

Chapter 23

Bern: Integration Guidelines

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23.1 Introduction

The innovation we seek to address in this chapter is one that consists mainly of a ten-page document defining the migrant integration policy of the Swiss capital, Bern. Our aim in this short chapter will be to outline how a document may be considered a social innovation, and how it might function as a tool for guiding local policy.

Since the 1970s, the integration of migrants has sparked heated political debates within Switzerland¹. In 2008, a new Foreign Nationals Act introduced “integration” as a legal notion. As article 4 states: “the aim of integration is the coexistence of the resident Swiss and foreign population on the basis of the values of the Federal Constitution and mutual respect and tolerance.” Furthermore, it is established that “integration should enable foreign nationals who are lawfully resident in Switzerland for the longer term to participate in the economic, social and cultural life of the society”. It should be noted that integration is further defined as a bidirectional process, requiring “willingness on the part of the foreign nationals and openness on the part of the Swiss population”.

As often happens within a federal system, implementation has been left open to the interpretation of the various cantons. Yet, compared to rural and peri-urban populations, urban populations regularly show more openness towards migrants².

¹ For a summary on the concept of integration in Switzerland, see Cattacin and Chimienti (2006), and the report *La notion d'intégration dans la loi*, Commission fédérale pour les questions de migration, 2008.

² The results of the vote on the federal popular initiative to prevent the construction of Mosque minarets (2009), or the more recent vote on the initiative “against mass immigration” (2014) are meaningful examples.

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In the canton of Bern, the composition of the parliaments on the communal and cantonal levels reflects this political cleavage. The left wing coalition has held a majority in the city parliament since 1996, while on the cantonal level, the conservative party *Schweizerische Volkspartei*, Swiss Popular Party (SVP) is the most represented party, with right wing politicians representing two thirds of the parliament. Accordingly, as with other Swiss cities, Bern felt the need to develop its own integration policy.

A political majority does not prevent divergences, however. Civil servants who were interviewed reported a lack of coordination between the numerous actors involved in the field of migrant integration. The idea of working on “integration guidelines” was adopted, and the process of its development is at least as important as the result. We will first outline the context of Bern as a Swiss city before focusing on the integration guidelines as social innovation. This will commence with a short history of its development, before an analysis of its mode of working, the ways of addressing users and the interaction with the governance system.

23.2 The Context

Bern is the Swiss capital and home to the federal administration, government and parliament. It is the fourth largest city (130,000 inhabitants in 2014) and urban area (406,000) in Switzerland. Foreigners represent 24% of the city’s population, which is slightly less than most other cities in Switzerland. The unemployment rate³ reached 3.3% of the active population in 2010 in Bern while the mean average for all Swiss cities was 4.4%. Bern is the chef-lieu of the second largest canton, both in area and population.

Since Switzerland is a federal state, responsibility for welfare is shared across the national, cantonal (26 cantons) and communal levels (2495 communes). Following the two guiding principles of subsidiarity and federalism, a large part of the welfare system is steered by the commune. The commune of the city of Bern has a wide and supportive welfare system and is seen as constantly growing, since the left holds a majority in the city government. Nevertheless, it should be noted that representatives from both the left and right agree with this vision. Even if there is some doubt regarding long-term viability, expansion of the city’s welfare system is not contested on a fundamental level. However, the two main coalitions regularly disagree on the extent of the state’s role regarding societal issues: a left wing coalition, commonly called *Rot-Grün-Mitte*, red-green-centre (RGM), is opposed to a right wing coalition, named by interviewees “die Bürgerlichen” (“bourgeois”, in the “conservative” sense). Since the early 1990s, the former have been the most prominent actors in the development of a kind of municipal socialism in the city. They are a good fit for Häußermann’s notion of an integration coalition (Häußermann 2006). The second coalition advocates a more liberal state and could be seen as a

³ It should be stated that this only counts people registered with regional unemployment offices.

growth coalition. However, a convincing consensus can be found when it comes to the welfare system's *raison d'être*. Along these lines, the dual coalitions function as what we might call an innovation regime⁴.

This consensus rests in a desire to enhance the location's desirability for people and business. Although it is the capital, as previously mentioned, Bern is only the fourth largest city in Switzerland. The head trio is Zurich, often identified as the financial capital, Geneva known for its banks and its numerous international organisations, and Basel, with its dynamic pharmaceutical industry. Each of these three has an international airport as well as close links with neighbouring countries. For its part, Bern is trying to identify itself as a social, open-minded and innovative city. Interviewees proudly recall how, in the 1990s, Bern was a pioneering city in the field of drug policy⁵. "Bern is a social city" or "Diversity is richness" are slogans promoted by the city government, so it comes as no surprise that Bern wants to be a city where no one is left behind.

Bern also invests in the promotion of a positive discourse concerning the issue of migrants, with voters' support showing that this orientation is more than simple city branding⁶. Due to the system of direct democracy at the communal level, orientation of the welfare system can be attributed in part to voting citizens. A significant number of Bern's citizens could be described as belonging to a "creative class" (Florida 2013). Despite the critiques that can be levelled at this analytical category, a number of interviewees spoke of an "urban mind", or an "urban minded population". This state of mind is considered to include values like global mindedness, solidarity, creativity, ecology and growth. Referendums on migration issues regularly show how urbanites distinguish themselves from the rest of the population. For example, 72.3% of Bern city dwellers rejected the recent vote against "mass migration"⁷. Meanwhile, on the cantonal level, 51.1% of the voters accepted restrictions on immigration. The values of openness and tolerance demonstrated by urban voters are consequently embraced by the city's government, becoming a framework for their policies.

23.3 Integration Guidelines

We will now outline the history of integration guidelines. In the second half of the 1990s, Swiss cities started to take control of the challenges surrounding the integration of migrants. Until then, right wing populist parties were alone in tackling the subject. Schönenberger and D'Amato (2009) attribute this change to the increasing

⁴ Concept inspired by Häußermann, see Cattacin (2011).

⁵ Interview with a third sector worker in the field of addictions.

⁶ See for example the high scores of the government re-election of 2012 (almost 70% for the city president).

⁷ Swiss popular initiative "Against mass immigration", February 9th 2014. Accepted by a slight majority of 50.34%. Detailed results for Bern available on the Chancery website: <http://www.sta.be.ch/sta/de/index/wahlen-abstimmungen/wahlen-abstimmungen.html>.

heterogenization and fragmentation of the social and urban structure and to the arrival of new lifestyles (of nationals and migrants). The specific urban context allowed cities to take a lead in negotiating this theme that, up until this point, had been largely ignored by the Confederation and the cantons. Consequently, several debates arose, with one of the purported problems being the implementation of the ageing foreigners law (1931). It had become necessary to adapt the policies to the present context and more current concerns. However, authorities on various levels offered minimal cooperation due to their differing understandings of procedures.

For these reasons, in 1995, the executive council of the city of Bern decided to establish official guidelines. The idea was to develop and possess a better knowledge regarding the integration of “people from foreign origin” and the fundamentals regarding potential alternative practices. A year later, the anthropologist Hans-Rudolf Wicker (University of Bern) delivered a report that highlighted the necessity of a coordinated and needs-related integration policy. Many actors within the fields of administration and civil society transmitted their feedback and, in 1997, a working group dedicated to the redaction of the guidelines was established. It included representatives from the Foreigners Police of Bern, from diverse departments like welfare, education, equality between men and women, from the federal foreigner’s commission, together with an anthropologist. Some nongovernmental organisations were represented, among other Caritas (charities), the information service for foreigners and the Forum for Migrants. It is noteworthy that representatives of migrant populations themselves were not invited. In 1998, the executive council received a first draft, which underwent revision until 1999, when it was finally voted on and accepted by the council.

The guidelines are composed of ten principles, intended to pave the way for a renewed understanding of integration, specifically within the realm of political discourse. Furthermore, they were meant to “open the way” to the implementation of lasting integration measures⁸. As an introduction to the newly established guidelines, the executive councillor at the time⁹ underlined the importance of contributions made by migrants to Switzerland. Indeed, some migrants are amongst the most professionally successful people in Switzerland; however, it is the case that a disproportionately high number work in the low-pay sector or are unemployed. This could be interpreted as a sign of an economic, social and cultural disintegration that threatens Bern’s prosperity. Schönenberger and D’Amato (2009) state that while there has never been an active integration policy in Switzerland, the “declining” economic situation has intensified the challenges faced by migrants.

Ten years later, the need for an adaptation of the guidelines was felt. It had to encompass the emerging consensus on the principle of encouraging and demanding¹⁰

⁸ Claudia Omar-Amberg, preface to *Leitbild zur Integrationspolitik der Stadt Bern*, Stadt Bern, 1999.

⁹ The social-democrat Claudia Omar-Amberg, in charge of the Department of Education, Health and Welfare.

¹⁰ *Fordern und fördern* in German. Encouraging refers to the welfare benefits whilst demanding refers to the conditions attached to the provision of these benefits.

(impacting the whole urban welfare system) and the approach of integration as a bilateral process. The scene had changed with a new law regarding foreigners coming into force in 2008. The Confederation had taken over the debate about integration, which had started at a city level, and for the first time integration became a legal notion. Since 2001, the Confederation has offered a budget for integration measures; measures which migrants may be forced to follow (e.g. language classes). However, divergences remained when it came to the balance between encouraging and demanding and on the understandings of the respective roles of the migrant population and the “host” population. Meanwhile, a newly created “Competence Centre for Integration” was tasked with leading the update of the 1999 guidelines, supported by an expert group (internal and external of administration). A new study was ordered by the Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies. In 2009, the Competence Centre for Integration organised a “guidelines day” in which 60 participants took part. As a civil servant explained: “we invited a lot of people for a day of discussion. They could make proposals, ask questions. It would have been unimaginable to come up with these guidelines and say ‘here, now you have to implement them’”¹¹. This time round, representatives of migrant populations were not forgotten.

Ratified by the city council in 2010, the most significant aspect of the new version was a list of 37 concrete measures planned for implementation in 2011 and 2012. The intention was that the Competence Centre would help to coordinate and inform, whilst the city would draw from the global city budget in order to finance them. Some measures address the migrant population directly (e.g. financial support for German courses) while others address workers in contact with migrants (e.g. diversity management training).

23.3.1 Internal Organization and Mode of Working

We will now describe the 2010 version of the guidelines. The document starts with an introduction to the integration policy of Bern, first highlighting the diversity of the city’s population: foreigners represent one fifth of the population and exist in a heterogeneous population. Following that, the document defines integration as a way of reaching equality of opportunity and participation for everyone, understood as the basis for social cohesion. Integration is meant as a dynamic process that requires, besides financial means and time, the commitment of both migrants and national citizens. The importance of the many actors involved (e.g. welfare institutions, sport clubs, religious communities, associations, etc.) is also acknowledged.

The document details four guiding principles: “1. The city of Bern recognises diversity and difference as strengths of our society; 2. The city of Bern supports the potential of migrants; 3. The city of Bern commits itself to the fight against discrimination; 4. The city of Bern supports equality of opportunities and participation of migrants”. These principles are detailed in three or four sub-points. Then, the

¹¹ Interview with a public administrator in the field of integration.

specific aims are detailed in several fields of action such as training, language and education; labour market; hobbies, culture and sport; health; civic and social participation; housing and environment; information and communication. Finally, the document names the actors involved and their specific roles in the implementation of the guidelines, namely the Competence Centre for Integration, the administrative services, external partners (associations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), etc.), the board for integration (group of experts) and the Forum for Migrants. The Competence Centre for Integration is meant to coordinate the work of a wide network of public, private and third sector actors.

Integration policy is thus a “cross-cutting” policy involving all sectors of a mixed welfare system. The Competence Centre is also the link between the different territorial levels: the Confederation, the cantons and the other communes.

Widely publicised by the Swiss administration, the document is available on paper as well as on the Internet, foremost addressing the administration and the civil servants of the city of Bern. The principles and aims presented in the document should lead their everyday work and orientate the action of their services. However, it cannot be assimilated to a work duty since no enforcement is planned to ensure the implementation of the guiding principles. Moreover, the document also addresses private and third sector actors, highlighting their potential impact on integration and suggesting ways of considering and dealing with people of foreign origin. Finally, it is meant to inform the population about the integration policy of their city. In 2010, the updated version of the guidelines became more concretised, encompassing a catalogue of measures. In this respect, the guidelines function as a basis for the proposal to existing structures of how they could participate, in real terms, in the city’s integration policy.

23.3.2 Conception and Ways of Addressing Users

The guidelines have many goals and thus address different categories of users. We could identify three user-oriented roles and two governance-related roles. First, through the development of the guidelines and the consultation process, experts and stakeholders (that were sometimes not considered or did not consider themselves as stakeholders before) are involved and encouraged to take part in the city’s integration policy. The purpose is thus to redefine the extent of the policy field. Second, the guidelines have a coordination role. Users here are agencies and units providing services in the redefined field of migrant integration. At the street level, users are the workers providing these services, for whom the guidelines are a code of conduct. Third, the guidelines have an information role, with users here being the city’s inhabitants and even potential inhabitants the city wants to attract with its migrant-friendly image.

The first governance-related role is practice oriented since the guidelines serve as a basis for concrete measures. The idea is that action needs, first of all, a consensus on the aims and definition of concepts. It states in black and white that the city

of Bern wants to promote integration and specifies what exactly is meant by integration, why it is important and who is responsible for it. Since reaching the aims relies on the coordinated work of many actors, clarifying all these aspects is crucial. By pointing out where integration is at stake, it opens the way for new measures and most importantly, new fields of action. The second governance role is political and strategic. As a civil servant said, “The guidelines were a political project. The idea was to show that they [the city government] handled it [integration]”¹². The guidelines are used as a political tool, to legitimise measures of integration. Indeed, integration is a hot topic for debate. As Vogel stated for another Swiss city, establishing guidelines on this topic puts an end to countless discussions in the city council (Vogel 2006). Thus, it can be seen as a way of imposing a political program. As everybody agreed on the principle of promoting integration, the left managed to establish a model that bound the principle to measures in order to make them harder to contest.

23.3.3 *Interaction with the Governance System*

Integration guidelines can be considered as an innovative change within the governance of Bern’s local welfare system. Starting with a formulation of the principles, it contributes to the reification of the city of Bern, establishing it as an important actor regarding urban social life. Every principle and its sub-points start with “The city of Bern [dedicates itself to/supports/acknowledges/etc.]”. Repeated 18 times in a row, this anaphora suggests that dedication to the integration of migrants is a special feature of the city of Bern. It also insists on the communal stranglehold on integration issues facing the cantonal and federal authorities.

The guidelines are also an innovative feature of governance in the way they go beyond the usual decision-making process, usually involving elected magistrates and occurring behind closed doors. The development of the guidelines is in this sense as important as the result. First, by involving many actors, the competence centre acknowledged the fact that integration cannot rely solely on the state and its administrative agencies. Neither can it be reached through big projects or campaigns or on quotas and compulsory measures aimed towards civil society. Examples of inclusion, equality of opportunities and non-discrimination can be seen everywhere and everyday. As a civil servant explained: “People often think that there is no will to implement these guidelines. What we see is a lot of motivation yet perhaps a lack of know-how. People expect big projects. But integration is also a matter of details we do not necessarily see”¹³.

Second, this manner of discussing, negotiating and finally writing down guidelines is an innovative way of building social policies. It supports participation and acceptance through the consultation and involvement of stakeholders. It acknowl-

¹² Interview with a civil servant in the field of integration.

¹³ Ibid.

edges the limits of enforceable rules in a field like integration. Definitions and responsibilities first have to be collectively defined and endorsed. The coordinating and informing role of the Competence Centre for Integration illustrates the innovative (in this context) role of the state as an encouraging and enabling actor. However, herein lie the limits of this way of governing. The city can somehow enforce its guidelines within its own administration and institutions; however, there is no legal basis for doing so in associations and private companies. Since there is no intention to make them mandatory, their implementation remains highly dependent on cooperation from third parties.

Another limit is related to the competences attributed to the Confederation. As an example, a journalist put forward the case of a migrant with an academic degree that is not recognised by Swiss authorities (Einhäus 2011). In such a case, the city has no leeway to offer him better job opportunities. The same problem weighs upon the naturalisation process and requirements. If Bern—its government and its population—predominantly think that naturalisation can be a tool to support integration, the city has no authority to lighten the requirements of the procedure. Those are defined by the canton and Confederation. At these upper levels, naturalisation is mostly seen as the reward for “completed” integration.

23.4 Conclusion

Two opposing interpretations can be made from this innovative feature of governance. On the one hand, this way of defining a policy and an agenda by consulting experts and stakeholders can be seen as a technocratic turn in Bern’s governance. Indeed, the clarity and univocality of the guidelines can mask the controversial aspects of the debate on what is integration and how we want to achieve it. Like Schönenberger and D’Amato (2009) argued, the guidelines managed to simplify a complex and controversial debate. This simplification and clarification allowed the city government to launch concrete measures on the basis of the collectively defined guidelines and thus, partly avoid the endless debates on integration. As MacLeod (2011:2632) argues, “This process of polic(y)ing and governing through a stage-managed consensus is serving to depoliticise 21st-century capitalism’s deeply antagonistic social relations”.

On the other hand, the guidelines can be seen as an acknowledgement of the eminently political character of integration policy. Instead of pretending the concept of integration is technical and unequivocal, this policy building process is based on a political debate. Integration policy has first been disputed among stakeholders from civil society and has then been voted on by the city council. This process requires consensus and reaching a consensus requires a deliberation process. The consensus has to be renewed, as it has been done with an update of the guidelines after 10 years. However, in the medium term, it allows for the building of coherent policy, where all stakeholders involved potentially work towards collectively defined aims. The guidelines could be a sign of an upcoming form of governance where the local state aims at facilitating and coordinating the implementation of policies (refer Øverbye et al. 2010 for more on this topic).

In either interpretation, such guidelines contribute to addressing the growing challenge of coordination. The multiplication of actors involved in the welfare system (see Kazepov 2010) increases the need for coordination measures. Integration guidelines have proven to be effective as a horizontal coordination measure addressing actors of the same (urban) level. However, it is less helpful with regard to the challenges of multilevel governance and the need for vertical coordination. These challenges are accentuated by the difference in the political majorities between the city (left wing majority) and the cantonal level (right wing majority). Nevertheless, the innovative features of the integration guidelines are strongly related to their development and their implementation on a local level. It allows a significant consultation process since the lower scale permits involving any interested actor. In that case, developing guidelines at the city level can increase inhabitants' identification with the city. The integration policy is not only a welfare policy. In the case of Bern, it is an intrinsic part of the city's image and attractiveness.

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