshop is an association that provides a meeting place for people with different conditions and disabilities. The integration work began in connection with the refugee wave in 2015. The association has around 150 members and all members pay an annual fee.

> *You can come here and just sit and have a coffee, and talk in a social setting and under conditions that are predetermined. Many who came here may have some form of disability, and who find it difficult to make friends in adulthood (Interviewee, the workshop).*

The study association is a non-profit association and is financed by state funds. The integration work in the organization is specifically aimed at asylum seekers and foreign-born people who are far from the labour market. These activities have received special funding.

> *We work with newly arrived parents, who can get an education and have conversations about the Swedish school, about what it is like to have children in the Swedish school and so on (Interviewee, the study association).*

We interviewed representatives of four different church congregations. Church 1 has over the years had regular church services and Sunday school. The connection to integration came when refugees became members of the church in 2015. The congregation then applied for a grant from the County Administrative Board to start a language café. The congregation's finances consist otherwise of collections, income from letting premises, and gifts from members.

In addition to church services, church 2 organises scout activities, a children's choir, a brass band, Sunday school, youth activities and meetings for seniors. The volunteers involved in the church activities for refugees are mainly seniors driven by a desire to help.

Church 3 consists of several smaller congregations and has existed for ten years. The church organises services and supports the sub-congregations in various issues, including integration issues. In addition to church services, they arrange children's and youth activities, choirs, and support groups and they offer counselling. The interviewee says that integration came to the fore in connection with the refugee wave in 2015. However, even before that, the church's sub-congregations were working with, among other things, language cafés and civic orientation.

> *Many congregations in Sweden worked a lot with newcomers and asylum seekers before 2015 (Interviewee, church 3).*

In 2015, however, the need arose for coordination of activities in integration both nationally and between the sub-congregations, for which the church is responsible. The church provides support to the sub-congregations in integration issues and has a person who is specifically employed for the purpose.

Church 4 wants to be open to the surrounding population. The congregation runs several activities, such as a café, conference centre, charity shop, home help, preschool, sheltered housing, Bible school, and more. The congregation also has services in Arabic and has had language cafés and homework help for students of Swedish as a foreign language.

> *The focus has been different. There have been Arabic services and an international venue (Interviewee, church 4).*

Immigrant associations

We conducted interviews with four different immigrant associations. The first association brings together immigrants from an African country and works towards promoting social cohesion and learning. The association receives grants from the municipality and various authorities to finance premises costs and learning activities. Additionally, the Swedish National Agency for Education provides a specific grant for homework help, which finances a part-time position. According to the interviewee, the families are the core of the association and an important part of their culture.

The second association also primarily caters to immigrants from Africa and focuses on providing support to women and children in need. The association has staff with pedagogical training, and the board currently has four members. The goal is to encourage more people to become involved and become part of the board. The association has 100 members, and the financing comes from member donations.

> *The idea is that we will help and that they will govern themselves. This is what we are striving towards (Interviewee, immigrant association 2).*

The third association is made up of immigrants from a Middle Eastern country. The main objective of this association is to preserve the language and culture of its members. The association has around 50 to 70 active members and 100 to 300 passive members on Facebook. Apart from cultural events, the association also conducts activities that help its members to understand Swedish society better. Although it is a family association, it is open to the public. The association does not receive any grants from the municipality or authorities.

The fourth association is an umbrella association that comprises several smaller associations. These smaller associations bring together members from the former Yugoslavia, many of whom came to Sweden during the war in the early 1990s. The main objective of this association is to preserve the language and culture of its members. They organize joint activities that help them achieve this objective, such as larger memorial services on important dates. The board of the association has an equal number of men and women.

> *It is stated in the statutes of the umbrella organization. It is important to keep it (Interviewee, immigrant association 4).*

The association has no grants, but the economy consists of annual member fees. The income is enough to carry out larger events, according to the interviewee.

6.2.   Integration activities

The municipality

The municipality has extensive experience in integration projects. The projects are funded by different authorities, including the County Administrative Board and the Delegation against Segregation (Delmos). The interviewee from the first municipal project says that the initiative for the project came from the County Administrative Board, which encouraged organizations to apply for early intervention (TIA) project funding. The interviewee believes that the early intervention project provides an opportunity for newcomers to find employment early and thus prevent getting stuck in the government aid system.

> *The path to early integration into society is through work ... Reduced income support and increased self-sufficiency in the municipality. It is the eye of the storm when it comes to integration (Interviewee, municipal project 1).*

The interviewee believes that contact persons with an understanding of integration are important for trust to develop between immigrants and those who work with integration. Understanding and close and mutual contact increase the willingness of newcomers to become part of Swedish society. The interviewee believes that it is important to understand their background and culture. According to the interviewee,

immigrants bring with them experiences of their country's culture, with other forms of governance than in Sweden, which affects how they understand the new country. Therefore, as a first step, it is important to understand the background of the target group.

> *It is a pedagogical issue and partly a more reasoning, conversational way is needed in pedagogy than what happens, but even more so, it must be conveyed by trusted people (Interviewee, municipal Project 1).*

In practice, the municipality's TIA project appointed a contact person and a project manager who sought out people in places where new immigrants could be found. The activities were about informing the target group about how the labour market works and how to get a job by, among other things, writing a CV. When the project period ended, they applied for a continuation, but the application was rejected by the county administrative board. They then received funding from Delmos instead, so the project was named the "Delmos project". The municipality believes that the broad need for early intervention means that the Delmos project has a great chance of becoming part of the municipality's regular activities. However, the Delmos project has not carried out any special efforts for gender equality.

> *The most difficult thing about the TIA activities from a gender equality perspective was to get women familiar with the idea of working outside the home. The importance of work and how their economy can be positively affected for both the person themselves and their children was highlighted (Interviewee, municipal project 1).*

The interviewee believes that showing results in gender equality is challenging. The authorities set requirements that, according to the interviewee, cannot be measured when projects are reported. This means that project owners report different results than those achieved. According to the interviewee, this is because authorities have a different view of integration and gender equality, which they expect others to embody as well.

> *We think that those we say are "excluded" also have this belief, but they do not (Interviewee, municipal project 1).*

The second municipal project had a focus on the labour market and health and is also considered an early intervention. The interviewees believe that early intervention is effective for early integration.

> *But there is also the conviction that these early interventions are the most effective, and that we should not wait several years until the newcomer has fallen through the various systems and they end up in income support (Interviewee, municipal project 2).*

The project was created on the initiative of units within the municipality (the social administration, the immigrant and refugee section, and the labour market department) and the Swedish Public Employment Service. They saw a common need to collaborate on individuals who failed to move on from the establishment programme due to health reasons. The purpose of the project was to strengthen the health of the participants and enhance their ability to complete the establishment program to prevent them from returning to income support.

> *If you do not feel so well, then you cannot be included in the job development guarantee. One follows the other (Interviewee, municipal project 2)*

> *It is only when they have fallen out of these programmes, and they still do not have a job and if they apply for income support. Then they usually come here (Interviewee, municipal project 2).*

To offer targeted health support, the participants' mental and physical health was assessed. The project manager then asked several questions about the participant's background and social life. After that, each participant was offered an individual plan with activities adapted to the ability of each participant. The project activities ended with follow-up health tests and a discussion with the participant about their individual development.

Out of a total of 35 participants, most were women. The interviewee believes that women generally have a greater need for support than men. Another observation was that women were more motivated. Women showed more motivation than men to participate in the projects, while older men in particular tended not to want to continue. According to the interviewee, some participants went on to study Swedish and others went on to get a part-time job. For the project staff, it is the small steps that the participants take that are important. Because of the great need to continue working with the health of people who do not complete the establishment program, the municipality aims to include it in their regular activities.

Social enterprises

The cooperative worked with practical entrepreneurship among foreign-born women who were distant from the labour market. Practical entrepreneurship began when the cooperative realized that the participants did not have the language skills necessary to understand all the theoretical elements. The activities needed to be adapted to the participants' ability to understand entrepreneurship. The women in the project had little work experience in Sweden and low knowledge of entrepreneurship. In addition, there were difficulties for women to attend an eight-hour session due to home conditions.

When the cooperative changed the project towards more practical learning, the company had modular activities in catering where women baked pastries. The pastries were then sold to conference organizers. According to the interviewee, these

activities were the ones that the women appreciated the most. The pastry business was to contribute to their business skills and give rise to thoughts and ideas on entrepreneurship.

> *We built this up, try out entrepreneurship or arouse interest... Some of the women saw the potential for future social enterprises (Interviewee, the cooperative).*

The participants were directed to the cooperative from the Swedish Public Employment Service as the project could be seen as job training. According to the interviewee, many showed signs of project fatigue from previous projects. In order not to risk that the project would become just one in a crowd, it was therefore important that the activities were based on the interests of the participants said the interviewee. The cooperative believes that integration processes are difficult to measure and report. Instead, the women are usually asked to simply talk about their experiences of the cooperative's integration activities within entrepreneurship.

The project was terminated due to lack of continued funding. The interviewee believes that the project did not meet the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth's criteria in the follow-up of the activities. The requirements most often set by the authorities are a list of the number of participants and a report of what knowledge and skills the participants have learnt within the framework of the project grants. The interviewee believes that this was difficult to produce, since the project had taken a new direction.

In the other social enterprise, the cleaning company, activities include cleaning assignments that can be seen as real jobs for the women who previously participated in the cooperative's activities. The cleaning company is inspired by "Yalla Trappan" in Malmö, which is a work-integrating social enterprise and women's cooperative. The cleaning company has developed the concept to include "real jobs" where women get to work in a social context where they can practice Swedish. The participants have lived in Sweden between four and seven years. Some attend Swedish language instruction while others completely lack knowledge of the Swedish language. The needs expressed by the women are for more language training and more contact with society. In practice, cleaning assignments are based on an individual action plan planned in cooperation with the women.

> *We work to make everyone feel involved in their work. We adapt to each person what they can handle, in different ways, the women have a say (Interviewee, the cleaning company).*

According to the interviewee, integration is difficult to define and measure. Thus, no such indicators are used in the cleaning company.

Non-profit associations

The aid association organizes several different activities related to integration and they also run a charity shop. For example, the association arranges refugee support and language cafés/homework help. Refugee support is an activity that searches for relatives of people who have been separated from their families in countries affected by conflicts and wars. Homework help is offered, where students come from Swedish for Immigrants classes and from adult upper secondary school. A project called Textile Integration provided opportunities for internships in various furniture companies. It is a project that was started in collaboration with other actors, including two county councils and several municipalities. Participants sewed products that were then sold at auction or to furniture companies. A total of 40 people participated in Textile Integration and according to the interview, the project received positive feedback from the participants. Today, the project has been terminated due to lack of funding. However, the aid association, together with another civil society association, has started a similar project. The interviewee believes that the disadvantage of project money is that it is available to a limited extent and usually comes with a short time frame. Project funding also requires that organizations meet certain conditions, which means that not all organizations have the same opportunities to apply for project funding.

> *It is a short period you almost have to have the entire organization ready and then you apply for money and can start. But if you do not have the entire organization ready you must first rig it, and by then almost the entire period has passed. We also noticed this here in Textile Integration, constantly chasing money to be able to continue the business (Interviewee, aid association).*

Another non-profit association, the workshop, had activities aimed at strengthening refugees' understanding of Swedish society. The project funds were financed by the County Administrative Board via the TIA project.

> *We think it is important that asylum seekers get a picture of society, what else is there? How does Swedish society work? (Interviewee, the workshop).*

The association invested in lectures and simpler dialogues on various social issues. For example, one lecture was about the labour market and the local business community and was conducted together with the Friends Association. In the lecture, participants received tips and advice on how to write a CV. An important prerequisite for creating appropriate activities is networking with other organizations, according to the interviewee. If you share thoughts and ideas about an activity, it is possible to prevent the risk of duplication of work.

> *It is stupid that we all do the same thing. As a result of a lot of networking, we reallocated our budget to salary so that we could work more instead of buying gadgets…we have spent a lot of time conveying knowledge (Interviewee, the workshop).*

The interviewee feels that the majority of all visitors to the workshop intended to become self-sufficient and thus asked questions about how to apply for a job in Sweden.

> *Most people who come here want to work. I would say 90 per cent of those who come. Then we have some who already have jobs in Sweden, and they want to practice the language and want to know more about the culture (Interviewee, workshop).*

Today, the project has been terminated. The reporting of results was perceived as complicated, according to the interviewee. The questions in the evaluation form were perceived as difficult to answer. One issue in the feedback was, for example, about filling in the number of visiting asylum seekers in the activities. The interviewee says that the number of visitors fluctuates, and it is not possible to predict how many or who are expected to come to each activity. It is also not possible to keep track of who is an asylum seeker or not.

The friends association has built its TIA activities based on the refugees' current needs. Initiatives were carried out in language instruction and job seeking, as well as activities for asylum seekers waiting for a residence permit. Today, the number of activities has decreased due to a lower number of asylum seekers. Part of the association's activities were digital lectures on socially important issues. However, the interviewee believes that most visitors came to activities that focused on jobs and the government system.

> *Jobs and paperwork are important (Interviewee, friends association).*

The study association had initiatives financed with funds from various financiers, including a local foundation. For example, the foundation financed a course for newcomers on what the school system looks like in Sweden. The funding has covered costs for personnel, among other things. Another project focused on health. The project was funded by the County Administrative Board and was about conveying knowledge about stress. After the stress course, the interviewee realized that the people in the target group were not always able to participate in person. Thus, it was decided that courses would be digital and available on Facebook and YouTube, among other places. As a result, the digital courses increased the number of participants, which is why the association applied for project money from the County Administrative Board for a digital school.

After the stress courses, we started to go digital and then we noticed that many who did not want or could not come to the classroom signed up, so then we applied for TIA funding to start online teaching (Interviewee, Studieförbundet).

We had people with disabilities, sick people who did not dare to come to school, and women (Interviewee, the study association).

The ideas for the project came internally from the study association after contacts with the target group who expressed a desire for courses that can be accessed from home. The challenge, however, is to find funding for the good ideas. By the time this study was done, all projects had been finalized except for the activities that take place on the union's YouTube channel.

Every time we seek TIA money, it's because we have a good idea. We have produced something that we see that we cannot finance ourselves. We have no money to develop methods or try out methods. We have quite a lot of contact with the target group, and they express the same thing that we should do this (Interviewee the study association).

In church 1, language cafés were started after the refugee wave in 2015 with funds from the County Administrative Board. The interviewee believes that because of the church's core values of helping individuals in need, it became natural for the congregation to offer a social community for newcomers.

They needed a social context, but above all, they appreciated that their children got to participate in an activity in the church such as the Scouts or confirmation (Interviewee, church 1).

The initiative for the TIA-project language café came from the congregation after the County Administrative Board encouraged local associations to apply for TIA funds. The congregation was initially supported by an administrator to fill in the application. The project funds were used for coffee and materials for the language sessions. In the beginning, about 20–25 people came to the language café, but after a few years, the number of visitors decreased to 5–7 until the congregation decided to close down the language café. The interviewee felt that the reporting of the project was simple, as it was about the number of visitors who came to the language café. With the help of volunteers, church 2 has also arranged well-attended thematic language cafés.

We started at half past three and then we had coffee and always made sure that there were volunteers at every table. Then we usually had a program item. It has been about getting driving licences, and all sorts of subjects (Interviewee, church 2).

The church has also organized volleyball games in which many young boys participated. Their pastor was helpful in contact with the Swedish Migration Agency at the beginning of the refugee crisis. They also tried to arrange activities for women but with mixed success.

Church 3 saw the TIA funds as an opportunity for new solutions for the target group of asylum seekers. They took on the role of national coordinator and supporting hand for the member congregations' TIA applications.

> *TIA money provided opportunities to fund new initiatives for the target group (Interviewee, church 3).*

The coordinator helped its member congregations with applications for TIA funds since the application procedure was seen as complicated. The coordinator also helped the local congregations to understand the framework of the TIA projects. A difficult question to answer, according to the interviewee, was the number of people who would visit the activities in the congregations. The congregations carried out initiatives in language instruction and community information. Examples of activities in language training were learning to sing in Swedish. Education about "the language of the authorities" and filling out various official documents was also provided.

The fourth church also hosted a language café in connection with the refugee wave in 2015. The interviewee said that visitors came to the language café to learn the Swedish language before their formal Swedish coursework. A study association provided them with teaching materials that dealt with the Swedish school system. After 2017, however, the congregation chose to close the language café and instead open "word and fika" (fika is the Swedish word for a coffee break), which is a meeting place for integration. The idea of the activity is that participants meet new friends and in this way increase their understanding of each other's different cultures. The difference between word-and-fika and the language café was that the language café focused only on the Swedish language while word-and-fika focused on knowledge exchange and relationship building.

> *Yes, but it was simply integration. It was to create relationships and find cultural ways that work for new Swedish friends (Interviewee, church 4).*

Word-and-fika is an open activity for everyone, regardless of the participants' Swedish proficiency. The idea of word-and-fika is to be accessible to people who need to practice the language and get to know new people.

> *There we see that this meeting place can be a help for people to find their way back to a social context (Interviewee, church 4).*

Immigrant associations

The main activity of the first immigrant association we interviewed was homework help for children and youth. Homework-help takes place in a school. The association also helps families fill out government papers. They teach new families how different systems work in Sweden as it is an important starting point for their continued journey in the country. The association has about five activities a week. The activities are not planned, but the contents are determined on-site. The activities are open to the public, but the association is characterized as a family association for immigrants from a specific African country. When asked which initiatives were considered to have the most impact on integration, the answer was education and knowledge.

> *When a group of people come and do not know Sweden, the old citizens welcome the newcomers and introduce them to how society works. For example, if a doctor calls, the newcomers don't understand anything. Therefore, we talk about how society works and how not to make mistakes. The most important thing is that we play a major role for the children and that they should be encouraged to study further (Interviewee, immigrant association 1)*

The second immigrant association offers homework help and advice on time management for newly arrived families. Many families seeking counselling come directly from refugee camps and may find it difficult to adapt to a new society with new habits. The association starts activities only after dialogue with members. Members maintain contact through WhatsApp, where the members are in different groups. Through WhatsApp, members plan what activities to carry out.

> *We have WhatsApp groups where we ask what we should do and who is involved (Interviewee, immigrant association 2).*

More men than women participate in the activities. The interviewee believes that women find it more difficult to create time for leisure activities because of their role in the home. On the other hand, more women participate in homework-help activities.

Immigrant association 3 also plans its activities via WhatsApp, where members and board members are gathered in different groups. Activities are based on initiatives from members. The association organizes seminars on important social topics. For example, a seminar on the Swedish healthcare system clarified the role of different staff groups within the healthcare system. Other lectures have dealt with stress and endemic diseases. The association does not use state funds. Work is provided by volunteers and the members pay for simple snacks themselves.

> *We don't need money if we're not going to do anything beyond the activities we already do... We manage with our members, we have tried to be completely independent (Interviewee, immigrant association 3)*

The ambition of the association is that it should be open and include several groups in society to reach out with the seminars as far as possible.

> *It is open to everyone. We have invited many Swedish children and friends who have come. It is not limited to us (Interviewee, immigrant association 3).*

The fourth immigrant association arranges cultural activities together with and for its members, such as marking common anniversaries. According to the interviewee, more women than men participate in the activities.

> *Very many women. I think when it comes to associations, women take responsibility (Interviewee, immigrant association 4).*

The activities vary between sports, health care, folk dance, and music and these are planned during the annual meetings. All activities are linked to their culture. Therefore, their language is important in their activities.

> *We try to have different activities but there will still be a lot that is from [our country]. We try to preserve our culture (Interviewee, immigrant association 4).*

When asked if members recommend jobs to each other during the activities, the interviewee replied that it does not occur to the same extent as when the association was started when newcomers needed jobs.

> *When we arrived. Then there was a lot of that. They wanted to work where many spoke the same language (Interviewee, immigrant association 4).*

6.3. Experiences of integration issues

The interviewees have different kinds of experiences of integration, which has had an impact on the design of the activities. One of the interviewees from the municipality says that the experience of integration comes from when he lived abroad. Since he had to adapt to a new culture, he relates to integration on a personal level. He is critical of how integration issues are handled in Sweden and believes that current methods and values regarding integration need to be nuanced.

> *I may not follow in the footsteps of the ordinary Swede. I have lived in a different culture for most of my life. I have had to adapt to new cultures. And then I return home and discover that there has been a*

change and all of a sudden I have to integrate myself. I still wrestle with adapting to Sweden (Interviewee, municipal project 1).

According to the informant, integration must be two-sided. During a study at a refugee camp, he understood how important it was that help was not given unconditionally. According to the interviewee, an active integration process leads to refugees taking power over their situation.

All the time quid pro quo so as not to spoil another person. And it is in those theories that this early intervention belongs (Interviewee, Municipal Project 1).

The interviewee from the second municipal project believes that experiences with integration come from meeting people in her profession. In her work as a treatment educator, the interviewee meets people in different situations. She talks about her experiences of families experiencing cultural clashes as being poorly integrated. These families have not been given a picture of how different systems in Sweden work or what values apply in Sweden.

I often worked with families who come from other countries, who due to lack of integration have ended up where they have ended up, because, among other things, they have not understood child rearing correctly (Interviewee, municipal project 2).

The interviewees from immigrant associations also mention experiencing cultural clashes that have been difficult to handle, which is one reason for their involvement in the associations. Various things may be simpler or more difficult in their culture compared to the culture in Sweden. For example, one of them mentions that spontaneous greetings between people are considered odd in Sweden, while it is seen as something nice in their home country. According to him, it gives a sense of belonging. At the same time, they believe that integration is a mutual process where the understanding of different cultures must come from multiple directions. This is one of several reasons why the association holds lectures on social issues for its members. Furthermore, several interviewees from immigrant associations emphasize the significance of language and education. They see these as necessary for being included in daily social life. One of the interviewees also mentions his educational background, which has made it easier for him to become part of Swedish society.

There is a high labour shortage in [my profession] so I would not say that I have struggled in the same way that others have struggled (Interviewee, immigrant association 3).

Another interviewee highlights their integration process as a good example. When she arrived in Sweden with her family, they stayed with a host family in a small community. She believes that the host family provided important insights about life in Sweden, its values, and ways of thinking. However, she also emphasizes the

significance of preserving one's identity. Integration is not only about becoming a part of society but also about maintaining one's identity and establishing a connection within Swedish society.

> *I think you should be proud when you have more to stand on. I have two cultures to stand on. You should not just stand on one (Interviewee, immigrant association 4).*

The interviewees from non-profit associations and social enterprises have varying experiences of integration. The experience is based partly on their contacts with refugees and asylum seekers and partly on their own experiences of living abroad. Many of the activities carried out were based on requests from the target group. Needs, such as the need for language skills, information about society, and work, guided the design of the activities. Other qualitative values cannot be measured, but interviewees saw them as important starting points for continued efforts. One example is the dissemination of knowledge and contacts via social networks, which the target group has found valuable.

Regarding the importance of work, interviewees said that work is part of a mutual integration process. They found that work is an important prerequisite for becoming independent and included in society. Those who had lived abroad could relate to integration on a deeper level. They pointed to the importance of social interaction. Through contacts with the surrounding society, their understanding of how life works in the new country broadened.

The interviewees from religious communities referred to their values and experiences from previous professions. Several were former teachers and had students from different countries. The basic values of the congregations were also reflected in their activities. One of them says that integration is a natural part of the work of the church. This became clear during the refugee wave in 2015 when many parishes mobilized support in the form of housing and food for new arrivals.

> *The mobilization was rapid. They met people on the platform and helped with food and clothes. It has helped gradually. Many congregations came to life after the refugee wave (Interviewee, church 3).*

> *We are a Christian congregation, and we have it in us that you should do something for the smallest, those who have the hardest time (Interviewee, church 2).*

7. Continuation of activities

In this section, we use the analytical framework to reason about the continuation of the activities – did they continue or not, and why?

7.1. Activities based on personal commitment and previous experience

The interviews show that although staff or volunteers have been working daily on integration processes since the refugee wave started in 2015, these activities have not been part of the organization's regular work, and in most cases, they have not been incorporated into their formal organizational structure but conducted as temporary side projects. In addition, the projects were usually run by individual committed members. Common among the interviewed organizations was their arrangement of activities motivated by a desire to help and support newcomers and asylum seekers.

> *But we wanted to reach out more to people who needed help. Mainly to young people and women. Because they always have questions and always need help with something (Interviewee, immigrant association 2).*

> *What I am passionate about and that made me want to move on... is because I see the women... If I can do something to help you, I will be happy to do so. I've wanted to work closely with them, that's what I do. If I can be a voice for them, fight the way a little for their sake, I am happy to do it (Interviewee, the cleaning company).*

All the organizations had organized some kind of social meeting place. The non-profit associations organized volunteer activities in the form of meeting places for social networking and places for knowledge exchange. The interviewees associated support in these forms with integration measures. The immigrant associations emphasized knowledge exchange and learning as reasons for their voluntary commitment. According to social constructionism, past experiences and impressions are important starting points for the understanding of new knowledge. The majority of the interviewees associated the "helping" and "supporting" with experiences from previous jobs and previous meetings with other people from different places.

> *After returning to Sweden after living abroad for a long time, I have basically worked as a teacher, but the integration issue has always been there...it is a theme that has guided me in everything from teaching to different projects (Interviewee, municipal project 1).*

> *... And I didn't know much about that culture or that language when I moved there, so I think I have a decent knowledge of what it's like not*

> *to fit in. You look white ... I can feel what it's like to try to fit in sometimes. And it motivates me (Interviewee, the study association).*

The interviewees were personally involved in the integration process and applied independently for project funding. The design of the activities was based on the interviewees' previous experiences of integration processes and their views on integration. For example, language cafés were often organised by former teachers.

> *I am a teacher of Swedish as a second language and have worked a lot with adult education (Interviewee, church 2).*

> *I have been a teacher for 20 years and there I worked in the municipal adult school with people who came in 1994 from Bosnia and Yugoslavia... What I learned is that integration takes time. You have to think for yourself, if I were to come to another country, I would be Swedish for quite some time. It is, of course, that they think the same. It takes a generation to achieve good integration (Interviewee, church 1).*

> *There are quite a few of us in the association who are trained in pedagogy. I work a lot with children and young people, another is a lecturer, and he is involved in helping and coaching families (Interviewee, immigrant association 2).*

The personal background of the interviewees influenced the needs they identified and the activities they organized. Interviewees from both the municipality and social enterprises believed that work was essential for integration, based on their previous experiences and interactions, and accordingly, they arranged activities centred around employment. However, after becoming acquainted with their target group, interviewees from social enterprises recognized the significance of health and thus introduced activities that prioritized health.

> *... I've always worked with people. I often worked with families who come from other countries, who due to lack of integration have ended up where they have ended up... so I have worked a lot with such things (Interviewee, municipal project 2).*

Interviewees from the municipality saw the importance of good health when they realized that health problems among immigrants made it more difficult to find and keep a job.

All in all, this shows that integration activities do not have to be an organizational issue but rather a temporary operational issue based on the personal commitment of individual employees and volunteers. It also shows that the design of interventions depends on their previous experience.

7.2. Ineffective decoupling

According to the analytical framework, institutional frameworks are reflected in an organization's formal structure, while actual activities are often loosely coupled from these frameworks. This avoids conflicts between the organizations core activities and the formal structure with its institutional requirements. It is thus possible to operate effectively despite institutional constraints or impositions – one can speak of "effective loose coupling". Projects financed by TIA funds or from other sources have often been loosely linked, or even unrelated, to the regular activities. However, pursuing "effective loose coupling" proved difficult. The interviewees talked about several difficulties. At first, it was difficult to fill out the application:

> *The application was perceived as complicated. A lady in the group had tried to fill it out but she gave up. But then we said if we can ask [the county administrative officer] for help. And so we did. And then it took off (Interviewee, church 1).*

> *Those were pretty advanced questions. Many that I will not be able to answer about the organization... we have not had the opportunity to map and be as in-depth as the questions required (Interviewee, the workshop).*

The interviewees then mentioned that the projects often required addressing a specified target group, and further that for the reporting this target group's participation in planned activities must be measured. It was perceived as limiting, for various reasons.

> *This is aimed at asylum seekers over the age of 18 and it is a rather narrow group... So a lot of resources have gone into finding asylum seekers. It is difficult to get a pre-notification from the asylum seeker. That will you come, you have to say yes or no, it doesn't work that way. It works with Swedes... [but] it doesn't work that way in Africa – if you feel like it you will come. So it has been very difficult culturally that the demands on us are Swedish demands. But we do not meet Swedish citizens who are used to these demands... it doesn't really work, because it's not the same culture (Interviewee, the workshop).*

> *When we have run different projects, it is often the case that the funders earmark the money so that it will go exactly to this target group. In our case, in the last two projects, it has been foreign-born women, so our efforts have been directed at women, although we in different ways try to include the men or invite them to information meetings so that they know what is happening (Interviewee, the cooperative).*

Furthermore, the project form itself made it difficult to continue.

> *TIA funds are good but it's a limited period, that's the problem…all these projects become a drag in many contexts. You have so many ideas, and then you should have the energy to fill out the application and argue for it, and then you should get started and then the time window has passed (Interviewee, the aid association).*

> *That's what's a bit sad about project activities that once you find certain solutions, the funding is exhausted. Doing "copy-paste" elsewhere is not innovative enough for more project funds, so it requires that perhaps the municipality goes in with funding, so that's the problem when things get very successful (Interviewee, the cooperative).*

Most organizations had ended their integration activities. They were not integrated, or institutionalised, into their ordinary activities. The integration activities were decoupled from the formal framework of the organizations to such an extent that one can rather speak of "ineffective decoupling", which is the opposite of the theory's thesis of effective loose coupling. Institutional theory holds that institutions influence and are incorporated into the formal structure of organizations so that the formal structure reflects the surrounding environment. The aim is to achieve legitimacy, both among the organization's members and vis-à-vis the surrounding environment. The members maintain the formal structure or "myth" together, while the actual activities may be loosely coupled to the formal structure. However, the study shows that the integration issue partly lacks legitimacy from the surrounding environment, and it has in many cases also been shown to lack anchoring in the formal structure of the organization. In the study, we see that integration as a "myth" is not reflected in the formal structure of the organization.

Most of the interviewed organizations do not have integration work as their purpose but have added it through projects. The projects were maintained for a limited time and with limited legitimacy. They were driven by the personal interest of individual members in helping refugees integrate into society, and the activities built on the individual members' previous experiences. Those who saw language as a key organized language cafés, those who saw knowledge of society as important organized lectures, and so on. The activities were thus disconnected from the formal organization, but they were too disconnected – they did not gain a foothold in the organization.

The study also shows that activities have been unsustainable and terminated after follow-up from authorities. The projects have not been able to deliver the measurable goals requested, that is, the organizers have not "succeeded" with the loose coupling – to conduct effective operations while on the surface meeting the formal requirements. This shows that ineffective decoupling rather than effective loose coupling resulted. In most cases, integration work was not institutionalised in civil society organizations. But there were exceptions, of three kinds.

7.3. Institutionalization

The first exception to ineffective decoupling is found in the immigrant associations, where activities continue. In these, the purpose of "family association for social community" is firmly anchored in the formal structure of the organization.

> *It is part of our idea from our background that we should help each other. The association is a good opportunity to help each other and support families and young people, and children. We help when they have problems. If you are ill then we can provide support. If someone is affected by something, we will help. Families are allies with each other in this association. Then we have succeeded (Interviewee, immigrant association 3).*

The organizational framework was compatible both with the projects and with the regular activities of the immigrant associations, and loose coupling was not needed. Nor was there any need for institutional change – integration work was, so to speak, institutionalised from the start.

The second exception is illustrated by the cooperative and the cleaning company. Many interviewees said that it was difficult to develop activities suitable for the target group. The project activities for which funding was offered were not adapted to the needs identified by civil society among the target group. In most cases, this meant that the activities were completed after the project period ended. However, there were cases where the organiser adapted the activities to the needs of the target group and made a radical change in the activities, which also entailed a change in the formal organizational structure. One such example is the cooperative, which first focused on traditional teaching about entrepreneurship but after listening to its target group instead helped to start a social enterprise, the cleaning company, where the target group learned entrepreneurship under practical application of the same.

> *For the past three years, we [the cooperative] have run a project aimed at foreign-born women with a focus on strengthening them for the labour market and entrepreneurship... So, we ran this project and made sure that we created the conditions, or we were a catalyst, for this [cleaning] company to be started. There is no profit motive, and we do not own that company, it stands on its own two feet today, we want it to be real jobs that the company offers (Interviewee, the cooperative).*

At the beginning of the process, there was a tendency towards decoupling between activities and the formal structure, but by the end of the process, a new formal structure was created to accommodate the new activities. Integration work had thus been institutionalized in the formal structure.

A third version of institutionalisation – at least temporary – is that achieved through collaboration. One way to institutionalize a "myth" in an organization is,

according to the theory, through collaboration within and between organizations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Collaboration takes place in the form of networks and through various relationships that form a social environment that preserves a myth. The interviewees talk about at least four different active networks: *i)* a project owner network for the TIA projects, *ii)* the churches' networks, *iii)* local area networks that bring together CSOs, schools and companies, and *iv)* the network for refugee support and integration administered by the municipality and which brings together all the associations. The latter network is praised by the informants – they exchange information, coordinate activities and recruit participants through this network.

> *It may have changed direction over time, but it is just as interesting and still just as in demand. Collaboration in the municipality is between different organizations. We know each other. Support each other in different ways. And take help from each other from time to time when needed (Interviewee, the aid association).*

The integration activities carried out by the CSOs differed from their regular activities and did not gain a foothold in their formal structures. However, the activities gained legitimacy through external collaboration, for example by organizations tipping off the target group about each other's activities and by forming refugee networks for better coordination of activities.

In the municipality and social enterprises, "integration" was maintained as a myth between smaller units and groups, while collaboration with civil society in general was limited. The cleaning company had regular contact with private providers and then further developed the cooperative's project into their organization. The municipal projects were discussed by smaller groups within the municipality and between working groups across administrations and other actors from the public sector. This means that "integration" does not have to become part of the organization's formal framework but can still be institutionalized, at least temporarily. Cooperation creates a legitimacy that makes integration activities survive a certain period.

The immigrant associations show the opposite – when integration work is already institutionalized in the formal organizational framework, no collaboration is needed to create legitimacy.

> *No. We are a small association, we are not that big. We do not have such great needs. We manage with our members, and we have tried to be completely independent (Interviewee, immigrant association 3).*

The immigrant associations believe that they are there for the members to support and help each other and that the activities should lead to a better knowledge of Swedish and increased knowledge of society at large. Immigrant associations have little or no cooperation with other organizations. The activities are run by the members' interests, financed by membership fees, and do not need to be legitimized by any external context.

8. Summary

The purpose of the study was to analyse whether civil society's activities to integrate refugees after the refugee wave in 2015 gained a long-term foothold in the organizations or not, if this varies between different organizations, and if so, why. To answer the purpose, three research questions were formulated, which are answered below.

1. ***What initiatives or activities have been carried out in connection with the refugee wave in 2015 and how do these differ between the organizations?***

Civil society actors and the municipality have carried out various activities and initiatives in connection with the refugee wave in 2015. The most common activity concerned efforts to help newcomers with food and accommodation in the most acute phase, which previous research also shows is the most common help from civil society organizations. The associations arranged fundraisers and channelled the great commitment from private individuals who wanted to help. After the most acute phase, the various organizations organised different kinds of activities. We found that the design of the activities, such as language cafés, meeting places, lectures, job training, CV writing, entrepreneurship, and so on was highly linked to the organizer's previous experiences. For example, teachers were happy to organise language cafés. The activities were also dependent on the commitment of individual members of the organization who set up projects and applied for project grants.

Furthermore, we found that the activities were highly dependent on external project funding, but that the conditions for the funding both affected and complicated the activities – what the funder wanted to measure was often difficult to measure, and what the organizer thought was an important result could not be quantified. The conditions also made it difficult to apply for grants, so some initiatives never started, and others ended. Immigrant associations were an exception to dependence on project grants. Even before the refugee crisis, their purpose was to be a meeting place for their group, and they had also previously arranged language training and conveyed knowledge about Swedish society. The members both finance and arrange these activities.

Overall, language training, lectures on society and social interaction were most common. Many interviewees saw the need for more activities focusing on work, but despite this, only three activities focused entirely on work, job training and other activities with the aim of labour market integration.

2. *How do civil society organizations and units within the municipality continue with activities in integration today?*

The organizations that organised language cafés continued to do so until the number of new refugees decreased. In the majority of the organizations, the activities ended when the project funds were exhausted. In a few cases, the character of them changed instead. In the latter cases, they started new or modified activities with other funding. For example, one church chose to change its language cafés into a social meeting place. The cooperative ended its project for women when further project funding was not granted. They argued that one reason for this was that their perception of the target group's needs and conditions differed from that of the authorities. The cooperative chose instead to support a social enterprise, the cleaning company, which could receive the cooperative's former participants. The cleaning company is financed through sold services.

Another exception is the municipality's outreach activities within the Delmos project, which are considered successful and necessary, and which are likely to be integrated into the municipality's regular activities. Unlike civil society organizations, the municipality has the financial muscle needed to do this. As mentioned earlier, immigrant associations also continue with their activities. They are not dependent on project funds.

3. *Why do some organizations and others not continue with integration activities?*

In the analysis, we used the concept of loose coupling to explain why the majority of activities were completed when the project funds were exhausted, but also why others continued. According to the theory, members need to decouple an organization's activities to some extent from its formal structure (which is shaped by institutional requirements and also referred to as a "myth") for operations to be conducted effectively. You do something in one way but say that you have done it in another way for the business to be perceived as legitimate. Where projects were ended, we found that they were rather "ineffectively decoupled" from the formal structure. The nature of the activities was not sufficiently anchored in the organization's regular activities to be integrated in the long term. The activities depended on the commitment of the members and the duration of the project funds.

Furthermore, institutional frameworks in the form of application procedures for project funding and criteria for follow-up were too difficult to meet – loose coupling was not successful. The organizations felt that the authorities' ideas on how integration should be conducted did not correspond to the needs and wishes of the target group.

Previous research describes how formal integration policies in the form of formal measures and regulations govern civil society's efforts. However, it does not describe how formal integration policy can be limiting for actors who choose to work with integration. Within the framework of this report, we show that formal and

highly regulated integration policies were too difficult to meet for civil society organizations. Instead of effective loose coupling, the activities became altogether decoupled from the formal structure, so much so that "ineffective decoupling" resulted. The formal structure could not house the activities once project funds ran out.

The exception to the above were the immigrant associations where loose coupling was not needed – the activities were fully compatible with the formal structure, and not dependent on project funds. In these cases, the activities continued. There were two other cases where the activities continued – at least for some time. In one case, represented by the cooperative and the cleaning company, they initially experienced the same situation as described above; an attempt was made to decouple the activities from the authorities' requirements, but this did not work, so the decision was made to change the activities and move them to a new organization, a social enterprise. The formal structure was changed to fit the activities, eliminating the need for loose coupling. However, this has not been described in previous research or in the theory of loose coupling. Meyer and Rowan (1977) describe loose coupling as an effective management of the formal structures of daily work. Theorists do not tell us that decoupling can go so far as to completely detach the activities from the existing structure and form a new formal structure that fits better with the activities.

In the second case, the activities gained legitimacy through collaboration between organizations and were able to continue. According to the theory, collaboration helps to integrate and adapt a myth (in this case, integration) in an organization. The aid association is an example of an association that had a strong collaboration with other organizations to maintain integration work in the association. Furthermore, we found variations in the degree of interaction. For those associations that participated in collaboration structures at an overall level, for example, in the refugee network, collaboration had a limited effect on the duration of the activities. Their activities have ended. On the other hand, those who had closer collaboration within smaller groups, such as the cooperative that collaborated with other local actors or municipal units that had working groups across administrations, had a higher tendency to deepen the "myth" in the organization and thus institutionalize integration work in the organization. Their activities continued.

9. Discussion

If discussing the results from a governance perspective, two different interpretations can be made. The first interpretation is that the authorities use the TIA funds and other public grants to take advantage of civil society's great commitment to help their fellow human beings and to help the authorities with refugee reception in the most acute phase. In this interpretation, the means are a great success. They helped the organizations to channel the commitment of volunteers and a rich variety of activities were created. The activities were of great benefit and help to refugees and they constituted a very important addition to the government's range of relief efforts when the need was greatest.

If one interprets that the funds were also a way for the authorities to institutionalise integration work in the CSOs, that is, it was hoped that the organizations would continue on their own, either by integrating refugees/immigrants into their regular activities and/or integrating activities for the same into the regular offering, then it did not work as well. In Meyer & Rowan's (1977) theoretical framework, the "myth" is already institutionalized in the formal framework – the theory does not state how it got there or from where other than that it is a demand or expectation from the surrounding environment. Since the authorities cannot directly control the activities – then, as mentioned, public procurement would have been needed – indirect control has been attempted: the organizations themselves have been allowed to propose activities, within certain frameworks, and apply for funds for these. In other words, the demands or expectations from the surrounding environment have been unclear and the funds have been short-term, which has made it difficult for the "myth" to take hold in the organization's formal framework. Instead, activities were created that were short-term and whose design came to depend on the personal experiences and commitment of those who arranged them. The activities were excellent, but both from an authority perspective and, it turned out, from a participant perspective, more focus was desired on activities that focused on integration into the labour market. Furthermore, the criteria for follow-up and evaluation were not always appropriate – they did not measure the results that the organisers of the activities and their participants found important, which led to many projects not being continued. In sum, "integration" did not take hold in the formal structure of the majority of organizations.

The exceptions were cases where the organizers completely decoupled the activities both from government requirements and from the existing, formal structure and instead created a new formal structure, with different funding, that could accommodate the activities. Alternatively, as in the case of immigrant associations, integration was enshrined in the formal structure from the beginning. The lesson is that if the government wants to engage civil society in the long term for a certain purpose, the formal structure of the organization needs to be – or be made – compatible with this purpose. The project grant system used here was not optimal for such a purpose.

9.1. Recommendations

For CSOs, the study can contribute knowledge about the difficulties that can arise when applying for public funding for their activities and thus some of the most common pitfalls can be avoided. However, our recommendations are mainly aimed at authorities that want to benefit from civil society involvement. From the previous reasoning, we conclude that the formal structure of the civil society organization needs to be such that it can easily accommodate integration work. From this follow the recommendation to focus primarily on immigrant associations. However, this has the limitation that each association is mainly aimed at its ethnic group. If one wants to engage other associations, one must consider the previous knowledge and experience of the associations and their committed members, and build the calls on these, alternatively targeting those associations where the previous experiences and orientations of the activities match what the authority wants to achieve. One should simply build on the interest that already exists. The final recommendation is to listen carefully to both the associations and the target group, so that the evaluation criteria match what is valued as important and what can be achieved.

9.2. Suggestions for further research

Meyer & Rowan's (1977) theory of loose coupling is one of the most cited theories in institutional theory and is also considered to underlie the development of new institutional theory (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). We found it useful, but not fully. In their theory, institutional requirements of various kinds and from different directions have become part of the formal organization, and the theory of loose coupling describes how the core business despite sometimes conflicting and "unnecessary" requirements can be conducted effectively. In our study, the institutional demands (or desires) of government agencies were not institutionalized, which gave the theory of loose coupling a different character. Instead of effective loose coupling, there was ineffective decoupling.

From a theoretical perspective, it would be interesting to continue studying institutionalization processes – how integration work is institutionalized or not, in civil society organizations, and then other theoretical frameworks would be useful, such as Scandinavian institutionalism that emphasizes change rather than stability. Theories of "translation" of new ideas from one context to another (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996) could, for example, be used to study how integration work takes shape in organizations that continue with the activities after the project funds have run out. It would also be interesting to compare the organization perspective with the goals and visions of political governance, and any conflicts between them. Since previous research has shown that formal integration is strongly linked to formal political governance, the questions are partly how this governance is designed and partly how the organizations handle it. Such research would contribute to knowledge about the relationship between the design and duration of interventions and contribute to research on civil society's relationship with the public sector.

9.3.   Conclusion

We found that most of the interventions initiated by civil society organizations after the refugee wave in 2015 have ended, and we found that few interventions were about integration into the labour market, which was one of the government's purposes with the efforts for asylum seekers. Instead, the activities were shaped based on the CSO members' interests and experiences. There was a strong correlation between the previous experiences of integration issues among engaged members and which activities they chose to invest in.

Furthermore, the study showed that the project form, with demands for new thinking and predetermined performance measures, led to short-termism. The external requirements were not compatible with the working methods and performance measures preferred by both civil society actors and refugees, so the projects were not renewed. The organizations could not host the activities in the long term. The exceptions are cases where, after listening to the target group's needs for labour market-oriented activities, it was decided to form a new, formal organization that could accommodate the desired activities. The same applies to the immigrant associations that already had "integration" built into the organization's purpose and activities.

We used neo-institutional theory to interpret the results. Social constructionist theory explained what interventions were formed, and why the different organizations focused on different kinds of interventions. The activities were shaped by committed members' previous understanding and experiences of integration, rather than by either the hopes of authorities or the regular activities of organizations. These were largely decoupled from each other. We hypothesized that the theory of loose coupling between activities and formal organization could shed light on how integration activities were successfully conducted within organizations that were not originally designed for these purposes and how the activities were eventually institutionalized, but we found that although there were both cognitive and normative explanations for why one worked with integration, the activities remained temporary. They were never taken for granted, and thus not institutionalized. The activities were so incompatible with the formal structure and institutional requirements of the organization that rather than "effective loose coupling" between the activities and the formal structure, we found the opposite, namely "ineffective decoupling". The activities continued only in cases where the formal organisation already had integration as its purpose, or when the formal organization was changed to accommodate integration activities. We conclude that for integration activities to be long-lasting and effective, they need to be compatible with the formal structures.

The theory of loose coupling has helped explain the degree to which decoupling occurs – however, the theory lacks explanations for when it does not work as intended. We contribute to the theory with the concept of 'ineffective decoupling' and we also contribute with the result that (ineffective) decoupling, precisely because of its inefficiency, can give rise to the choice to create a new formal, and more effective, structure.

References

Alvesson, M., & Sködberg, K. (2017). *Interpretation and Reflection: Philosophy of Science and Qualitative Methods* (3rd ed.). Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. London: Penguin Books.

Beversluis, D., Schoeller-Diaz, D., Anderson, M., Anderson, N., Slaughter, A., & Patel, R. R. (2017). Develop and validate the refugee integration scale in Nairobi, Kenya. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 30* (1), 106-132.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Bref, S. (2018). When you arrive in Sweden. Taken from https://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/1050894/When-you-come-to-Sweden/

Czarniawska, B., & Joerges, B. (1996). Travel of ideas. In B. Czarniawska &; G. Sevón (ed.), Translation *of organizational change* (pp. 13-48). Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Diedrich, A., & Hellgren, H. (2018). *Organization of labour market integration of foreign-born people in the Gothenburg area* (GRI Report 2018:3). Gothenburg: GRI

Eby, J., Iverson, E., Smyers, J., & Kekic, E. (2011). The role of the faith community in resettling refugees in the United States. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 24*(3), 586-605.

Escobar, K., Nilsson, M., & Ahl, H. (2021). Escobar, K., Nilsson, M. & Ahl, H. (2021). *Multi-level governance and civil society's work to integrate migrants after the migrant crisis in 2015 in Jönköping*. Research report no. 19, School of Education and Communication, Jönköping University.

Fakhoury, T. (2021). Refugee return and fragmented host rule: Displaced Syrians face Lebanon's fragmented politics. *Third World Quarterly, 42* (1), 162-180.

Fry, C., & Islar, M. (2021). Horizontal local governance and social inclusion: the case of municipal-civil society engagement during refugee reception in Malmö, Sweden. *Frontiers in Political Science, 3,* 643134.

Garkisch, M., Heidingsfelder, J., & Beckmann, M. (2017). Third sector organizations and migration: A systematic literature review on the contributions of third sector organizations in the context of displacement, migration and refugee crises. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 28*(5), 1839-1880.

Gois, P., & Falchi, G. (2017). The third way. Peacetime humanitarian corridors as a (local) civil society response to the EU's common failure. *REMHU: Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana, 25,* 59-75.

Hadj Abdou, L. (2020). "Press or pull"? Framing immigration in times of crisis in the European Union and the United States. *Journal of European Integration, 42(*5), 643-658.

Ideström, J., & Linde, S. (2019). Welfare state supporter and civil society activist: The Church of Sweden in the "refugee crisis" 2015. *Social Inclusion, 7* (2), 4-13.

Kuch, A. (2017). Naturalization of Burundian refugees in Tanzania: The debates on local integration and the meaning of citizenship revisited. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 30* (3), 468-487.

Lee, J.-E. (2015). Disciplinary citizenship in South Korean NGOs' narratives of resettlement for North Korean refugees. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 38* (15), 2688-2704.

Martin, N. (2012). "There is abuse everywhere" migrant non-profit organizations and the problem of precarious employment. *Review of Urban Issues, 48* (3), 389-416.

Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutional organizations: formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology, 83* (1977), 340-363.

Migration info. (2019). The Establishment Program. Taken from https://www.migrationsinfo.se/arbetsmarknad/etableringsreformen/

Moreira, J.B. (2017). Refugee policy in Brazil (1995–2010): Achievements and challenges. *Refugee survey quarterly, 36* (4), 25-44.

Mourad, L., & Norman, K. P. (2020). Transforming refugees into migrants: institutional change and international protection policies. *European Journal of International Relations, 26(*3), 687-713.

MUCF. (2016). *The Volatile Reception*. Taken from: https://www.mucf.se/sites/default/files/2018/09/flyktingmottagandet.pdf

MUCF. (2017). *Gather strength!* Retrieved from: https://www.mucf.se/sites/default/files/2017/11/samlakraft_2017_12okt.pdf

Polzer, T. (2009). Bargaining rights: The policy of local integration. *Refuge, 26,* 92.

Powell, W., & DiMaggio, P. (red.). (1991). *Den nya institutionalismen i organizationsanalys* (1 uppl.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ritchie, G. (2018). Civil society, the state and private sponsorship: the political economy of refugee resettlement. *International Journal of Lifelong Learning, 37* (6), 663-675.

Ruist, J. (2018). *Time for integration – an ESO report on refugees' background and labour market establishment. Report to the Expert Group for Studies in Public Economics*. Report 2018:3. Stockholm: Government Offices of Sweden

Sahin Mencutek, Z. (2021). Refugee organizations: abilities, interactions, and limitations. *Third World Quarterly, 42* (1), 181-199.

Sarstrand Marekovic, A.-M. (2011). *From immigration agency to refugee reception: forty years of work with immigrants and refugees at the municipal level.* Archive: Lund.

Scott, W. R. (2001). *Institutions and organizations*. A thousand oaks: SAGE.

SOU. (2017:12). *Receiving people on the run. Sweden autumn 2015*. Stockholm: Government Offices of Sweden

Sunata, U., & Tosun, S. (2019). Assessing the role of civil society in refugee integration in Turkey: NGOs as a new typology. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 32* (4), 683-703.

Sunderland, J. (2015). *The migration crisis in the Mediterranean: why people flee, what the EU should do* (1623132460). Human Rights Watch. Taken from www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/19/ Mediterranean migration-crisis/why-people-flee-what-EU-should-do

Trägårdh, L. (2019). From popular movements to civil society: The state and society in modern Sweden. In V. E. J, Wallman Lundåsen S, S. L, & e. al (Eds.), *The Swedish Civil Society: An Introduction* (pp. 23-41). Stockholm: Idealista Publishing House.

Go, M., Greenspan, I., Crossley, H., & Handy, F. (2015). Social Return on Investment Analysis: A case study of a job and skills training program offered by a social enterprise. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 26*(2), 129-144.

Yin, R. K. (2007). *Case studies: design and implementation*. Malmö: Liber.

Appendix 1. Interview questions

Introduction
The purpose of the study is to create knowledge about how civil society has worked with integration of refugees at an early stage, before they have received a decision from the Swedish Migration Agency. The study is based on the programme Early Intervention in Integration (TIA), which was implemented in connection with the refugee wave in 2015. The programme offered civil society funding for interventions during the asylum process. Municipalities, authorities, and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for funding for early intervention activities in Swedish teaching, knowledge about society and the labour market, and for efforts in health. This study focuses on how and why integration activities differ between organizations and whether organizations have continued with the activities.

Questions about the organization
Background and history of the organization (when was it started, by whom, for what purpose).
The organization's regular activities (what do you do?) Are there members with a foreign background?
Where does your income come from?
How much of your income comes from the state? Do you have previous experience of working with integration in your organization? When did you start getting involved in integration work? Why did you get involved in integration work? What experiences of gender equality work do you have in your organization?

Questions about the TIA project
Why did you apply for TIA funding?
How did you arrive at the purpose of the TIA activities?
What actions were carried out?
How have you continued with the activities?
Have you stopped the activities and, if so, why?
What do you think about the questions in the application form?
Is there a question in the TIA application that could not be answered in advance and if so, why?
What were the thoughts on gender equality in the application?
How did you report your results?
How did you measure the benefit of your activities?
In what order do you think these activities (Swedish teaching, knowledge of society and the labour market, and health) go from more important to less important? And if so, why?

What activities do you think have succeeded and why? Which interventions were the most difficult to implement and why? What expectations did you have of the impact of integration activities? What other measures in addition to those in the application would be needed? Are these interventions different from the government's "early intervention", and if so, why?

Questions about the organization's image of integration

What is the organization's experience or perception of integration work? What do you think of local integration work in general? Have you been influenced by ideas from other sectors of integration?
Are there differences in integration between women, men, and children? When do you feel that a refugee is considered integrated? When do you think integration has failed?

Questions about entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship

In what way is the municipality a place for entrepreneurship among immigrants?
Are there meeting places that can promote refugee entrepreneurship?
What initiatives do you have that can contribute to entrepreneurship?
How can your activities affect refugee entrepreneurship?
To which target group are your activities directed?
How do you enable newcomers to engage in and influence politics?
Do you have contact with other organizations in connection with initiatives for entrepreneurship and if so, which ones? In what ways can other organizations contribute resources to the activities?
Which effort had the least effect according to you?

Questions about the labour market for new arrivals

How do you contribute to a labour market for newcomers?
What initiatives based on TIA were aimed at the labour market?
Which intervention based on TIA had the most effect on labour market integration? Which intervention had the least effect?
Which activities of Swedish teaching, knowledge of society and the labour market, and health are most effective for integration into the labour market?

Gender equality issues

Have you implemented any initiatives with a special focus on gender equality? What were they?
How do you contribute to more women participating in the activities?
How have you worked to reach only women in TIA activities?
Do you have groups with only or a majority of men? Why?
What obstacles or opportunities do you think there are for integrating newly arrived women and men?
How did you go about involving gender equality in your project?

Which aspects of integration of women and men refugees do you think were most difficult versus easier to work with?

Are there other organizations that have supported gender equality in integration? If so, how?

How did any partners in the application affect the gender equality work?

Questions about networks

Are you part of any integration network? Tell me more. Did any activity contribute to more cooperation? If so, which one and how. Has there been a dialogue with other organizations during the TIA application? How did you plan the activities? How did you meet to plan activities with other organizations? In what ways were other organizations involved in the activities? In what ways could other organizations hinder or facilitate the work?