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## PREFACE

In this thesis, we become acquainted with an initiative that has emerged in the Danish civil society concurrent with Denmark experiencing an increase of asylum seekers. The initiative is called 'Venligboerne'. I have had the distinct pleasure of interviewing twelve 'Venligboere' in connection with this research. Their contributions have been inspirational and essential in order to conduct this research. Thank you very much for taking the time! You are truly worth the name, 'Venligboerne'.

Also a great thank you to my supervisor, Trine Lund Thomsen. Your insightful comments have led to inspiring discussions that have strengthened my working process. Your competent guidance has surely helped me to complete my research.

Last – but surely not least – I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my friends and family for the support and patience you have shown me. You have contributed in various ways to the completion of my thesis. Thank you!



## ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to investigate what kind of initiative 'Venligboerne' is and how it contributes to inclusion of refugees in Denmark. The research is based on twelve qualitative interviews with men and women who are participating actively in Venligboerne. Thus, research of Venligboerne is approached from a bottom-up perspective.

Theoretical concepts support the analysis of Venligboerne. For the first part of the analysis, the following concepts are used as tools to answer the question; "What kind of initiative is Venligboerne?": *collective action* and *collective identity* and *formal vs. informal relations*. In the second part, theoretical concepts that are used as tool to answer the question; "How does Venligboerne contribute to inclusion", are *recognition* and *forms of capital*.

The analysis is divided into two parts. The purpose of the first part of the analysis is to create a pre-understanding of what kind of initiative Venligboerne is. The focus is on how a collective identity and a common objective links individuals to Venligboerne. The purpose is not to investigate Venligboerne per se, but rather to provide a foundation for the research of how Venligboerne – in a special way – can contribute to inclusion of refugees based on the type of initiative it is. The second part of the analysis digs deeper into *how* Venligboerne contribute to inclusion of refugees in Denmark by analysing how Venligboerne creates a sense of belonging to a community and how Venligboerne facilitates a process of gaining access to participate to a community for refugees.

The analysis concludes that Venligboerne is an initiative that is propelled and managed by the civil society on the civil society's premise, and people are linked together by a common identity and a common goal of creating an including community for refugees. The framework of Venligboerne – or rather the lack thereof – enables the development of informal relationships that exceeds the boundaries of the activities and events. The type of relations that exist between local Danes and refugees in Venligboerne entail that Venligboerne possess something unique in terms of inclusion of refugees in Denmark. Through these informal relations that Venligboerne foster refugees and Danes interact in everyday life situations. Through their interactions, Venligboerne contribute to creating a sense of belonging for refugees. The local Danes also contribute with their social and cultural capital and by converting their own capitals into capital for refugees Venligboerne facilitate a process of refugees getting access to participate in wider communities. Furthermore, Venligboerne use of Facebook to support the development of a sense of belonging and accumulation of capital. Thereby Venligboerne use Facebook as a tool to contribute to the inclusion of refugees in a unique way.



# CHAPTER 1

## 1 INTRODUCTION

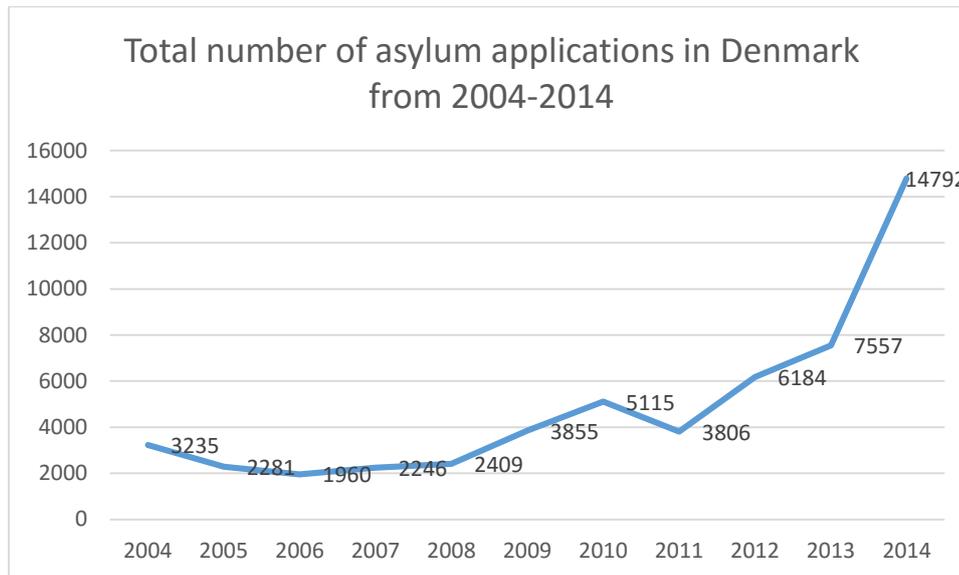
"This is not a time to take fright, it's a time of humanity and of human dignity." - Jean-Claude Juncker, European Commission President (Alliance News 2015)

### 1.2 REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE

The current situation has been called the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War (Frontex 2014; UNHCR 2015c). 80 % of the world's more than 19 million refugees have sought refuge in other developing countries – most of them in neighbouring countries. However, the conditions in the neighbouring countries are pushing a growing number of people towards Europe and further afield (UNHCR 2015a). Approximately 615 000 applicants for asylum were registered in the EU in 2014, which marked the highest level received in the EU since the EU-level data collection began in 2008 (Frontex 2014). During the second quarter of 2015, 213 200 first time asylum seekers applied for protection in the EU, and thus, the number went up by 15% compared with the first quarter of 2015 and by 85% compared with the second quarter of 2014 (Eurostat 2015). Naturally, the largest number of refugees arrives in the countries at Europe's external borders. Many countries – especially the Southern European countries – are facing increasing economic, social and political challenges, as they are the main entrance to Europe for refugees and migrants. The common EU system, the so-called Dublin Regulation, require that the individual EU countries register the asylum seekers that arrive because an application for asylum must be processed in the first EU country that the person reaches (EUR-lex 2011). Thus, according to the Dublin Regulation, the first EU-country that an asylum seeker arrives in, is responsible for meeting the rights of an asylum seeker, which involve humane material reception conditions (such as housing) and that the fundamental rights are fully respected (European commission 2012). Due to the economic instability and the increasing numbers of asylum seekers, an increasing number of countries do not register the asylum seekers that arrive in the countries (Center for Europæisk Politik 2015; Winther 2014). As the influx of asylum seekers continues at Europe's borders, the Eastern and the Northern European countries experience increasing numbers of asylum seekers as well.

### 1.2 THE DANISH CONTEXT

Denmark has experienced an increase of asylum seekers over the last four years. As it appears in figure 1, overall, the number of applications for asylum in Denmark has grown steadily since 2004.

**Figure 1**

(Danmarks statistik 2015)

When looking at the increase in asylum applications in Denmark over time, it does not necessarily mean that the world has become more of a battlefield than in earlier times. According to Castles and Miller (2009), the increase of asylum-applications rather reflects an increasingly globalised world. However, figure 1 shows a significant rise of applications for asylum since 2011. In 2011, the number was 3806 applications and the number reached 14.792 applications for asylum in 2014. This is an increase of 289 % within four years. According to Andreas Kamm, general secretary at Danish Refugee Council, the conflict in Syria is the main reason for the increase of asylum seekers within the last few years (Hvilsom 2013).

For many years, migration has been on the political agenda as well as a popular theme in the public debate in many western countries (Castles and Miller 2009). In Denmark, since the 1990s, there has been an increasing tendency in the media and public debate to portray immigrants as a threat against 'Danshiness' because they are seen as a disruptive element in the imagined culturally homogeneous national community (Olwig 2012:5). Right-wing politicians map out the imagined consequences of migration. As a result, they put forward a call for strict border control, detention of asylum-seekers, and the generally tightening of the asylum policies. The latest example is the introduction of suggestions for 34 tightening the asylum policy (e.g. changing the possibilities of obtaining family unification until after three years) (Ritzau 2015a). The public appeal of such populism is obvious: right-wing electoral success (Castles and Miller 2009:188). Most recently, at the election in Denmark in June 2015, the Danish Peoples Party (DPP) became the second largest party in Denmark (Statistikbanken 2015). In the election campaign, the debate about migrants,

asylum seekers, and refugees was dominant and the negative tone in the political debate has been criticized by international medias (Larsen 2015).

Regardless of the public debate regarding refugees, the question of refugees have been a distant issue for many Danish people (Christensen Bau 2015). Nevertheless, September 6<sup>th</sup> 2015 marks a day, when the refugee situation became obvious and present to most people in Denmark, due to pictures in the news and on the social media showing refugees walking on a Danish highway. Three hundred refugees arrived to Denmark by ferry and train to Southern Zealand (Ritzau 2015b). Although they did not aim to apply for asylum in Denmark, but walked towards Sweden by foot, this incident became a public issue debated in the Danish media.

Below is an example of one the pictures circling on the social media from the incident (Source of the picture: Ejsing 2015).



According to Rune Stubager, Professor in political science, the refugee crisis has become more relevant and therefore it influences our individual priorities (Crone, Jensen, and Nielsen 2015). This is reflected, when looking at the responses in the civil society. Many Danes wished to respond to the situation, and one of the ways they did that was by driving to Rødby, the town in Southern Zealand, where the refugees had arrived. In the TV documentary called “The refugees at E45” (DR 2015), a journalist is following a number of people who did just that. He describes the atmosphere as a frenzy of helpfulness.

This is just one example of a new tendency that seems to emerge on a local level, namely a huge drive by ordinary citizens to welcome refugees, rather than rejecting them (Baumard 2015). This tendency is further expressed by the formation of numerous activist and protest groups in Denmark. Examples are the

two online campaigns called “Nej til Støjbergs skræmmekampagne” (“No to Støjberg’s<sup>1</sup> scare tactics”) and “Anstændig flygtningepolitik” (“Decent immigration policy”). Both campaigns take place on the social media, Facebook. The latter claims on their Facebook page that: “*We are an initiative with the purpose of responding to the Government and The Danish People’s Party’s statements about refugees: A reasonable voice and an opposition*” (Anstændig Flygtningepolitik 2015). Also, a number of physical protest groups have emerged. Examples are “Flygtninge er også mennesker” (“Refugees are also humans”, “Refugees Welcome” and “Bedsteforældre for asyl” (Grandparents pro asylum). These groups are operating online as well as in real life by arranging peaceful protests. A different initiative that has gained a lot of attention in the media and on the social media is “Venligboerne”<sup>2</sup>.

### 1.3 “VENLIGBOERNE”

During the fall of 2014, a new initiative emerged, namely Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp (Venligboerne helping refugees). Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp emerged from an existing initiative called Venligboerne. Venligboerne was founded by a Danish woman called Merete Bonde Pilgaard in Hjørring - a town in Northern Jutland. The original initiative was based on a method that Merete used in a project meant for promoting health physically, mentally, and socially. The goal was to encourage a cognitive behavioural change by using the method of approaching other people with curiosity and friendliness rather than with negativity and bad assumptions. This method is based on the scientifically proven fact that when you approach people with kindness, your body produces oxytocin - a hormone that reduces stress and anxiety (Brunsted 2015). Merete created a group on Facebook and she invited people in her network into the group, which served as a platform for mutual inspiration by posting ideas of how to practice kindness. In October 2014 Hjørring received approx. 500 asylum seekers. In Meretes words: *Not everything that were said about them was nice. You could choose to be seized with a feeling of chaos or you could chose to do something about it*” (Merete in Brunsted 2015:35). Merete wrote a post on Facebook asking, who would like to join her in welcoming the new asylum seekers. A number of people responded, and one them was Mads Nygaard, who was an employee at the local asylum centre in Hjørring. According to Mads a meeting was arranged and at the first meeting ‘Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp’ was born and created on Facebook (Mads 1). The original idea of ‘Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp’ was to create a platform for the local people of Hjørring and the asylum seekers residing in Hjørring. Many different activities were arranged ranging from establishing a café at the asylum centre to arranging large celebrations of festive seasons. The initiative caught the media’s attention and it was discovered and replicated in several towns all over Denmark.

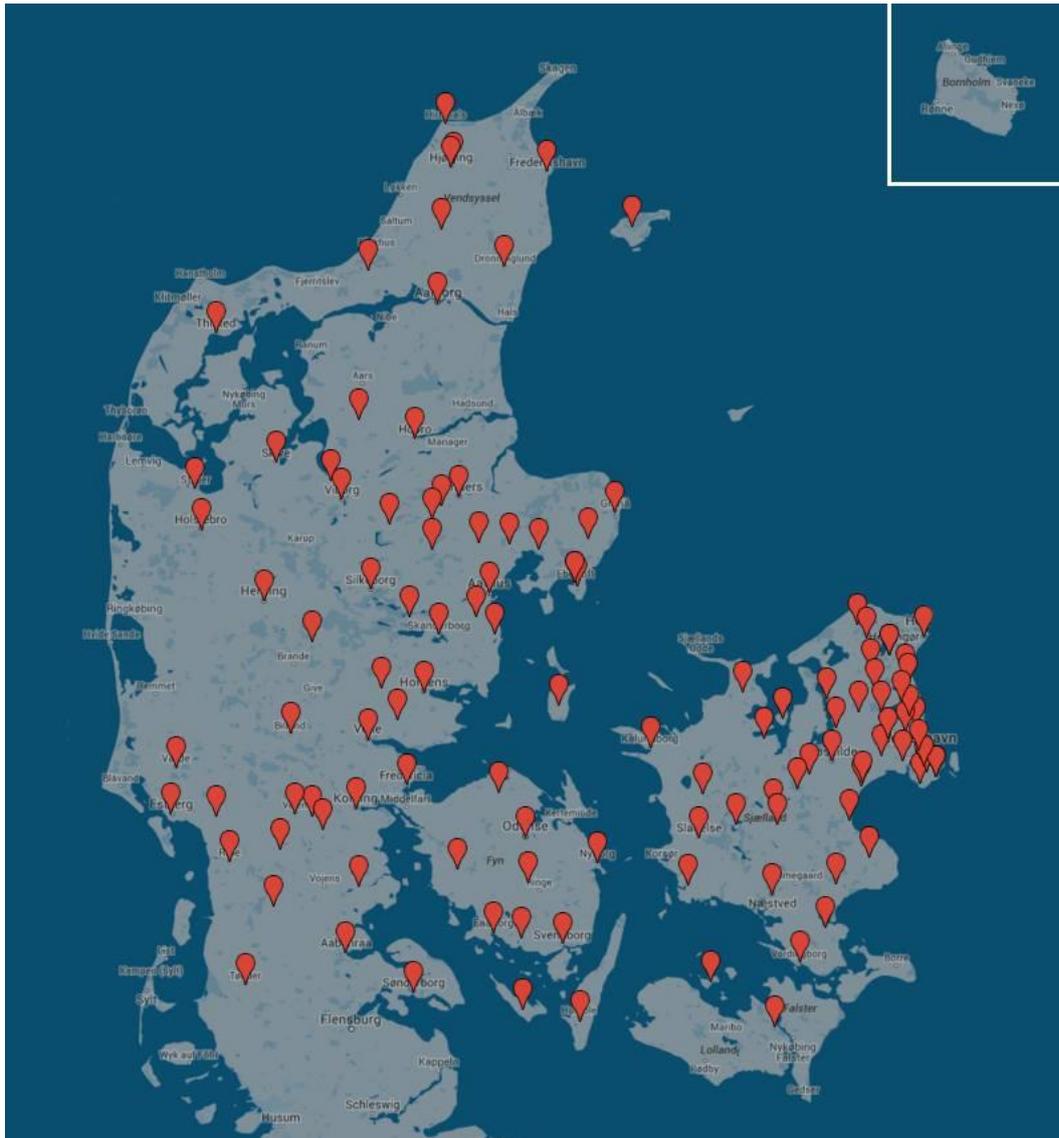
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<sup>1</sup> The Danish Minister of foreigners, integration and housing (V).

<sup>2</sup> ‘Venligboerne’ is a made up word. Directly translated it means ‘Friendly-livers’

An overview of the different Venligboer-groups on Facebook state that per November 2015, 115 local Venligboer-groups exist on Facebook. It has even spread across the Danish borders and now exists in other European countries as well. As the initiative developed it was called *Venligboerne* –instead of *Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp* even though it stilled focused on refugees.

### Map of local groups of Venligboerne<sup>3</sup>



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<sup>3</sup> The map is made on the basis a list of local Venligboer-groups. See the list on Venligbo News 2015

Venligboerne have won several prizes such as 'Årets fantastiske frivillige'<sup>4</sup> (Flaskeposten 2015), the "Hal Koch-prize"<sup>5</sup> (Nordjyske 2015) and "Enhedslistens særpris"<sup>6</sup> (Arbejderen 2015) and the general secretary of Red Cross in Denmark, Anders Ladekarl, commented on Venligboerne saying that it is one of the best establishments that has happened to Denmark (Kjeldsen and Nørgaard 2015). Venligboerne is not an organisation like Red Cross or Danish Refugee Council - but then what is Venligboerne? Venligboerne has been called many things in the media; *successful project of integration* (Jørgensen 2015), *grass-root movement* (Elling 2015), *nation-wide movement* (Skjødt 2015), *a group of volunteers* (Jørgensen 2015). Correspondingly when asking Venligboerne themselves different answers occur. Some call it a movement (Kathrine, Per: 5; Emma: 1; Hanne: 10), a digital sixties-rebellion (Emma; Bodil: 6), a community project (Mads: 4) to mention a few.

Thus, Venligboerne is a widespread initiative that has gained a lot of attention but it is not clear what kind of initiative Venligboerne is, which leads to the research question.

#### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate Venligboerne in an explorative way, guided by the following research question:

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*What kind of initiative is Venligboerne and how does it contribute to inclusion of refugees in Denmark?*

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The research question is divided into two parts. The purpose of the first part of the analysis is to create a pre-understanding of what kind of initiative Venligboerne is. The focus will be on how a collective identity unifies Venligboerne in a community that is driven by a common objective. The purpose is not to investigate Venligboerne per se, but rather to provide a foundation for the research of how Venligboerne – in a special way – can contribute to inclusion based on the type of initiative it is.

The first part of the analysis will be supported by the following sub-questions:

- What unifies Venligboerne?

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<sup>4</sup> The prize is called 'The amazing volunteers of the year' in English and is given by Coop and Samvirke along with 10.000 DKR.

<sup>5</sup> An honorary prize given by that recognise a person or an organisation and projects that is responsible for the development of democracy.

<sup>6</sup> A prize by the Red-Green alliance that comes with 10.000 DKR. The prize was given to 'Venligboerne' because they have mobilised a national network of volunteers helping people who need it.

- What is the objective of Venligboerne?
- What kind of relations does Venligboerne foster?

The second part of the analysis will dig deeper into *how* Venligboerne contribute to inclusion of refugees in Denmark. This will be done by analysing how Venligboerne create a sense of belonging to a community and how Venligboerne facilitate a process of gaining access to participate to a community for refugees. For the second part of the analysis will be supported by the following sub-questions:

- How does Venligboerne create a sense of belonging to a community?
- How does Venligboerne facilitate a process of gaining access to participate to the community for refugees?

The study is based on twelve qualitative interviews with men and women from three different regions participating actively in Venligboerne. The study adopts a narrative approach in which the unique narratives are of great significance. Thus, the focus of the research is on the individual's experience with the purpose of understanding what type of initiative Venligboerne is, and how they contribute to inclusion of refugees. Thus, Venligboerne will be approached from a bottom-up perspective.

## 1.5 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

### 1.5.1 INCLUSION

In relation to Venligboerne it makes sense to use the concept of inclusion because Venligboerne operates on a relational level – meaning that the focus of Venligboerne is on *community* rather than *societal integration*. This is reflected in a description of Venligboerne by one of my respondents: *"If there is one thing I want to avoid, it is that people think that Venligboerne is a Danish-people's-project. It is a community project!"* (Mads 4). The concept of inclusion can be defined in different ways and is often confused with the concept of social integration (Kristensen, Oberman, and Dolmer 2007). One definition of inclusion run as follows: *"Inclusion as a concept covers being considered a part of the community, being a participant, and the fact that the community compose a diversity of individuals that can be distinctive in many different ways"*<sup>7</sup>(Fisker 2010:462). Another definition states: *"Inclusion is a relational and contextual concept more than an individual oriented perspective. It is related to the individual's experienced and noticeable participation in everyday life, but also about the community's ability to enable this participation"*<sup>8</sup> (Hedetoft et al. 2002:1).

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<sup>7</sup> The quote is translated from Danish to English

<sup>8</sup> The quote is translated from Danish to English

On the basis of the definitions above, this research employs an understanding of inclusion that covers having *a sense of belonging* and a process in which individuals are *enabled to participate to the community*. In relation to refugees, inclusion is not only about having the right to participate in various communities. Inclusion also involves the community enabling refugees' participation in order to be able to contribute and experience recognition.

In chapter 3, it will be elaborated on how inclusion is operationalised as *having a sense of belonging* and *access to the resources* that are necessary in order to participate in the community.

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### 1.5.2 REFUGEE? – ASYLUM SEEKER? MIGRANT?

In the public debate different words are being used referring to the people who cross the Mediterranean Sea in order to reach safety in Europe. It is becoming increasingly common to see the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' being used interchangeably in media and public discourse (Edwards 2015). According to Adrian Edwards, UNCHR's spokesperson, confusing the two terms can have serious consequences for refugees' life and safety. Mixing the two removes the focus on the juridical claims for protection that refugees have and that can undermine the public's support to asylum as an institution (Edwards 2015)

Due to this confusion the accurate meaning of the three terms that are being confused in the public debate will briefly be defined, namely *refugee*, *asylum seeker* and *migrant*. Lastly I will argue why I choose to use the word 'refugee' throughout my research.

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#### REFUGEE

The definition of a refugee is defined in the UN's Refugee Convention from 1951. A refugee, according to the Convention, is *someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion* (UNHCR 2001). When a person is recognized as a refugee, he/she is entitled to international protection (Human Rights and Education Associates 2013).

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#### ASYLUM SEEKER

An asylum seeker is someone who claims to be a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated. The task of national asylum systems is to assess which asylum-seekers actually fit the definition as a refugee and therefore qualify for international protection. Those evaluated not to be refugees, nor to be in need of any other form of international protection, can be sent back to their home countries (UNHCR n.d.)

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## MIGRANT

A migrant is a person who chooses to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants face no such impediment to return. If they choose to return home, they will continue to receive the protection of their government (Edwards 2015).

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## MY CHOICE OF TERMINOLOGY

Thus, it is clear that the terms *asylum seeker*, *refugee* and *migrant* hold different meanings. As Venligboerne is the object of research it is relevant to note that when they claim that they help *refugees*, they do not necessarily refer to the accurate definition of refugees as it is outlined above because Venligboerne do not distinguish between the categories. In many cases, an overall term for people who might actually belong to the three different categories is used. In these cases, the term 'refugee' is used. This is done for two main reasons: 1) numbers from UNCHR show that the majority of the people who reach Europe this year actually are refugees (Holm 2015; UNHCR 2015b). Therefore, I find it reasonable to use this term. 2) Because Venligboerne primarily use the word 'refugees' to define the group of newcomers in Denmark that they target and therefore it will simplify the reading to use the same word. The focus in this study is not on the refugees but on Venligboerne, and therefore I argue that this simplification is not harmful in this case.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research is to conduct knowledge about Venligboerne in order to be able to analyse what kind of initiative Venligboerne is and how it contributes to the inclusion of refugees in Denmark. This chapter will clarify the scientific theoretical approach that guides the research and the choice of methodological approach.

#### 2.1 INSPIRATION FROM THE HERMENEUTIC AND THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

The focus of the research is on the individual's experience with the purpose of understanding what kind of initiative Venligboerne is. Thus, the research question encourages an explorative approach toward the field in order to enable a conduction of knowledge about the individual's experience of Venligboerne. In relation to the lack of research about Venligboerne, an explorative method was used when collecting the data – *the narrative interview*.

The narrative method includes elements from both the hermeneutical and the phenomenological tradition. This is because narrative research constantly seeks to generate new knowledge and understanding through conversation and text (Antoft and Thomsen 2005:157). Through a process in which the importance of the individual parts determines the whole meaning, meaning is achieved and interpreted. This process is called *the hermeneutical spiral*. The hermeneutic tradition assumes that the researcher holds a preconception of the studied field (Berg-Sørensen 2010). This can have a deterrent effect on the attempt to access the intended meanings behind a statement and being able to generate new knowledge (Antoft and Thomsen 2005:157). To overcome this issue, the phenomenological approach was adopted when collecting the data. The phenomenological approach attempts to understand the individual's perceptions, perspectives and understandings of a particular situation or phenomenon (Manen 1990). According to Husserl the phenomenological researcher must strive for *epoché*. This means that the phenomenological researcher approaches the field 'directly' and seeks to bracket his/her own basic assumptions of everyday life as well as science in order to ensure that these assumptions does not blur the perspective of the first-person's perspective (Berg-Sørensen 2010:161). Thus, the point of departure will be the respondents' subjective experiences of Venligboerne.

## 2.2 THE NARRATIVE INTERVIEW

In light of the phenomenological approach it is relevant to use an open-ended qualitative interview as a method because it seeks to understand the world from the respondent's perspective and unfolds meaning that relates to the individual's experiences (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

In a narrative interview the respondent guides the interview and therefore may reveal information that could not have been predicted. Thus, this approach is an explorative approach and leaves room for the individual's point of view (Atkinson 1998). In a narrative interview the interviewer seeks to understand the changing experiences and outlooks of individuals in their daily lives, what they see as important, and how to provide interpretations of the accounts they give of their past, present and future (Roberts 2002). Therefore, the researcher does not have themes that must be covered during the interview. However, in this research there was a predefined point of interest, namely Venligboerne. The respondents' experiences with Venligboerne were of interest and therefore, the respondents were encouraged to tell their stories about how they got involved with Venligboerne and what experiences they have had with Venligboerne. The interview started out with an open question that encouraged the respondents to tell narratives. The interview guide consisted of a number of open questions that encouraged the respondents to tell their stories freely (see Interview guide in appendix 1). In this process, Atkinson (1998) points to the importance of being aware of the role that the interviewer must play in the interview. In order to succeed in the narrative interview, the researcher must be a good guide in the process of getting the narratives from the respondent. This includes being aware that as a collaborator in the open-ended process, the researcher is never really in control of the story actually told (Atkinson 1998).

When the respondents finished their stories, questions based on the themes that the respondent brought up was asked. In the interview guide, a number of follow up questions was prepared, but only used if they were relevant for the story the respondent told. This approach allowed an explorative approach to begin with and to dig deeper into the themes that the respondents brought up.

## 2.3 CONDUCTION OF NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS

In the following the process of how the interviews were conducted in practice will be provided.

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### 2.3.1 RECRUITING THE RESPONDENTS

Gaining access to Venligboerne was not a challenging task since the communication is centred on Facebook. As mentioned in section 1.3, Venligboerne have since the beginning in Hjørring spread across the country. Therefore, I have considered different approaches as to how to sample respondents. From the beginning, I was sure that I wanted to interview Venligboerne in Hjørring because that is where Venligboerne began. I considered whether I should collect interview persons from Hjørring exclusively in order to focus on what the original idea of Venligboerne was. However, in order to be able to describe what kind of initiative Venligboerne is, the picture of an initiative that has developed from being a local initiative in Hjørring to becoming a national initiative containing more than 100 local groups must be encapsulated. I decided to interview Venligboerne in Copenhagen too because they have the biggest Facebook group and they have a large amount of different activities. In order to gain the contact to possible respondents, I posted a message in Hjørring and Copenhagen's Facebook groups. In the message, I briefly explained my research and encouraged them to contact me.

I started out by conducting the interviews in Hjørring, and after this, interviews were conducted in Copenhagen. After conducting these eight interviews, it became clear to me that there are a number of disagreements among Venligboerne in Hjørring and Copenhagen. These disagreements were related to the guidelines that the original group in Hjørring have developed. Therefore, I decided to include interviews from yet another group of Venligboerne in a different region in order to extend the picture of what happens when Venligboerne developed geographically. I decided to contact Venligboerne in a medium-sized group (the name of the group is omitted due to anonymity). Thus, the sample contains respondents from The Northern Jutland Region, the Capital Region and a group in the Mid Jutland Region.

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### PRESENTATION OF THE SAMPLE

The approach of getting respondents described above lead to the conduction of twelve interviews. Information about the respondents can be found in the table below:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Engagement in Venligboerne</b>
Kathrine	Hjørring	Development consultant in Hjørring Municipality	42	Administrator in a group on Facebook. She arranged and participated in events and meets with a number of refugees that she got in touch with through the events or thorough Facebook. Active since the beginning of Venligboerne in October 2014.
Per	Hjørring	Self-employed in his own IT company and owner of a gallery	49	Administrator in a group on Facebook. He arranged and participated in events and meets with a number of refugees that he got in touch with through the events or Facebook. Active since the beginning of Venligboerne in October 2014.
Bodil	Hjørring	Pensioner	72	Participates in events and meets with some of the refugees that she get in touch with through the events or through Facebook. Active since February 2015.
John	Hjørring	Disability pensioner	41	Primarily, John's engagement is collecting furniture and clothes that he gives to refugees. He also meets with refugees privately. John was doing these things actively before he engaged in Venligboerne.
Hans	Hjørring	High school teacher	53	Hans has been involved with Venligboerne since February 2015. He participated in a few events and he is working on arranging a movie club displaying movies from the Middle East.
Emma	Copenhagen	Part time supervisor at the University	35	Emma participates in a few events and meet with a number of people that she get in touch with through the events or thorough Facebook. She got involved with Venligboerne in July 2015.
Hanne	Copenhagen	Pensioner	62	Hanne became a member of Venligboerne Copenhagen in February 2015. In June 2015, she started up a local group on Facebook. She is the administrator of that group.
Andrea	Copenhagen	Studying	26	Andrea participated in a few events and meets with a number of people that she gets in touch with through the events or thorough Facebook. She became a member of Venligboerne around December 2014.
Mads	Copenhagen and Frederikshavn	Author	45	Mads is one of the initiators of 'Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp'. He was employed at the asylum centre in Hjørring where it started. He left the job and has spent most of his time promoting Venligboerne since then. He is in contact with

				a large amount of the various Venligboer-groups. Active in Venligboerne since the beginning in October 2014.
Martin	A town in Mid Jutland	Telecommunications technician	48	Administrator in a local Venligbo-group on Facebook. Organise events and practical help for refugees. He meets with the municipality in order to change the integration service for the better. Active since July 2015.
Laura	A town in Mid Jutland	Flex job	49	Administrator in a local group. She participated in a few events and meets with a number of people that she gets in touch with through the events or thorough Facebook. Active in Venligboerne since April 2015.
Anna	A town in Mid Jutland	Disability pensioner	58	Administrator in a local group on Facebook. She participated in a few events and meets with a number of people that she gets in touch with through the events or thorough Facebook. Active in Venligboerne since February 2015.

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### 2.3.2 CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

It was important for me that the respondents felt comfortable. Therefore, I was mindful of the importance of the place where the interview was conducted. When the appointments were made with the respondents, they were given the opportunity to choose the place. Half the interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes and the other half in public places. Generally, the interviews conducted in private homes were longer and more personal. One interview was conducted on the phone. I was aware that the phone is not well suited for a narrative interview. However, the alternative was not to include the respondent because we did not have the time to meet in person. Therefore, I decided to conduct the interview via phone anyways. As expected, the interview was not as personal as a narrative interview tends to be, but important aspects of Venligboerne did come up.

When conducting the interviews, I started out presenting my research and myself and I gave a briefing on the practicalities of the interview. During the briefing, I explained that I was interested in hearing their stories and perspectives, and therefore all the details that they find important were relevant to me (see appendix 1: Interview guide). After the briefing, I started the interview by asking the open-ended narrative question: *Will you start out by telling me about yourself?* After the opening question, I focused on being a good guide. In some cases, the respondents told freely and directed the interview towards narratives of

Venligboerne after telling about themselves. In other cases, I asked a new open question: *Do you remember how you got involved with Venligboerne?* That led the respondents to talk about their engagement in Venligboerne. In most of the cases, the interview persons told detailed narratives of both their meetings with refugees through Venligboerne and their general experience of Venligboerne. When the interview person paused, I asked a new question as openly as possible, in order to help the respondent to continue his/her narrative. When the conversation came to a point where the respondent did not talk anymore, I turned to my notes and asked the respondent to elaborate on specific issues they had mentioned during the first part of the interview. Finally, I asked if there was anything the respondent thought was important for me to know, that we had not already discussed – in order to understand what Venligboerne is. If the respondent did not have anything to add, I ended the interview.

## 2.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The basic ethical considerations are *informed consent*, *anonymity* and *confidentiality* (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). I have attempted to comply with the ethical guidelines to ensure informed consent to the extent possible. As mentioned above, I started the interviews with a briefing of the research and the interview. However, I am not able to give a full description of the research because of the inductive approach, which imply that I do not know exactly know what the focus would end up being.

Even though I attempt to secure anonymity by using different names throughout the thesis, in some cases, it is not possible to ensure complete anonymity. An example of this is if they are administrators in a Facebook-group. However, when I told the respondents that they would be anonymous, most of them told me that it was not necessary. Therefore I believe that anonymization on an overall level is sufficient.

While interviewing the respondents from the different regions, I realised that disagreements about certain parts of Venligboerne occur – especially relating to whether or not the guidelines should be followed. I will get further into the different opinions in chapter 5. Because I conducted my interviews in Hjørring first, I formed my impression of what Venligboerne is, based on what these respondents told me. When I interviewed in Copenhagen, I realised that these respondents has a different point of view on certain issues. What is relevant here is to reflect upon how I, as a researcher, respond to listening to disagreements without getting involved. I tried to focus on not bringing my pre-understanding into play. Thus, I attempted only to approach the differences based on what the respondents told me themselves.

## 2.5 CRITICAL REFLECTION UPON THE EMPIRICAL DATA

A criterion that can be applied to evaluate the quality of the empirical data is *generalisation*. This research is based on interviews with twelve men and women from three different regions. The sample in this research is very limited compared to the large amount of people who are associated with Venligboerne through Facebook. The sample size is too small to be able to conclude anything in general for all Venligboerne in all of Denmark. However, the criterion of generalisation must be viewed in a different way than in quantitative research. The aim in this context is not to identify quantitative aspects of distribution and scale, but rather qualitative aspects such as patterns and nuances (Bo 2005). Thus, my aim is to shed light on what characterise Venligboerne now. As Venligboerne is a developing initiative, it is important to note that the patterns and characteristics that are identified in this research can change. Furthermore, the picture that this research paints of Venligboerne is based on the stories of the twelve respondents interviewed. All the respondents take active part of Venligboerne. However, the largest number of Venligboerne who are in the groups on Facebook are not actively engaged with Venligboerne, but merely a part of a symbolic number. Thus, the research of Venligboerne is based on those who are active.

Regarding the age range of the respondents the majority of them are in their forties or their fifties. This is not necessarily an expression of the general age range of Venligboerne. When looking at Facebook, there are a lot of younger people as well – especially in the Capital Region. Due to the way that the respondents were recruited, I did expect to be contacted by people who considered themselves rather active in Venligboerne. That assumption turned out to be correct. Thus, the overrepresentation could be interpreted as an indicator that this age group generally is the most active in Venligboerne. Another problematic related to the sample is, that while conducting the interviews, it occurred that many of the refugees who have gained a resident permit in Denmark are Venligboerne in their new homes. As Mads pointed out, Venligboerne is not a project for Danes (Mads: 4). However, I did not get in contact with any refugees, so they are not included in the empirical data. Again, this might be due to the way Venligboerne was contacted. The post was only written in Danish on Facebook. If I had been aware of the fact that it was relevant to interview refugees, I would have posted in English as well. Because of the lack of respondents who are refugees, an important perspective might be lacking. However, I attempt to make it clear in the analysis that in many cases, refugees participate actively in Venligboerne.

## 2.6 AN ABDUCTIVE APPROACH

As mentioned above, I wish to conduct new knowledge of Venligboerne and therefore an explorative method is used. By doing so, a bottom-up approach to the empirical data is possible.

An *abductive approach*, which means that the research does not take the point of departure in an established theoretical frame. Instead, the substantial themes in the empirical data are identified and after that, theoretical concepts that can be used to analyse the themes are identified. This is called *theoretical sensitising*, and implies that the empirical data is seen through existing theory that can help explain the phenomena that emerges from in the empirical data (Antoft & Thomsen 2005).

In the chart in section 2.6.1, the themes that emerged when working through the transcriptions of the twelve interviews is presented. This approach provides a strong link between the empirical data and the theoretical framework but it is bottom-up – derived from the empirical data to theory.

The themes that are marked with a red circle; *The core of Venligboerne*, *The role of Facebook*, *The contact between people*, *Focus on resources* and *equality*, have been selected and will be continuously worked with in the analysis. They can be divided into two main themes; 1) What is Venligboerne? and 2) How does Venligboerne facilitate inclusion in Denmark? Chapter 3 will account for the theoretical concepts that will be used to analyse the interviews.

## 2.6.1 CHART OVER THEMES

Persons	The core of Venligboerne	The role of Facebook	Sending a message	Motivation	You contribute what you can and want to	The contact between people	Focus on resources	Equality	Practical and legal help	Boundaries and involvement in other people's lives	References to critique of refugees in the public debate	Comparing Venligboerne to professional initiatives
Themes												
Katrine	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Hans	X		X		X	X	X	X			X	X
Mads	X	X	X			X	X	X				X
Hanne	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Bodil	X	X		X	X	X				X		
Per	X	X	X	X		X	X				X	X
Emma	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	
John	X			X		X		X	X		X	
Andrea	X	X	X		X	X	X	X				X
Martin	X	X	X			X			X		X	
Laura	X	X				X					X	X
Anna	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	

## CHAPTER 3

This chapter introduces the theoretical concepts that will support the analysis of Venligboerne. The kind of relations Venligboerne offers to refugees can be argued to influence how Venligboerne contribute to the inclusion of refugees in Denmark. Thus, it is not only relevant to explore what kind of initiative Venligboerne is, but also what kind of relations Venligboerne foster, in order to build a foundation from which it can be analysed how Venligboerne contribute to inclusion. The chapter will be divided in two parts. In the first part theoretical concepts that will be used as tools to answer the question; “What kind of initiative is Venligboerne?”, will be introduced. The concepts are collective action and *collective identity* and *formal vs. informal relations*. In the second part theoretical concepts that will be used as tool to answer the question; “How does Venligboerne contribute to inclusion”, will be introduced. In this part, the concepts are *recognition* and *forms of capital*.

### 3.1 THEORY TO SHED LIGHT ON: “WHAT KIND OF INITIATIVE IS VENLIGBOERNE?”

#### 3.1.1 COLLECTIVE ACTION AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

To understand what kind of initiative Venligboerne is, it is necessary to explore what unifies Venligboerne and what their objective is. Therefore, two theoretical concepts will be introduced to serve this purpose; *collective action* and *collective identity*.

Collective action	Collective identity
Collective action describes the joint activity of a group of individuals to pursue the public good.	An interactive, shared process that links individuals or groups to a social movement through sustained interaction. It contains a sense of “we,” a consciousness, an oppositional culture. Collective identity can be a perception of a shared status or relationship, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly.

The terms collective action and collective identity originate from a framework called ‘New Social Movement Theory’.

The term new social movement refers to a diverse array of collective actions (Buechler 2012). There are many variations as to what is called new social movements. According to Tarrow, new social movements consist of groups of people, who share a collective identity that is centred on social solidarity, a common

identifiable cause, and ideas that are maintained and advocated over time (Tarrow 2011:4–7). Diani (2000:387) defines them as “networks of informal relationships between a multiplicity of individuals and organizations, who share a distinctive collective identity, and mobilize resources on conflictual issues”. In Melucci's (1984:825) objective, a movement is a form of collective action that is based on solidarity. According to Melucci, solidarity is the capacity for individuals to share a collective identity. Furthermore, a social movement is carrying on a conflict and it is breaking the limits of a system in which action occurs.

As these definitions demonstrate, the main goal of new social movements is to seek social change through collective action that is based on a collective identity. Furthermore, a theme in new social movement activism is a preference for organisational forms that are decentralised, egalitarian, participatory, prefigurative, and ad hoc. For these movements, their organisational form is less of a strategic tool and more a symbolic expression of movement values and member identities (Buechler 2011).

The latest addition to new social movements has been labelled online social movements. The term online social movements refers to: “[...]the adoption and use by social movements and community activists of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as the internet and the World Wide Web” (Loader 2003:1319). This includes both social movements that use information and communication technologies (ICTs) as well as social movements that take place exclusively on the internet (Hara and Huang 2011).

Historically, technology has constructively influenced social movements. With the development of ICTs from the press to the internet and lately, social media, social movement organisers have been able to distribute their ideas widely and better coordinate their activities (Hara and Huang 2011). One of the values of the use of ICTs in social movements, is that citizens, who may not consider themselves activists, are participating in online mobilisation, because through the wide use of the internet, social movements are finding ways to reach the general public (Hara and Huang 2011).

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#### 3.1.1.1 COLLECTIVE ACTION

Collective action describes the joint activity of a group of individuals to pursue the public good, and is oriented toward achieving a variety of goals (Hara and Huang 2011). For Melucci, collective action is the product of purposeful orientations that develop within a field of opportunities and constraints. He takes a constructive view of collective action that sees whatever unity or cohesion a movement achieves as an ongoing accomplishment rather than structurally or ideologically given (Buechler 2011). Thus, when it

comes to Venligboerne it can be argued that their work can be perceived as collective action that continuously construct their unity and cohesion as a group through positioning themselves as a group that stands for certain values.

In relation to online social movements, it is relevant to note that some social networking sites, such as Facebook, facilitate collective action (Hara and Huang 2011). Thus, the internet can help social movements expand, reach the general public to support consensus mobilisation, and assist action mobilisation. The point of using Facebook in the mobilisation of collective action is relevant to Venligboerne as it can shed light on the importance of Facebook to Venligboerne in terms of expanding their ideas and values that motivate their action.

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### 3.1.1.2 COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

The concept of collective identity can help understand what unifies an initiative like Venligboerne. For Melucci, the establishment and maintenance of collective identity in social movements is a major movement accomplishment; indeed in some cases it is the reason for being a movement (Buechler 2011). Melucci defines collective identity as an interactive, shared process that links individuals or groups to a social movement through sustained interaction (Carty 2011). In Melucci's objective, all social movements have an identity dimension. Collective identity is embodied in the movement, and in the movement collective identity finds realisation (Melucci 1989). Melucci 1995:48 stated that people take action for "the possibility of recognizing themselves and being recognized as subjects of their action". Furthermore, identity helps to define the realms of action and possibility as stated in the following: "individuals acting collectively ... define in cognitive terms the field of possibilities and limits they perceive while at the same time activating their relationships so as to give sense to their 'being together' and to the goals they pursue" (Melucci 1995:43). Collective identity can be a perception of a shared status or relationship, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly. By appealing to identity, social movements motivate participants through intrinsic rewards such as self-realization, personal satisfaction, and providing a sense of group belonging (Carty 2011).

In online social movements, a collective identity can be fostered by communication. Research on internet use by contemporary social movements demonstrates that the internet has the capability to foster construction of collective identity and solidarity among movement members (Hara and Huang 2011). Hara and Huang (2011) suggest that computer-mediated communication may also have the potential to 1) help cross-culture interaction, 2) enabling the sharing of ideas and 3) perhaps fostering feelings of solidarity. One way of producing a feeling of solidarity, is to use verbal encouragement. Thus, the text-based internet

serves as an ideal medium for exchanging inspiring words (Hara and Huang 2011). This way, members of online social movements can easily express their verbal encouragement to movement participants. Thus, electronic communication can act as a new means by which likeminded individuals are able to connect to each other, help form a united consciousness, and mobilise participation around a specific issue (Hara and Huang 2011).

Within the concepts of collective identity and collective action lies a perspective on how people can be linked together without being part of an organisation with given structures. Therefore, the concepts will be used as tools in the analysis to analyse the respondents' stories of Venligboerne, shed light on what unifies Venligboerne, and what their objective is. The way the concepts will be used in the analysis is to analyse how the fundamental idea of Venligboerne is linking people together through sustained interaction between members of Venligboerne locally and nationally. As it will be evident in the analysis, Venligboerne is not constituted by organisational frames. Instead, they are gathered around a common purpose and a common objective – a collective identity.

Furthermore, perspectives on online social movements are included because Venligboerne use the online social media, Facebook, as an important part of their work. This perspective will be used as a tool to understand how Facebook plays a role in unifying Venligboerne as one initiative across different geographic locations.

### 3.1.2 FORMAL VS. INFORMAL RELATIONS

To further understand what kind of initiative Venligboerne is, the next step is to explore what kind of relations an initiative like Venligboerne can foster. Therefore, in the following a theoretical concept that can serve that purpose will be introduced; formal vs. informal relations.

Formal relations	Informal relations
Professional, specified, and public relations	Unpaid and private relations
Based on a principal of equality and justice	Based on the conditions of being present
Characterised by being universalistic, functionally specialised, emotionally neutral, regulated and bureaucratic.	Characterised as particularistic, functionally diffuse, emotional, flexible, present, and personal.

According to La Cour (2014) the structures around relations influence the relations that are created. La Cour (2014) introduces two ideal types of relations, namely informal and formal.

The informal relations are the unpaid and private relations that are characterised as particularistic, functionally diffuse, emotional, flexible, present, and personal. They are based on the conditions of being present (La Cour 2014).

The formal relations are professional, specified, and public, and they are characterised by being universalistic, functionally specialised, emotionally neutral, regulated, bureaucratic, and based on a principle of equality and justice (La Cour 2014).

In short, relations can be framed by an organisation's resolutions and terms (formal relations) or by the terms of intimacy (informal). In practice, it can be difficult to separate the two, because the characteristic of informal relations can also be found in formal relations. An example of this is organised voluntarism<sup>9</sup>.

As a point of departure, La Cour (2014) points out that the relations that are created in organised voluntary work are formal. An organisation defines the content of the work and formulates more or less specified expectations to the role of the volunteer and his or her tasks. The organisation produces plans, recruit volunteers, educate them, and lead them. In that way, the relations that occur in the voluntary social work are formal, because they are different from the informal relations that are found between friends and family-members (La Cour 2014). The organised volunteerism is an example of how it can be difficult to differentiate between the two types of relations, because in most cases volunteers will appear to be 'friends'. But how can misunderstandings be avoided that one's friendliness is not an offer of friendship outside the frames of the organized activity?

The concepts of informal and formal relations will be combined with the concepts of collective action and collective identity in the first part of the analysis, in order to shed light on what kind of initiative Venligboerne is. The concepts will be used to analyse how the organisational forms of Venligboerne foster certain types of relations.

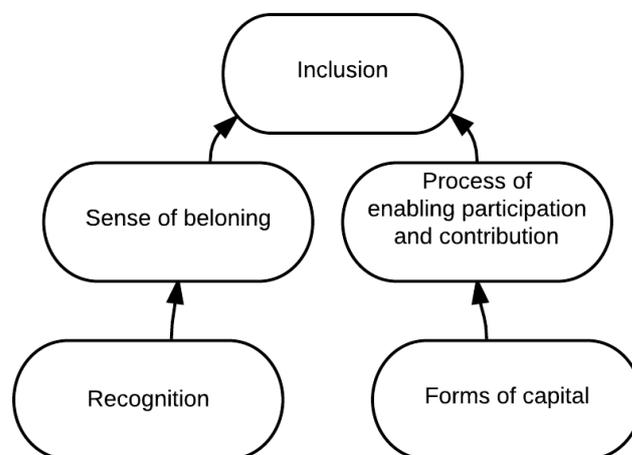
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<sup>9</sup> Understood as the voluntary social work that takes place in well-established organisations or associations.

### 3.2 THEORY TO SHED LIGHT ON: “HOW DOES VENLIGBOERNE CONTRIBUTE TO INCLUSION OF REFUGEES?”

In this section, the theoretical concepts that will be used as tools in the second part of the analysis that seeks to answer the question: “How does Venligboerne contribute to the inclusion of refugees in Denmark?” are described. In section 1.5.1, my understanding and definition of inclusion was accounted for. To sum up, when referring to how Venligboerne contribute to inclusion of refugees, inclusion covers having a *sense of belonging* and a process of *gaining access to participate*. This understanding holds a perception of inclusion as a process that must minimise and eliminate factors of exclusion where exclusion is understood as the processes through which the individual is excluded from participation in the society they live in (Hedetoft et al. 2002).

Thus, I need theoretical tools that can help me analyse how Venligboerne, create a sense of belonging and how they facilitate a process of gaining access to participate to the community for refugees. Thus, I operationalise inclusion: *sense of belonging* and *facilitating a process of gaining access*.



In the following, I will introduce Axel Honneth’s theoretical *concept of recognition*, because he operates with the understanding that the *sense of belonging* depends on the degree of *recognition*. Furthermore, I will introduce Pierre Bourdieu’s *social and cultural capital*, because they can be used a tool to analyse how Venligboerne facilitate refugees gaining social networks and cultural knowledge that can enable wider participation and contribution.

### 3.2.1 RECOGNITION

Axel Honneth has developed a theory of recognition. The theory takes its point of departure in the possibilities that individuals have of obtaining self-realisation and a sense of belonging, and provides an understanding of which conditions it requires. In the views of Honneth, being recognised by another subject is a necessary condition for attaining a full, undistorted subjectivity. In view of this claim, denying someone recognition is to deprive him of a basic prerequisite for human flourishing (Fraser and Honneth 2003:28). Thus, Honneth goes beyond the individual and emphasizes the role of the community and larger structural factors in facilitating daily coping and a sense of belonging by providing recognition.

The definition of inclusion in this thesis imply that it is necessary for an individual to feel a sense of belonging in order to experience being included. As the focus is on how Venligboerne contribute to inclusion of refugees from Venligboerne's perspective, it cannot be assessed whether or not refugees actually feel recognised from their own perspectives. However, since Honneth's theory of recognition operate with the connection between recognition and a sense of belonging, the concept of recognition in the three spheres is used to analyse how Venligboerne – through recognition, contribute to inclusion of refugees in Denmark.

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#### 3.2.1.1 THE SPHERES OF RECOGNITION

Honneth describes three different spheres of recognition: *The private sphere, the juridical sphere and the solidarity sphere*. The stages described below are neither purely beliefs about oneself nor emotional states, but involve a dynamic process in which individuals come to experience themselves as having a certain status (Anderson 1995:xii).

##### **The Private Sphere**

Honneth point to love as the condition for the subject's fundamental self-confidence. In this case, love is used to describe the primary and symmetric relations such as relationships with mother, father, children, spouse or friends (Honneth 1996:95). Emotional recognition – that is constituted by love and friendship - enables individuals to express themselves and consider themselves as someone who can take part in close relationships and societal conditions (Honneth 2003:174). The perception of the private sphere is relevant to the analysis because it appears in many of the respondent's stories that the refugees' they meet are currently in Denmark without their family or friends. Thus, in many cases Venligboerne become the primary relations of refugees. The concept provides me with a tool to analyse how Venligboerne practice

recognition of refugees by establishing close relations and thus provide a contributing factor for inclusion of refugees.

### **The Juridical Sphere**

Recognition in the form of rights secures all individuals the basic opportunities to realise their autonomy and enables the individual to experience self-esteem as a citizen. Through the universal rights that are given to all members of society, the individual is able to obtain self-respect as an equal member of society. A person without rights may have self-respect, but the highest form of self-respect can only be realised when the individual is recognised as an autonomous acting individual with rights (Honneth 2003:15–16).

It appears in the respondents' stories that often refugees do not know of their rights and their options because the majority of information they get from public services is in Danish. Thus, in Honneth's objective, it is difficult for refugees to experience themselves as autonomous acting individuals. This concept is relevant in the analysis because the respondents share stories of how they step in to facilitate and fight for the rights of refugees and concretely that information will be provided in a way that is reasonable for refugees. By doing this Venligboerne contribute to refugees obtaining self-respect as an equal member of society – and thereby can obtain the notion of being included.

### **The Solidarity Sphere**

According to Honneth, in order to experience recognition, an individual must experience that her/his participation and positive engagement is being recognised. This can happen through an experience of a relation to a group or community. This means that the individual is able to contribute to the community's whole. Through a sense of community with others in a group, individuals can recognise themselves and be recognised for their unique abilities and particular qualities (Honneth 2003:16–17). This concept is relevant in order to perceive how Venligboerne provide the opportunity for refugees to obtain recognition through being a part of a community. The concept can enable an analysis of the importance and influence that being a part of Venligboerne has for refugees.

Within the concept of recognition in the three spheres, Honneth provides a perspective on how different relations and situations holds different possibilities for refugees to obtain recognition and thereby a notion of belonging and being included. Thus, in the analysis I can use the concept of recognition as a tool to analyse the respondent stories of how they interact with refugees in different ways – and thereby shed light on how Venligboerne contribute to inclusion of refugees in Denmark.

### 3.2.2 FORMS OF CAPITAL

In order to analyse how Venligboerne facilitate access to resources that enable refugees to participate in the community and thereby contribute to the inclusion of refugees in Denmark, Bourdieu's concepts of *social* and *cultural capital* will be used. They can be used as tools to analyse how Venligboerne facilitate a process of refugees gaining social networks and cultural knowledge. These resources enable refugees' wider contribution, because possessing them enables individuals to manage oneself in different social settings, according to Bourdieu.

Bourdieu's concept of capitals holds an understanding of how the resources individuals possess either grant them or deny them access to power and recognition in the social world (Bourdieu 1986). The value of the capital is determined by the field that it is brought into play – meaning that something can be regarded as relevant and valuable in one social setting while not being regarded as such in another social setting. Through an individual's capital, he/she can gain influence in a particular field (Bourdieu 1986:242). In relation to the research, an example is that a refugee in Denmark can possess an extensive cultural knowledge that is relevant in the country of origin, but in the Danish society that particular resource is not relevant.

Capital takes time to accumulate and contains a tendency to persist in its being. The structure of the distribution of the different types of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world (Bourdieu 1986:243). Depending on the field in which it functions, capital can present itself in three fundamental appearances: *economic capital* which is immediately and directly convertible into money, *cultural capital*, which may be institutionalised in the forms of educational qualifications and cultural knowledge, and as *social capital*, made up of social connections (Bourdieu 1986:244).

In a large empirical study of successful integration, cultural knowledge was found to move barriers of integration while social connections were seen to have a fundamental role in driving the process of integration (Ager and Strang 2008). In this analysis, Bourdieu's concept of *cultural capital* can be understood as cultural knowledge while *social capital* can be understood as social connections. Therefore, in the following, *social capital* will be defined as a theoretical tool to understand the importance of social connections to the process of inclusion and *cultural capital* as a theoretical tool to understand the importance of cultural knowledge.

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#### 3.2.2.1 SOCIAL CAPITAL - SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Social capital is the aggregate of the resources, which are linked to possession of durable network, which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital (Bourdieu 1986:249). The

volume of the social capital possessed by a given individual depends on the size of the network of connections he or she can effectively mobilise and on the volume of the capital possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he or she is connected (Bourdieu 1986:250). In relation to refugees, it means that refugees will have low social capital in the country of refuge, as refugees generally do not have a social network in the new country. However, the interviews reveal that Venligboerne does provide a social network for refugees that is constituted by different types of social connections.

In the following, the different forms of social connection: *social bonds*, *social bridges* and *social links* will be outlined. This is relevant because different types of networks offer access to different kind of platforms.

### **Social bond, bridges and links**

*Social Bonds* are more enclosed networks that are oriented towards its own collective identity, which reinforces the group's internal homogeneity (Putnam 2007). Examples of social bonds are family and co-ethnic, co-national, co-religious groups. *Social bridges* are open networks that are oriented towards other social groups and the surrounding society. This type of network, typically consist of relations between people that belong to different societal layers and different ethnical groups (Putnam 2007). Venligboerne can be categorised as social bridges and the ethnical Danes will have a larger network and thus work as gatekeepers to a wider network for refugees. In a way Venligboerne can build up social capital for refugees, because they have gained access to a larger network of connections that can be mobilised.

Another type of social connection that is relevant to the analysis of Venligboerne is *social links*. While social bridges define connections between different groups, social links refer to the connection between individuals and structures of the state, such as government services (Ager and Strang 2008). An empirical study reveals that refugees' circumstances – such as lack of familiarity with their surroundings, not speaking the language etc. - led to barriers that required additional effort from both refugees and the wider community if genuine equality of access to services was to be achieved (Ager and Strang 2008:181). It is generally acknowledged in policy and practice that 'connecting' refugees to relevant services is a major task in supporting inclusion while there is many structural barriers to effective connection.

Thus, the concept of social capital can be used in the analysis in order to shed light how Venligboerne facilitate refugees' development of social network in Denmark and thereby contributing to inclusion in Denmark.

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### 3.2.2.2 CULTURAL CAPITAL – CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to education, social conventions, skills and forms of cultural knowledge. Cultural capital can be acquired to a varying extent, depending on the period, the society, and the social class, in the absence of any deliberate inculcation, and therefore quite unconsciously (Bourdieu 1986:246). Cultural capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status (Barker 2004). Thus, possessing cultural capital in the Danish society can be of vital importance for refugees in order to be included. In relation to the analysis, cultural capital must be viewed as linguistic skills and cultural knowledge understood as understanding of cultural and social codes and an understanding of the Danish society - such as the necessity of paying taxes, equality and how to communicate with public services. Ager and Strang (2008) have identified the ability to speak the language of the host community as a key area of cultural competence (Ager and Strang 2004). In a Danish context, lack of linguistic skills are perceived as a barrier for refugees in order to participate in the Danish society (Dahl and Jakobsen 2005; Spencer and Cooper 2006). Additionally, a broader cultural knowledge is necessary for refugees in order to manage oneself in the host society (Ager and Strang 2004:4).

The concepts of social and cultural capital can be used in the analysis in order to shed light on how Venligboerne facilitate refugees' development of social networks and cultural knowledge in Denmark and thereby contributing to inclusion in Denmark. The way the concepts of social and cultural capital will be used in the analysis is to analyse how the people who participate in Venligboerne contribute with their own capital to generate capital for refugees by converting different forms of capital.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4 CASE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview and understanding of Venligboerne as a basis for the analysis of what kind of initiative Venligboerne is and how it contributes to inclusion of refugees in Denmark. Therefore, this section contains a story of how Venligboerne began and provide a brief overview of the development from what it was in the beginning in Hjørring until now. Furthermore, it contains a description of how Facebook is used and how the groups work practically on Facebook. This will provide a background understanding that is necessary when entering the analysis.

#### 4.1 OVERVIEW OF VENLIGBOERNE

This section will elaborate on the description of how Venligboerne began that is provided in section 1.3, and provide a brief overview of the development from what it was in the beginning in Hjørring until now.

The respondents, Katrine and Per, have both been involved with Venligboerne since the beginning of 'Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp'. In their stories of Venligboerne they both refer to the fact that Merete's idea of Venligboerne is based on a specific method – namely practicing kindness (Per: 4; Kathrine: 2-3). The original idea of 'Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp' was to create a platform for the local people in Hjørring and the asylum seekers residing in Hjørring to meet each other – a space for practicing kindness. The first initiative of 'Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp' was to open a cafe at the asylum centre, Café Sunshine. It quickly became a success and as Mads describes: *"it quickly became the room that all the asylum seekers in Hjørring was talking about because it was so damn cosy. The small group of volunteers invited many friends to come also"* (Mads 1).

One event that is brought up as a highlight in the early development of 'Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp' in Hjørring is a Christmas celebration for Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees<sup>10</sup>. Kathrine and Mads highlight that they found out that Eritrean and Ethiopian people celebrate Christmas on January 7 just three days beforehand. They found out because someone asked them if they knew about a place they would be allowed to gather for their celebration (Kathrine: 5; Mads: 1). Mads, who worked at the asylum centre at that time, proposed to the management that the asylum centre would arrange the celebration. The response was, according to Mads, characteristic for the asylum system, namely that they could not arrange an event meant for only two nationalities when the asylum centre contained five nationalities (Mads: 1). Thus,

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<sup>10</sup> They celebrate Christmas on January 7

Venligboerne decided to arrange it. Kathrine describes the process in short: *"I went home and contacted the others asking them if we could do it? And in three days we managed to arrange this Eritrean Christmas"* (Kathrine: 5). The event turned out to be successful and a touching experience for all the people involved. According to Kathrine, after that event Venligboerne: *"accelerated because we really were hooked on that kind of events"* (Kathrine: 5). All the while Venligboerne in Hjørring ran Café Sunshine at the asylum centre and arranged more events, Venligboerne became more and more well known: *"Local people from Hjørring came by voluntarily because Facebook and the local medias had made the place quite famous. Once Venligboerne was in the local media, it was only a matter of time until it spread in the wider medias"* (Mads: 2). As the knowledge of Venligboerne spread in the news media as well as on the social media, more people wished to take part of Venligboerne.

After Venligboerne (with a focus on refugees) had existed for approximately one year and within that time had experienced an explosive development, Kathrine, who have been involved from the beginning, reflects on the initiative: *"Merete's idea was always simplicity and the method is friendliness. And it is the contact between people that is important. The Facebook group is just meant for facilitating these meetings in real life and for inspiring others and evoke happiness and recognisability – to encourage people to take action themselves"* (Kathrine: 13).

Kathrine emphasizes that the goal of Venligboerne is to create contact between people. Per agrees with that and elaborates on it: *"The large events are actually just platforms with the purpose of creating contact between people and to take an interest in each other"* (Per: 13). The awareness of this goal in the original idea of Venligboerne can similarly be found in the stories of the respondents', who have not been involved with Venligboerne from the beginning in Hjørring (Laura: 3; Hanne: 10; John: 7; Emma: 2). One example is Laura, who has started a local Venligboer-group. She accounts that the main goal of the group is to find a way to make a link between refugees and Danish people (Laura: 3). Thus, the goal of Venligboerne, defined by the early Venligboere recurs in other local groups. This will be elaborated on in section 4.2.

Kathrine also refers to the role of Facebook in her reflection of Venligboerne. She notes that the Facebook group was created 1) for the purpose of facilitating the meetings between refugees and local Danish people – specifically; mobilising and organising local people to do voluntary work at the local asylum centre, and 2) for sharing the positive experiences in order to inspire more people to participate.

As mentioned above, the news of Venligboerne started spreading, and on the social media, it started growing and people were inspired to replicate the idea. In this development, Facebook came to play a larger role than originally. In order to understand the importance of Facebook in Venligboerne's work, an introduction to Venligboerne on Facebook will be provided in the following.

## 4.2 VENLIGBOERNE ON FACEBOOK

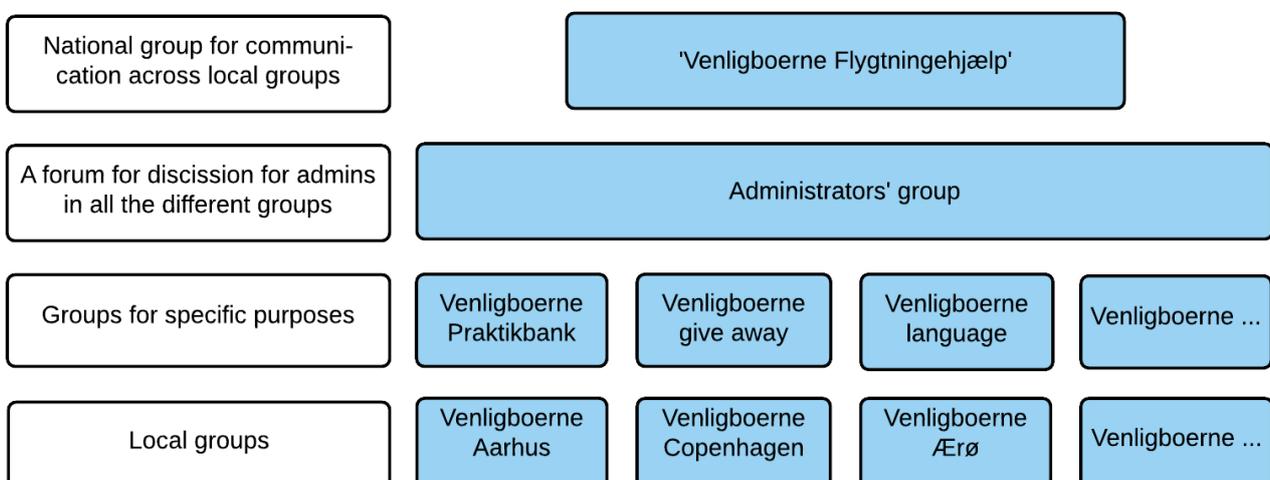
As it appears from the above, Venligboerne arrange different types of events and activities. These call for organising and mobilising. For that particular purpose, Venligboerne use Facebook. Therefore, the following will briefly describe Venligboerne’s use of Facebook.

### 4.2.1 FACEBOOK IS A PLATFORM FOR ORGANISING AND COMMUNICATION

As mentioned briefly in section 4.1, in Venligboerne’s development from consisting of one group on Facebook related to activities taking place in Hjørring to becoming an initiative that is spread geographically all over Denmark, Facebook came to play a larger role than originally.

The map of local Venligboer groups in section 1.3, indicates that there are more than 100 local groups. In these groups, everyone who wishes to be a member of Venligboerne can ask to join. The purpose of the local groups is – like in the original group in Hjørring - to facilitate meetings between local people and refugees. Besides the local groups there is a number of Venligboer-groups on Facebook that are not minded on a specific geographical locality. These groups are targeting a specific purpose. One example is ‘Venligboerne Praktikbank’ (Per: 7). This is a group where people share internship openings and job adverts and refugees can ask for help to make job applications and resumes (Emma: 4). Last but not least, there is a group for all the administrators of the different groups, where they can discuss and share experiences of how they handle different situations. In section 4.2.2 below, the role of the administrators’ group will be further elaborated on. The overall structure of Venligboerne on Facebook can be explained from figure 2 below:

**Figure 2: Overview of Venligboerne on Facebook**



Mads paints a picture of what role Facebook plays: *“In short you can say that the use of Facebook can be seen as a local hall. We are reusing the way the town gathered in the old days in a Facebook setting understood like this: each group centres around its local setting and it tries to organise the nearby civil society”* (Mads: 3). In practice Facebook works like this: the one who create the group on Facebook becomes the administrator<sup>11</sup> (admin) of that group. This is how the local Venligboer-groups are started; someone decided to open the group and call it Venligboerne. An example of this is Laura, who explains it like this: *“I noticed that many things happened in the Hjørring-group so I just had to make one like that here also. It was without anything – without anyone. I just created it. It is easy to create a Facebook group”* (Laura: 1). Thus, by using Facebook as a tool, Venligboerne becomes ‘public property’ that – as a point of departure - anyone can be part of. Exactly the fact that anyone can create a group on Facebook and call it Venligboerne poses a challenge to maintain a common thread. The fact that Venligboerne is ‘public property’ and anyone can take part in it, directs the attention towards the question: What unifies Venligboerne and ensures that Venligboerne stays Venligboerne? This will be elaborated on in chapter 5.

Thus, Facebook plays a concrete role as a tool for organising locally and sharing information across local groups. Facebook is also widely used as a platform for communication between the members of the group. The respondents point out that the groups on Facebook are for refugees as well as for local Danish people. Therefore, Facebook can also serve as a platform where refugees and Danish people can establish contact and communicate in different ways. This will be elaborated on in section 5.1.5.

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#### 4.2.2 GUIDELINES AND ADMINS

When Venligboerne started spreading and more groups emerged, Merete tried to operationalise the method of friendliness in order to ensure that her fundamental idea of Venligboerne would be grounded in the different Venligboer-groups. One of the ways was to develop a few guidelines for the groups on Facebook.

A summary of the guidelines posted in ‘Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp’:

- Be friendly, curious and respectful when meeting other people
- We do not belong to any political party
- We are not a news feed – so please don’t post news that can be found elsewhere

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<sup>11</sup> Being the administrator of a Facebook group allows you to control who joins the group and banish people from the group. Furthermore, the admin can control what is posted in the group by deleting unwanted posts. Thus, the admins in the different local groups have a role in ensuring that the guidelines are followed in the different ‘Venligboer’-groups on Facebook.

- We are not a company that makes money on friendliness and we want no posts in the group related to sales and no collections in this group either
- We don't want pictures of war and dead children in our group

(See appendix 2: Guidelines for posts on Facebook)

The guidelines are sent to the admins when a new Venligboer-group appears on Facebook. Thus, these guidelines are meant to provide a guide for the admins in order to nurture a friendly environment in the Facebook group (Martin: 5; Katrine: 13).

Furthermore, as Venligboerne increased in number of members and groups, a new initiative was taken in order to maintain common ground in Venligboerne. A closed group for admins in the different Venligboerne-groups on Facebook were created (Kathrine: 13; Per: 7; Martin: 5). Andrea describes the group like this: *"they try to make sure that all the groups maintain the same style"* (Andrea: 5). Martin explains that the admins discuss anything and everything in that group. For example, they can discuss what to do in specific cases if a member of the group posts something that is political and fosters negative debates (Martin: 5). Thus, the admins use the Facebook group for admins as a forum to discuss how to maintain the friendliness in the groups on Facebook. Sometimes it is necessary to delete posts on Facebook, because they are not in line with the guidelines (Andrea: 3-4; Kathrine: 3; Per: 6; Hanne: 9). Kathrine accounts: *"Some people think it is censor when they are not allowed to collect money or show pictures of dead children and so. But the argument is that it is the fundamental idea is something else"* (Kathrine: 3). Martin reflects on the role of the guidelines in the local groups: *"besides them the groups are actually autonomous. No, they are autonomous! But of course, an eye is kept... no not keeping an eye, that not really correct. But obviously, it is pursued that the groups comply with the guidelines that Venligboerne stand for"* (Martin: 5). Thus, the admins take on a role as an authority in the sense that they define what is acceptable action on Facebook and what is not – and that can vary from one group to another.

To summarise, Venligboerne have developed from being a local initiative in Hjørring to becoming a national initiative with local groups in more than 100 towns. Venligboerne arrange different types of events and activities where refugees and local Danish people can meet each other. These activities and events call for organising and mobilising. For that purpose Venligboerne use Facebook. Facebook provides a certain structure that Venligboerne's online practice is assigned to and use in different ways.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5 VENLIGBOERNE – WHAT KIND OF INITIATIVE IS VENLIGBOERNE?

This chapter contains the first part of the analysis that seeks to shed light on the first part of the research question: *what kind of initiative is Venligboerne?* The purpose of this part of the analysis is to create a pre-understanding of what kind of initiative Venligboerne is. This will be done by clarifying what unifies Venligboerne, what is their objective, and what kind of relations can this initiative foster. The focus will be on how a collective identity unifies Venligboerne in a community that is driven by a common objective. Within the theoretical concepts *collective action* and *collective identity* lies a perspective on how people can be linked together in one joint initiative without being framed by an organisation with given structures. Moreover, the concept of *formal and informal relations* provides a perspective on what kind of relations an initiative like Venligboerne can foster. Taken together, these theoretical concepts will be used to provide a perspective on what the respondents say about what kind of initiative Venligboerne is.

Thus, the purpose is not to investigate Venligboerne per se. Rather, the purpose is to provide a foundation for the research of how Venligboerne – in a unique way – can contribute to inclusion based on the kind of initiative it is.

#### 5.1 “THERE IS ONLY A ‘WE’”

Since the beginning Venligboerne have had their primary focus on the relations between people, when organising activities and events with refugees. Even though they are widely spread geographically, Venligboerne are still talked about as one initiative. However, they are not framed by an overall organisational setup like a humanitarian organisation. That leads to the question of what links people together in this joint initiative? What unifies Venligboerne? In this section, the fundamental idea of Venligboerne will be explored and its role as linking people together through sustained interaction will be outlined.

Many of the respondents agree that there is something that unifies Venligboerne even though many different local groups compose Venligboerne. Hanne notes that: *“There is a common thread and line”* (Hanne: 11). Andrea refers to Venligboerne as: *“a group of people who are gathered around a collective view”* (Andrea: 1). When talking about Venligboerne as a common thread and a collective view, the respondents refer to something that is not merely practical. Their ways of expressing what Venligboerne is, can be an indication of a perception of a shared status or relationship. Per supports this idea: *“We are not something you attend. We are something that you are”* (Per: 5). Also Andrea refers to Venligboerne as

something that you are: *"I am a Venligboer. It has become a part of who I am"* (Andrea: 2). Talking about Venligboerne as an identity reveals a strong identification with the collective view and the shared perception of a relationship that lies within Venligboerne. When Per refers to Venligboerne as a 'we', he indicates that this shared status or relationship is not an individual identification but rather a collective identification – a collective identity. The 'we' includes a large number of people because Venligboerne consists of 130.000 - 150.000<sup>12</sup> people who are widely spread geographically. Thus, the notion of a shared relationship or status in Venligboerne must be imagined, rather than experienced directly. Nevertheless, this is exactly what a collective identity can do, according to Melucci (cf. section 3.1.2). A collective identity is an interactive, *shared process* that links individuals or groups to a social movement through *sustained interaction*. So what is this shared relationship or status of Venligboerne about – what triggers this shared process? Something recurs in the respondents' stories, namely a common consciousness about approaching people with friendliness<sup>13</sup> (Anna: 1; Kathrine: 3; Hans: 1; Per: 8; John; Martin: 2). Per expresses it like this: *"Venligboerne is about having a consciousness that a friendly act can make a positive change"* (Per: 8). Thus, Per underlines friendliness as a central practise of Venligboerne. Martin expresses it like this: *"There is no doubt that the core of Venligboerne is practicing friendliness"* (Martin: 2). Thus, it appears that the shared status or relationship, that the people participating in Venligboerne share, is a consciousness of being and acting friendly. As the concept of collective identity indicates, this consciousness of friendliness links individuals to Venligboerne through sustained interaction. In the following, it will be outlined that in relation to Venligboerne, the sustained interactions takes place on two different platforms that are interrelated: 1) the local community and 2) Facebook.

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#### 5.1.1 SUSTAINED INTERACTION IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

It is evident in the respondents' stories of Venligboerne, that the shared consciousness of being friendly is manifested through actions. Concretely, in Venligboerne it is manifested through joint activities and events, where refugees and local Danish people spend time together. In the respondents' stories of Venligboerne, there are many examples of such activities and events (e.g. Per: 2; Emma: 5; Bodil: 6; Hanne: 12; Andrea: 2; Hans: 1; Martin: 8; Anna: 1). One example of an event is from Per's stories of Venligboerne. He explains how he arranged an event for refugees and local Danish people with the purpose of creating contacts and friendships (Per: 2). He recounts that 125 refugees and 150 local Danish people participated. They had lunch together and engaged in different kinds of activities (Per: 2). Reflecting on the event, Per

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<sup>12</sup> Based on the number that is provided in a post from January 10, 2016 on the Facebook page, 'Venligbo news'.

<sup>13</sup> When 'Venligboerne' talk about friendliness and approaching people with friendliness it involves being open-minded and curious, respectful and friendly.

expresses: *"Many personal friendships grew out of it and they have meant a lot - back then they were all asylum seekers. Now, many of them have obtained permanent resident permit and the fact that they have connections in the society that they are about to be a part of - that means a lot!"* (Per: 2). When perceiving this story through Melucci's objective of individuals acting collectively, the fact that Per highlight the outcome of the event, can be an indicator of him trying to make sense of their being together and to the goals they pursue. This event – and other activities and events within Venligboerne - can be understood as a form of collective action; the joint activity of the people participating towards pursuing the public good. In this case, the public good is to connect refugees with Danish people to ensure that they have connections in the society they have recently become a part of. Throughout the analysis, more examples of this type of events will be presented.

Thus, the collective identity that is centred on being friendly is sustained and manifested through collective action in the local communities. This example also reveals that these actions have a goal – a common objective. We will return to that in section 5.1.3.

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#### 5.1.2 SUSTAINED INTERACTION ON FACEBOOK

One way the collective identity is sustained is in the local communities by participating in collective action. However, since Venligboerne is widely spread geographically, there is a need for a broader platform to sustain the collective identity. As it appears in the following, Facebook has an important role in linking individuals to Venligboerne. This is done through sustained interaction between the members of Venligboerne nationally. In the respondents' stories, different ways to use Facebook are revealed. Three different ways of using Facebook recur, and by applying the idea of sustained interaction, they can reveal how Facebook is used to link people together in Venligboerne as one joint initiative.

##### Sharing stories

The majority of the respondents mention the importance of sharing positive stories (Kathrine; Hans; Mads; Per; Emma; Andrea; Martin; Anna). One example is Kathrine, who tells a story of how the national Facebook group ('Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp') changed its character after the group had 6000 new members in three days. The new members had joined the group after the incident on September 6, where refugees walked on the Danish highway (cf. section 1.2). Kathrine reports how the new members started to post countless of news articles in the group and thereby the posts that focus on being friendly and creating contact between people were drowning. Kathrine explains how she and a few others wished to: *"[...] shift focus to what it is really about: contact between people"* (Kathrine: 16). Thus, Kathrine and a few others started posting positive stories and pictures from concrete activities and events with refugees.

The way they used Facebook, can be seen as an example of using Facebook to foster solidarity and focus on the common purpose. The concept of online social movement provides a perspective on this sort of action. As mentioned in section 3.1, electronic communication can act as a means by which likeminded individuals are able to connect to each other and thereby help form a united consciousness. In relation to the example of Kathrine, she used Facebook as a means to form the united consciousness of Venligboerne, through sharing stories of concrete activities and events. Thus, this is an example of how Facebook is used to link individuals to Venligboerne through sustained interaction.

#### Admins communicating across different groups

As described in section 4.2.2, admins from the different local groups have a Facebook group for discussing how to maintain the friendliness in the various groups. It appears in the stories of the respondents about who are admins of the groups that they are often engaged in contact with other admins from other groups (Martin; Laura; Hanne; Kathrine; Per). This form of contact can also be interpreted as sustained interaction because they share their experiences from their local groups and thereby inspire each other. The admins can provide the local groups with the notion of being a part of a collective identity and having a common goal by referring to the common guidelines or by sharing ideas and inspiration from other local groups.

#### Using the groups to draw on a national network

In section 6.1.3, it will be outlined how the respondents use the various Venligboer-Facebook groups as an extended network. Andrea gives an example of this. She explains how a young man from Eritrea, Jonas, contacted her on Facebook because he wished to have some friends. He had just moved to Hjørring and did not know anybody. Andrea lives in Copenhagen, so she contacted Venligboerne in Hjørring. This way, Jonas was connected to local Venligboerne in Hjørring (Andrea 1). This way of using Facebook as a tool to be connected to all Venligboerne across the country, can also be seen as an example of sustained interaction. The sustained interaction between Venligboerne in Hjørring and Copenhagen, for instance, can create a notion of unity and thereby a link to Venligboerne as one joint movement.

Taken together, Facebook is used as a tool to sustain interaction between Venligboerne across different localities. Through interaction on Facebook, Venligboerne can share their common objective in different ways and help link people together in one joint initiative.

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#### 5.1.3 THE OBJECTIVE - SOCIAL CHANGE IN FORM OF INCLUSION

In the sections above it is clarified that Venligboerne is unified by a collective identity that is sustained though 1) face-to-face interaction in form of local activities and events and 2) by interaction between

members of the different Venligboer-groups on Facebook. In this section, the attention is directed towards the objective of Venligboerne.

As mentioned in section 1.3, Merete experienced a general negativity and resentment against refugees in the local community. Her idea of 'Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp' grew out of a wish to change the negative perception in the local community. Thus, the objective of Venligboerne generally seen was to seek social change. However, a more concrete objective of Venligboerne occurs in the respondents' stories.

Reflecting on friendliness as the core of Venligboerne, Hans expresses: *"The advantage of this initiative is that there is a model of friendliness. That is the premises. We are not against anyone – we are in favour of someone. We are in favour of being friendly"* (Hans: 1). Hans points to the fact that this particular approach has an embracing and including outcome. Exactly this embracing and including outcome Kathrine points out, was always Merete's objective (Kathrine: 13). She emphasizes that: *"It is about building bridges. We all agree to that"* (Kathrine: 9). Also, Mads underlines how he finds Venligboerne to be an including initiative: *"In my objective, if you are a true Venligboer, then your underlying basis is that there is no 'us' and 'them' – there is only a 'we'"* (Mads: 4). He adds to this that one thing is important for him to emphasize, namely that Venligboerne is not a 'Danish-people's-project'. Mads would rather describe it as a community project (Mads: 4). What the respondents express above, can be seen as an indicator of the objective of Venligboerne; namely creating a community that is embracing and including. This objective is also evident in practice – as Per's story of his event for local Danish people and asylum seekers in section 5.1.1 exemplifies. That is, the activities and the events that are arranged in the local communities, are directed to the purpose of connecting refugees and local Danish people. This is done to invite them into an including community. This perspective will be further developed in chapter 6.

To sum up, Venligboerne is driven by a common objective of seeking social change by creating an including and embracing community for refugees.

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#### 5.1.4 DIFFERENT – BUT THE SAME?

In the section above, the collective identity of Venligboerne was - as argued to be - a unifying factor of Venligboerne. In this section, an example of how Venligboerne has developed since the beginning in Hjørring, will serve as an indication of how the collective identity of Venligboerne must be understood as an interactive process.

The interviews with the respondents revealed that differences do exist in Venligboerne. An example of a difference between groups is the difference between the national group and the local group in Copenhagen. This is highly interesting and a relevant example in relation to understand the development of Venligboerne - and how Venligboerne is perceived as one united initiative in spite of differences. Even though 'Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp' has the status of being the national group (and is the original group), the Copenhagen group contains almost double the amount of members. About the beginning of the group in Copenhagen, Kathrine accounts that: *"They [the Copenhagen-group] emerged from us [Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp] because they thought it should be allowed to pose pictures of war and to be political in the Facebook group"*. One of the respondents refers to the division as differences between 'East and West' (Hanne: 8). As Hanne put it: *"In west, refugees are not allowed to post if they are sad. They are only allowed to post flowers and stuff like that. We think that is naive. So in East we think Facebook is a forum where refugees are allowed to say if something is sad"* (Hanne 8). In fact, in the description of the Copenhagen-group they also pose the guidelines introduced in section 4.2.2. However, there are a few changes to them. The most important one is the wording of the one about not posting certain kinds of pictures. In Copenhagen it is phrased like this: *"Please feel free to share your feelings too. Extremely disturbing pictures may be deleted"* (see appendix 2: Guidelines for posts on Facebook). Kathrine points out that the purpose of the rule of not posting disturbing pictures on Facebook is not to create an illusion that refugees are not sad, but rather to ensure that the Facebook groups is a nice and safe place to be (Kathrine: 14). Thus, the purpose of the 'West and East' is the same but they have different ideas of the concrete way to act it out. Per draws the whole issue of different approaches and positions on how Venligboerne should be to a higher level by saying: *"I am not sure if anyone have the same definition [of what it means to be a Venligboer]. That is a part of the autonomy. We stick to Merete's fundamental idea of approaching people with friendliness – and I am sure we do it in different ways"* (Per: 9). Thus, he acknowledges that there are some differences due to the integrated level of autonomy, but he does not consider the different approaches a problem; As long as the fundamental idea and goal Venligboerne is intact- or in other words – is embedded in the collective identity.

This situation illustrates that because Venligboerne is not an organisation, where the structures are provided, different perceptions of how the collective identity of being 'a friendly Venligboer' is manifested, can occur. However, the objective must remain the same. Thus, it illustrates that the collective identity of Venligboerne is developed in an interactive, shared process. Maybe exactly because Venligboerne are linked together by a collective identity, which is developed through an interactive process and profess to a common objective, Venligboerne can make up a unified initiative across different localities.

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### 5.1.5 “THEY DIDN’T UNDERSTAND IT!”

In the previous section it was exemplified that the unifying collective identity of Venligboerne is not static but on the contrary develops in an interactive shared process. However, in this section it will be exemplified how Venligboerne construct their unity and cohesion as a group through positioning themselves as a group, which stands for certain values in opposition to other values.

Two incidents will exemplify how Venligboerne appears to be a unified initiative with certain values:

The first incident is mentioned in section 5.1.2 where Kathrine reports how ‘Venligboerne Flygtningehjælp’ changed its character as a result of the 6000 new member who joined in three days and who started posting news of refugees walking on the highway. The same was experienced in other groups on Facebook: (Hanne: 7; Laura: 1). Hanne describes it like this: *“People went berserk about helping. A big part of the help was to collect clothes and throw it all around [...] something weird happened in ‘Venligboerne Copenhagen’. They got 10.000 new members in 2-3 days [...] Everything that was posted on the page before just disappeared [...] it changed its character because of these 10.000 new members”* (Hanne: 7). Both Hanne and Kathrine explain how the admins of the group used different methods in order to ‘right the group again’ (Hanne 7) and to ‘train them in friendliness’ (Kathrine 13). This can be indication of the fact that Venligboerne stands for certain values. When considering the common objective of Venligboerne as being seeking social change through creating embracing and including communities, it is clear that the turn of the Facebook activity is not in line with that common objective.

The second incident is about a woman who created a group on Facebook called ‘Venligboerne Danmark’, but it was not recognised by Venligboerne as a Venligboer-group. Mads and Laura point out that the woman did not understand what Venligboerne was about, and describes her group as self-promotion and a branding project with pictures and movies of her everywhere (Mads: 3; Laura: 13). Per and Laura explain how different people have tried to contact the woman and ask her to change the name of her group, but without any response. It has even lead to a police report for identity theft (Laura: 13; Per: 4). As a result of this incident the legal rights to the name Venligboerne was bought (Per: 4). This incident indicates how Venligboerne construct their unity and cohesion as a group through positioning themselves as a group that stands for certain values. Venligboerne respond to the group, which the woman had called ‘Venligboerne Danmark’, because they assessed that it did not stand for the same values and the same objective of creating an including and embracing community. Thus, the two examples above illustrates how the collective identity of Venligboerne is strengthened and expressed.

To sum up, it appears that the status or relationship, which the people participating in Venligboerne share, is a consciousness of 'being friendly'. As the concept of collective identity indicates, this consciousness of friendliness links individuals to Venligboerne through sustained interaction and is manifested through collective action in the local communities as well as on Facebook. The actions of Venligboerne are directed towards a common objective; achieving social change in the sense of creating an embracing and including community, which refugees can take part of. This common goal is made clear when Venligboerne construct their unity and cohesion as a group. This is achieved through positioning themselves as a group that stands for certain values and are united by a common purpose.

## 5.2 ORGANISATIONAL FORMS

As highlighted above, what unifies Venligboerne is not structures or organisational resolutions and terms. Instead people are linked to Venligboerne by a collective identity that is manifested through sustained interaction and by having a common objective. To further understand what kind of initiative Venligboerne is, the next step is to explore what kind of relations an initiative like Venligboerne can foster. Therefore, this section will clarify how the work of Venligboerne is being organised in order to shed light on the organisational forms and thus, what kind of relations develops within Venligboerne.

As it has already been clarified, the activities and events are an important part of Venligboerne, because they create a platform for the meeting between refugees and local Danish people. The organising of the different activities and events takes place in the respective local groups. Hanne describes how it works in the local group she is a part of: *"It is the resources you have that you contribute with in Venligboerne, and everyone does that and it is widely different"* (Hanne: 4). What Hanne indicates is that the activities in Venligboerne are dependent on the members. According to Per: *"It's very much up to the individual's interests and preferences"* (Per: 6). Thus, Venligboerne is built on a participatory approach instead of having a leadership that is in charge of planning and implement activities. Facebook supports this approach, by providing a platform where anyone can post his or her suggestion in the group and then other members of the group can join: *"It is like this at Venligboerne's page that people just write if they have something. Here is an example: 'I have baked a cake so I will go to the asylum centre. Come if you want to join' Then you just go there and you can eat cake together"* (John: 6). As John's example highlights anyone can contribute and arrange what they want to. Not only joint activities and events are initiated. In the respondent's stories it is described that individuals also invite a few people to dinner or on a trip. One example is Anna who invited a Syrian family over to her house. She describes: *"we just had some soft drinks and some water and we sat outside because the weather was good. And then we went for a walk"* (Anna: 1). What Anna describes resembles a very normal everyday interaction between friends. That directs the attention

towards what kind of relations Venligboerne foster. Based on the description of the time they spend together, it seems that it can be characterised as private and flexible. Based on La Cour's (2014) understanding of types of relations, the relation that Anna has to the Syrian family can be characterised as informal. Thus, this can be seen as an indication of how the participatory approach of Venligboerne fosters the development of informal relations.

In the interview with Kathrine she describes an example of the organising of an event in Venligboerne at the asylum centre in Hjørring. This example reveals characteristics of the organisational forms of Venligboerne. She recounts how a journalist contacted them and wished to do a story on Venligboerne and therefore wanted to film one of their events. As Kathrine expresses it: *"It was a good occasion to throw a party"* (Kathrine: 9). So, they planned a party at the asylum centre. In the following Kathrine describes how she experienced the organising of the event:

*"We had some money so we could buy food. While I was grocery shopping I thought to myself: How will I ever manage to cook for 100 people [...] On the morning of the party I said to my husband that I was frustrated that it all was so unorganized and chaotic [...] The moment we opened the car at the asylum centre to drag the groceries inside people came to help – Syrians. And then two people said: Oh, can we help do the cooking? I come from Morocco and I have been a chef in France and Italy and I love to cook. And then there was another: I usually clean up after them. That's the work-sharing [...] Then someone else came – he had been a chef in Aleppo. So my worries disappeared. I was degraded to being the one who could unscrew the lid of the olive oil while they just took over the cooking"* (Kathrine 9-10).

From Kathrine's description it seems like there was no centralised organising of the party. Instead it reveals the participatory approach of Venligboerne. Furthermore, the fact that the Moroccan and the Syrian chefs were able to join the preparations of the party reflects egalitarian and ad hoc organisational forms. In the example from Kathrine's story it appears that the organisational forms that characterise Venligboerne are decentralised, egalitarian, participatory, and ad hoc. Venligboerne are not framed by an organisation's resolutions and terms. In relation to La Cour's (2014) terms of informal and formal relations, the opposite is being framed by the terms of intimacy. An example of that can be seen below where it is clear that Venligboerne is based on principle of being present' rather than on a principal of equality and justice. This is evident in the story of the Christmas celebration at the asylum centre in Hjørring introduced in section 4.1. It is clear that the relations that the asylum centre can offer are based on the principle of equality and justice, as they are not willing to arrange an event for two nationalities when the asylum centre contains five nationalities. By arranging the celebration, Venligboerne on the other hand, demonstrate that their relations are based on the principle of being present.

Kathrine reflects on the relations that are developed in Venligboerne compared to what she had expected based on her experience from working with people in her professional life: *“I did not imagine that some of the people from the asylum centre would come to our home [...] how do you get involved but not get overly involved? You can’t avoid that in Venligboerne”* (Kathrine: 7). As it appears the informal relations that are developed through Venligboerne makes Venligboerne an initiative, where the relations that are formed exceeds the concrete activities and events. When relating this to La Cour’s (2014) categorisation of organised voluntarism as formal relations, because the friendships that are developed in this context are not expected to exist outside the frame of the activities, it is clear that Venligboerne is different. There are no organisational resolutions and terms that frames the being together. Instead it is centred on a collective identity that is sustained and developed through interaction.

To sum up, the organisational forms of Venligboerne are decentralised, egalitarian, participatory, and ad hoc. Therefore, any member of Venligboerne can initiate an event or an activity. It also means that there are no organisational resolutions and terms that frames the being together. As a result Venligboerne can foster informal relationships that exceeds the frames of the activities and events.

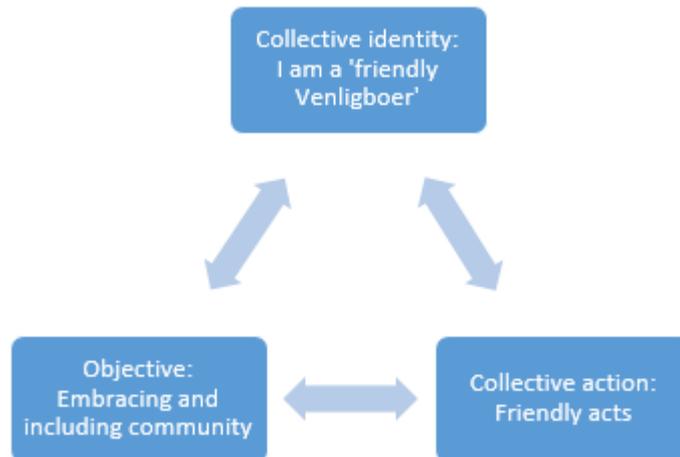
### 5.3 SUB CONCLUSION

The analysis above describes how Venligboerne can be linked together in one unified initiative even though they are spread out geographically and are not framed by an overall organisational setup like humanitarian organisations. Furthermore, it sheds light on what kind of relations Venligboerne can foster.

It appears that the shared status or relationship, that the people participating in Venligboerne share, is a consciousness of being and acting friendly. As the concept of collective identity indicates, this consciousness of friendliness links individuals to Venligboerne through sustained interaction that takes place on two different but interrelated platforms; namely in the local community and through Facebook. In the local community the collective identity is sustained and manifested through collective action in the form of activities and events for refugees and local Danish people. Furthermore, it is sustained through interaction on Facebook, where the members of different local groups can communicate with each other, exchange ideas, encourage each other through sharing positive stories and by making up a national network. Venligboerne is driven by a common objective of seeking social change by creating an including and embracing community for refugees. This objective becomes clear when Venligboerne construct their unity and cohesion as a group through positioning themselves as a group that stands for certain values as a response to initiatives that does not consist with their values and their objective.

The dynamic of the unifying factors of Venligboerne can be illustrated in figure 3 below:

**Figure 3**



As figure 3 illustrates, the collective identity of Venligboerne as a notion of 'being a friendly Venligboer' is being manifested through collective actions. The objective of the actions are creating an embracing and including community. At the same time they are interrelated; they influence each other in an interactive process. It is this interactive process of collective identity, collective action, and common objective that unifies Venligboerne and at the same time give way to certain organisational forms.

It appears that the organisational forms that characterise Venligboerne are decentralised, egalitarian, participatory, and ad hoc. Therefore, any member of Venligboerne can initiate an event or an activity. It also means that there are no organisational resolutions and terms that frames the being together. As a result Venligboerne can foster informal relationships that exceeds the frames of the activities and events.

As it is clarified above, the kind of initiative Venligboerne is, influences the relations that Venligboerne foster. In the following chapter, the significance of this specific kind of relations will be clarified.

# CHAPTER 6

## 6 HOW DOES VENLIGBOERNE CONTRIBUTE TO INCLUSION OF REFUGEES IN DENMARK?

In chapter 5 it is clarified that Venligboerne is an initiative that is defined by a collective identity, which is sustained through interaction in the local groups and on Facebook. It is this interactive process of collective identity, collective action and common objective that unifies Venligboerne and at the same time give way to certain organisational forms. It appeared that the kind of initiative Venligboerne is, influences the relations that Venligboerne foster. The decentralised, egalitarian, participatory, and ad hoc organisational forms of Venligboerne facilitate informal relations between local Danish people and refugees. In this chapter the aim is to dig deeper into *how* Venligboerne contribute to inclusion of refugees in Denmark. This aim will be met by analysing how Venligboerne creates a sense of belonging to a community and how Venligboerne facilitate a process for refugees of gaining access to participate to a community. Throughout the analysis the theoretical concepts; *recognition*, *social capital* and *cultural capital* will be applied.

### 6.1 PART OF A COMMUNITY

As it was clarified in chapter 5, a common objective of Venligboerne is to create an embracing and including community for refugees. Thus, Venligboerne is an initiative with focus on creating meetings between refugees and local Danish people, and their structures allow informal relations to occur. In the following, the significance of these relations and how they contribute to creating a sense of belonging and thereby contribute to inclusion of refugees in Denmark will be analysed.

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#### 6.1.1 "WE DANCED DABKA AND HAD DANISH SMØRREBRØD"

The following examples of concrete events reveal how Venligboerne creates the possibility for refugees to participate in the community. One concrete example of this is obvious in Kathrine's story of Venligboerne. She tells about a party that Venligboerne had arranged for asylum seekers in Hjørring because a cook had offered to cook for a large event. When the party was about to start, they realised that all the Eritrean people fasted. Therefore, there was too much food for the number of people at the party. Kathrine accounts that her husband and Merete remembered that there was an area close by where refugees were accommodated in dormitory rooms. Venligboerne had not yet been in contact with these people, but they decided to just go there and invite them to join the party. Therefore, they went there and approached a young man who was standing outside. Kathrine recite the story in detail because it had made a great impression on her: "*He said: 'What do you want?' We answered: 'We have this party over*

*there and we just want to ask You if You would like to come?’ [...] So he knocked on the door at the chairman who was Syrian. He looked so sleepy: ‘Whaaat? He said. ‘Well we would like to invite you to this party’. ‘But why?’ he said. And then Merete said: ‘because we want to be your friends.’ ‘You do?’ They had lived there for five months and they had never met any Danish people. So within no time he woke up all the people in these dormitory rooms – they were sleeping even though it was 2 pm because what were they supposed to do? They were all just like: ‘But do You want to be our friends?’ And in no time they came over to the party and we danced dabka and had dinner – it was Danish smørrebrød” (Kathrine: 6).*

When adopting the theoretical tool of recognition on the solidarity sphere to this story, a great deal of how Venligboerne contribute to inclusion is revealed. In the objective of Honneth, the refugees from the dormitory rooms got access to experiencing a relation to a community and became part of Venligboerne’s solidarity. The fact that they all danced Dabka, which is an Arab folk dance, can be perceived as an indicator of how the refugees experienced a relation to a community where their participation and positive engagement was recognised. By dancing Dabka the refugees were recognised for their abilities while they were also invited to take part of Danish traditions like ‘Danish Smørrebrød’. Thereby, the refugees got access to contribute to the community’s whole. According to Honneth, it is through a sense of community with others in a group the individuals can recognise themselves and be recognised for their unique abilities and particular qualities. Thus, through inviting refugees to participate in the event and enable them to contribute, Venligboerne provided the refugees with a sense of belonging to the community of Venligboerne and thus contributed to inclusion of refugees.

This is one example of many events and activities that Venligboerne have arranged where people are invited to join the community. In the interviews with the respondents there are many examples of such activities (e.g. Per 2; Emma 5; Bodil 6; Hanne 12; Andrea 2; Hans 1; Martin 8; Anna 1). The common denominator of these events and activities is that they enable refugees to take part of a community that is embracing and including.

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#### 6.1.2 “WE TAKE THEIR TALENTS, AMBITIONS AND WISHES AS A STARTING POINT”

In the respondents’ stories there is an underlying curiosity and openness towards refugees. For example when Anna states: *“I don’t perceive foreigners as a threat at all. I can’t! On the contrary I think they open my world to amazing opportunities [...] They have so much to give because they come from different cultures”* (Anna 3). Anna expresses an attitude towards foreigners – and therefore also refugees - that they have something to contribute with. This attitude is also reflected in Kathrine’s statement: *“outlook provided insight”* (Kathrine 2). Also Hans explains that he *“perceive these people as a resource that help us*

*grow wiser*" (Hans 1). This positive focus on refugees' resources in Venligboerne is expressed by a focus on how refugees can participate with their resources.

Hans, Mads and Per provide examples of that; Hans wanted to use the resources of Syrian refugees by inviting them to his high school class to give a presentation on religion in Syria (Hans: 1). Another example is the story of how the café at Hjørring asylum centre was started. Mads recounts: *"In Toftelund asylum centre volunteers ran the shop, thus it was a Danish-project. We wouldn't dream of it in Venligboerne. What we do is, we invite the asylum seekers inside from the first moment they arrive and then we respect them and we take their talents, ambitions and wishes as a starting point"* (Mads 2). Concretely, what Mads did was to make a note at the asylum centre and ask who would like to run the café. He received a multitude of enquiries (Mads 2). A similar example is Per, who accounts for the opening of 'Café Venligboerne' in Hjørring: *"The Syrians are very resourceful so typically they need to use their resources. So they help get the café off the ground"* (Per 6). These examples can be an indication of how Venligboerne enables refugees to participate and contribute with their resources to the community. The experience of participating and contributing is related to inclusion. Therefore, Venligboerne contribute to inclusion of refugees by focusing of refugees' resources and enabling them to use them.

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### 6.1.3 "HE PARTICIPATES IN THE FAMILY AND THE ACTIVITIES HERE"

In the previous section it is clear that Venligboerne provide a community where refugees are included in the sense that they are able to contribute. In addition to that, a common feature in the respondents' stories is how they have developed close relations with refugees through their participation in Venligboerne (Hanne 4, John 7-8; Per: 1; Kathrine: 8; Andrea: 1; Martin: 5; Emma: 3). As it was clarified in chapter 5, the structure of Venligboerne enables the relations that are formed within Venligboerne to be informal. Examples of close, informal and even family-like relations are exemplified in the following stories by Per, John and Martin, and how they contribute to inclusion of refugees in Denmark will be clarified.

Per recounts that he has gained many personal relations from the events in Venligboerne. One example is Marez, to whom Per refers as family (Per: 1). Marez is a young man who Per helped move to Aalborg in order to attend Aalborg University (how Per helped Marez will be outlined in section 6.2.2). Per recounts: *"Now, Marez lives here almost every weekend because when he is off school why should he just be staring at the wall in his apartment in Aalborg? Then it is better to come home as it is now. Then he participates in the family and the activities here"* (Per: 12). Per refers to Marez as 'son' and as Per put it: *"Marez has named me his third parent"* (Per: 1). In Per's story of his relationship with Marez, the informal character of the relationship is reflected in the sense that it is private and personal. By opening up his home and

family to Marez, the relations between them exceeds the activities that are arranged as a common platform in Venligboerne. Instead Per fills out the role as primary and symmetric relation for Marez that allows him to experience recognition in the private sphere.

A similar example can be found in John's stories. John tells the story of how he invited an African woman and her children over for Christmas because they did not have a place to celebrate Christmas (John: 2). John adds to the story that he has since developed a close relationship with this family and the children call him father. John explains: *"It is an arrangement they have. They have a father and a mother – and then they have a 'great father'. He is the one who provide for them. So I am their 'great father'"* (John 2). Like Per, John also opens his private home and fills out the role in the African family as the 'father'. By providing an informal and private relation, John contributes to recognition in the private sphere.

Martin reports personal friendships with Soher, a man who live alone in a small village waiting for family reunification. Martin recounts: *"I have no doubt that he suffers from PTSD. Some days I come over and he is just blank [...] but luckily, me and my wife know him so well by now that he found out that if he needs it he can just sit down and cry"* (Martin: 5). Martin's story of his relation to Soher reflects a personal and emotional relation. As Soher lives in Denmark without his family, Martin plays the role as a primary relation for Soher and constitute emotional recognition that enables Soher to experience a sense of belonging.

What is common in these stories is that through their engagement in Venligboerne, the respondents have developed informal, personal and devoted relations to refugees. In their stories of these relationships, it is recurring that they make up the primary relations of refugees. Thus, the respondents provide emotional recognition through informal relation that take shape as friendships – and even family-like relations - with refugees where they are enabled to express themselves. In the objective of Honneth, that relation is necessary for individuals to consider themselves as someone who can take part of close relationships and in societal conditions (cf. section 3.2.1.1). In this objective, the fact that many refugees do not have close relationships in Denmark because they arrived on their own, has a consequence for their ability to consider themselves as someone who can take part in societal conditions. Thus, by becoming the primary relations of refugees, Venligboerne practice recognition of refugees in the private sphere and thus provide emotional recognition that enables individuals to express themselves and be recognised. Because developing a sense of belonging depends on the level of the recognition an individual experience, the recognition that Venligboerne contribute to thought personal relations, is important for the inclusion of refugees in Denmark.

When considering how Venligboerne contribute to inclusion of refugees in Denmark, these private relations and their contribution to inclusion are important. In relation to the structural forms of Venligboerne that are outlined in chapter 5, this is one of the elements that clearly separate the relations that Venligboerne develop and the relations that develop in professional relations and in organised voluntarism. As La Cour (2014) points out, in organised voluntarism, the organisation defines the frames of the relation that the volunteer develop to 'the participant of the activity'. An example of this can be found in the policy of the social intercourse of Youth Red Cross. One of the sections in the policy is about the volunteers not giving 'the participant of the activities' their private phone number or e-mail addresses and not having contact privately (URK n.d.). Thus, the element of inclusion through recognition in the private sphere can be facilitated by Venligboerne because of the kind of initiative they are and thereby the type of relations they foster.

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#### 6.1.4 "FACEBOOK PROVIDES INTEGRATION"

As it appears Venligboerne create a platform for refugees and local Danish people to meet in their local communities, and thereby enables refugees to obtain a sense of belonging through participating in the community and in personal relations. The respondents point to Facebook as another important platform for getting in touch with people. Through the various Venligboer-Facebook-groups, refugees and Danes can establish contact and communicate in different ways. Andrea describes it like this: *"Almost every refugee has Facebook. And it works really well – you write in different languages on Facebook – Danish and English – and if someone writes in Arabic, there is always one who translates it. So we help each other understand"* (Andrea 3). Thus, Facebook provides a space where people can contribute with what they have and they can get in touch despite different nationalities and diverse geographical locations.

Kathrine and Mads emphasize Facebook's role in providing a space for expressing emotions and getting friendly and sympathetic responses:

*"If you know what it means for a person who have come here all by himself and doesn't know anyone [...] if he posts a picture with a flower and he gets seventeen comments and 100 likes, that just does something to people"* (Kathrine: 4)

*"I think that what happens before the physical activities is that we use Facebook as a place where they can get something off their chest or emphasize something or share something about their home countries. [...] This is what makes them feel that the groups are for them"* (Mads: 5)

In Kathrine and Mads' accounts of how the Facebook groups are used, it appears that they serve as more than a platform for planning events. It appears that through Facebook, Venligboerne provide a sense of community with others, like it is the case of the events and activities that are arranged by Venligboerne. Mads indicates that the Facebook-groups can facilitate recognition on the solidarity sphere as they serve as a platform where refugees can contribute with their unique abilities and particular qualities through sharing things from their home countries. According to Honneth, it is through this sense of community that the individuals can recognise themselves and be recognised for their unique abilities and particular qualities. Thus, it appears that Facebook is used as a tool to provide this recognition of refugees that enables them to have sense of belonging to a community.

Furthermore, Mads and Kathrine reveal that through Facebook, close relation where people can be private with each other, can appear:

Kathrine explains how messenger on Facebook is used to communicate emotions: *"[...] emoticons or these stickers that you can use for communication. I have never used so many of those before. You can describe any emotions with these stickers and we use them a lot. They provide a common language because you can express: 'Ouch, my heart is aching' or 'I am giddy right now' or 'I think you are a lovely person'. You can express all feelings with those. Facebook provides integration [laughing]"* (Kathrine 4). When Kathrine accounts of how emoticons and stickers can be used to express emotions, it is indicated that Facebook can be used as a facilitator of recognition of refugees on the private sphere. Even though the communication takes place on Facebook, and in some cases the whole relationship is based on this communication, it can be characterised as a type of primary and symmetric relation.

Mads describes the role of Facebook further: *"It is really nice to have a place – also in the middle of the night – where you can let an emotion out that is stuck with you. Get it out and experience that there are others who are sleepless too, who comment on it saying: I feel like that too right now [...] it gives you the feeling that you are not alone in the world. And when you experience that – something happen to the posts about an activity at the town square where we sing and drink coffee. Then you get the motivation to participate in these things because you feel like you know people even though you haven't met them face to face"* (Mads 5). Like Kathrine, Mads also express how Facebook is used as a platform for sharing personal emotions. In Mads' example, the communication takes place in the group and not in a private message like in Kathrine's example. This way of using Facebook indicates a way of inviting refugees to be a part of a virtual community that can provide a sense of belonging. As Mads indicates this sense of belonging that is created by being recognised by the virtual community, encourage refugees to take part of the real life activities that Venligboerne arrange as well.

Thus, Venligboerne use Facebook as a facilitator of creating a sense of belonging to a community and thereby foster inclusion, online as well as offline.

As it was mentioned in section 6.1.3, Venligboerne can contribute to the inclusion of refugees in a special way due to the kind of initiative it is. The policy of the social intercourse of Youth Red Cross was used as an example. This is relevant to Venligboerne's use of Facebook in including refugees. According to the policy of the social intercourse of Youth Red Cross, the volunteers should not be in contact with the 'participants of the activities' through social medias privately. In light of how Facebook is used as a facilitator of inclusion that furthermore is a motivator for people to participate in the real life events and activities, Venligboerne has something particular to contribute with in terms of inclusion of refugees in Denmark that is related to the type of relations that the initiative fosters.

To sum up, Venligboerne enables refugees to participate and contribute with their resources to the community in various ways, which creates a sense of belonging to the community. Furthermore, a sense of belonging depends on the level of the recognition an individual experience. It occurs that Venligboerne contribute to recognition of refugees through personal relations that are important for the inclusion of refugees in Denmark. Thus, the element of inclusion through recognition in the private sphere can be facilitated by Venligboerne because of the kind of initiative they are – and thereby the type of relations they foster.

All the while the face-to-face interaction that takes place between refugees and local Danish people in Venligboerne contribute to inclusion, which is further supported by their use of Facebook. It appears that Facebook is used as a tool to provide a sense of belonging to a community. Furthermore, the activity on Facebook is a motivator for people to participate in the real life events and activities. Thus, Venligboerne have something particular to contribute with in terms of inclusion of refugees in Denmark that is related to the type of relations that the initiative fosters.

## 6.2 FACILITATORS OF CAPITAL

In the previous section the primary focus have been on how the relations in Venligboerne contribute to inclusion by creating a sense of belonging. However, inclusion also involves a process of *gaining access to participate*. What characterise refugee's situation when they arrive in Denmark is lack of cultural knowledge, social network and economic resources. In Bourdieu's perspective the lack of these resources can have social and economic consequences for refugees because in order to be able to participate to a particular social setting - or a community - possessing the necessary resources is required. Therefore, the

following analysis will focus on how Venligboerne facilitate a process of refugees gaining access to participate to a community.

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#### 6.2.1 "VENLIGBOERNE IS AS A NETWORK WHERE WE PUT PEOPLE IN THE HOLES WHERE THEY FIT"

It appears like Venligboerne provide refugees with social relations with local Danish people. Through these different types of relationships, refugees work out social networks in Denmark - a network where refugees can also contribute with their abilities. Hans expresses it: *"You can say that when you are being put in Gannerup, you don't have this network, and you can say that I perceive Venligboerne as a network where we put people in the holes where they fit"* (Hans: 5). Hans indicates that Venligboerne make up a social network that refugees are a part of. Thus, through Venligboerne refugees gain social capital because they gain connections that can effectively be mobilised. However, in Venligboerne people also draw on their own network in order to contribute to the inclusion of refugees in Denmark.

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#### 6.2.2 "... SO I CONTACTED HER..."

The respondents share stories of how they draw on their own networks to help refugees with different issues (Per: 2; Emma: 4; Hans: 5; Bodil: 2; Bodil 3; Martin: 5; Kathrine: 8; John: 2).

One example of this is Per. As earlier mentioned, Per helped Marez arranging for him to study in Aalborg. Per describes it like this: *"Hell-bent, I succeeded in getting him to Aalborg instead of Sønder Omme. And when he came to Aalborg, I succeeded in getting him a student accommodation instead of somewhere in the periphery. And now he is at the adult education centre<sup>14</sup> instead of a school for refugees. He is attending university this May"* (Per: 2). What Per expresses here is a struggle with the system because apparently, Marez had been vitiated to Sønder Omme after he granted his residents permit in Denmark. According to the Danish Integration Act that means he is not allowed to move for three years (Socialministeriet 1998:§ 6–14). Per does not express it directly, but it is indicated that he has been struggling with the system to make an exception in Marez' case. Being able to take on such a legal matter requires particular resources that refugees are most likely not in possession of in the Danish society. Per draws on his own capitals in order to enable Marez to gain access to Aalborg University. Thereby, Per converts his own capital to Marez by facilitating a process of gaining access. By getting an education in Denmark, Marez gains access to a new social network in Denmark and the possibility to obtain social and cultural capital that is relevant in Denmark. Thus, on the basis of Per's capitals, Marez gets access to a platform that - in the longer run - can provide access to the wider community.

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<sup>14</sup> VUC

Another example is Emma, who tells that: *“I have connected him [a Syrian man she knows through Venligboerne] with different people in my network [...] he is an engineer within something technical. So because I know people in the line of business, I introduced him”* (Emma 4). Thus, Emma work as a gatekeeper to social connections, which are relevant within the line of work that the Syrian man is pursuing. This can be an indication of how Venligboerne works as a bridging network. In a way Venligboerne can build up social capital for refugees, because they have gained access to a larger network of connections that can be mobilised.

A different example of how Venligboerne draw on their own network for the benefit of refugees is found in the interview with Bodil. Bodil introduces a young man from Syria, Arma, who she got to know through Venligboerne when he was residing at Hjørring asylum centre. Arma was referred to Skagen after he was granted asylum: *“Then he is just sitting there in Skagen – bored and lonely. Then I remembered that one of my friends from the orchestra lives in Skagen [...] so I contacted her [...] now he is a frequent visitor in her house and she helped him to become a part of a Red Cross café”* (Bodil 2). As Bodil draws on her social capital in form of a large network she generates social capital for Arma.

Social networks can take on different forms and serve different purposes. In the mentioned examples, Venligboerne work as social bridges and the ethnical Danish respondents, who have larger networks, work as gatekeepers to a wider network for refugees. This way, Venligboerne can build up social capital for refugees, because through Venligboerne they have gained access to a larger network of connections that can be mobilised.

Thus, Venligboerne contribute to inclusion of refugees by working as social bridges. In the following is an example of how Venligboerne also work as social links between refugees and structures of the public system. This example is from the interview with Martin, who talks about his friend Asala from Syria:

*“Then the chief education officer calls me; He says that there is this party at the school on Friday and Nazek [Asala’s daughter] who attend the fifth grade, is allowed to attend. But Asala hasn’t replied to their request because all communication between the school and the parents takes place at the school’s intranet via an app or the internet. And Asala has never logged in [...] and the secretary tells me that it is all written in Danish. This can’t be right! So I call the language school and the job centre because there is another challenge; They have to teach our refugees, when they get family reunification, what the intranet at school is and how to use it”* (Martin: 7). It is clear that Asala’s lack of familiarity with the Danish system and not speaking the language led to barriers that required additional effort if genuine equality of access to services was to be achieved. Cf. section 3.2.2.1, it is generally acknowledged in policy and practice that ‘con-

necting' refugees to relevant services is a major task in supporting inclusion while there are many structural barriers to effective connection. In this example, Martin serve as the social link, which connects Asala with the relevant services for his situation; help communicating with the school. In this way, Martin draws on his own capital and convert it to Asala. The example above can also be analysed in the light of Honneth's concept of recognition in the juridical sphere. In this objective, Asala is not able to obtain the highest form of self-respect because it is only realised when the individual is recognised as an autonomous acting individual who know his rights and options. In this case, Asala do not know his options because all communication of this is in Danish. When Martin steps in and mediates, according to Honneth, he contributes to Asala being able to obtain self-respect as an equal member of society – and thus also can obtain a notion of being included.

In the analysis it appears that people who participate in Venligboerne share their social capital in different ways. Thus, Venligboerne generate social capital for refugees by contributing with their own capital. By expanding refugees' social networks, Venligboerne facilitate a process of gaining access to participate to a wider set of communities, which contribute to inclusion of refugees.

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### 6.2.3 "THIS IS HOW WE DO IT IN DENMARK"

What characterise Venligboerne is an ability and willingness to accumulate cultural capital for refugees, which is evident in the following.

Venligboerne have a large focus on teaching refugees to speak Danish, which becomes evident in the interviews in different ways. For one, many respondents report of 'language cafes' in the different local groups. The respondents are also generally attendant to the importance of language, because it can be a barrier for refugees in order to gain access to participate to various communities. One example is Hanne who explain that when Venligboerne arrange 'language café', "*we only speak Danish because that is something primary – we must help them learn Danish!*" (Hanne: 3). The same goes for Bodil: "*I want to help them speak proper Danish*" (Bodil: 4). She gives an example of how she corrects Jonas, a young man from Eritrea, when they chat on Facebook. She also note that Arma, her friend who lives in Skagen, asked her to ask the other Venligboerne to speak Danish instead of English with him.

The fact that Venligboerne focus on teaching the language can be seen as an indicator of how they generate cultural capital for refugees because speaking the language of the host community is a key cultural competence. In order to be able to participate in and contribute to various communities, the first step is to gain access. One example of a community is the community that a workplace constitute. Even though

Venligboerne might not be able to provide jobs directly, Venligboerne contribute to the inclusion of refugees by facilitating a process of gaining access to participate by converting cultural capital in form of linguistic skills.

Furthermore, it recurs in the interviews with the respondents how they pass on cultural knowledge in the form of understanding of the Danish society (Martin: 3; Per: 3; Kathrine: 12; Laura: 9). Martin explains that: *“Venligboerne are here to talk to them and explain them how the Danish society works. To explain what licence fee is why do children need to see the dentist and how do I schedule to see the doctor? All these things that we take for granted because this is how we do in our society”* (Martin 3). Similarly, Kathrine explains how she is specific about teaching about the Danish society: *“We tell them we they must pay licence fee. And why we pay VAT. I don’t want to shop in the Syrian grocery shop if he doesn’t pay VAT and taxes because I pay 50% of my income to you – among others – and you and you – and to myself so my children can go to school and all the things we value in our society. That means that so should you [referring to the Syrian grocer]”* (Kathrine 12). Martin and Kathrine’s stories are examples of how Venligboerne focus on teaching refugees how different aspects of the Danish society works. This is an indicator of how Venligboerne contribute to inclusion because by teaching them cultural knowledge, they convert their own cultural capital to refugees. Obtaining cultural capital in Denmark enables refugees to manage themselves and in the longer term enable them to participate in and contribute to other communities than Venligboerne. Thus, Venligboerne contribute to the inclusion of refugees because they facilitate a process of gaining access to participate.

In terms of converting cultural capital to refugees, Venligboerne also contribute with the knowledge of social norms in Denmark. One example is Bodil who explains how she had an appointment with Jonas, a young Eritrean man, to go together to the language café. However, Jonas showed up 45 minutes late. Bodil explains how she reprimanded Jonas and made it clear that: *“This is not how we do here”* (Bodil: 9). On the basis of this incident, Jonas and Bodil were able to talk about the social norm of being timely in Denmark (Bodil 9-10). Another way for Venligboerne to share the knowledge of social norms in Denmark, is a result of the type of relations that Venligboerne foster, namely the informal and private relations: *“Now she is sitting here at our dining table and listen to my teenage boys go: blah blah blah – the way they talk. And now she is beginning to understand Danish better [...] she is sitting there and she gets to understand a lot about how Danish children act and their culture. How we do at our meals and these kind of normal things”* (Kathrine: 8). The examples indicate how local Danish people in their relations with refugees can facilitate a process of refugees gaining cultural capital in form of knowledge of social norms in Denmark. The examples of how Bodil and Kathrine contribute to develop cultural capital for refugees,

is also an indication of the value of the informal relations that Venligboerne foster. By being together in private settings, Venligboerne facilitates a process of refugees obtaining forms of capital that are valued in the Danish society. According to Bordieu, the forms of capital individuals possess either grant them or deny them access to power and recognition in the social world. Thus, when Venligboerne contribute with their own capital to generate capital for refugees by converting different forms of capital, they facilitate a process of gaining access to participate to the community for refugees.

### 6.3 SUB-CONCLUSION

Venligboerne enables refugees to participate and contribute with their resources to the community in various ways. Thus, Venligboerne create a sense of belonging to the community. Furthermore, a sense of belonging depends on the level of the recognition an individual experience. It occurs that Venligboerne contribute to recognition of refugees through personal relations that are important for the inclusion of refugees in Denmark. Thus, the element of inclusion through recognition in the private sphere can be facilitated by Venligboerne because of the kind of initiative they are and thereby the type of relations they foster.

All the while the face-to-face interaction that takes place between refugees and local Danish people in Venligboerne contribute to inclusion. This is further supported by their use of Facebook as a tool to provide a sense of belonging to a community. Furthermore, the activity on Facebook is a motivator for people to participate in the real life events and activities. Thus, Venligboerne have something particular to contribute with in terms of inclusion of refugees in Denmark.

Furthermore, Venligboerne contribute to inclusion by accumulating capital to refugees. In a way Venligboerne can build up social capital for refugees, because they have gained access to a larger network of connections that can be mobilised. By expanding refugees' social networks, Venligboerne facilitate a process of gaining access to participate to a wider set of communities, which contribute to inclusion of refugees. In Venligboerne local Danish people and refugees make up personal relations, which facilitate a process of refugees gaining cultural capital in form of cultural knowledge in form of language, social and societal norms in Denmark. This is also an indication of the value of the informal relations that Venligboerne foster. By being together in private settings Venligboerne facilitate a process of refugees obtaining forms of capital that are valued in the Danish society. According to Bordieu the forms of capital individuals possess either grant them or deny them access to power and recognition in the social world. Thus, when Venligboerne contribute with their own capital to generate capital for refugees by converting different forms of capital, they facilitate a process of gaining access to participate to the community for refugees.

## CAPTER 7

### 7 CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to investigate the civil society initiative called Venligboerne. The research was guided by the research question: *what kind of initiative is Venligboerne and how does it contribute to inclusion of refugees in Denmark*. The approach for investigating the initiative has been an explorative approach in the form of twelve qualitative interviews with men and women who take active part of Venligboerne.

In the analysis of what kind of initiative Venligboerne is, the focus was on understanding what links individuals together in a joint initiative when it is spread geographically and not controlled by an organisation with predefined structures. The analysis revealed that Venligboerne is an initiative that is propelled and managed by the civil society on the civil society's premise. People are linked together by a shared status or relationship. This status or relationship that they share is a consciousness of being and acting friendly, which can be categorised as a collective identity. This collective identity links individuals to Venligboerne through sustained interaction and by having a common goal. The sustained interaction takes place on two different but interrelated platforms; namely in the local community and on Facebook. In the local community, the collective identity is sustained and manifested through collective action in the form of activities and events for refugees and local Danes. Furthermore, the collective identity of Venligboerne is sustained through interaction on Facebook, where the members of different local groups can communicate with each other, exchange ideas, encourage each other through sharing positive stories, and by making up a national network. Venligboerne is driven by a common objective of seeking social change by creating an including and embracing community for refugees.

Being an initiative that is linked together by an interactive process of collective identity, collective action, and a common objective rather than by an organisation with predefined structures, Venligboerne employ organisational forms that are decentralised, egalitarian, participatory, and ad hoc. Consequently, any member of Venligboerne can initiate an event or an activity, and there are no organisational resolutions and terms that set boundaries for the relations that Danes and refugees develop. As a result, Venligboerne can foster informal relations that exceeds the boundaries of the planned activities and events arranged by Venligboerne. The type of relations that exist between local Danes and refugees in Venligboerne entail that Venligboerne possess something unique in terms of inclusion of refugees in Denmark.

So what are the unique qualities of Venligboerne in terms of inclusion of refugees? A recurring theme is that Venligboerne enables refugees to participate and contribute with their resources to the community

in various ways. In Venligboerne the participation and contribution is facilitated by local Danes and refugees developing relationships, in which refugees can experience recognition and a sense of belonging. All the while the face-to-face interaction that takes place between refugees and local Danes in Venligboerne contribute to inclusion, which is further supported by their use of Facebook. It appears that Facebook is used as a tool to provide a sense of belonging to a community and promote motivation for people to participate in some of the real life events and activities.

Additionally, Venligboerne contribute to inclusion by accumulating different kinds of capital to refugees. Venligboerne build up social capital for refugees, because through Venligboerne refugees gain access to a larger network of connections that can be mobilised. Furthermore, local Danes draw on their own networks in different situations in order to help refugees gain access to various resources. The same is evident when it comes to cultural capital. The relations between local Danes and refugees can facilitate a process of refugees gaining cultural capital in form of knowledge of the language, social and societal norms in Denmark. By being together in private settings, Venligboerne facilitate a process of refugees obtaining forms of capital that are valued in the Danish society because local Danes contribute with their own capital. This is contributing to inclusion in Denmark because the forms of capital individuals possess either grant them or deny them access to different communities in the social world. Thus, local Danes convert their own capital to help generate capital for refugees. Thus, they facilitate a process of gaining access to participate to the community for refugees.

## 7.1 DISCUSSION

The findings presented above must be seen in light of the fact that they are based on the analysis of twelve interviews with people from four different local Venligboer groups from three different regions of Denmark. Since the local groups are autonomous there can be other elements that are relevant than the once included in this research. Furthermore, Venligboerne is continually growing in number of members and the initiative develops, which means some elements might be more or less important later on. So when investigating an initiative like Venligboerne it is necessary to be aware of the fact that the initiative is organic and therefore in constant development. In the analysis of Venligboerne it is indicated that being the type of initiative Venligboerne is - with no organisational resolutions and terms that set boundaries for the relations that Danes and refugees develop – enables Venligboerne to contribute to the inclusion of refugees in Denmark in a unique way. This leads to the question of what would happen to Venligboerne's ability to include refugees in Denmark, if they become increasingly organised and institutionalised? In a few of the interviews it was indicated that Venligboerne – to some extent – are moving toward taking on an associational structure (Per: 7; Laura: 2; Martin: 6). In fact, it was mentioned that many of

the local groups are already constituted as local associations (Laura: 2). An example of this is the group that Martin and Laura are admins in. Martin explains that the local Venligboer-group he is a part of has constituted 'Venligboerne' as an association with a board. In relation to this, he points to the obligations and responsibilities that come with being part of an association – like obtaining child protection certificates if volunteers interact with families with children (Martin: 6). This development brings the attention towards a more organised form than what is described in the analysis. In light of the concepts of formal and informal relations, the increase of frames could have an influence on the relations that develop. Therefore, it would be relevant to research this development further and analyse what consequences this might have.

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## APPENDIX 1-14

## APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Briefing**Fortæl om mig selv og undersøgelsen

Læser på AAU. Jeg bor i Randers og arbejder ved siden af studiet hos Ungdommens Røde Kors, så jeg kommer en del rundt. Har studeret sociologi og nu en kandidatuddannelse, der hedder kultur, kommunikation og globalisering. Jeg har hele vejen gennem mit studie haft meget fokus på flygtninge og har lavet flere undersøgelser, der handlede om flygtninge på den ene eller anden måde – med udgangspunkt i flygtnings oplevelser. I den seneste tid er min interesse blevet vakt meget for en anden vinkel; nemlig modtager samfundet.

For at beskrive fokus i mit speciale: Jeg undersøger civilsamfundets mobilisering, med henblik på, hvordan civilsamfundet kan bidrage til modtagelse og inklusion af flygtninge i Danmark.

Min plan er at jeg undersøger Venligboerne som case, hvor jeg beskriver Venligboerne - hvilken type initiativ er det? Hvad karakteriserer Venligboerne? Og hvordan er Venligboerne anderledes end den mere professionelt organiserede frivillighed?

Når alt dette er sagt, så har jeg valgt at gå til min undersøgende med en meget åben tilgang, hvor jeg fokuserer på Venligboernes egne perspektiver og motiver. Det betyder at det interview, jeg gerne vil lave med dig er meget med fokus på dine fortællinger, hvor jeg gerne både vil høre noget om, hvad der er gået forud for at du har engaget dig i Venligboerne og hvordan du oplever Venligboerne.

Om interviewet:

- Jeg er interesseret i din fortælling og din oplevelse af Venligboerne – det betyder at jeg opfordrer dig til at fortælle løs. Jeg kommer dog til at stille nogle spørgsmål, men de vil tage udgangspunkt i, hvad du fortæller. Jeg forestiller mig at vi både vil komme til at snakke om Venligboerne – men også om dig som person – derfor vil jeg også komme til at stille nogle personlige spørgsmål. Du må selvfølgelig altid sige fra, hvis der er nogle spørgsmål, du ikke ønsker at svare på.
- Jeg forestiller mig at interviewet vil tage omkring en times tid (?)
- Interviewet vil blive brugt i mit speciale – du vil fremstå som anonym
- Må jeg optage?

**Åbningsspørgsmål**

Vil du ikke starte med at fortælle mig lidt om dig selv?

Kan du huske, hvad der fik dig til at engagere dig i Venligboerne?

Vil du fortælle mig om Venligboerne? – hvad er Venligboerne?

Hvordan vil du beskrive dit engagement i Venligboerne?

**Opfølgende spørgsmål**Uddybende om motivation

- Hvordan kom du med i Venligboerne?
- Vil du fortælle lidt om, hvad der fik dig til at engagere dig?
- Har du lavet den slags før?
- Hvad betyder det for dig at være Venligboer?
- Hvad får du ud af at være Venligboer?

Uddybende om Venligboerne

- Hvordan fungerer de forskellige arrangementer?
- Hvem planlægger dem? Kan alle tage initiativ til et arrangement?
- Foregår alt kommunikation over Facebook?
- Hvem deltager i arrangementerne?
- Hvordan kommunikeres arrangementerne til flygtninge?
- Hvilke typer aktiviteter deltager du i?
- Hvordan vil du karakterisere de relationer du får til flygtninge gennem dit engagement i Venligboerne?
- Hvordan ser du, at det lykkedes Venligboerne at skabe inklusion i lokalsamfundet? Hvorfor tror du det er sådan?

Uddybende om interviewpersonen

- Vil du fortælle lidt om, hvad der optager dig i din fritid?
- Er du politisk aktiv/interessert?

## APPENDIX 2-14

**The following Appendix' can be found on the disc.**

Appendix 2: Guidelines for posts on Facebook

Appendix 3: Transcription of interview with Kathrine

Appendix 4: Transcription of interview with Bodil

Appendix 5: Transcription of interview with Hanne

Appendix 6: Transcription of interview with John

Appendix 7: Transcription of interview with Per

Appendix 8: Transcription of interview with Andrea

Appendix 9: Transcription of interview with Hans

Appendix 10: Transcription of interview with Mads

Appendix 11: Transcription of interview with Martin

Appendix 12: Transcription of interview with Laura

Appendix 13: Transcription of interview with Anna

Appendix 14: Transcription of interview with Emma