

Intercultural Game in Music Teacher Education: Exploring El Sistema in Sweden



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Abstract El Sistema, the originally Venezuelan music teaching movement is spreading worldwide, suggesting Western classical music as a tool for counteracting poverty and segregation. In Sweden, this represents an interesting and perhaps provoking twist, as the hegemony of classical music in music teacher education has since long been replaced by the hegemony of popular music. Based on fieldwork during the implementation of El Sistema in Malmö, the most multicultural town in Sweden, this chapter analyses El Sistema through the concept of habitus crises, an important ingredient in the development of intercultural pedagogic competencies. Through the understanding of El Sistema as a glocal phenomenon, the potential of the El Sistema intervention is discussed. The discussion is framed by a mapping of the tension fields that El Sistema teachers are navigating. The experiences of the El Sistema teachers in Malmö point towards a music teacher training that actively prepares for teaching in segregated, multi-cultural and socio-economic vulnerable areas. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future music teacher training in interacting ethnospaces: stimulating habitus crises and promoting transformative learning.

Keywords Habitus crises · El Sistema · Intercultural competence

1 Introduction

The Europe of today might best be described as fluid *ethnospaces*, with migration and the conditions for integration as one of the greatest challenges. The concept of ethnospace, introduced by Arjun Appadurai (1992), takes into account that earlier socio-cultural “wholes,” such as communities and villages, have been substituted by cosmopolitan and deterritorialized reproduction of group identity. The concept covers how “ethnospaces of today’s world are profoundly interactive” (Appadurai

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1992, 48), and, furthermore, permits an understanding of modern belonging, beyond all national reference (Sloterdijk 2000), and of urban landscapes with “transnational dynamic and fluid occupancy” (Montilla 2014, 143). It is in these ethnospaces that the originally Venezuelan music-teaching movement El Sistema is rapidly spreading, suggesting a format for music education that promotes integration by using Western art music as one of the main tools for developing social cohesion. To music educators who have been questioning the relevance of Western art music as a viable model in a global world, this choice of genre might be surprising, or even provoking. Certainly, this was the case in Sweden, where already in the 1970s a national investigation on music education suggested that a wider range of genres and approaches to learning needed to be included in higher music education in order to address the needs of diverse societies (Olsson 1993). This investigation led to a reform, so successful that today the pendula has moved to the other side, placing pop-rock as the dominant genre in Swedish classrooms (Lindgren and Ericsson 2010).

This chapter takes the El Sistema in Malmö as a starting point for reflections on the ‘intercultural game’ (Pöllman 2016) in music education and the need for, and the development of, intercultural pedagogic competence in music education in today’s interactive ethnospaces. After a section on intercultural pedagogic competence, the following two sections describe El Sistema as a *glocal* phenomenon, and give an overview of the competing discourses that have shaped music education in Sweden during the past decades. The term *glocal*, first introduced in social scientific discourse in the early 1990s by sociologist Roland Robertson, highlights the need to rethink the local and the global, not as opposites, but as two sides of the same coin (Roudometof 2015). Here the concept of *glocalization* is used to describe “how people relate linguistically, culturally and cognitively to one another and to the institutions they inhabit in times of change” (Sarroub 2008, 61). The third and fourth sections analyze the intercultural game within El Sistema and how established practices and the music teacher habitus might be challenged in the *glocal* context. In this way, the tension fields embedded in the El Sistema are approached as affordances for the development of intercultural skills in music teacher education. In the context of teaching an “alien” music genre to large groups of children in classrooms where Swedish is the minority language, it is in the daily efforts that teachers both need and develop intercultural pedagogic competence. As a whole, the chapter argues that in the Nordic context, El Sistema represents an interesting twist, since its implementation has the capacity to assist in developing a culturally sensitive music teacher education, based on theoretical awareness and practical experience.

2 Intercultural Pedagogic Competence

Despite the lack of reflexivity on intercultural competences in Swedish teacher education (Lorentz 2016), the idea of interculturality is not new in this context or in wider global policy. The term *intercultural* appeared 1974 in a UNESCO

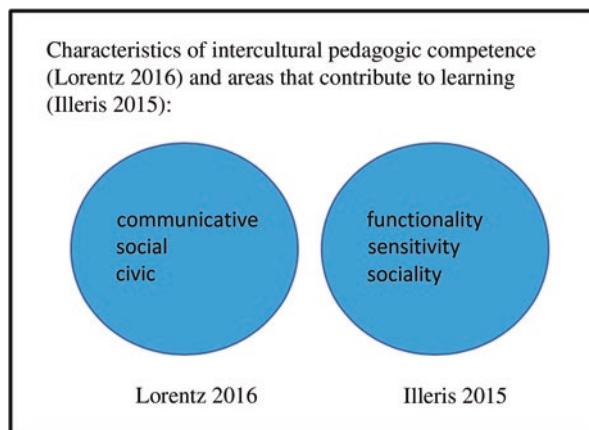
recommendation on education (UNESCO 1974). Under paragraph 22 it is stated that increased efforts to develop and mediate an international and intercultural approach are needed at all stages and in all forms of education. Both *intercultural* and *international* are used together with words such as *understanding* and *approach*. A historical overview of the discourse on intercultural education in Sweden shows how this vagueness in regard to the meaning of terms has continued in policy documents. However, a 1983 governmental document, referring to research and intercultural education (SOU 1983) suggests that this proposition never led to action or reform. In a 1985 parliamentary decision, intercultural education is described as an attitude, something that should permeate all school subjects (Lorentz 2016). This attitude, however, was never put into concrete action.

In the beginning of the 1990s, the Swedish government decided on a new curriculum, (Lpo 94 1994), in which multicultural society is mentioned and school is described as a cultural meeting place. The concept of *intercultural* has now disappeared from the national school documents and has been replaced by *internationalization* in which contact with schools and students in other countries is considered to be sufficient practice to develop the school as a cultural meeting place (Lorentz 2016). The same disappearance of the term *intercultural* applies to Swedish policy documents for teacher education. The report on new teacher-education (SOU 2008) problematically only mentions intercultural competence in the section on “Swedish for immigrants”. In the current curricula for elementary school (Lgr 11 2011) and upper secondary school (Gy 11 2011), it is again internationalization that should contribute to increased understanding of multicultural society. A suggested (and very disappointing) interpretation of this disappearance of intercultural competence is articulated by Lorentz (2016): “Intercultural competence is good for Swedish students abroad, and might be good for immigrants in Sweden, it is not necessary for Swedish citizens” (Lorentz 2016, 70, my translation). It is therefore not surprising that intercultural teacher competence is not a topic of study in most Swedish teacher training (Lorenz 2016).

The tendency to diminish the value of intercultural competence contrasts what Touraine (2003) suggests is most important for democracy: an educational system that teaches intercultural communication. Expanding on what intercultural communication implies, Lorentz (2016) suggests that intercultural pedagogic competence is conceptualized and practiced as three different competences in interaction: communicative competence, social competence and civic competence. These three domains of intercultural pedagogic competence are related to what Illeris (2015) describes as the three areas that contribute to learning: functionality, sensitivity and sociality.

With the concept of *functionality*, Illeris (2015) shows that every learning process includes development of meaning, significance and skills. *Sensitivity* refers to the fact that learning processes benefit from mental and physical balance. *Sociality*, finally, points at how learning processes include our relation to and interplay with the surrounding world. Lorentz (2016) introduces five key phases in the process leading up to the goal – interculturally competent and aware teachers. The first phase, deconstruction, is to see or rather to choose to see actions, values and norms

Fig. 1 The three characteristics of intercultural pedagogic competence (Lorentz 2016) and the three areas that contribute to learning (Illeris 2015) as tools for music teacher education in current ethnospaces



in one's own culture, and to be aware of one's own cultural identity/identities. This is to clarify one's own starting point and hopefully increasing one's understanding about the consequences of the actions of our own identity work. In the second phase, students learn to define and understand intercultural communication, for example, by their own hands-on experiences. The third phase, ethnorelative understanding, facilitates the motivation and capacity for accepting cultural differences, and understanding the concept of pluralism, for example, in relation to epistemological issues. The fourth phase involves cultural awareness, as students learn to see themselves as cultural products and as social creatures, and to understand intercultural sensitivity. Finally, the fifth phase on reflexivity aims at internalizing a reflective, intercultural approach towards the world, to acquire knowledge on cultural and social actions and norms. In music teacher education, the tool box (Fig. 1) might be used when guiding future music teachers through the five phases leading towards intercultural pedagogical competence.

Research shows that a content that creates integration and sociality is beneficial for learning (Illeris 2015; Lorentz and Bergstedt 2006; Lorentz 2016). In times where life conditions demand radical social readjustments, Illeris (2015) recommends *transformative learning*, in other words, a learning that fosters abilities to go beyond what is taken for granted. Transformative learning might also follow after what Pöllman (2016) describes as *habitus crises* (discussed below), or *habitus dislocations* as part of the intercultural game.

3 El Sistema as a Glocal Phenomenon

The outspoken ambition of El Sistema in Sweden is to contribute to the process of integration in multicultural societies is prompted by the fact that Sweden, as the EU at large, is faced with a need for strategies and actions for future social cohesion (see Pyrhönen et al. 2017). By 1 January 2015, the number of people living in the EU

who were born outside of the EU was 34.3 million (Eurostat 2016). Since then, the Syrian crisis has added to the migration flows. In 2015 in Sweden, a total of 162,877 refugees applied for asylum, and around 35,000 of them were unaccompanied children (Migrationsinfo 2016), whose country of origin was most commonly Syria and Afghanistan. In Malmö, 32% of the inhabitants are immigrants, representing 186 countries (Malmö Stad 2019). This situation forms a challenge for all dimensions of society and not the least for the EU cultural sector responsible for handling the situation. A recent EU report (EU Voices of Culture 2016) on the role of cultural participation in promoting inclusion describes culture as the perfect arena for developing and maintaining democracy because culture “provides spaces for the articulation and dissemination of complex ideas, and facilitates broad participation in social space” (2016, 8). Hence, the cultural sector is “the perfect space from which to catalyse the development of polity and society as spaces in which refugees and other new citizens are afforded equal voice and status” (2016, 8). The Swedish El Sistema ambition emphasises social inclusion and democracy, thereby aligning to current trends in Swedish music education discourse, emphasizing the need for music schools and institutions to reach and involve all citizens and thereby contribute to a sustainable society.

The music education system El Sistema started initially in 1975 in Venezuela as a project designed to foster the training of Venezuelan musicians, and later as a tool for combatting poverty and to provide music education for children in the streets. The founder José Antonio Abreu introduced “The Foundation for the National Network of Youth and Children Orchestras of Venezuela” as a national project, but today El Sistema has spread to more than 60 countries and involves about one million children (Sistema Global 2016; Clausson and Thanner 2015).

In 1993, El Sistema received UNESCO’s international music prize and since then its international success has grown alongside its list of awards, including the Swedish alternative Nobel Prize (the Right Livelihood Award) 2001, and the TED prize in 2009 (TED 2018a). It is clear, simply by looking at the prize list, that the expectations of El Sistema as a global “game changer” are high; for example, “The TED Prize is awarded annually to a leader with a creative bold wish to spark global change (...) solving some of the world’s most pressing problems” (TED 2018b). The idea of classical music education as a means to save at-risk children, and the assumption that democracy can be promoted by giving all children the right to develop expressive tools, has given El Sistema many followers, but also raised critical concerns. We can ask, could it be, as Geoffrey Baker (2014) suggests, that El Sistema rather orchestrates youth to submission, and that Western art music is not the ultimate tool for music education in a society characterized by cultural diversity?

Given that it has substantially spread internationally and experienced varied reception, El Sistema takes on new local interpretations as it lands in different educational traditions. In Sweden, El Sistema is promoted not as a music education format that counteracts poverty but rather as a possibility for more integration in multicultural societies. In 2016, El Sistema started an orchestra (the Dream Orchestra) for newly arrived immigrants in Gothenburg. Music schools in 27

Swedish municipalities have started El Sistema activities, reaching out to 7000 children (El Sistema Sverige 2016). The El Sistema Sweden webpage states under the subheading “democracy and diversity” that the aim is to strengthen democratic values. Other ambitions are musical diversity, reaching out to both children and adults and involving local settings as well as established official contexts and institutions. The fact that formal institutions for music education and music performance are included has added value: “This contributes to the social mobilization that is crucial in places where segregation has hampered the possibilities for human growth. Together with music!” (El Sistema Sverige 2016, my translation). This ambition of democratic musical diversity is noteworthy, considering the original El Sistema’s focus on Western art music.

Unlike in many other countries, the Swedish El Sistema challenges the established musical repertoire in schools (Lindgren and Bergman 2014) and simultaneously presents a countermovement to the general tendency to marginalize music as a subject in favor of the core subjects that are measured in the PISA tests, such as language and mathematics. The recent national report on the future of Swedish municipal music schools (SOU 2016) suggests a national policy that strengthens both the role and quality of the municipal music schools. It also states that these schools “can, want to, and should play an important role” (SOU 2016, 275) in the efforts to include new immigrants. El Sistema, with the outspoken aim to include 100 schools in the next few years (El Sistema Sverige 2016), has an interesting catalytic position in the ongoing change process of the municipal music schools in Sweden.

In Malmö, El Sistema started in 2013 at two comprehensive schools located in a part of the city where 85 different nationalities are represented and 33% of the inhabitants are born abroad. Malmö’s El Sistema first started as a regular part of the municipal music school with the aim to protect “the cultural rights for all, and in the long run include more districts of Malmö” (Lorensson 2013). It would soon be obvious to the six carefully selected music teachers that they had been given the task to balance expectations of high artistic results with expectations of a music education that defeats segregation between privileged and socio-economically vulnerable parts of Malmö’s population. The municipal music school that offers extracurricular music tuition within the region is financed by tax income. As such, the school should serve all citizens, a task that has been difficult, in spite of numerous projects to attract students from segregated areas (Hofvander Trulsson 2010). Based on research on how Malmö is growing into an increasingly segregated city (Salonen 2012; Stigendal 2007), the Malmö Commission recommended knowledge alliances to stimulate more democratic processes of governance, and an approach towards economic growth that includes culture (Stigendal and Östergren 2013). In Malmö, the Commission report paved the way for El Sistema, and influenced its practical interpretation. One thousand and two hundred children in Malmö are active in El Sistema. For nursery-school children, the program entails choir and eurythmics, and school children are offered violin, cello, trumpet, trombone, horn, percussion, eurythmics, choir, and orchestra. The children have lessons three times a week, plus concerts for parents once a month, and several external concerts each semester.

Thirteen music teachers are employed, and all of these teachers have a degree from the 5-year music teacher program at the Malmö Academy of Music. Members from the Malmö Symphony Orchestra regularly visit the El Sistema children as inspiring musicians – not as teachers – and the children regularly perform with the orchestra as part of their performing activities both in the local community and at the concert house.

4 Emerging Antagonistic Justifications

Research on the development of El Sistema in Gothenburg points at how current dominating discourses in Swedish music education are challenged by the teaching of classical orchestral instruments in music schools (Lindgren and Bergman 2014). It is symptomatic that the discursive field of Swedish music education can be examined through the growing body of research on issues of democracy and cultural diversity in music education. Concepts such as musical agency (Karlsen and Westerlund 2010; Karlsen 2012), educational reform (Drummond 2005; Schippers 2010), social mobility (Hofvander Trulsson 2010) and exotification (Sæther 2010) have been used to promote a quest for music educators and policy makers to reflect on music's communicative power, which can be used for good or bad. As Nettl already in 1985 stated, it is important to study the institutions where music is taught: "Our cultural values, too, ought to be discernible in our musical system. What kinds of values do we teach?" (1985, 73). What styles are regarded important or "good"? What teaching methods enhance individual or collective growth? What students are included? Nettl, who was skeptical towards the dominance of classical music in American music education, asked: "Does this perhaps mean that we like to think of our society, reflected in music, as a group of marionettes directed by a supreme puller of strings" (1985, 74). This skepticism can also be interpreted as a reminder that genre choices are value-laden, and that whatever choice is made, the music educators carry both responsibility and possibilities. Today, while there seems to be a consensus that music is an important part of cultural and identity negotiations, these aspects are not reflected in the general status of music as a subject in Swedish schools, or in higher music education.

5 Paradigm Shift

El Sistema can be positioned in relation to several competing discourses on music education in Swedish society. While international research in music education has in general welcomed a shift from the (globally) dominating teaching practices based on Western art music (Green 2006; Lebler 2008; Westerlund 2016), Swedish researchers also have had to problematize the use of the rock-band model as a dominant norm. Due to educational reforms in the 1970s and 1980s, the music teaching that takes place in Swedish schools has mostly been organized in the form of

pop-rock bands, with the teacher serving as a facilitator to collaborative, student-centered learning. Initially, the intended impact was to stimulate active music making, and also to some extent to democratize the learning practices. However, as research has shown (Georgii-Hemming and Westvall 2010; Ericsson and Lindgren 2010; Bergman 2009) this stimulation and democratization has had limited impact on the students' opportunities to develop knowledge of music and develop instrumental skills – for instance, girls have often been given (or have taken) the role of the vocalist. The reforms have also led to a complete paradigm shift with one dominating musical genre (i.e. pop-rock), whereas other genres such as jazz, folk, world music and Western classical music have been marginalized.

6 Critical Practitioners

It is also possible to interpret El Sistema as a *community music* approach (Lindgren et al. 2016). Yet, as Kertz-Welzel argues, there has been a tendency in the research on community music to “oversimplify the complexity of musical activities” (2016, 118). In light of the rapid success in terms of the spreading of El Sistema, it might be useful to reconsider preconceptions of community music as completely separated from formal music education, and to look for mutual communication on shared problems. Music teaching in schools or community settings in current ethno-spaces demands skilled teachers: “Pedagogical heroism in terms of envisioning an elevated position of the community music facilitator, while at the same time offering the position to anybody who has the basic skills, is also a kind of *kitsch*” (Kertz-Welzel 2016, 121). Kertz-Welzel calls for “critical practitioners” (2016, 120) with professional training in order to avoid non-reflected activism. It is interesting to note that during the implementation phase of El Sistema in Malmö, the six employed music teachers were given scheduled weekly time for reflection to expand on their professional competence based on a 5-year, masters-level music teacher training. Many of the needed competences, like intercultural pedagogic competence, simply had to be developed in practice, since music teacher programs, with few exceptions, rarely prepare teachers for working with children in socio-economical vulnerable areas.

Moreover, the Swedish researchers Lindgren and Bergman (2014) use a critical-historical perspective to place El Sistema in a movement of on-going discussions on *Bildung*, legitimacy, aesthetics and identity. Both the general school system and the municipal music schools in Sweden rest on early nineteenth-century ideas of the value of education for the working class and socially vulnerable groups towards the development of both the individual and society. When it comes to extracurricular music teaching and learning in music schools, the discourse surrounding these historic ideas favors Western art music and strives for high musical quality through the master–apprenticeship model with its “traditional” instruction types. The opposite of this approach is the creative discourse – more prominent in educational practices – that highlights collaborative learning, group learning, peer assessment and

hands-on music making. In the implementation of El Sistema in Malmö, there are traces of both of these approaches.

The instrumental teaching covers mainly instruments for the symphony orchestra, such as flute, violin and cello. However, the teaching methods include characteristics of the creative discourse, with the added ambition to enhance integration. In El Sistema Malmö, as in Gothenburg, music education is legitimized as being good for both social development and development of musical skills. This *double justification* is one of the major challenges for El Sistema music teachers. Another challenge for the teachers is the unusual (in a Swedish context) symphony-orchestra education that contradicts the “taken for granted” with whom the music teachers have been raised and trained. To Bergman and Lindgren, “El Sistema in Sweden offers an aesthetic and ideological missions statement in which Babumba and Beethoven are equally possible in the repertoire of a symphony and choir performance” (2014, 55). “Babumba” is a song composed by El Sistema teachers Malin Aghed and Magnus Pettersson and its style refers to West African music. It is a typical example of the efforts of music teachers to expand the genre choices in El Sistema. Babumba has become a “hit” and is frequently included in El Sistema concerts. Another typical Swedish interpretation of El Sistema is the inclusion of repertoire from folk and world-music genres. Even if the children are trained for a possible future in a symphony orchestra, Western art music is not the one and only provided genre. The El Sistema teachers in Malmö put a lot of emphasis on the children’s own musical creativity in order to move away from the genre issue. Thus, El Sistema can be understood as neither radical nor conservative, but more as a hybrid ingredient in glocal music-education contexts. It stirs up tension fields in late modern and postmodern societies.

7 Balancing in Tension Fields of El Sistema

Much in line with the idea of transformative learning, the German researcher Andreas Pöllman (2016) argues that schools and universities can and should facilitate intercultural learning because intercultural competence is increasingly important in culturally diverse societies. According to Pöllman, legal provision of formal equality – like Swedish society provides – is not enough to guarantee equal educational opportunities. Educational sites need to nurture a renewed feel for the intercultural game and involve students with ground-breaking interruptions of both “long-accustomed practical sense and taken-for-granted ways of being reflexive, possibly stimulating new forms of reflexive intercultural awareness” (2016, 6). One way of stimulating such interruptions would be to provide “direct in situ intercultural experiences” (Pöllman 2016, 6) by cross-cultural mobility that can provide strong and context-intensive opportunities for learning.

In the case of El Sistema in Malmö, the teachers were not exposed to other cultures “far away” but to the multiplicity of cultures and life conditions around them, in their own town and within the culture of their own profession. The intercultural

game within their own location involved tension fields that can be understood as expressions of *habitus crisis*, which are an important ingredient in the development of intercultural pedagogic competencies. *Habitus* is a key concept in Pierre Bourdieu's social theory, used as a structured and structuring force to explain social action. People with similar living conditions tend to develop similar ways of acting – a structure of their habitus. In Bourdieu's thinking, these structures then generate structuring dispositions “that guide social practice” (Bourdieu 1990, 60). In the original form of this concept, habitus structures are so powerful that they counteract social mobility. The concept of habitus crisis is derived from Bourdieu's concept *habitus clivé*, discussed by Friedman (2016) as a tool to understand the emotional consequences and imprints of social mobility. In the context of education, Pöllman (2016) suggests a significant but yet unfulfilled potential of extending habitus crises to intercultural education. In Malmö's El Sistema, the teachers' habitus as music educators changed, in their reflexive practice in the collaborative development of the new, intense, music teaching format. Sometimes this change was smooth; sometimes the balancing of various tension fields resulted more in frustration.

7.1 *Fieldwork in El Sistema Malmö*

In my participant observation study at two schools during the first semester of El Sistema in Malmö, I further explored the tension fields present in the activities in which the teachers were involved. I interviewed local leaders and El Sistema music teachers, kept a fieldwork diary and received a reflective diary from one of the teachers. The data was analyzed through bricolage, and emerging categories identified, both theory driven and data driven, following Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) guidelines for qualitative research. The use of participant observation was inspired by *radical empiricism*, a concept developed as a fieldwork approach by Stoller (1997) that invites the researcher to use sensory perception in order to understand the world. Radical empiricism in Stoller's version goes beyond participant observation in demanding that the researcher makes use of all senses in the field. In my own version of this approach, I used my fiddle in the fieldwork (Sæther 2015), and participated in the music-making with the teachers and the children.

The study shows that the tension fields can be thematized under four categories: (1) social worker versus the teacher, (2) the resource in the school, (3) exotification, and (4) creativity and the orchestra. Moreover, music teachers working with El Sistema constantly have to navigate their changing environments and represent a source for knowledge production in the underdeveloped field of intercultural pedagogic competence.

7.1.1 The Social Worker Versus the Teacher

According to my study, the music teachers of El Sistema found themselves torn between the double aims of El Sistema. On the one hand they needed to promote integration, on the other hand they were expected to train children towards high artistic achievements. Sometimes during the breaks between lessons, the teachers reflected on how to draw the line between working almost as a social worker and how to do simply the job of a music teacher. Since El Sistema prescribes meeting the children three times a week, there were a lot more chances for the children to develop musical skills than what the regular meeting with a music teacher would allow during one short weekly music school or school lesson. The frequent and intense learning activities (including concerts) also provided opportunities for building trust and friendship that contributed to relationships that were useful when the children or their families needed assistance. This new way of organizing the music activities in schools instead of the of music-school premises led to some habitus alterations – a milder form of crisis – for the music teachers, the children and their families. During the first semester, the teachers alternated between statements such as “this is what we have been trained for, but as ordinary music teachers we were never given the chance” and “we shouldn’t be expected to solve all the problems of the school.” Every Monday, the music teachers allocated a half day to reflect on results, challenges and developments, and to plan for the coming week according to these scheduled, future-oriented meetings. In these reflective conversations, the music teachers often worked with solutions for social problems as well as more pedagogical and musical tasks. Exemplifying their endeavors, the song “We want to build Malmö,” composed by the teachers, indicates a willingness *to adapt to the task of being a social worker; a task that can be expressed in and through music-making*. Thus, the song is the creative result of the music teachers’ willingness to negotiate towards the double aims of El Sistema amid the ambiguity of their circumstances.

*We want to build Malmö with music and songs
We want to build Malmö with stone and concrete
We want to build bridges
Between all the people
Between all the people in Malmö*
(Malmö Kulturskola 2013, my translation)

The leader of the municipal music school in Malmö has integrated El Sistema as one of the regular sub-departments, in order to be able to reach out to groups of citizens that have been difficult to attract. His argument is that: “Music is a cultural right for ALL, it belongs to all (...) there has always been a need for a catalyst, something that can break down the hindrances we tend to construct between ourselves, El Sistema can be that catalyst.” Already during the first semester, the children and the teachers participated in numerous official concerts, positioning culture at the forefront in Malmö’s development towards social sustainability. The music teachers were happy about the attention their work got in media: “this never happened before.” But they were also troubled by some of the coverage as they did not

want to belong to the discourse that describes immigrants as victims; as stated by one of the teachers: “It must not appear as if we pity these children. Our story is that we have an interesting and good activity.” The tension between social and strictly musical goals was balanced by one of the teachers who pointed out that El Sistema could just as well have started in one of the privileged parts of Malmö, yet it just happened to start in one of the most segregated parts. This remark shows that the original policy goals of El Sistema in Malmö are difficult to combine with formal music education and that there is a tendency among the teachers to think of El Sistema as a tool for development of formal music education in elementary schools and municipal music schools. This was further developed in conversations between the teachers who also identified the possibilities for collective growth reconciled with the challenges of the twofold purpose of El Sistema:

Teacher 1: “It is not a new pedagogy.”

Teacher 2: “Just nice that we are allowed to do it.”

Teacher 3: “And that we can work together, as a group.”

7.1.2 The Resource in the School

One of the important factors in the organization of El Sistema in Malmö is that it should be something that “fills the week (...) something to long for and think about” (leader of the music school), something that takes a big place in the life of the school. This ambition marks a big change for the music teachers. Most of them have years of experience as a marginalized teacher. Since music does not belong to the core subjects, the position of teachers in the schools’ inner life may depend on the time of the year; for example, at Christmas and other festivities, music teachers are needed, while other times maybe they are not. Working with El Sistema has given these music teachers a much more visible position among their colleagues, and their mission has forced them to reflect on their duties as educators, beyond “just” being a music teacher – to accept habitus alterations. As one of the teachers expressed it: “We have to work with our value systems, and find a way to cooperate with the other players in the school system.”

To the director of the cultural school, the hope is that El Sistema might change the reputation of the involved schools, thereby making them attractive to children from all parts of the city. At the start of El Sistema, the two selected schools in Malmö were of the category that socio-economically privileged families move away from or avoid. One way of strengthening the school culture is to involve the parents, therefore in El Sistema all families are invited to *vänstays*¹ once a week, for concerts

¹ *Vänstays* are evening concerts for and with the parents and other family members. In Swedish ‘*vän*’ means friend.

and musical activities. The *vänstays* during the first semester were quite challenging for all involved: for the parents because they normally did not come to school together with their children, certainly not after the end of the school day; for the children, because they were not used to performing for and with their parents; for the teachers because they had to arrange for safe transports to and from the *vänstays*, and make sure everyone was welcome; and for the invited musicians from the symphony orchestra because they rarely meet this kind of audience.

The music teachers working in El Sistema in Malmö develop new skills in this multifaceted work. They have to plan for new teaching methods, such as instrumental teaching for beginners in large groups, to re-think their professional roles and to cooperate at many levels with schools, parents, municipality and the symphony orchestra. This planning and cooperation leads to a sense of agency among the music teachers, as one of the teachers expressed: “This is what we were trained for, but earlier not given the chance to implement.” Some of them, inspired by their experiences, have taken up their studies and are heading for a position where they can do research on their own practice. Even the aspiration to conduct research on their own, developing teaching methods, might be interpreted as a result of the habitus alterations.

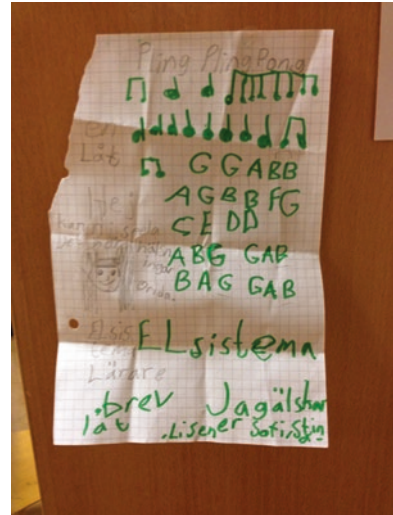
7.1.3 Exotification and Creativity

During the first semester of El Sistema many journalists and politicians visited the schools. The children were invited to large gatherings, like kick-offs for teachers and civil servants. After only a few weeks of instrumental training on violin and flute, the children performed with the symphony orchestra. The song “We want to build Malmö” became one of the hits. Sometimes, the teachers also got tired of the official rhetoric on El Sistema about how good music is for integration. “We try to avoid talking about us and them,” as one of the teachers said in one of the gatherings for reflection. The music teachers did not talk about immigrant children. Their students were just children from Malmö, and they thought El Sistema would be just as relevant to children in other parts of Malmö as to the segregated parts. During the first semester this insight grew stronger: “We are here to teach music – not to pity children.”

This sensitivity towards exotification might be explained by some of the teachers’ own experiences of working with children in refugee camps, and also from taking part in the intercultural projects at the Malmö Academy of Music during their teacher education. One way of solving the dilemmas of exotification and problematic genre choices in the fields of tension was to concentrate on the children’s own music making. From the outset, the teachers involved the children in collaborative creations and asked them to compose their own music (See Fig. 2).

As mentioned above, the teachers also composed their own music for the children. At the end of the first semester, one of the teachers composed a song with lyrics that said nothing about integration or inclusion – instead it highlighted musi-

Fig. 2 First composition of one El Sistema pupil in Malmö that was played by the teachers and students in one of the music lessons



cal concepts: forte, piano, staccato and legato. Legato – softly connected – could be seen as a metaphor of how the teachers positioned themselves in relation to both the symphony orchestra and the official rhetoric of El Sistema as a tool for democracy. In this way, they showed a new understanding of the “intercultural game” as proposed by Pöllman (2016).

7.1.4 Habitus Crises in the Orchestra

In the first meeting between the Malmö Symphony Orchestra and the El Sistema children, the El Sistema teachers insisted on taking the initiative. They wanted the orchestra to come to the children – not the other way around. This first meeting was preceded by negotiations between the producers from the Symphony Orchestra and the El Sistema music teachers, who were not always in harmony with each other since the music teachers and the representatives from the symphony orchestra had different preconceptions of what a “children concert” could be. The final outcome was successful, however, the process involved strong, direct, context-intensive, in situ intercultural experiences, i.e. habitus crises. The first meeting in the children’s sports hall interrupted the taken-for-granted ways of thinking and being of the children, their teachers and the professional musicians. In the first lesson after the concert in the sports hall, the children spoke of their strong experience of being allowed to sit in the orchestra next to the musicians. For the members of the orchestra, the concert in the sports hall forced them to leave their comfort zones to play for and with children who had never visited a concert hall.

8 Discussion and Conclusion

Four years after the start of El Sistema in Malmö the program has expanded to include four schools in Malmö. The growth has been deliberately slow, and has taken place within the economical frames of the municipal music school (El Sistema 2017). The initial group of six teachers has continued to develop their intercultural skills in collaboration with the newly employed colleagues. On the national level, El Sistema has intensified its efforts to develop new teaching methods, suitable for the learning contexts in which El Sistema lands, or creates generally in school environments. The recently launched El Sistema Academy serves as a center for education, research and cooperation for the music teachers and institutions concerned. In Gothenburg, the orchestra for refugees initiated in 2016, called the Dream Orchestra, was nominated to the prize “Music for all” (Årets musik för alla) with the motivation that it “encompasses integration as much as music.” While it is evident that this orchestra is of importance to the involved members, the Dream Orchestra’s² impact on structural integration remains to be validated. Although it is too early to say anything about the long-term impact of El Sistema in Malmö, by providing the pupils with expressive and musical tools, the children’s agency may increase, both on macro- and micro levels.

For the future of music teacher education research, as well as for the professional education of music teachers, the El Sistema intervention in the Swedish educational landscape has already provided new perspectives by prompting reflexivity and active engagement with the intercultural game. The habitus dislocations, for the children, the teachers and the Symphony Orchestra members, are potentially important ingredients leading up to *transformative learning*, which Illeris (2015) identifies as central when social re-adjustments are necessary. These re-adjustments include the researcher, who, in practicing sensory scholarship, will naturally be involved in transformative or interactive research.

For the music teachers, El Sistema has offered a possibility to expand the frames of the music teacher profession, to develop collaborative teaching methods, and to reflect on the moral and political dimensions of being a music teacher, for example the potential dangers with exotification of immigrant children. The experiences from the implementation of El Sistema in Malmö show how teachers equipped with intercultural pedagogical competence – such as the El Sistema teachers develop in practice – might be able to stimulate in teaching what Illeris (2015) describes as transformative learning. Longitudinal studies, including the perspectives of the children, will show the implications of the transformations and habitus crises that the intervention of El Sistema in Malmö has offered.

Looking at El Sistema as a glocal phenomenon affords us to envision a future, intercultural music teacher education based on theoretical awareness and practical

²The Dream Orchestra started in April 2016 as a music activity for young refugees. The orchestra now has 30 members and rehearses three times a week. (See: <http://www.elsistema.se/sa-gor-vi/dream-orchestra/>).

experience. Through deliberate habitus crises, breaking with long-standing discourses and teaching methods, it is possible to stimulate reflection and to promote the agency of future music teachers. One way of provoking habitus crises is to include hands-on, intercultural teaching experiences in teacher training, and to combine this with time for reflection on the “taken for granted” in music teacher education. Other possible strategies would be to strive towards transformative learning through curriculum developments. Including the five phases suggested by Lorentz (2016) in the curriculum would help music-teacher students to develop the intercultural pedagogic competence that is needed when teaching music in ethnospaces.

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