

**A Think Tank that promotes
the values of an open society.**

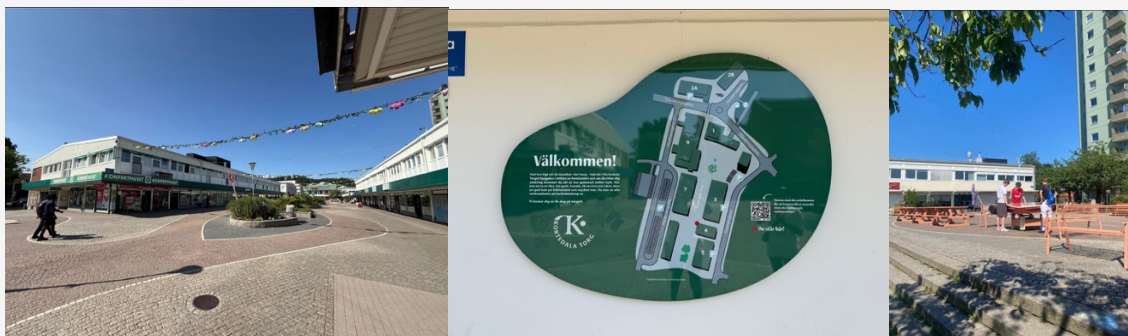
NEIGHBORHOODING DEMOCRACY

A PHOTO ESSAY

Gothenburg Summit 2026

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Kortedala Torg
15 – 07 – 2026

Question 1: How is the neighborhood you went to?



Your reflection

From our group, several members saw a lot of what reminds them of their home. In particular, the South African Fellows felt that they could relate to the atmosphere, especially the shop with the African fabrics and the phone store. It felt like home. This struck an interesting contrast compared to the rest of Gothenburg that we had seen up to this point. Different development and shops from the rest of Gothenburg speaks to the population of the neighborhood. The South African Fellows also noted how the infrastructure looked quite similar to that of what's in South Africa. The layout and architecture of the neighborhood were definitely Swedish, although the culture was very different. People often did not have the luxury of leisure. We often got rejected solely because they were under a time constraint. We also noted that people seemed to be in survival mode. Additionally, based on our conversations, we noted that there does not seem to be much of a strong community in this neighborhood. Adding to this, we felt that the public facilities and infrastructure, were without a soul or passion, much of the layout felt fake or forced. One positive thing we noted was that it was actually very active for a weekday. There were little shopping carts and people were playing on the public games in the square.

Question 2: What do you assume of the people living there?



Your reflection

Our initial impression of the neighbourhood was that it looked quite different from the rest of Gothenburg. It felt as though it wasn't really part of the city, or at least didn't match the first image we had formed of it. The area seemed quite distinct and even foreign to the country. This assumption turned out to be correct, as we quickly noticed upon walking toward the complex that it was home to a large number of immigrants, which helped explain why the neighborhood appeared the way it did.

We observed people of many different races and nationalities. The age groups were quite mixed, with a good balance of young children, teenagers, middle-aged adults, and elderly residents. Most appeared to come from low-income families, including shop owners who seemed to be fighting for survival. The businesses there operated on a modest, hand-to-mouth basis rather than being high-flying or skyrocketing enterprises. Everyone was simply minding their own business, yet there didn't seem to be any real connection between the people and the place itself.

Question 3: Are people in the neighborhood politically active? Are they socially active?

Note: Include video attached

Your reflection

People are not necessarily politically active but are extremely socially active. There is apathy and discontent at how a lot of people are excluded from decision-making, not just in the general direction of society in Sweden, but also in local decisions (like the new developments in Kortedala Torg). We noticed many diverse groups of different ages and ethnicities conversing and walking together in the short time spent there. We also noticed groups of children playing in the playground area while parents spoke while watching them.

There was one resident who expressed that even though they were an immigrant, they believe they can drive political change in the community. We do think that it is difficult to gauge political and social engagement from our short, external interaction with the area.



Question 4: Does the neighborhood seem peaceful or there seem to be frictions and struggles?



Your reflection

At first, the neighborhood gave the impression of being peaceful and relatively quiet. We visited the area during the daytime, when there were no obvious signs of conflict or tension. People were going about their daily routines, and nothing immediately suggested that the neighborhood faced serious social issues. However, after speaking with local residents, our perspective changed significantly. They explained that most of the problematic behaviour begins at night, when incidents involving drug use, crime, public disturbances, and drunk people fighting are more likely to occur. Some residents also mentioned that certain confrontations may involve knives or even guns, which made the situation sound much more serious than it initially appeared. This helped explain why we did not personally witness these problems during our visit. The struggles within the community are not always visible to someone simply just walking through the neighborhood and does not reside there.

Question 5: Do people seem calm and trustful or upset and afraid?



Your reflection

The overall impression was a mixture of both. On the surface, people seemed calm and went about their daily routines as normal. However, after speaking with residents, it became clear that there is an underlying sense of anxiety and unease. Although this was not always openly expressed, concerns about crime, safety, and the issues affecting the neighborhood suggested that many people do not feel entirely secure.

It felt as though the calmness we observed was more of an outward appearance than a reflection of how people actually feel. Beneath that calm exterior, there seemed to be a level of uncertainty and concern, particularly regarding what happens in the neighborhood after dark.

Question 6: How did talking to the people in the neighborhood change your perspective about the place?



Your reflection

The IYTT Summit Program included a description of the area from the city developers. This description included a note on the perceived safety issues of the area. This built a negative bias for us and put us on edge when we first visited the area, worried about potential safety issues that could arise. This perception however was challenged and changed when we interacted with the area ourselves. The neighborhood was not as dangerous as we had assumed. However, this may be due to the fact that we experienced it during the day and only for a few hours. Given that the area was perceived through our lens, and not that of a resident of the neighborhood, it is possible our perception is not fully accurate.

We did feel out of place and had residents looking at us, this may be due to our IYTT shirts. However, we did not experience any criminal or illegal activity and felt safe while walking and interacting with people. We do think that infrastructure change will not change the culture of the community. The neighborhood needs more art or graffiti to give it more soul and change the cold energy of the space.

The current developments feel as more of a tick box exercise and lack soul and need to be more intentional – addressing the actual needs of the community. Our initial perspective was negative but after being there, it did not make our perspective better or positive. It was difficult to get a nuanced perspective of a place from just a few hours of interaction and observation.



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