

local asylum:

from isolation to integration



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LOCAL ASYLUM: FROM INTEGRATION TO ISOLATION
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abstract

The thesis *Local Asylum: From Isolation to Integration* is based on the belief that urban designers and associated fields hold a purpose in the debate and the handling of refugees arriving in Denmark. The urban designers focus should be on how to unfold their toolbox in order to highlight potentials in the built environment to help create the best possible conditions for asylum seekers during their more or less temporary stay. Through exploration of the potential of new alternative forms of integration, social constellations, locations and connections, the project is developed in order to generate ideas that benefit both asylum seekers and the Danish society.

The exploration of the possibilities in the built environment is examined through research of the asylum process and the conditions the asylum seekers typically live under today as well as the effects hereof. The project proposes that we should start thinking of the asylum seekers and the asylum centres in a different way. Thus, it puts forth the approach of splitting the traditional asylum centre into smaller units and instead create decentralised centres inside existing towns in peripheral Denmark. Due to negative growth towns here often hold a large amount of empty building stock that can be used for home units, as well as existing functions that can facilitate the practical functions of the asylum centre. Decreasing the concentration of asylum seekers and mixing their everyday functions with the local functions are meant to afford integration and make their time spent in the asylum centre meaningful.

The specific design interventions affording integration are explored and developed by means of a design case in the small town of Søllested on Lolland. It pays attention to the local physical and social context that the asylum centre are placed inside, while it considers the extent of the refugee crisis by extracting universal principles that can be used when potentially implementing asylum centres in other peripheral towns. These constitute process tools for analysis, program and design that are assembled in a design guide.

III. 1 Cover art

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preface

Local Asylum: From Isolation to Integration is a master thesis developed by Andrea Dynnes, Lærke Essemann Jensen and Lars Danielsson on the MSc 04 Urban Design semester at Aalborg University, Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology.

For contributing to the realisation of the project, a special thanks must go to the asylum seekers we have met for sharing their personal stories, the locals of Søllested for their hospitality and their positive curiosity, to DFUNK, Forvandlende Fortællinger, Os Imellem, Akademisk Arkitektforening, Arkitekter Uden Grænser and The Trampoline House for letting us attend their inspiring events, and to Ditte and Camilla for their helpful supervision throughout the semester.

hello reader

Local Asylum: From Isolation to Integration is structured as follows.

The project's starting point is a personal motivation, based on the current refugee situation and the national political discourse.

From here the project itself begins with a framework of collected knowledge and information. Based on this information, an approach is chosen, which is developed into a specific design case where the vision and design are explored in a real context.

As a product of the design case, the design guide represents a tool to summarise the knowledge gained from the experiences with the design case. The design guide is meant to be read as an extension of the report, but can also be seen as an individual product that can be both inspiring and useful for other planners and designers who will be establishing asylum centres in the future.

In the end, the epilogue sums up the unified experiences and reflects upon our gained knowledge.

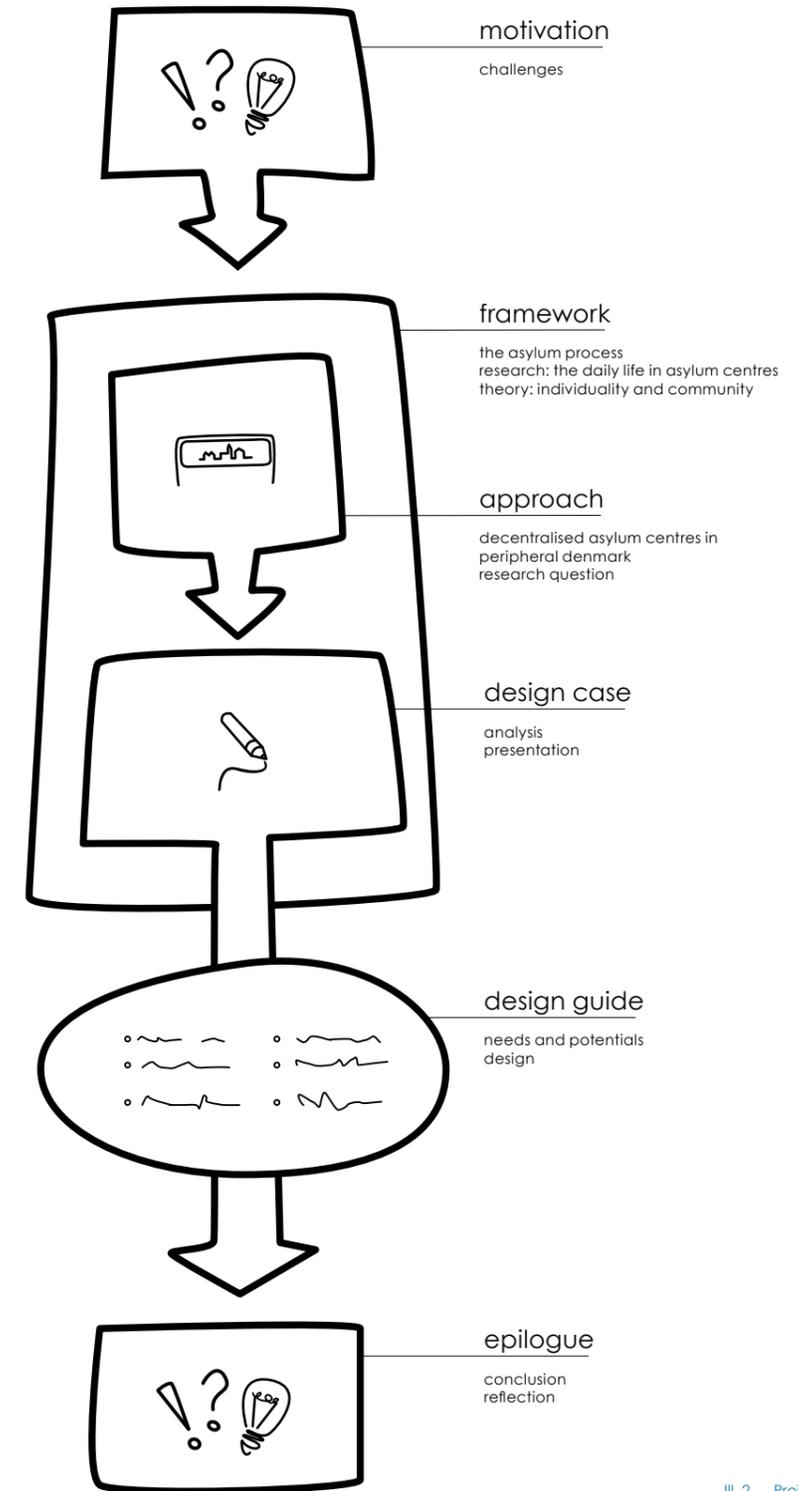
NAVIGATION

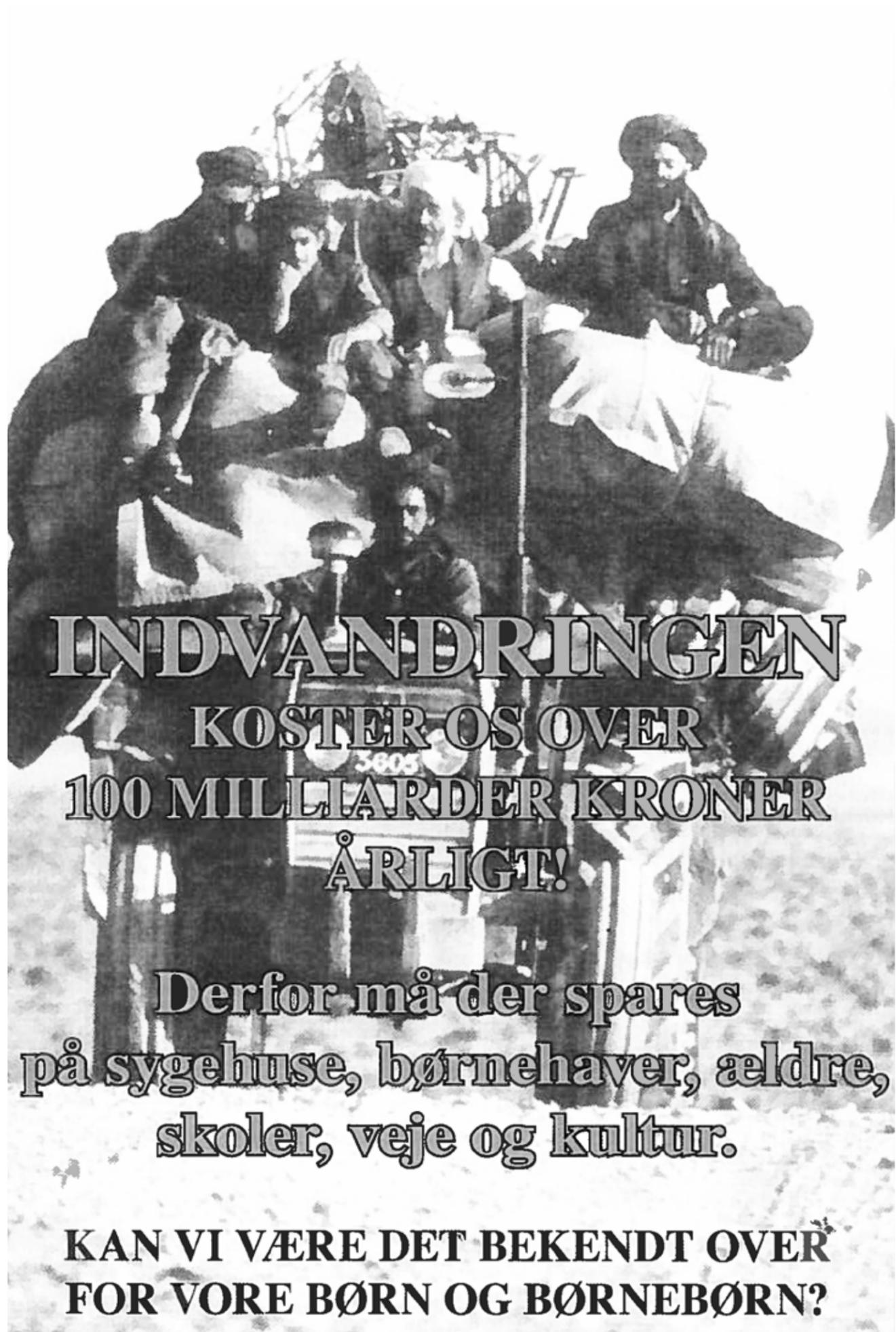
Each chapter is introduced by a short summarising text. To help navigate in the project, you will find the subject title at the top of each page.

Throughout the report, supporting notes, marked with blue, appears in the margin when elaboration is needed.

The reference system used in the report is Harvard style, based on the name and date structure.

All illustrations not references are our own illustrations.





**INDVANDRINGEN
KOSTER OS OVER
100 MILLIARDER KRONER
ÅRLIGT!**

**Derfor må der spares
på sygehuse, børnehaver, ældre,
skoler, veje og kultur.**

**KAN VI VÆRE DET BEKENDT OVER
FOR VORE BØRN OG BØRNEBØRN?**

Ill. 3 Anti-immigration flyer published by Dansk Kultur, 2016. Received in the mail 14/5-2016 at Frederiksberg, Denmark.

motivation

a review of today's challenges

This project takes its point of departure in a polarised debate about immigration policies and human welfare. This first chapter is concerned with today's challenges and how the design project is situated in the on-going political and economic debates. This is to understand the issue in its totality and the foundation for the problems and potentials this design project sheds light on.



III. 4 Nationalmuseet, n.d. Refugee camp at Kløvermarken. Amager, Denmark 1945 - 1949.



III. 5 Beredskabsstyrelsen, 2016. Tents at the asylum centre in Næstved. March, 2016.

challenges

The background for this project is the global refugee crisis that Denmark and most Western European countries became a part of in mid-2015. The global refugee situation was amplified by the Syrian civil war, which started in 2011. The war has led many Syrian civilians to flee their home, hoping to find peace and safety in Europe. The latest official count from 2014, states that 59,5 million people were displaced. The number is currently estimated to have increased. This is the highest number since the Second World War. (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2016)

The refugee crisis is not a new challenge to either Denmark or the Western European countries. There have been major refugee flows on several occasions in the past century. It is difficult to predict future refugee patterns or estimate when the current influx will decline. What is certain is that new crises will come, caused by war, climate or political reasons. However, there have been different ways of handling the past refugee inflows.

- 1945: 250.000 civilians fled to Denmark due to the Second World War. 18.000 of them were German refugees, placed in the largest refugee camp in Denmark's history on Amager. Back then, the architect Poul Henningsen was one of the few designers who fought an unsuccessful battle where he criticised the wretched conditions that the refugees were living under. (Arkitekten, 2016a)

- 1956: A whole other story is the one of the 1.000 Hungarian refugees that Denmark agreed to accommodate in 1956. At that time, getting new people to the country was exciting for the Danish people who greeted them at the border with music, tea and speeches. The government was prepared for the Hungarians to stay in Denmark, so the demand for education and jobs for them was prioritised highly in order to achieve integration. (Flugttanker, 2016)

- 1992: The influx of 20.000 Bosnian refugees in 1992 and onwards have shown to be a success in terms of integration. Today 17.829 of them still live in Denmark and studies show that a higher percentage of the Bosnian people over the age of 18 are in education, compared to their Danish peers. Birte Weis describes the success as:

"There were approximately 100 local communities with asylum centres for Bosnians. We managed to mobilise a humanistic will, not only at the local authorities, but also among thousands of common Danes. It demanded a down-to-earth, realistic approach to the task, which meant, that politically the problems that naturally occur when accepting 20.000 refugees were neither exaggerated nor understated." (b.dk, 2016)

BIRTE WEIS (1941 -)
Minister for Home Affairs for the
Social Democratic Party, Denmark
1993-1997.

The refugee crisis has led to a polarised debate, both among politicians and in the local societies, on how to deal with the high number of immigrants and how to accommodate them. The debate has come to how, on one hand, the bad conditions in the asylum centres are allowed to be in order for people not to want to come to Denmark, but, on the other hand, how good they need to be in order to be somewhat humane. Danish authorities have led a strict immigration policy to prevent the increased flow of refugees. This is called 'politics of discomfort' (Hauge et al., 2015), and includes actions as the 'jewellery law', advertisements in international newspapers about Denmark's unwillingness to welcome refugees and the opening of new temporary asylum centres. Due to this, the asylum seekers find themselves as pawns in the government's strategy to stop the crowds from coming.

The temporary asylum centres are large camps where a great number of asylum seekers live in tents or barracks at a closed off territory. The residents have few activities and have non-or little contact to the local Danish society, due to the centres being remotely located in peripheral Denmark or in the outskirts of the cities where there are vacant land. The politicians refer to these asylum centres as being perfectly humane and legitimise the use of tents based on the urgent need for accommodation, while the government's opponents have claimed these camps as being inhumane, unnecessary and a disgrace (Information, 2016). There are currently seven Danish asylum centres that are housing asylum seekers in tents.

JEWELLERY LAW - BILL L87
Bill L87 was a controversial law
passed by the government in
January 2016 that for instance
enabled the police to search and
collect valuables worth over 10.000
DKK from refugees upon arrival.

MORTEN GOLL
 Director & Internship/Volunteer
 Coordinator at the Trampoline
 House - an independent community
 centre in Copenhagen that provides
 refugees and asylum seekers in
 Denmark with a place of support,
 community, and purpose.
 (Trampoline House, 2016)

The camp's structure facilitates no or little contact with the local society, which is unfortunate for the asylum seekers well-being and possibility to integrate. The whole asylum policy might lead to asylum seekers being poorly integrated, having low language skills and little ability to enter the job market. Morten Goll (2016) highlights that 47 % of asylum seekers become social clients who receive unemployment benefits and do not pay taxes.

This highlights the economical aspects of the debate and question whether or not the current approach is a good deal economically for the government. On the one hand, the country does not have to spend a lot of money on the refugees to begin with, which could have a negative economic effect in the long run due to the people with refugee background not being integrated properly. In other words, the tents and barracks are cheap, but has no exit-value. On the other hand, spending a lot of money on the asylum seekers now could have a positive effect on integration and thereby the economic turnout in the long run. However, the latter can cause the flow of refugees to Denmark to grow and become even more of an expense and, some might say, a threat to the Danish society and culture.

The project takes point of departure in the belief that the isolated and closed off asylum centres are a bad starting point for integration. It is a problem because contact, both passive and active, with local residents is a key element in understanding the Danish society and the Danish language. It is especially important to learn the Danish language in order to get a job. Furthermore, the government policy towards asylum seekers legalizes the nation's view of these people as second-class. The poor living conditions at asylum centres symbolises a significant difference from how average Danish people live. This confirms the impression of 'us' and 'them'.

The problems of the conditions in Danish asylum centres are also being debated among architects. In a feature in Politiken, Søren Rasmussen and Johan Galster pinpoint that studies made about the Bosnian refugees from the 1990s show that the people who were integrated the best were also the ones that were most likely to return to their home country. (Politiken, 2016c) This is also touched upon by Peder Duelund Mortensen in the following question:

"Can they [the asylum seekers] during the next possibly many years on temporary residence permit without any participation in the daily life and integration in the life of the surrounding society develop competences, hope and trust to be able to return to their home and contribute to the reconstruction of their home country?" (Arkitekten, 2016b).

The importance of integration and acquisition of resources is elaborated upon in the framework chapter by a wider range of professions such as sociologists and anthropologists.

It is apparent that there are various elements to this very complex refugee discussion, such as politics, economy, planning, prejudice, morals and welfare. Architects, engineers, planners and urban designers have an influence in society and the skills and knowledge from the profession that can contribute to this important discussion. This project focuses on unfolding the designers' toolbox in order to highlight possible alternative ways of living that will improve the well-being of the refugees staying in Denmark as asylum seekers. Thus, this project does not revolve around the economic and political questions about the refugee crisis. Instead it seeks to uncover the professional expertise that designers hold when it comes to assessing the applicability and quality of the built and social environment that the asylum seekers live within. Simultaneously, it serves as an input in the debate about how to meet the refugees, not as political pawns, but as people who come to the country seeking safety and recognition.

The project seeks to change the way we consider the refugee crisis and look at it as a possibility instead of a problem. The current temporary asylum centres set in tent and barracks are no better than the camps that were established 70 years ago. The vision for this project is to come up with a proposal on how to integrate the asylum seekers and at the same time give the Danish society some additional qualities by taking part in the integration process. This should serve as an example of how to achieve more long-term sustainable solutions that secures a more humane asylum process.

SØREN RASMUSSEN
 Architect and owner of
 ONV Architects.

JOHAN GALSTER
 Development director at
 2+1 Idébureau.

PEDER DUELUND MORTENSEN
 Architect and associate professor at
 The Royal Danish Academy of Fine
 Arts.



Ill. 6 Klint, 2015. Daily life at a Danish asylum centre, 2015.



III. 7 Fortællinger på Flugt. DRUNK, 2016.

This chapter contains analyses and research of the current asylum process and asylum centres as well as theoretical framework concerning individuality and community. This is to give insight into how the asylum seekers live and how the given environments affect their quality of life and well-being.

framework

today's situation
individuality and community



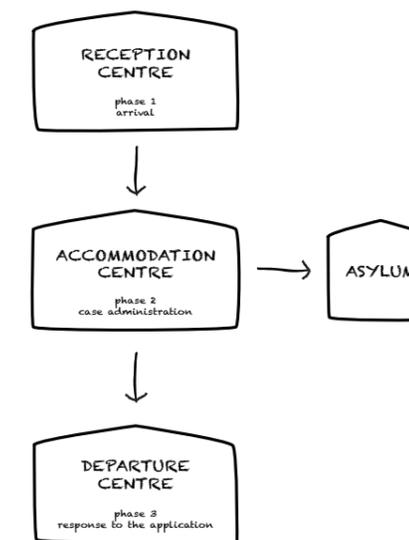
III. 8 Klougart, 2015. Woman holding her asylum identification. 'Hyttebyen' asylum centre in Hjørring, Denmark, September 2015.

the asylum process

In order to understand the background for the project, the asylum process – including the different steps and time span – must be understood and seen as a whole. The Danish asylum process can roughly be divided into three phases:

- Phase 1 – Arrival
- Phase 2 – Case administration
- Phase 3 – Response to the application

The term 'refugee' was in 1951 defined by the United Nations (UN) Refugee Convention as a person who:
"Due to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his or her nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him- or herself of the protection of that country." (UNHCR, 2016)



III. 9 The three phases of the asylum procedure.

There are several ways of receiving asylum in Denmark. One of them is to fulfil the definition as a refugee defined by the UN Refugee Convention, or by being at risk of inhumane and degrading treatment as the death penalty or torture. In Denmark, an asylum seeker can thereby be defined as a person applying for asylum while his or her situation is under investigation to meet the requirements of either the UN Refugee Convention or by being in risk of inhumane and degrading treatment.

UNITED NATIONS
 United Nations It is currently made up of 193 Member States. The mission and work of the United Nations are guided by the purposes and principles contained in its founding Charter.

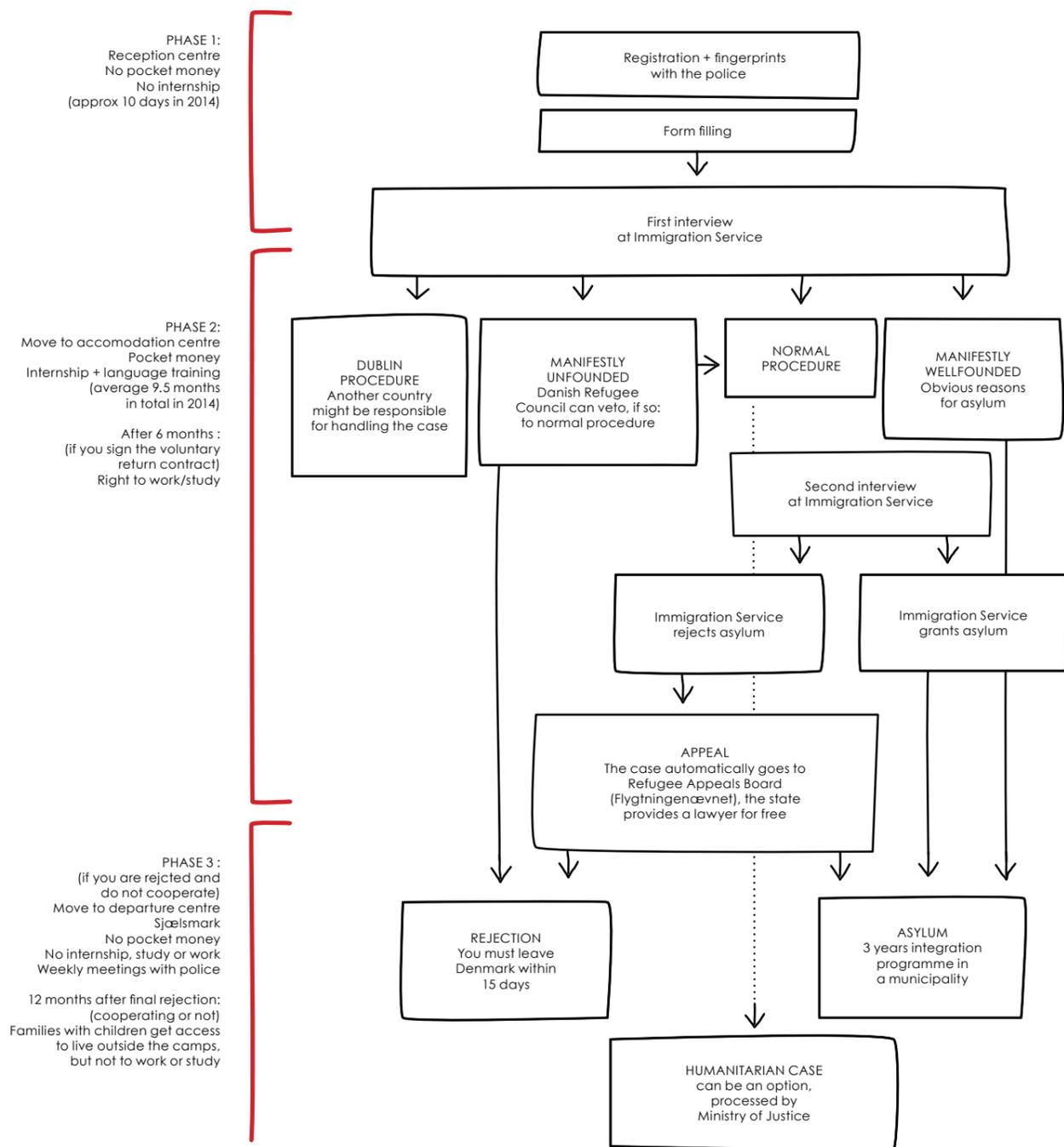
The largest amount of asylum seekers in Denmark comes from Syria, Afghanistan, Russia, Somalia, Serbia, Iran and Iraq - numbers vary somewhat each year. (Refugeeswelcome.dk, 2016) The percentage of asylum seekers who are granted a residence permit also varies from year to year and depends on the number of applications, country of origin and the number of family reunification. The number has from 2013 to 2014 grown from 55% to 74%. (Flygtning.dk, 2016) In 2015, 21.225 people applied for asylum in Denmark. There are currently no figures available on how many of those received a residence permit. (Nyidanmark.dk, 2016b)

The table shows the number of asylum seekers arriving per month over the last couple of years. The large increase the last two years has caused longer waiting time in asylum centres and uncertainties in the forecast about number of granted residence permits.

Phase 1 - Arrival

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
2011	366	277	325	282	285	254	255	274	341	391	353	403	3.806
2012	393	319	465	449	428	617	570	505	513	628	668	629	6.184
2013	761	590	601	581	506	533	642	705	687	757	660	534	7.557
2014	567	444	507	612	723	1.009	1.733	2.302	3.147	1.857	1.116	775	14.792
2015	654	473	465	564	914	1.077	1.063	1.812	2.756	3.684	5.094	2.669	21.225
2016	1.642	918	456										3.016

III. 10 Number of asylum seekers per month, 2011-2016.



III. 11 The Danish asylum procedure. Refugeeswelcome, 2014.

People who wish to apply for asylum in Denmark is taken to a reception centre, most often Center Sandholm, for registration, issuing of a personal asylum ID, the first written application and first interview.

The waiting time from arrival to first interview varies depending on the pressure on the system. The phase usually takes between 1-2 months, but it is expected to be 7 months in 2016. (Information, 2015) The asylum seeker must stay at the reception centre during this process. Due to the uncertainties of the future procedure, they are given a very limited amount of resources and daily allowance during this time. School, internships and language classes are also not available for the asylum seekers. (Refugees.dk, 2016a) Apart from Center Sandholm, the tent camps are often also used as reception centres that only cover the most basic necessities.

CENTER SANDHOLM
Former military camp that today is Denmark's largest asylum centre.

Phase 2 - Case administration

This is where the Danish Immigration Service on the background of the first interview decides the further procedure of each individual case. Based on the assessment, the case continues through one of the four procedures: the Dublin Procedure, Manifestly Unfounded, Normal Procedure, or Manifestly Wellfounded. (Refugeeswelcome.dk, 2016b)

The approximate assessment time in each procedure is difficult to estimate due to the individual character of the specific case, but the table on the opposite page shows a loose estimation from 2014 (see III.11). Still, it is expected that the procedure currently takes longer than the so-called 'service goals' outlined by the Danish Immigration Service. In 2014 the average time spend in the asylum system was 310 days. (Refugeeswelcome.dk, 2014)

In phase two, the asylum seekers are moved to an accommodation centre. In these centres the asylum seekers typically have as a minimum access to healthcare facilities, an administration, a jobcentre and education facilities. (Larsen et al., 2015, p. 22) Other offers can vary based on the centres connection to surrounding local functions. In this phase, they are provided with a higher cash allowance, the children are divided into integration classes either in the centre or at the local school, and adults get language training and the possibility to do an internship. After six months at the accommodation centre, the asylum seekers obtain the rights to study and work. The asylum seekers were previously able to apply for a home outside the centre during their time in phase two, but this opportunity was abolished by bill L87 in January 2016. (Folketinget.dk, 2016)

Phase 3 - Response to the application

At the end of phase two, the final assessment is made on whether or not asylum is granted. If the asylum seeker receives a residence permit, a municipality is responsible for providing housing facilities and a three-year integration program.

If the application is finally rejected, all given resources from prior phases are retracted. The person is moved to a departure centre and asked to leave the country within 15 days. These types of centres are run by the Danish Prison and Probation Service and are generally of a more prison-like nature.

Most of the rejected asylum seekers choose to leave the country willingly, others are forced to leave within a couple of years, while in some special cases people have not been able to leave and ended up spending up to 18 years in the departure centre. (Refugees.dk, 2016)

the daily life in asylum centres

METHODOLOGY

In order to gain knowledge and insight into the daily life at the asylum centre, the research process has revolved around reading articles and previous research studies done on the subject. The research concerning the operation of asylum centres has provided knowledge on the living conditions and highlighted some of the problematic results that have been uncovered. Such as the general mindset of the institution, the absence of feeling at 'home' and the isolation from the surrounding community. Additionally, information has been gathered from various lectures and events held by organisations working with asylum centres and refugees, followed up by minor interviews and conversations with former residents at asylum centres. Here is a complete list of events where information has been gathered:

- 10/2-16 Flugttanker - DFUNK, Copenhagen
- 24/2-16 Dynamoaften - Arkitekter Uden Grænser, Copenhagen
- 03/3-16 Flugt - Akademisk Arkitektforening, Copenhagen
- 10/3-16 Morgenklog - Akademisk Arkitektforening, Copenhagen
- 15/3-16 Flygtninge Fortæller - DFUNK, Copenhagen
- 30/3-16 Fortællinger på Flugt - DFUNK, Forvandlende Fortællinger, Os Imellem, Copenhagen
- 30/4-16 Support party for the Trampoline House - Borup Højskole, Copenhagen

Due to the topical nature of the issue, there has been limited direct contact with asylum centres and asylum seekers during the research phase. The topic's current relevance has resulted in a great amount of people approaching both asylum centres and supporting organisations with the intention of gathering information. This forces the centres and organisations to prioritise their contact and openness to the public, both in terms of protecting the privacy of the asylum seekers and the time it takes to answer all inquiries. Having said that, the relevancy of the topic has already resulted in a comprehensive amount of material, both national and international, that have been available to us without interfering directly.

The results from the research process have then been seen in light of relevant theoretical knowledge. This has been done in order to see how people experience and are influenced by the current physical and social conditions at asylum centres.

THE CURRENT SITUATION AT DANISH ASYLUM CENTRES

Most of the Danish asylum centres are organised as institutions where a large number of asylum seekers live in a restricted area. (Nyidanmark.dk, 2016a) In a Norwegian research report, *The Meaning of Housing Quality for Asylum Seekers* conducted by SINTEF, this typology is referred to as a centralised asylum centre. (Hauge et al., 2015) Centralised asylum centres are institutions, often former hotels, schools, military camps or hospitals transformed into homes for asylum seekers. These places are not built to the purpose, and are often characterised by old buildings with defects and lack of space for the individual. Former institutions, as military camps for instance, are built to accommodate a homogeneous group of people of the same age, gender and with a good physical state. Asylum seekers on the other hand, represent all kinds of people like the population in general. This leads to challenges in the operation of the centres, and reduces the well-being of the residents. (Hauge et al., 2015)

LOCATION

Big institutional centres with a large amount of residents are space consuming. This causes most asylum centres to be located in the outskirts of cities or in peripheral Denmark. The centralised asylum centres concern architect Jørgen Eskemose. He states that centralised centres will always be isolated in the outskirts where there are cheap old factories or empty institutions available. These locations are disconnected, far from city centres and neighbours. (DR P1, 2016) The remote location is highly unfortunate for the asylum seeker's integration into the local society. It is crucial that asylum centres are centrally located or well connected, measured in walking distance to the city or the town centre. (Arkitektnytt, 2016) If there are no activities in or near the asylum centre, most asylum seekers will stay inside their room most of the time, which results in more isolated and cramped living conditions. (Hauge et al., 2015)

DFUNK
Dansk Flyktningehjælp Ungdom
(Dfunk.dk, 2016)

SINTEF
The Foundation for Scientific and Industrial Research, the largest independent research organisation in Scandinavia.
(SINTEF.no, 2016)

CENTRALISED ASYLUM CENTRES
The term centralised refers to the housing typology, where asylum seekers live in larger groups at an institutional-like centres.
The term does not refer to the geographical location; centralised asylum centres can be located both centrally and rurally.
(Hauge et al., 2015)

Jørgen Eskemose
Head of Department of Human Settlements at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Schools of Architecture, Design and Conservation.



III. 12 CIWAN MAHMOUD
Kurd who came from Syria five years ago. Has lived in a Danish asylum centre and is now a member of The Trampoline House.
Here seen speaking at the support party for the Trampoline House at Borup Højskole.

FEELING AT HOME

The dominative institutional approach in the asylum centre is often equal to a lack of feeling at 'home'. An overall focus on functionality and efficiency leaves very limited opportunity to influence the physical surroundings, where only few unfixed items such as carpets, pictures and other decorations can be implemented in the rooms. (Hauge et al., 2015) The mindset of the institution becomes undesirable because of boundaries depriving the inhabitants of opportunities to exist as individuals and express their identity. (Horst, 2006) In today's society, it is not without great symbolic meaning to have a place to live and call home.

"The camp [asylum centre] was isolated out in the forest. (...) The life in the camp was so tiresome. We were four persons in one room, doing nothing for three years except waiting for our reply. During the time in the camp, you don't have the rights to work, study or do anything else." - Ciwan, at the Support party for the Trampoline House

IMPACT

There are some positive qualities associated with centralised asylum centres. They are cost efficient and it is easy to keep an eye on everyone living there. The staff can easily register if the asylum seeker is staying in their room and they can provide assistance to those who need extra help or care. The better overview might help the staff to prevent people from isolating themselves or help them notice people with psychological distress. Furthermore, gathering many people with different languages, cultures and religions, in a building not meant for the purpose, can often cause conflicts and problems. They can be caused by overcrowded and cramped living conditions. A survey conducted in connection to the SINTEF research report, indicates a correlation between conflicts and room size, and number of people living per room.

"The staff reported that the more cramped living conditions, the higher number of conflicts among the residents." (Hauge et al., 2015, p. 87)

The lack of privacy is especially problematic for children sharing bedrooms with their parents, due to them not being able to choose where they want to go and stay in the same way that adults can. This forces them to spend much time at the reception centre and at the family bedroom.

“Overcrowded living conditions have a long-term negative effect on children’s growth. It affects their temper, school performance and their number of friends. Studies show that overcrowded conditions cause disruptions to the parent-child relationship. Overcrowded conditions can also lead to juvenile crime, based on children staying less at home and more easily getting in contact with criminal groups.” (Hauge et al., 2015, p. 84)

ISOLATION

The isolation is amplified by the lack of network, activities and integration in the local community. The SINTEF research report (2015) states:

“Many residents are depressed and in despair about their life situation that solely revolves around thinking about their case of residence permit. The staff says that many residents stay in their rooms almost around the clock.” (Hauge et al., 2015, p.77)

The centralised asylum centres contain all basic functions the asylum seekers need. In this way, the asylum centre becomes closed units where the asylum seekers have no reason to go outside the centre’s boundaries. It is possible to live in isolated housing conditions for a short while – and the asylum centres are meant to be temporary - but in 2014 asylum seekers lived an average of 310 days at asylum centres, a number that is expected to rise on the background of the increasing number of refugees arriving. (Refugees.dk, 2016)

Another research study done by Nordland Research Institute describes the isolated situation like this:

“Not much happens, and several of the residents describe their existence as being characterised by passivity and apathy. When we asked them to describe the daily life as they experience it, there were few consistent focal points or tasks that painted a picture of a meaningful existence. When nothing happens, it becomes difficult to get up in the morning. It also becomes difficult to sleep at night when the day has no duties. Many have ended up in a vicious cycle of passivity and subsequently low energy, lack of initiative and withdrawal from social life.” (Andrews et al., 2014, p. 14)

The statements and research presented in this section bear witness to today’s asylum centres not being of a good enough standard to provide the asylum seekers with much else than the most basic needs. Their existence is characterised by waiting and by a feeling of autonomy and not being able to realise their potentials through work or activities. The following section is concerned with urban design theories that handle the issue from a more sociological point of view.

NORDLAND RESEARCH INSTITUTE
Private nonprofit organization doing
development work and research
on topics which are related to
social science, environment and
entrepreneurship.



III. 13 Drost-Hansen, 2016. Bathroom wall in asylum tent camp in Haderslev, Denmark 2016.

“Life in the asylum centre is characterised by a desperate existence. You are isolated from society and are solely waiting for a reply. (...) The centres are not good. Integration only happens when you come out and meet people at school or through culture. Then you get to know what is important and right in the society you live in.” - Former asylum seeker at Flygtninge Fortæller, 15/3-16

individuality and community

WELL-BEING

"Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community." (Who.int, 2016)

Denmark is by many known and regarded as a welfare state where sympathy is put on the community and everyone contributes to the well-being of the most vulnerable in society. These values have ever since the construction of the welfare state manifested themselves in the built environment. Public and welfare architecture have been used as a manifestation of humanism and seen as a tool to carry out the overall vision. This mentality and pursuit of maintaining the humanitarian ideal has shaped a healthy public sector with social housing, kindergartens, libraries, public schools, hospitals, sports facilities and efficient public transportation. Accordingly the architecture strives to mirror the fundamental values in society, thus they should be inviting, democratic, humanised and organised around a sense of community. (Politiken, 2015a)

The welfare state seeks to afford a strong sense of community among the public while still protecting the well-being and free rights of the individual. This means balancing the sense of feeling safe and feeling free. The following attempts to define community and individuality and how the two are related to space. This is in order to understand the prerequisites the asylum seekers have in terms of becoming part of a community and realise themselves as individuals based on the physical conditions they are placed under in the asylum centre.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

There are different ways of defining a community. The most obvious being a community that is related geographically and shares a common interest for a physical space. Another definition could be a community that shares an attachment or identity. This type of community plays an important role in shaping people's sense of belonging. Sharing a common space or identity distinguishes the community from other communities that stand outside its boundaries. These boundaries of the distinction may be outlined physically on a map or in a wider sense by laws or religious views. (Infed.ord, 2013) Communities exist in different shapes and sizes but shares the notion of letting people feel protected and safe within a community and feel a sense of belonging to either a physical space or a set of beliefs.

The following is an insight into Zygmunt Bauman's sociological studies, which are for the most part, a critical eye on the consequences of the liquid modern metropolis, where the 'solid' modern city that entailed a meticulously planned, predictable, transparent and order-stamped world has been transformed into a 'liquid' modern city which is thoroughly commercialised and privatised, and where urban spaces no longer strive to be a common space for the benefit of all citizens. (Juul Frost Architects, 2009, pp. 51-52) In his studies on ghettos and gated communities, he finds that people tend to rather seek small closed communities of people with similar values that they can trust, than the wider open communities of diverse strangers. This is to strive to achieve feeling both safe and free as individuals, since the wider communities begin to feel as an unsafe environment due to the politicians' and media's articulation of fear. This sense of fear comes with society becoming more and more diverse, which means that it contains people of many different cultures, religions and values. These make up threads to a community mostly because they are often unknown, unfamiliar and misunderstood by the members. In a small scale it means that while local communities can be safe, social and hold common activities for its inhabitants, it can also be excluding and more outlined due to its urge to create boundaries towards who is different and not welcome. A community can even be constructed based on the exclusion of this externally imposed 'danger'. Bauman notes his concern about more and more communities becoming excluding and thereby contributing to society becoming more alienating, dissolving, hostile and to it losing its social responsibility towards the people who do not fit in. (Jacobsen, 2012, pp. 123-125)

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN (1925-) Polish sociologist whose work roughly can be summed up as a critical look at inequality, injustice and lack of freedom.

The exclusion and the identification of people as not being part of society and the wide community can lead to stigma, which is defined by Erving Goffman as the undermining of identity and self-esteem, caused by people being disapproved based on social characteristics. These social characteristics could be race, nationality or religion, which Goffman defines as 'tribal stigma'. Also being labelled as a client combined with not understanding certain practises can feel stigmatising. (Juul et al., 2012, p. 188-189)

Bauman's studies are based on local communities of the metropolis, but can be translated into the wide community of the country that right now is facing large groups of strangers entering into society. For both communities the values and expectations that the opposite community represents is unfamiliar territory and thereby it makes up an insecurity for the structure of the community.

While mostly being concerned with the limitations rather than the possibilities, Bauman has also engaged in describing how the dehumanised urban spaces of the fluid metropolis can be made human and break with the unequal distribution of access. His visions are far from concrete but illustrate a critical angle to society. He sums it up as:

"If there is to be a community in the world of individuals, it can only be a community woven together from sharing and mutual care; a community of concern and responsibility for the equal right to be human and the equal ability to act in that right." (Bauman in Jacobsen, 2012, p. 129)

On a more concrete note, Jan Gehl has for several decades sought to create urban spaces that mirror the Danish democracy and the mentality of openness to a wider community. According to Gehl, activities in urban spaces can be divided into three different types of activities, the 'necessary activities', that can take place in almost all types of physical surroundings, the 'optional activities', that are more dependent on the quality of the physical surroundings and the 'social activities' that occurs as a result of the two other types of activities. This type of contact can be children playing, conversations or other types of joining activities, but more often it can be the so-called 'passive contact'. The only premise for this type of contact is for people to be able to see and hear each other. Gehl argues that a range of opportunities emerges due to the simple opportunity of being able to see and hear each other. He describes the opportunities as:

- Contact at a modest level,
- A possible starting point for contact at other levels,
- A possibility for maintaining already established contacts,
- A source of information about the social world outside,
- A source of inspiration, an offer of stimulating experience (Gehl, 2007, p. 15)

If the quality of the urban spaces are not sufficient, the life and thereby the passive contact disappear and the transition between being alone and engaging in social activities becomes more outlined. Passive contact composes a smooth transition that enables people to be together in a casual and non-committal manner. Marc Augé describes good urban spaces or 'social spaces' as places that ties people together and facilitates or even encourage contact, interest or a joint responsibility for each other. (Jacobsen, 2012, p. 122)

Having established that social activity is connected to the physical surroundings, Gehl identifies five principles that can afford passive contact (and possibly social contact) and humanise an urban space by paying attention to senses, communication and dimensions. The principles, which are linked directly to principles of spatial planning, are:

- No walls
- Short distances
- Low speed
- One level
- Face-to-face orientation (Gehl, 2007, p. 58)

ERVING GOFFMAN (1922-82) Canadian-American sociologist who studied modern everyday life and basic human relations - particularly in public spaces.

JAN GEHL (1936-) Danish architect and urban designer working with the quality of urban life in cities.

MARC AUGÉ (1935-) French anthropologist working in the cross field between cultural anthropology and ethnography.

RICHARD SENNETT (1943-)
American sociologist concerned
public life, individuality and social
ties in the city.

Interaction among people within a community or between strangers is also touched upon by Richard Sennett who approaches urban space as being a 'normative space'. He argues that the city must be able to balance between the strange and the familiar and between space for anonymity and community. A balance that is important in order not to encourage a careless approach to strangers and everything being different from oneself. Looking closer at how these spaces are constructed, Sennett argues that they merge from a base of diversity, which are reflected through constellations of architecture and people. A space that appeal to different kinds of people influenced by diversity of buildings and programs. (Juul Frost Architects, 2009, pp. 40-44)

PLACE AND IDENTITY

Connected to individuality is identity, which is linked to the ability to realise one's sense of self. Identity being related to a person's community both physically and mentally is relevant to discuss in connection to the temporary conditions asylum seekers are placed under when arriving to a new country. This subject is investigated in the Norwegian research report *The Meaning of Housing Quality for Asylum Seekers*. Here it is pointed out that people who stay in temporary places (for one reason or another) have a tendency to create strategies to make the places they stay in feel as their home. (Winther in Hauge et al., 2015, p. 21) This is due to a basic human urge to get a feeling of belonging to a place and a desire to mark one's territory. There is no reason to believe that this should not be the same for the asylum seekers staying at the asylum centres even though it might not be a place they would want to call home. (Grønseth and Thorshaug in Hauge et al., 2015, p. 21) Hilje van der Horst finds that after a certain amount of time in the centre, the inhabitants will become frustrated because of the lack of autonomy and opportunity to continue traditions and customs from their home countries. This leads to them soon trying to figure out ways to make their current living situation feel like a home. The term 'home' is often described as a place of safety, comfort, privacy, control and as a place where it is possible to express who you are. This means that a lot of a person's identity, defined as what is ultimately important to an individual, is tied together with the place he or she lives.

HILJE VAN DER HORST
Dutch Assistant Professor at the
Sociology of Consumption and
Households group, Wageningen UR.

WILLIAM J. V. NEILL
Urban planner and Emeritus Professor
of Spatial Planning at the University
of Aberdeen.

In *Urban Planning and Cultural Identity*, William J. V. Neill associates the term 'dwelling' with identity by stating that people dwell in an environment when they experience it as meaningful. Making the place feel meaningful would constitute being able to orientate within it and most importantly being able to identify with it. This environment is not only constituted as a home but also in a bigger scale, the area you connect with and chose as your habitat. This highlights the notion of orientation and mobility in terms of being able to experience a place as meaningful. (Norberg-Schulz in Neill, 2004, p. 13)

On the other hand if a place is not meaningful and does not live up to a person's sense of self it can have an unhealthy effect if a person starts to identify with the place and starts feeling less valuable due to the surroundings.

On the matter of place and identity Neill turns to philosopher Edward Casey to put it into more existential terms:

"To lack a primal place is to be 'homeless' (...) being without any effective means of orientation in a complex and confusing world (...) I shall accord to place a position of renewed respect by specifying its power to direct and stabilise us, to memorialise and identify us, to tell us who and what we are in terms of where we are (as well as where are not)." (Casey in Neill, 2004, p. 13)

This quote ties strings to the situation of the asylum seekers, who feels rootless and in a sense 'homeless' because of their lack of opportunity to realise themselves and identify with their temporary 'homes' inside the asylum centres. To describe being rootless and having the urge to belong to a place, Martin Heidegger uses the German word for 'being alive', 'dasein' which translated directly into English means 'being there'. A word that links identity and being alive to a physical space which thereby categorises the word 'identity' as a socio-spatial phenomenon. (Neill, 2004, p. 14)

MARTIN HEIDEGGER (1889-1976)
German philosopher whose main
focus was ontology or the study of
being.



Ill. 14 Klougart, 2015. The daily life at Hyftebyen asylum centre in Hjørring, Denmark. September, 2015.

The asylum centre makes up a home for the asylum seekers while they are having their application processed. In the centres, the inhabitants are seldom given the opportunity to have a room of their own, which means that they have very little time to themselves. This can be a problem because people in general behave differently when among others. Goffman describes it through his performance analogy where he divides the spaces we live in into a 'front stage' and a 'back stage' and describes the different ways of 'acting' based on the environment.

Front stage is associated with how people act in public. We are performing different roles at work, in school or at the bus. These characters are put on in order to prevent embarrassment and to appear in self-beneficial ways. The opposite of front stage is back stage. Back stage is where the individual take off their mask, relax and not pretend. (Goffman, 1990) This is done in a safe environment where the individual is in control of the physical frames and the social interactions. This private sphere is often thought of as home. (Hauge et al., 2015)

What many residents at the asylum centres experience, is that their whole life is lived in front stage. This is particularly a problem in centralised centres where residents share bedrooms, bath and kitchen. They have none or few places to hide from attention and awareness from other residents, which is experienced through strong social control. They are observed when they come and go, when they cook and whom they are with, which transforms the asylum centre into a place less similar to a home and more similar to what Goffmann calls a 'total institution'.

"A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of likesituated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life." (Goffman in Hauge et al., 2015, p. 21)

summing up

The influx of asylum seekers in Denmark has put the government and the asylum centres across the country under pressure. The complexity of the asylum process and the varying and unpredictable waiting time for asylum seekers staying in asylum centres, paint a picture of an asylum system that struggles with the high number of people arriving. This is however also affected by a strict agenda from the politicians of wanting to decrease the number of asylum seekers. Unfortunately the people paying the price for the poor administrated asylum crisis are the people staying in asylum centres waiting to get their asylum request approved. The long waiting time means that the temporary shelters that the asylum centres constitutes becomes more and more permanent for people going through a long process of getting their asylum request approved. Ruben Pater pinpoints the problem of temporary shelters in refugee camps and asylum centres:

"Generations of people living in temporary conditions is not temporary – it's a lack of proper infrastructure, housing and opportunity." (Dezeen, 2016)

The asylum seekers enter the country on the premise that they are allowed to stay here, but while doing so they are technically not yet members of society. Placing people in a category that places them outside of the community is rooted in mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, and an 'us' versus 'them' mentality. (Jacobsen, 2012, p. 124)

This separation from the community and society means that the asylum seekers are met with surroundings that do not hold up to the expectations we otherwise have when it comes to design of welfare architecture. Nevertheless the design of the asylum centres has an impact on the asylum seekers well-being and the relationship, or lack thereof, they have to the wider community, which is an important means to integration. The overcrowded centres mean that the asylum seekers do not have an opportunity to have their own room and thereby only limited possibilities to retreat and protect their privacy and individuality. It also means they do not see the places they live or their territory as meaningful places that they can identify with and feel a sense of belonging to. They usually spend a lot of time in their rooms because the asylum centre does not have any offers for them except the mandatory functions (administration, jobcentre, healthcare and education facilities), which are all of a practical nature that does not pay much attention to the emotional needs of the asylum seekers, such as being able to be alone, feel at home, feel equally important and being able create meaningful relations. This combined with lack of resources to go join activities outside the asylum centre means that they are not able to realise themselves and that they are left to simply wait for the final letter that can send them out of the centre.

Their status as asylum seekers who are not yet members of society combined with them being physically placed in isolated asylum centres of poor standards, makes the barrier between the community and the asylum seekers not only a mental barrier but also a physically outlined barrier that stands in the way of more including and solidary ways of living.

The following chapter puts forth a new approach to accommodate the asylum seekers

RUBEN PATER
Designer and researcher concerned
with geopolitical issues based in
Amsterdam. Teacher at the Royal
Academy of Art in The Hague.



III. 15 Dalsgaard, 2007. 11 year old Ejsa playing in the hall at asylum centre Kongelunden. Denmark, 2007.



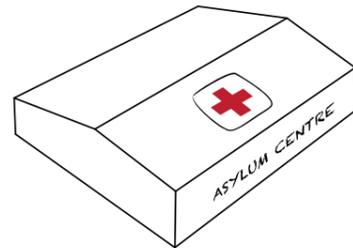
Ill. 16 Empty home, Søllested, 2016.

approach

decentralisation

The framework points towards an issue that calls for new ways of thinking about the refugee crisis and the problems with accommodating asylum seekers. The following chapter is an outline of the potentials for a different kind of asylum centre that can improve the well-being of asylum seekers and simultaneously help revitalise peripheral areas in Denmark.

Existing centralised model



Proposed decentralised model



... to be placed in existing urban and social structure in peripheral Denmark

Ill. 17 Diagram - Decentralised asylum centre.

decentralised asylum centres in peripheral denmark

DECENTRALISATION

The SINTEF research report did a research study on the housing conditions at Norwegian asylum centres based on case studies from seven different asylum centres. They interviewed employees and residents from these centres that included both centralised and decentralised facilities.

The report is a quantification of some of the technical conditions at the centres, and highlights some problematic results of the current housing conditions. The report concludes that decentralised asylum centres are recommended if integration is the desired outcome. (Hauge et al., 2015)

DECENTRALISED ASYLUM CENTRES are houses or apartments where the asylum seeker lives in areas among ordinary people. It is recommended that the housing unit is located in central areas close to public services and the asylum administration. (Søholt and Holm, 2010)

Decentralised asylum centres are houses or apartments where the asylum seekers live in neighbourhoods among ordinary people, while they have a separate administration where they can seek assistance or information when need. The term does not refer to the geographical location; centralised and decentralised asylum centres can be located in both central and rural areas. (Hauge et al., 2015, p. 5)

The research study shows that decentralised asylum centres are in general facilitated with more space per person, lower conflict level and of a higher physical, aesthetical and technical standard, compared to centralised asylum centres. (Hauge et al., 2015) Many asylum seekers want to stay in big cities, but it can also be advantageous to stay in smaller places of smaller communities. In smaller towns, the asylum seekers will be less anonymous and more visible in the local environment, which increases the contact and integration. (Arkitektnytt, 2016) Experiences from Kristiansand show that smaller groups of asylum seekers led to positive contact between neighbours and that the children integrated more easily with the local children. (Søholt and Holm, 2010, p. 62)

The asylum seekers living in decentralised centres become more independent, due to them using the public services and getting in contact with people outside the immigration system, which is important in terms of being integrated. The decentralised homes are often more discrete on the outside due to them looking like regular homes. The asylum seekers can to a greater extent maintain their personality and blend into the local community and experience a feeling of equality. What may be a challenge at decentralised centres is maintaining the supervision of all residents. The asylum seeker does not have as close service networks to take care of them as in centralised centres. This makes it more difficult to spot isolation and psychological distress. (Hauge et al., 2015) Creating social networks play an important role in decentralised asylum centres. Thus, it is important that both municipalities and voluntary organisations is part of the planning and operation process. (Dezeen, 2016) By implementing asylum seekers in different types of communities (a town, neighbourhood, school, work or local association) they are exposed to a wider platform for contact.

PERIPHERAL DENMARK

Dominated and challenged by the decline in population and economy, peripheral Denmark is often spoken of as a negative phenomenon and handled as a problem, rather than a possible resource.

The great decline in population in small peripheral towns has resulted in many empty homes and local functions closing, which has a negative effect on the local inhabitants.

"When meeting places such as the school closes, and the grocery store moves, the local community changes their self-perception, which has an impact on the social solidarity." (Laursen et al. in Larsen et al., 2015, p. 52)

The great amount of empty building stock in small peripheral towns, hold the potential of being the physical frame around decentralised asylum centres, if they are utilised correctly. These potentials are difficult to find in bigger cities where the pressure on the housing market is much higher. Furthermore the empty homes and buildings are placed within existing urban structures that can serve as the infrastructure that the centre needs to be able to function.

PERIPHERAL MUNICIPALITY
A peripheral municipality is defined as a municipality with under 40,000 inhabitants and located minimum 40 kilometres outside a so-called 'geographical centres'.

Birgitte Romme Larsen (post doc), Zachary Whyte (lecturer) and Karen Fog Olwig (professor): Employees at the University of Copenhagen, Department of Anthropology

Implementing decentralised asylum centres in empty homes and buildings in peripheral towns have the potential of being beneficial for both asylum seekers and local residents. The small towns will experience a much-needed increase in population and economic growth, while the asylum seekers get the best possible environment for self-realisation and integration. This is possible due to the tight local communities and the strong sense of neighbourliness found in peripheral towns. Studies show that the density of volunteers are higher in peripheral areas than in cities (Larsen et al., 2015, p. 35) and that people in smaller towns generally have a better and wider connection to their neighbours. (Politiken, 2016b)

Even though the small towns do not have as many public functions as the bigger cities, they hold a range of groups and associations that can be of great importance for the asylum seekers in terms of integration. Also the close connection to natural green environments and gardens can be beneficial for them in regards to their health and the possibility of growing food and engaging in social and physical activity. (Arkiteknyt, 2016)

In the research study *Den Nye Landbefolkning*, Birgitte Romme Larsen, Zachary Whyte and Karen Fog Olwig analyses the impact asylum centres can have on local communities in peripheral Denmark based on three asylum centres in the municipal districts of Jelling, Norddjurs and Langeland. Among other things they have been investigating the local's relationship to the centres based on location and number of asylum seekers.

In Jelling, the asylum centre is centrally located and the inhabitants use the same functions as the locals. An employee at the centre ,who is also a local, describes the centre and its relationship to the local community as:

"The way the centre is placed spatially in the town, means that for both groups the opposite one is always a part of the streetscape - we are used to one another." (Larsen et al., 2015, p. 21)

THE 10% ESTIMATION

Many locals, regardless of their opinion about asylum seekers, think it is too dramatic to place a very large number of foreign people in their small town. It is important to take this concern into consideration when planning an asylum centre, in terms of not creating an asylum centre that is too complex and overwhelming, which could lead to potential volunteers losing interest. On Langeland are the asylum centre run by the municipality. They have reacted to the concern and established a limit of 700 asylum seekers, which is approximately 10% of their total population. (Larsen et al., 2015, p. 20) Also in the small town of Esbønderup an inhabitant, overwhelmed by the advent of 300 asylum seekers, shared his concern:

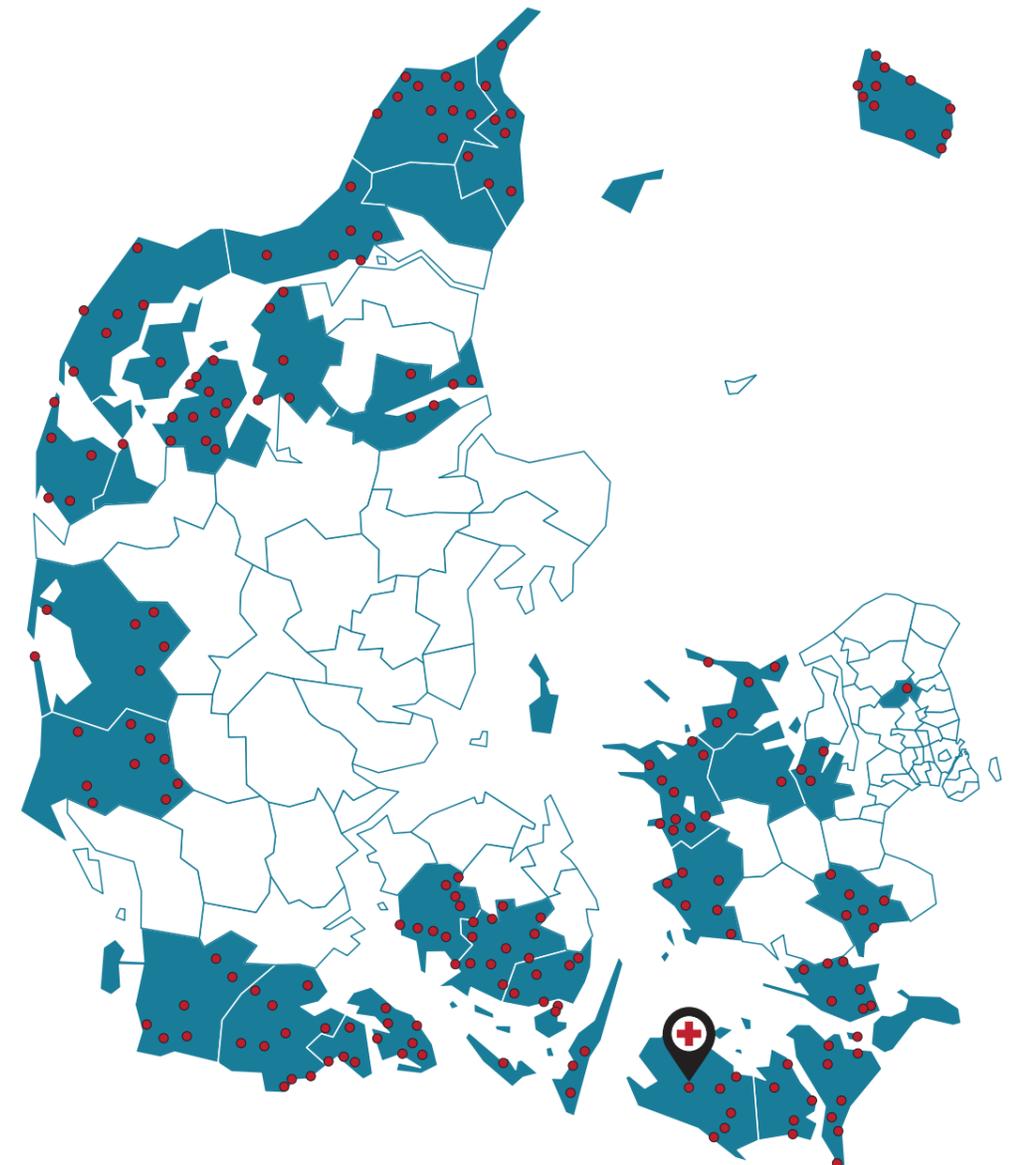
"It's not just about foreign cultures. We are only 1.100 inhabitants in this town, so the hundreds of people coming constitute a pretty high percentage. (...) I completely agree that we should help as a nation - the global situation taken into consideration - but right now, I think we as Esbønderup are helping too much. I think 100 asylum seekers would be appropriate. Had it been Danish people moving in, I would have said the same thing." (Politiken, 2016d)

POTENTIAL TOWNS

The map on the opposite page is an approximate investigation of the towns in Denmark that could hold decentralised asylum centres. It shows towns in peripheral Denmark that have experienced a decline in population over the past five years and which currently ha a population between 500 and 5.000 inhabitants. Only towns that fall under municipalities with an expected decline in population over the next 10 years are included in the count. These municipal districts are marked with grey. In 2015 there were a total of 61.321 empty houses in these specific districts. (Statistikbanken.dk, 2016)

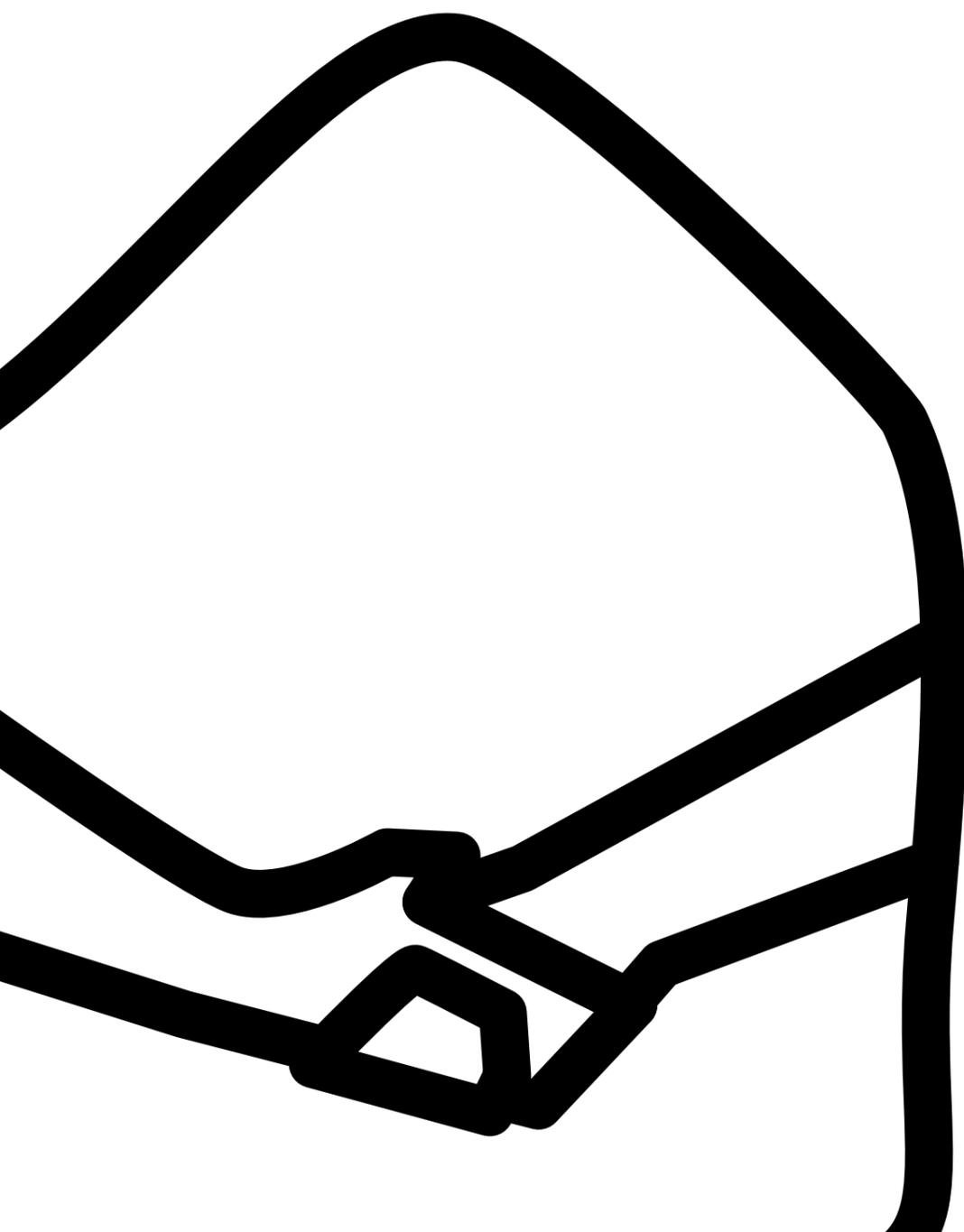
Only towns between 500 and 5.000 inhabitants have been selected, which is based on the assumption that towns with less than 500 inhabitants does not hold a comprehensive urban structure, and likewise, towns over 5.000 inhabitants would rise above the sense of a minor town.

Among the 201 towns that fulfil the specific criteria, Søllested is chosen as the context for the design case. The town is located on Lolland, which is one of the regions that have been the most affected by a decline in inhabitants in recent years. (Bolius.dk, 2015)



III. 18 Potential towns for decentralised asylum centres in peripheral Denmark

201 TOWNS IN SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES
WITH TOTAL POPULATION OF 295.936 PEOPLE ADD
POTENTIALLY 10% ASYLUM SEEKERS EQUALS
A CAPACITY OF 30,000 ASYLUM SEEKERS.



research question

How can a decentralised asylum centre in a small peripheral town make up physical and social urban interfaces that afford integration, and pay mutual attention to both locals and asylum seekers?



Ill. 19 Along the main street in Søllested, 2016.

design case søllested

analysis of physical and social structures

After having chosen an approach and a point of departure for the design case, this chapter presents an in depth analysis of the town in question; Søllested on Lolland. It serves as an outline of specific physical and social elements in Søllested that serve as potentials for a decentralised asylum centre that breaks with the problems of the centres of today.

choosing søllested

SØLLESTED
 Located on Lolland, Denmark
 1,432 inhabitants
 1,51 km²
 Distance to Nakskov:
 11 km - 8 minutes by train
 Distance to Maribo:
 18 km - 12 minutes by train

Søllested is a small town on Lolland with a population of 1.432 inhabitants. (Bolius.dk, 2015) The town is located approximately halfway between the island's two largest towns, Nakskov and Maribo. Søllested is like many small towns in peripheral Denmark challenged by population- and economic decline. From 2009 to 2014 the municipal district of Lolland has experienced an average decline in population of 847 persons a year. The number is expected to stabilise around 503 persons a year in the period 2015 – 2027, but the forecast indicates that it is the number of children, young and employed that will decline, while the number of pensioners will increase. This prognosis is in general similar to other peripheral municipalities. (Lolland Kommune, 2016)

As the population decline, it is reasonable to assume that public services will be merged and centralised in the larger cities. Services like schools, health care and nursing homes. Søllested is one of the smaller towns on Lolland, and is thus in danger of losing important functions. If this happens it will most likely result in a higher amount of families with schoolchildren and elderly moving closer to the facilities they need. Søllested is therefore in need of new citizens, preferably young people and families with children.

A positive side effect of decentralised asylum centres, is the mix of generations. It opens the possibility of housing asylum families with children close to elderly residents.

"Location creates socialisation. The young and the elderly is a good match. The elderly like that there is some life in the streets." (Skogvold Isaksen in Arkitektnytt, 2016)

Søllested has been chosen because it represents the common tendency that peripheral towns experiences these years, which were described in the previous chapter. However, it was also chosen because it is already somewhat connected to an asylum centre that is located 2,5 km south of the town. The centre is fairly new, established in the end of 2015, and has functioned as a centre for children, but is right now being changed into a centre for families. The presence of a centralised asylum centre makes it possible to analyse a local community's relationship to it and talk to them about potentials for alternative solutions without them mentally being very far removed from the idea of an asylum centre.

To open the analysis of Søllested, the current situation in the area is reviewed followed by the physical structures presented through primary mappings and in the end a subjective perspective on the social structures.

It is of great importance to understand the physical and social structures in order to highlight existing potentials and qualities within the town.



III. 20 Population trends on Lolland



III. 21 Orthophoto of Søllested, 2016.



III. 22 The main street in Søllested, 2016.



III. 23 An arrow indicates the path of Kløverstjerne. Søllested, 2016.

connections and infrastructure



III. 24 Connections and infrastructure in Søllested

The following section contains an analytical review of the infrastructure and connections represented in Søllested.

THE MAIN STREET

Søllested is like many other minor towns built around a main street (Højrebygade), acting as the backbone for the surrounding infrastructure. The main street runs across town and connect in both the northern and southern direction with two bigger bypass roads outside the town. This means that only few people travel through Søllested in their daily transport from place to place. The main road consists of two lanes in the middle, a shared field in each side used for car parking and as a bike path, along with a sidewalk for pedestrian in both sides of the street. See III. 24 Internally, the main street is connected to minor adjacent roads creating loops and dividing the town into minor residential neighbourhoods. The streets compose a web of internal connections, which create minor communities within the wide community of the town.

SECONDARY CONNECTIONS

Apart from the mandatory streets connecting across town, Søllested also holds more leisure-oriented paths. In 2011, the town became part of a pilot project called 'Kløverstjerne', with the purpose of establishing a collection of paths in order to highlight possible routes for walking, running and biking in the local communities. The paths consist of different themes and lengths, covering the local nature, landmarks, culture, and activities. The paths are: the Magic Path 2,5 km, the Exercise Path 5 km, the Church Path 7,5 km and the Forest Path 10,6 km.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

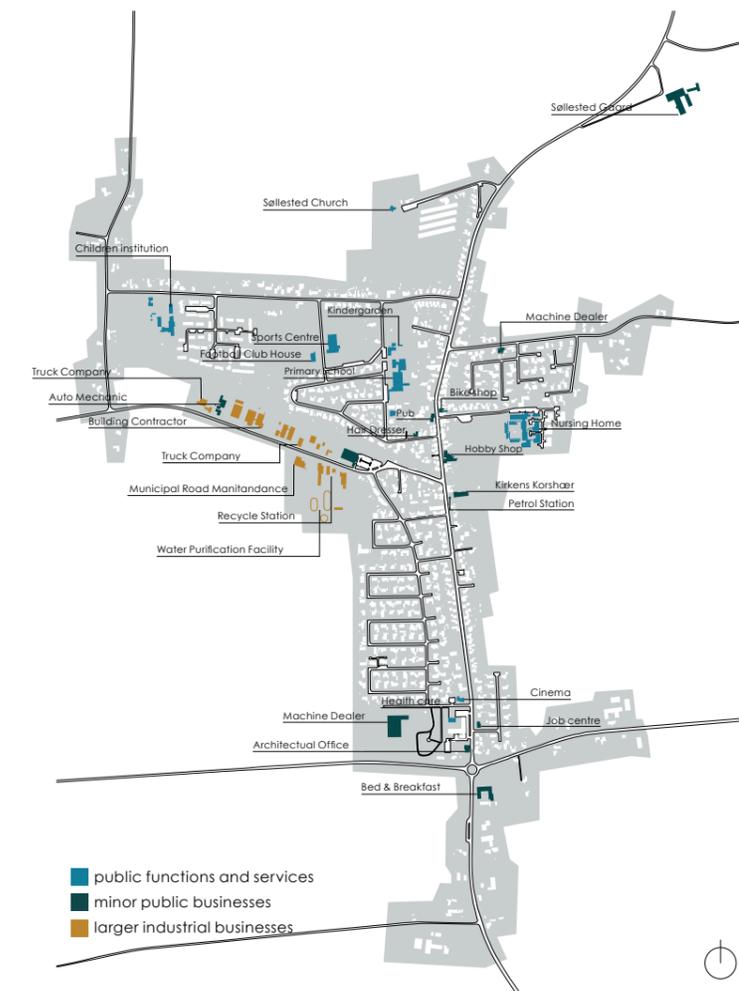
Søllested is well connected to the region through public transportation. The railway line between Nakskov and Maribo crosses through Søllested, and have hourly departures in both direction. Additionally, there are local bus departures every second hour during the daytime, connecting Søllested to minor towns nearby.

Public transportation is of great importance to the town's existence and future development, providing the residents with a wide range of possibilities to travel and to reach functions in the both near and wide surroundings.

functions and actors



III. 25 Inside the bicycle repair shop, Søllested, 2016.



III. 27 Functions and actors



III. 26 Søllested Cinema, Søllested, 2016.

The map highlights the different functions and actors that operate in Søllested. They are divided into three categories: public functions and services, minor private businesses and larger industrial businesses. It is important that the town has the necessary functions both in terms of keeping the town attractive for the locals, but also for potential new inhabitants. Also the existing functions can serve potential work places for internships for the asylum seekers.

During the analysing and mapping process, it became apparent that a lot of functions were not brought to our attention until visiting Søllested and talking to the local community. Here it became apparent that there were more functions and local societies than expected. They were small, but nonetheless meaningful to the people on the streets. Some of these functions are: Revue club, squash, bingo, petanque, knitting club, shooting club, allotment garden and gymnastik

PUBLIC FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES

Søllested houses most of the mandatory public functions and services, covering: a primary school, a school for children with special needs, a doctor's office, a sports centre, a church and a nursing home. Even though the library and pharmacy has shut down a collection point still exists in the local grocery store.

MINOR PRIVATE BUSINESSES

The few private businesses that still exist in Søllested are mainly located along, or near the main street. The most common used businesses are Fakta – the grocery store, Kirkens Korshær – second-hand store and the local pub. In addition there is an employment agency, two machine shops selling agricultural machines, a hairdresser, and a bicycle repair shop and a hobby shop. The two latter are the businesses in town that have existed the longest.

LARGER INDUSTRIAL BUSINESSES

The industrial businesses are located together in the western end of Søllested. These actors are a water purification facility, municipal maintenance and a recycling station.



III. 28 Empty home along the main street. Søllested, 2016.



III. 29 The former municipal office that is now standing empty. Søllested, 2016.

empty homes and buildings



III. 30 Empty homes and buildings

The decreasing population leave behind a town with several empty homes and buildings. Some homes are for sale, while others have simply been abandoned. Half of all empty homes and buildings in Søllested are located along the main street, revealing the dominating decline when driving through the town. The empty homes and buildings are found through registration from visits in Søllested along with online information. (Boligsiden.dk, 2016)

HOMES

In May 2016 Søllested holds a total of 37 empty homes or homes for sale, marked with blue on the map, which are spread all over town in different neighbourhoods. The empty homes are standard family houses with a capacity of approximately 4-5 people. Most of these homes are in good shape, while some bears the mark of being abandoned and not used for some time.

LARGE EMPTY BUILDINGS

Besides empty homes, Søllested holds four large empty buildings, marked by yellow, all located along the main street.

The first, starting from north, is the old noble pharmacy building from 1917 that until 2007 housed the local library (Danmarks Biblioteksforening), and later a café and a community hall for local associations. The next two buildings are located very close to each other. One of them is an old building that used to hold several apartments and the other is a former pizzeria. Both of the buildings are in a bad shape and there are plans for the former pizzeria to be demolished. The last one, further towards the south, is the old municipal building that used to house the administration of the now abolished Højreby Municipality. The building is generally in good shape.



III. 31 Old, empty villa. Søllested 2016.

søllested from street level

The following section contains reviews of the impression one gets from moving through the streets of Søllested. The information is gathered through experiences and conversations with the local residents met along the way.

As described in the structural analysis (p. 45), the main street acts as the most important structure when passing through the town. As the only street that stretches across the entire town, it is from here one navigates and gets in contact with all the different functions. While having a strong infrastructural importance, the street also reveals a historical perspective about a time when the area was part of a vibrant agricultural region that exported sugar to the whole of Scandinavia. The oldest buildings along the street are from the early 1900s. These were villas for the farm owners. A few of these buildings are restored and well kept, but still the most striking elements when moving through the street are the empty homes where trees and shrubs are taking over the gardens while the facades are falling apart. (III. 31)

Further up the street, north of the railway crossing, there are newer commercial buildings from the mid-1900s. Some of the shops are still operating, but are run by elderly men who are close to their retirement age. When they close the door, there are most likely no one to take over the shops.

The stores that have already closed are standing empty and bear witness to a place that once was vivid and vibrant. Through the window to the bakery, you see the marks on the floor where the counter and the refrigerator used to stand. Some of the furniture and objects were sold while others were left behind, completing the picture of what used to be and what could have been. The town has taken its toll and is marked by many years of decline. Even though the locals miss the old bakery and other function, no one is willing to run the businesses. The decline has resulted in an acceptance of closed stores and empty homes.



III. 32 The old bakery. Søllested, 2016.

"We especially miss the bakery."

- Long time resident of Søllested

"There are some empty homes along the street, but it is no worse than in other small towns."

- Woman working and living in Søllested

Even though the physical structures are marked by the decline, you get the impression that it has not affected the social structure to the same extent. The people on the streets describe implicit a social agreement of people living here appreciating the qualities that a small town and its close relations has to offer. Some of the people who have been living in the town for many years told that they like living in a town where they know and greet everyone they meet. They highlight the sports centre and the nursing home as places that are often centres for events and great places to meet.



III. 33 Højrebygade 64 on the main street. Søllested, 2016. The building used to house the administration of the former Højreby Municipality.

højrebygade 64

The former municipal building is located along the main street, almost immediately after entering the town from south. The building has a long facade towards the street and it is a highly visible landmark in the town.

The building was built in 1966-67 and was operating until 2007. (Museum-online.dk, 2016)

The doctors office is located in the courtyard behind the building, and on the opposite side of the street there is a private job centre. Both functions are still operating.

The building is in general of good condition. The outside exterior and the inside show signs of not being maintained in a couple of years. The parking space in front of the building and the green areas in the back is starting to overgrow. Still, there is a nice, quiet space in the courtyard surrounding the doctors office.

South of the building there is a newer extension to the building.

selected potentials

From the analysis of Søllested, we have become aware of the town's needs and potentials. One of the observations made was the lack of a public meeting place where everyone is included.

Meeting places that are designed for multiple users are important platforms for integration of asylum seekers and to strengthen local social inclusion. The public spaces should be open and accessible so that everyone feels welcome. Through the transformation of centrally located plots that currently are abandoned, these places will be the physical mark of the asylum centre's contribution to the town.

After the visit in Søllested, there were two areas that stood out with great potential. Both places are empty buildings located along the main street. Both mentioned in the structure analysis.

The first area is at Højrebygade 64. This is the former Højreby Municipality old office building.

The other area is a plot with two empty buildings on Højrebygade 10, on the corner of the main street and Bækkevej. It is centrally located, close to a bus stop, the petrol station and the second hand shop.



III. 34 Højrebygade 10 on the main street. Søllested, 2016. The red building will be demolished while the yellow will be transformed into café, bakery and library.

højrebygade 10

On this plot, there are two buildings. The building furthest south, closest to Bækkevej, is a former pizzeria. It has been empty for some years and has signs of heavy wear. The building is on the municipality's list of buildings to be demolished.

The other building, with yellow painted brick wall facades, has previously held several apartments. The building has been extended in several stages, but the main part was built in 1900. (Boliga.dk, 2016) The building has signs of use, but is in general of better condition than the pizzeria.

The most potential lie in this building, while a demolition of the pizzeria adds to the potential by creating a square in front of the building.

local residents and asylum seekers

In an extension to the conversations with the local residents about the structure of the town, this part of the analysis is a more clarifying view into the locals' relationship to the existing asylum centre and their opinion about the opportunity to instead house asylum seekers in local empty homes. This is done in order to gain knowledge and experience from the resident's own perspective.

RELATIONS TO THE ASYLUM SEEKERS

The relationship between the asylum seekers and the local community is very much affected by the short period the centre has existed and its location outside the town, which results in the asylum seekers being less visible in the streetscape. The informants told that they were familiar with the asylum centre, but only knew the residents from a distance, when observing them walk to the grocery store, often in minor groups.

Despite the asylum centre being located close to Søllested, none of the mandatory functions or activities are located or combined with those already existing in Søllested. They are either located at the asylum centre or in other towns further away. As for instance when medical attention is needed, they are assigned to the medical centre in Rødbyhavn, more than 20km away. Even though the doctor's office in Søllested is located only 2,5 km away from the asylum centre.

One of the locals, who have been in contact with the asylum seekers, is the man who owns the hobby shop. He recounts an episode where some of the boys came in to buy chargers for their phones. In his 20 years as a shop owner he has never experienced people wanting to test the products inside the store before purchasing them. It left him kind of baffled, but he nonetheless welcomes them as any other costumers. He senses a distance to them which he recognises as a barrier due to differences in language, culture and a lack of mutual knowledge about each other.

ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THE EMPTY HOUSES

When asked about the opportunity to house asylum seekers in the towns empty homes the answers are diverse among the locals, but characterised by an ingrained withdrawn and contemplative position. Some of the worries were based on a fear of them not living up to the 'rules of conduct', which lies within the norms of a minor community like Søllested. A local woman working at the second hand shop stated:

"It is definitely an option, but the homes must be kept tidy so it looks presentable. But that's not just on the asylum seekers. It applies to the locals as well. Some of the gardens look terrible."



III. 35 At the hairdresser. Søllested. 2016.

Another local man, who was taking a break from gardening with his wife, told that there are already foreigners living in a couple of houses in the town.

"They don't know how to keep their yard neat. You can see from the messy gardens where they are living. But you cannot claim that they are bothering anyone. Not at all."

Lastly a middle-aged woman, who was glancing over the main street through an open window, expressed that she did not believe in housing 'them' in the empty homes, due to the many elderly people in the town having a fear of foreigners.

"It is a good idea to let asylum seekers live in the empty homes as long as the buildings are in proper shape." - Local resident in Søllested

"The asylum seekers are welcome to live in the empty homes, as long as the houses are okay and they keep it clean." - Local women at the hairdresser

program

The analyses of Søllested show that the town has many of the qualities, both socially and in terms of program, that a decentralised asylum centre needs in order to function and make it a meaningful stay for the asylum seekers.

Søllested has an existing urban structure of infrastructure, programs and empty homes that the centre can benefit from and add to. Also socially, the asylum centre can benefit from a strong sense of community and the importance the locals put in neighbourliness. These social qualities and the possibility of realisation of oneself is what is absent in the asylum centres today, which makes it difficult for the asylum seekers to identify with their surroundings and relations, or lack thereof.

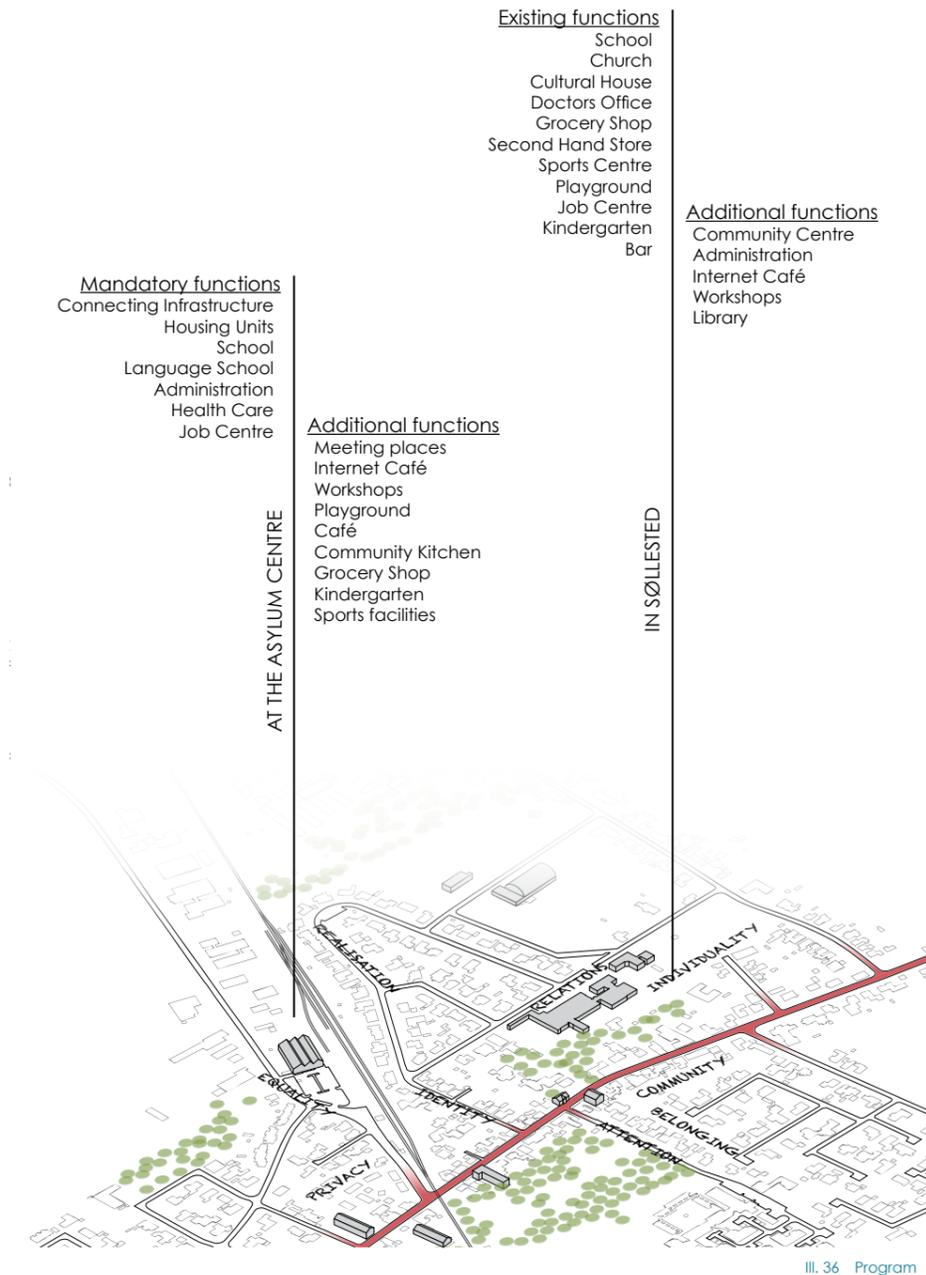
At the same time, the small town of Søllested has seen its better days and seem to find itself in a position where the only way they are going in terms of growth is down. The town is marked by people moving and empty homes standing by to decay. This affects the mood of the locals and the atmosphere that meets you when entering the town. This has caused the average age of the population to rise, which makes it appear as if the town is stuck in a time warp that are in need of an energy boost.

The analysis of the town has shown potentials to take the mandatory functions for the asylum centre and add them to similar existing functions, some of which are on the verge of being closed and has a lot of extra space at their disposal. The town also holds large buildings that have already been left by closing functions. In here, there is a potential of creating spaces for new additional functions based on the needs of the asylum seekers. These functions benefit both the locals and the asylum seekers and can facilitate some of the social activities that are necessary to achieve integration.

Adding the asylum centre gives a boost to the town as well as it provides the asylum seekers and the locals of Søllested with:

- A range of spaces to meet and form new relations
- A sense of being connected to an urban environment and a community
- An opportunity to realise themselves
- A sense of equality between them and the locals
- The possibility of practising individuality and being alone
- The security of a network of professionals that can provide them with the attention they need

The program that is supposed to facilitate this is shown in the diagram on the opposite page. It shows the program of the decentralised asylum centre when taking into account the needs of both the asylum seekers and the locals, which have been collected in the framework and the analysis.



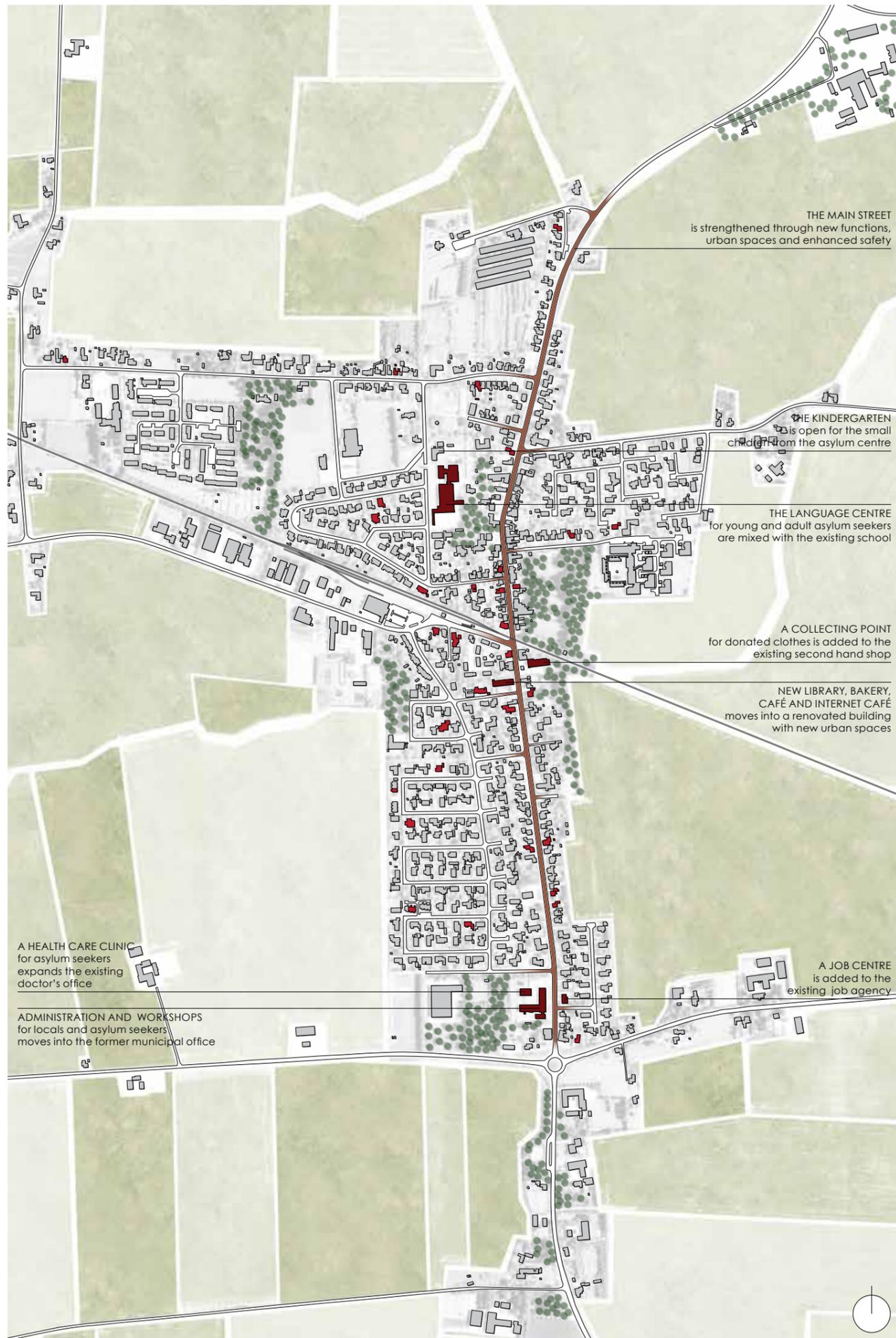


III.37 Design case Søllested

Based on the analysis, the approach and the framework, the design is presented and described in detail in order to cover how the design tools are used to create spaces that afford integration and ultimately a different way of living together in a small town. The new design of Søllested demonstrates a different way of approaching the challenges of today's asylum process.

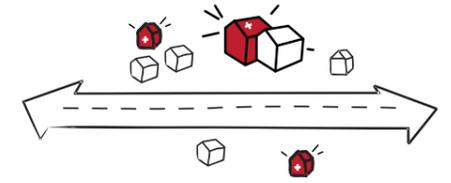
design case søllested

implementation of a
decentralised asylum centre



concept

The concept for the implementation of a decentralised accommodation centre in Søllested is derived from the framework and the analyses from Søllested in order to take into consideration both the asylum seekers and the local context. The concept is to create housing units for asylum seekers in empty homes and to add functions attached to the asylum centre to existing or new local functions. The main street is going to play an important role as the backbone of the decentralised asylum centre, thus its inhabitants need a clear structural element to enable them to move freely and participate in the different local offers. Since the asylum centre is going to experience new people arriving frequently, the main street should function as the stretch from which new inhabitants orientate themselves and get to know the town in a clear and easy manner.



III. 39 Concept diagram

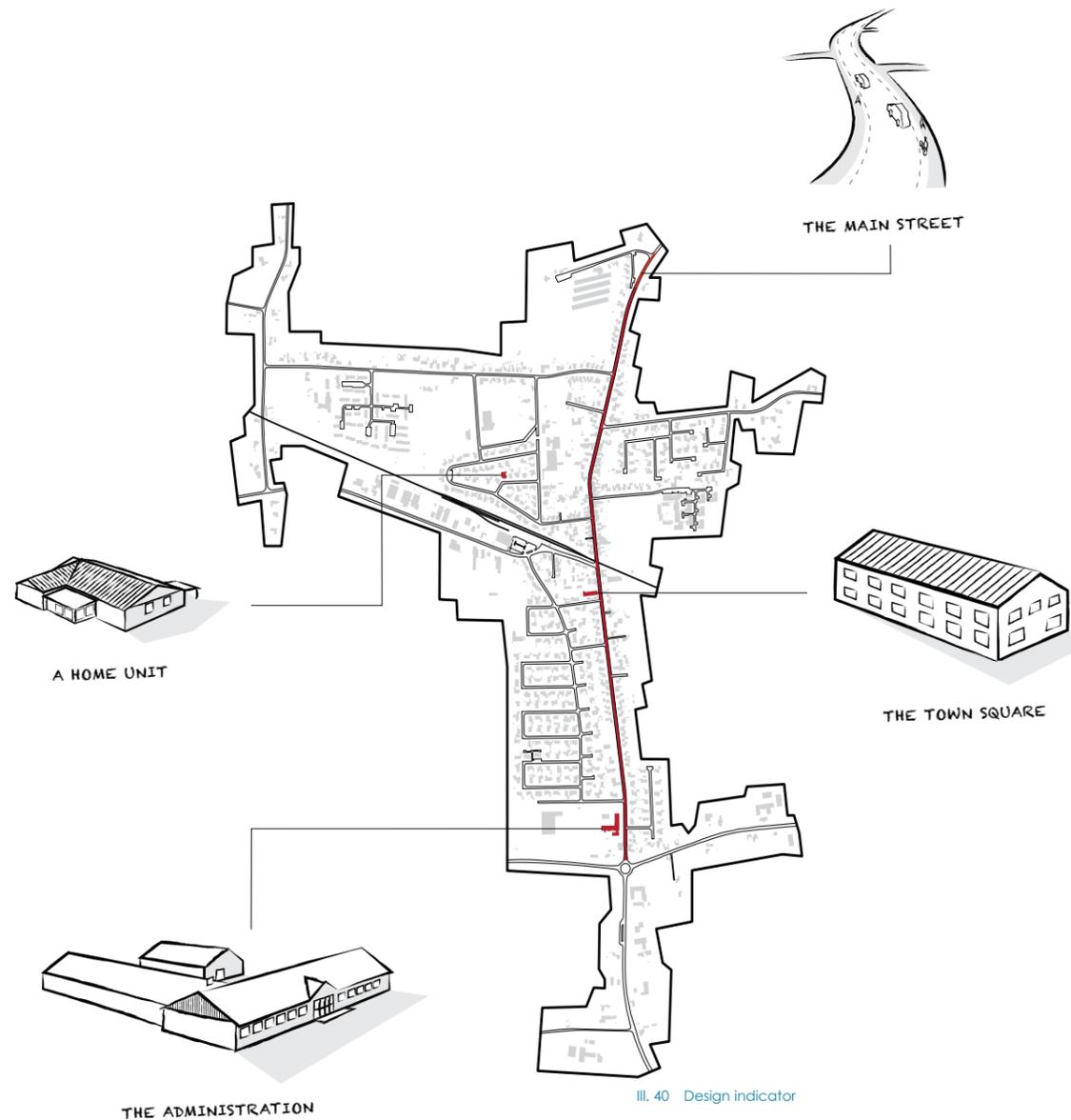
PLAN

The siteplan shows how the concept manifests itself once implemented in Søllested. The first thing the asylum seekers and other visitors will see when arriving to Søllested is the main street. By adding new urban spaces and functions and making changes to the street profile the town will make an immediate impression as a vivid and diverse place as opposed to a town that is struggling to survive. The main street will differ from the small streets connected to it and thereby become a point of orientation and constitute a landmark for the small town.

The plan shows how the 30 home units of the asylum centre are scattered across the town and blends in with the existing structures. By only transforming houses that make up homes for a 10% increase in population and by using already existing houses that has the same appearance as the rest of the homes in Søllested, the asylum homes are not going to dominate or outnumber the small town and they are going to indicate equality between the locals and the asylum seekers.

The new functions added to Søllested are based on the program from the previous chapter. The mandatory functions attached to the asylum centre is added to existing similar functions in order to create social interfaces that connects the asylum seekers to the locals, and to create collaborations between local forces and employees of the asylum centre. This is to make the asylum centre an integrated part of the town and not a centralised division working parallel to local departments. Apart from the administration, healthcare clinic, school, language centre and the job centre, which are mandatory to the asylum centre, the town features other functions where people can meet in their spare time and interact around leisure activities. These functions are made possible because the asylum centre is merged with an existing and currently functioning urban structure. The facilities of Søllested are then going to provide both the asylum seekers and the locals with offers in their spare time while being important interfaces for them to meet in. But in addition, other and new facilities are introduced based on what the locals as well as the asylum seekers need. A library, internet café, bakery and café are merged, while the administration for the asylum centre is mixed with healthcare facilities, an administration for the locals and different types of workshops. These new mixes of functions help create life and experiences and intensify certain spots in Søllested.

To hold the elements of the decentralised asylum centre together, the main street is transformed into a space of transit, with a range of green pockets and diverse squares, where people are able to find their way in a smooth and safe manner and meet their fellow citizens along the way. These situations where locals and asylum seekers meet and engage in direct or passive contact are made possible due to the decentralised nature of the asylum centre. This type of centre entails that people will have obligations at different locations in Søllested and thereby has a reason to leave their home and move around town. The main street is essential in terms of facilitating these patterns



of movement and connecting the interfaces for interaction and integration. But while creating the connections within Søllested, the main street also serves as the direct connection to the surroundings, either being the near natural areas surrounding the town as well as the rest of the country.

SCENARIOS AND ZOOM-INS

The following content in this chapter is an in depth description of key elements of the new decentralised asylum centre in Søllested. As a starting point it focuses on unfolding the impact and affordances of the main street and the home units. This is done by illustrating the desired scenarios that emerges due to design interventions, which are all implemented to enhance their well-being and living standard and ultimately afford integration of the asylum seekers. Accordingly, the scenarios focus on how program and design interventions afford social relations and interaction among, or between, asylum seekers and locals.

Afterwards the focus shifts to the two spaces on the main street where abandoned buildings are renovated to make room for entirely new functions for the locals and the asylum seekers. The decision of taking empty buildings and transforming them instead of adding everything to existing functions is made to create spaces that represent a neutral ground for the asylum seekers and locals. While being spaces that have emerged due to the advent of the asylum centre in Søllested, the spaces manifests themselves as spaces that are equally open and accessible to asylum seekers as well as locals and is a clear physical demonstration of how Søllested and the locals have benefitted from welcoming an asylum centre into the town. Inspired by the social activist Theaster Gates (2016), who works with transforming empty buildings into community hubs, the creation of these shared spaces in abandoned buildings seeks to change the way the locals imagine their town and getting them reinvested in the neighbourhood through culture. The idea is to add energy to spaces that people think of as insignificant and instead make them invested in being adjacent to them.

THEASTER GATES
A social activist from Chicago, USA,
who was trained as a potter. (TED)

The two locations differ from one another in terms of what they offer the inhabitants of Søllested. The first area, referred to as the Administration, is designed and programmed to hold practical functions for the inhabitants, while the other, referred to as the Town Square, holds programs for leisure and play. Both spaces and their program are described through expected scenarios, but because of the extensive transformations they are also illustrated with zoom-ins. These zoom-ins contain plans and sections that show how the desired scenarios are translated into concrete design solutions, that pay particular attention to the specific context. This is to pay equal attention to creating meaningful content and new programs as to creating beautiful vessels for them to unfold.

the main street

- an interface for physical and social connections

The main street in Søllested is the key to creating a functional physical infrastructure that can connect the asylum seekers and the locals to the different offers that Søllested holds. It should be available and easy to comprehend for asylum seekers regardless of how long they have stayed in Søllested. This is in order to make sure that it is easy for them to get to know the urban structure and feel a sense of belonging and an attachment to the town quickly.

While being this space of transit, the main street should also work as an important means of the social infrastructure in the town. This is something that is already apparent at its present state, where the public space made up by the main street is a space in which the locals run into each other frequently and have an eye out for each other. This should be facilitated better in order to improve the main street as a meeting point and as a place where you would actually want to stay.

Today in Søllested the main street signals a town that is struggling. The empty buildings and old shop signs are the only traces of what used to be and what could have been. The new design of the main street turns that upside down to make it a nice experience to arrive or simply move through the town. By moving functions for both asylum seekers and locals onto the main street, creating urban spaces and changing the street profile, the main street is intensified and the local initiatives are brought out in the open. These initiatives will create an intensified feeling of life and experiences on the main street and in general display the pulse of the town.



III. 41 The main street

CONNECTIONS AND ORIENTATION

The main street is an important link that connects people and places, both internally and externally. Externally it connects the inhabitants with the nearby recreational areas as well as it holds public transportation offers that connects them to other towns regionally. It means that the town does not become introvert and that the asylum seekers have the opportunity to maintain the social connection with family members possibly living in other parts of Denmark. Furthermore it enables them to use their right to move freely. This is important to maintain their individuality and give them something familiar to hold on to.

Internally the main street connects people with the new functions located along its stretch, but it also connects to the functions that are placed further away from the main street. This is done through wayfinding that with signs guide the inhabitants along pedestrian and cyclist friendly paths to the different functions. The signs show both letters and symbols in order to guide the locals and asylum seekers whether they speak Danish or not. This means that being on the main street makes you able to navigate to all the towns offers in a smooth manner. By adding greenery, flags and lighting to it, it will differ from the smaller streets connected to it and thereby be easy to identify and navigate from.

SOCIAL CONTACT

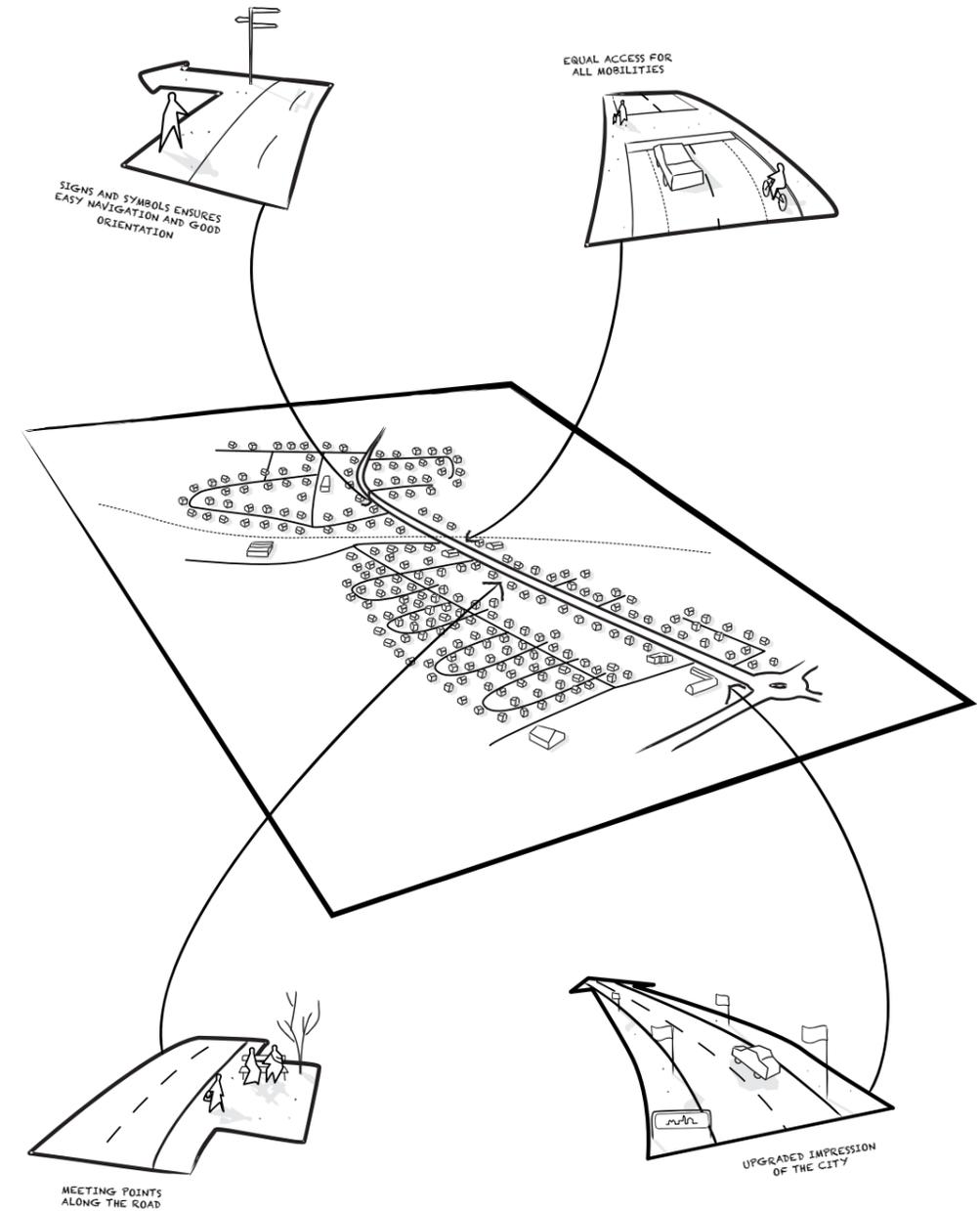
Establishing the main street as a meeting point in both interior and exterior spaces invites the inhabitants to stay together outside their private homes. In these public spaces the threshold between different types of people are smaller and the local societies are easier to get an understanding of or even join when they are visible in public. Here the coincidental meetings and the passive contact between different groups of the community and mobilities play an important role in terms of extending the existing structure of the community. This entails a social structure that is more flexible and open for changes and new inputs than the structure the local unions exists within today.

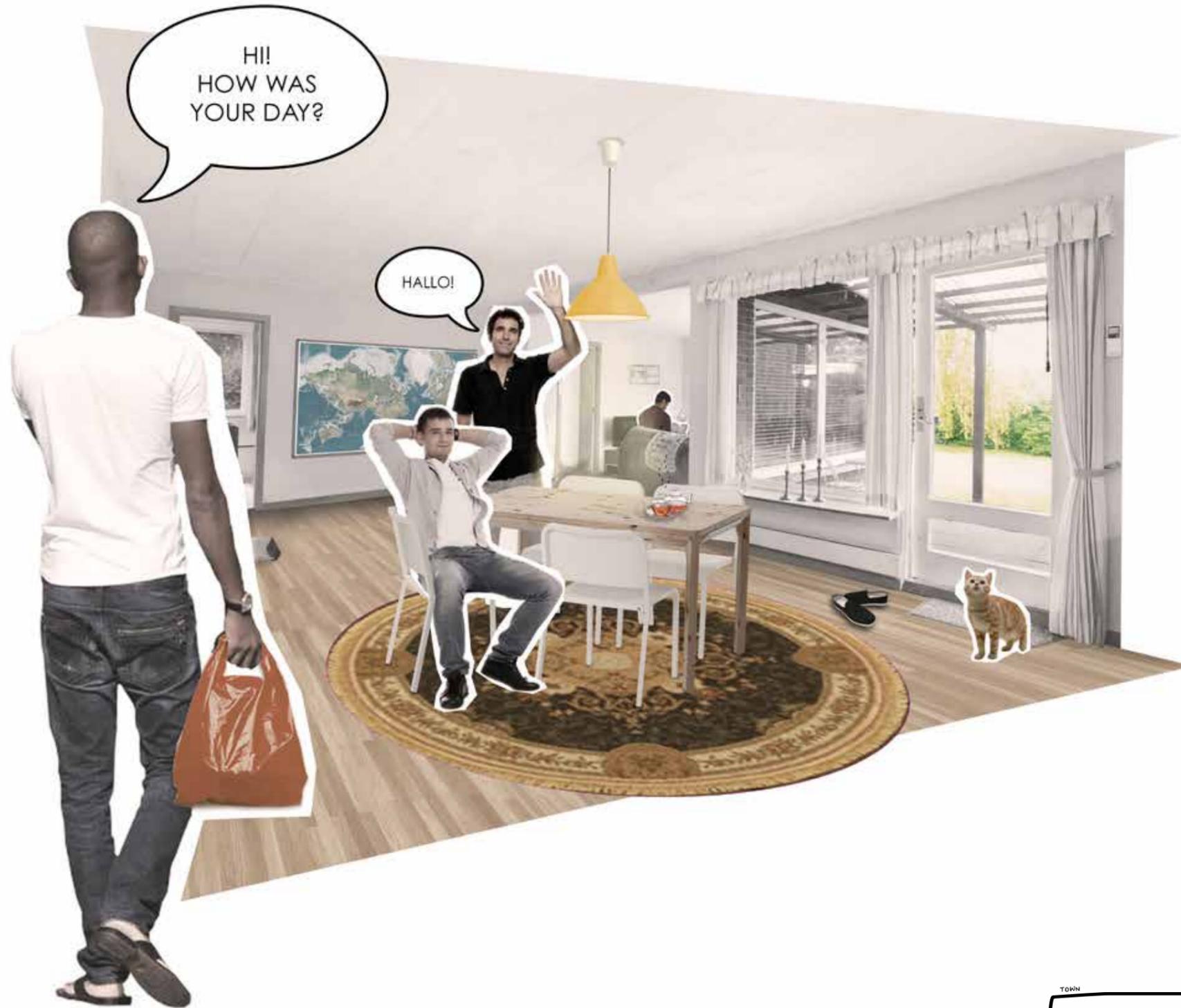
SAFETY MEASURES

The special consideration that is put on pedestrians and cyclist is also apparent on the main street in terms of its profile. These precautions have been put into the design based on the fact that the asylum seekers will most likely move around the town by foot or bicycle. This will increase the number of cyclists and pedestrians in Søllested, many of whom have limited knowledge of the Danish traffic regulations (Larsen, 2015), which make it necessary to integrate safety measures into the design of the street. Low speed is also one of Gehl's principles for spatial planning that affords passive contact.

The most significant reason for accidents, and the decisive factor of the extent of accidents, is speed. (Høye et al., 2012, p 293) Therefore, the speed is reduced by implementing speed chicanes in the shape of elevated surfaces in selected spots along the street. This will reduce the speed of the cars from 50 km/h to 30 km/h in these selected areas, where there are urban spaces, which will result in an increased number of people crossing the street. The elevations must have ramps with a 10% slope in order to get cars to reach the wanted speed limit. Bigger vehicles will need to reduce their speed even further when approaching the elevations. (Vejdirektoratet, 2013) The elevations even out the terrain between the sidewalk and the road, which makes it easier to cross the street for pedestrians. In a wider sense, its presence signals that it is the pedestrians and the cyclist that are being prioritised.

The new initiative makes the main street into a more attractive place to create squares and pockets where people can stay and meet. This is relevant because of the main street's already important status as a central social arena. The new urban spaces will facilitate these meetings and the contact that can occur between people crossing paths. Overall, the main street becomes the foundation between physical connections, important locations and social connections that arise based on direct or passive contact.





III. 43 A home unit

a home unit

- a space for equality and individuality

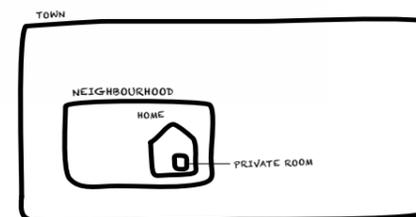
Program: Approximately 5 private rooms, Common spaces: kitchen, bathroom, living room, garden

The decentralised asylum centre is based on making smaller concentrations of asylum seekers and providing them a home inside ordinary houses among local residents. This is done to provide better conditions for integration, reduce the risk of internal conflicts and improve the asylum seekers well-being. As a result, every empty home - depending on its size - is meant to house an average of 5 people, constituted by either one or two families or a group of adults.

Being a foundation for their life in the asylum centre, the home units should provide the inhabitants with a secure base that protects the individuality and well-being of each person living in it.

SOCIAL COMMUNITIES

Moving into a regular home inside an existing town means entering into different types of social communities that trigger different types of relations. The asylum seeker enters into a family-like structure within the home, a local community of neighbours and a larger group that constitutes the wider public. By creating a decentralised asylum centre that brings these different types of spaces and social communities, the asylum seekers are provided with a gradual transition between public and private spanning from the private room to the wider public. This means that they are able to approach the public at their own pace and in a gradual manner.



III. 44 Social communities

The home: Inside the home, the asylum seekers are able to form relationships to the people they live with. It is easier for the asylum seekers to manage and form relations when there are less people to relate to at the same time. They are able to cook together, keep each other company, help each other out and share experiences of the asylum system.

The neighbourhood: The spaces that revolve around the community of neighbours living in close proximity to each other, is a bit more private than the public spaces found on the main street. Thus, the social structure is a bit closer and the relations a bit stronger. Here people often bump into each other and generally have an idea of each other's well-being.

The town: In the public spaces and common facilities, the asylum seekers are faced with the wider public. Here they are able to meet and interact with people of similar interests as themselves. Furthermore they here get the experience of belonging to a wide and diverse community that shares the common interests of their town.

PRIVACY AND INDIVIDUALITY

The structure of each home should provide every inhabitant with his or her own private room. This is to provide them with a secure space they can withdraw to whenever they have the urge to do so and a space where they can process the new impressions they have experienced and keep experiencing. These impressions might stem from their journey to Denmark and can therefore be of a traumatising nature. But, also positive impression that comes from entering into and acting inside new social unions and communities can be overwhelming and require people to spend time alone in order to process and being able to exist within them.

To put it into Goffman's terms connected to his performance analogy, the private room provides them with a secure 'back stage' where they are in control and able to process without 'acting' as they do on the 'front stage' in public. This is also described by the American architect Louis Kahn who defines the private room as a state of mind and a space of reflection:

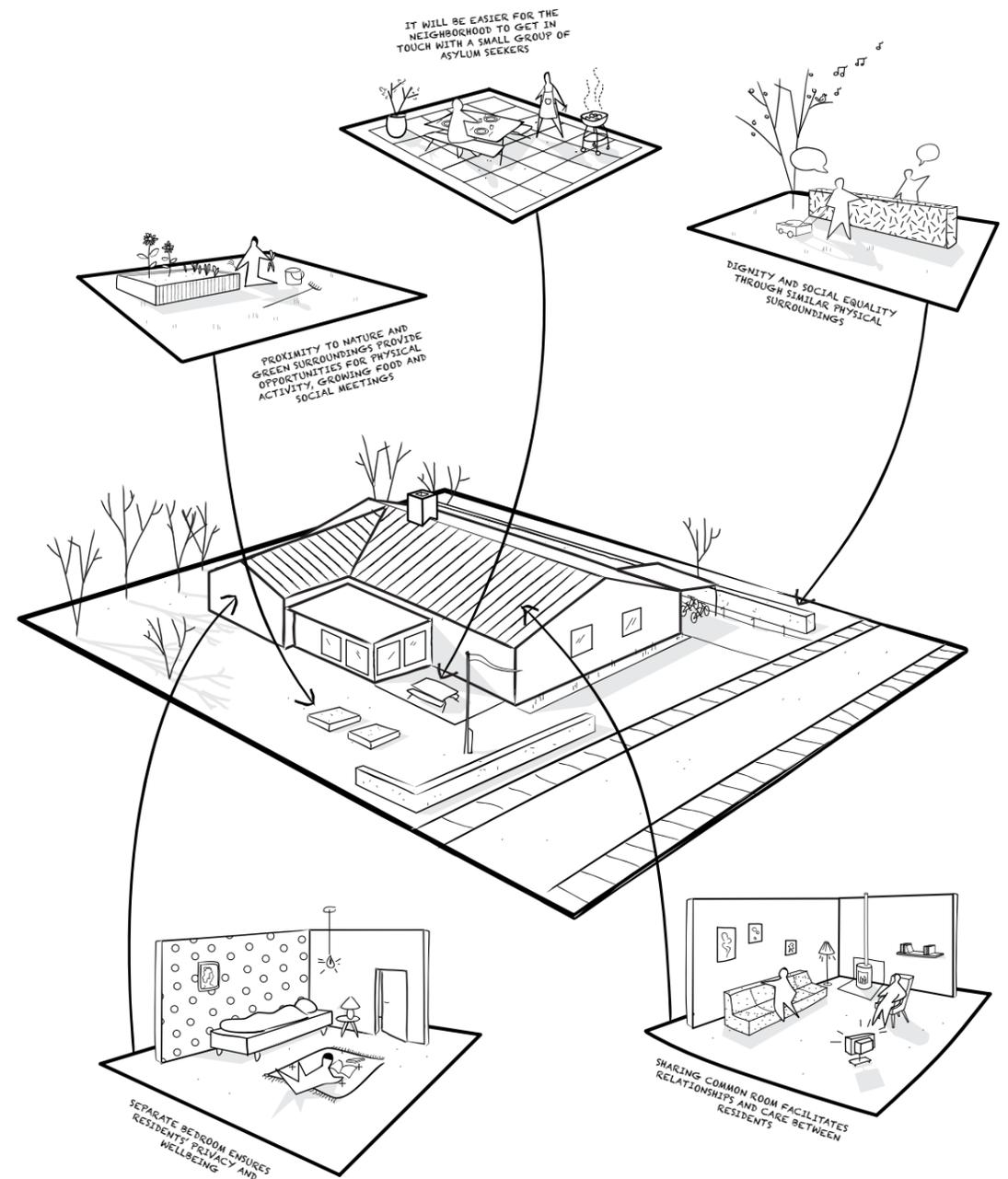
"Reflection as concentration on oneself represents an inwardness, a possibility that is always difficult to attain since we constantly dwell within social spaces. For this reason the room becomes the quintessential image of interiority in a literal sense: being only with oneself" (Volume, 2015)

The notion of individuality is also linked to the idea of having a private home where the asylum seekers do not feel watched by the employees of the asylum centre and where they are empowered and a degree of trust is put on them being able to take control of their stay. Here they have something to take ownership of and, to some degree, shape in order to make a space they find meaningful and thereby a space they can identify with. By using the facilities and tools Søllested offers, the asylum seekers can use their own skills and personality to create a space that constitutes a home for them and possibly continue habits and traditions from their home country.

EQUALITY

The home units in Søllested seek to shorten the physical and mental barrier between the locals and the asylum seekers. The regular homes are used as an asylum home to signal equality between the asylum seekers and the locals. By living in smaller groups in homes similar to all other homes in Søllested, it makes it easier for the neighbours to approach the asylum seekers. Furthermore, it becomes easier to mentally manage a small group of people instead of a large group of 200-300 people living together in a regular asylum centre. This makes it easier to get to know the asylum seekers as individuals and as neighbours on equal terms as the Danish neighbours next door. An important factor that should help sustain a good sense of neighbourliness is to shape the exterior surroundings so they are able to match the expectations of the neighbours. Thus, the gardens of the home units are designed as neat and easy to maintain before the asylum seekers move in. The asylum seekers have the opportunity of growing their own vegetables, but if they do not wish to, they can leave it be and stick to small things such as mowing the lawn with a lawn mower borrowed at the Town Square.

LOUIS KAHN (1901 - 1974)
American architect, design critic and professor



the administration

- a space for attention and realisation

Size: 1160 m² interior space. 8500 m² exterior space

Program: Administration for the decentralised asylum centre and municipal services for local residents.
Workshop for both locals and asylum seekers: wood, painting, sowing, and various repairs.

Health care clinic: The existing doctor's office and the asylum centres mandatory health care services.
Garden and urban farming: greenhouse, vegetable planters, chickens and rabbits.

The administration covers the administrative parts of running an asylum centre. This is a necessity in all asylum centres in order to guide the asylum seekers through the asylum process, as well as managing the day-to-day issues that can arise in the centre.

The administrations in centralised asylum centres often have a monitoring effect due to them being closely situated to the housing units (Hauge et al., 2015). In the decentralised asylum centre, the home units are linked to the administration, but none of them are physically connected to it and therefore the homes and the inhabitants become more independent. Still being linked to it means that the inhabitants do not feel watched by the employees constantly, but they can approach themselves and then get the attention they need.

The administration is mixed with functions of health care and workshops in order to create a public building for both asylum seekers and locals. At the workshops, the asylum seekers and locals are able to unfold and realise themselves by using their skills and create or repair objects that can be useful for them in their life in Søllested. The idea of mixing the functions associated with the asylum centre with local functions, means that the locals and the asylum seekers are given common interfaces where they can meet during their everyday lives. Furthermore, the mix becomes an expression of equality between the inhabitants because the distinctions between the two groups are blurred with them using the same facilities. This is also intensified by the building being renovated solely due to the advent of the asylum centre in Søllested. This makes it a neutral ground where the locals do not feel ownership of the area due to prior attachments to existing functions and where the experience of being there is tied to the advent of the asylum centre and a positive addition to the town.



Ill. 46 The Administration



III. 47 The Administration, Site Plan

CARE AND ATTENTION

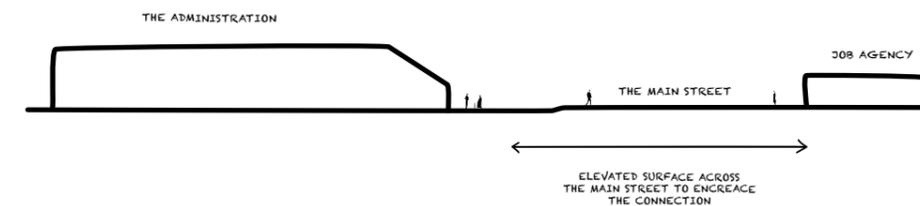
The front part of the former municipal office is renovated to hold the new administration for the asylum seekers as well as the locals. Being situated on the main street and presented clearly behind the open square, it is a recognisable structure for the users. Here, the asylum seekers can approach the employees of the asylum centre if they need guidance or help with issues such as their asylum case, their health or other problems and questions that are relevant to their stay. As well as the locals they can also receive help or information from an employee from the municipality.

The administration is closely connected to the health care clinic that is situated in the existing doctor's office, because the issues that the asylum seekers are struggling with might not only be of a practical nature. In the health care clinic the problems concerning their mental and physical state can be brought to attention behind closed doors or outside in the courtyard that separates the main building and the smaller health care clinic. This exterior space differs from the front square by being more intimate and affording other kinds of interaction. The main building protects it from the eyes of the main street and the trees moving in from the backyards grove of fruit trees create small intimate pockets for quiet conversation, reflection or relaxed breaks for the employees. Being in close proximity to the workshops, the healthcare employees has the opportunity to use alternative methods when treating people for mental issues. These methods have proved to be effective on Langeland where asylum seekers get help to process their emotions through group session of painting, drawing and poetry writing. The art therapist explains the approach as a way to help them process their troubles in a positive manner and help them rediscover their human value. (Langeland Kommune, 2014)

Having experienced potentially damaging events in the past, the administration should constitute a safe and accessible place where they know they can find attentive employees when they need them. In addition to the open square in front of the building, the otherwise closed built structure have been split by a large sections of windows, to create a transparent and welcoming effect that makes it possible to follow what is happening on the inside. This does not only become apparent for the cyclists or pedestrians walking by, but also for the bus passengers and drivers moving through Søllested.

On the main street a bus stop and a chicane are integrated into the street profile and square to slow down traffic as well as to draw attention to the things happening at the administration. The chicane is an elevated surface paved with the same concrete as the front square and the sidewalk to create a holistic design that extends itself onto the street. This is to slow traffic down to 30 km/h and raise awareness to the administration for all the different mobilities passing by the administration. In accordance with instructive traffic rules from Vejdirektoratet (2016), the width of the street is 3,0 m and the bike lane is 1,5 m with an edge line on 0,3 m. The two bus stops are placed along the traffic lanes, which prevents cars to overtake the bus and thereby slows down the traffic. This is also based on instructive traffic rules for streets with an AADT below 5000 and a low number of daily bus departures. (Vejdirektoratet, 2012a)

AADT - Annual average daily traffic
The AADT for the main street in Søllested is estimated to 2.900 in 2020.
(Vejdirektoratet, 2012b)



III. 48 Program and connection at the administration

REALISATION

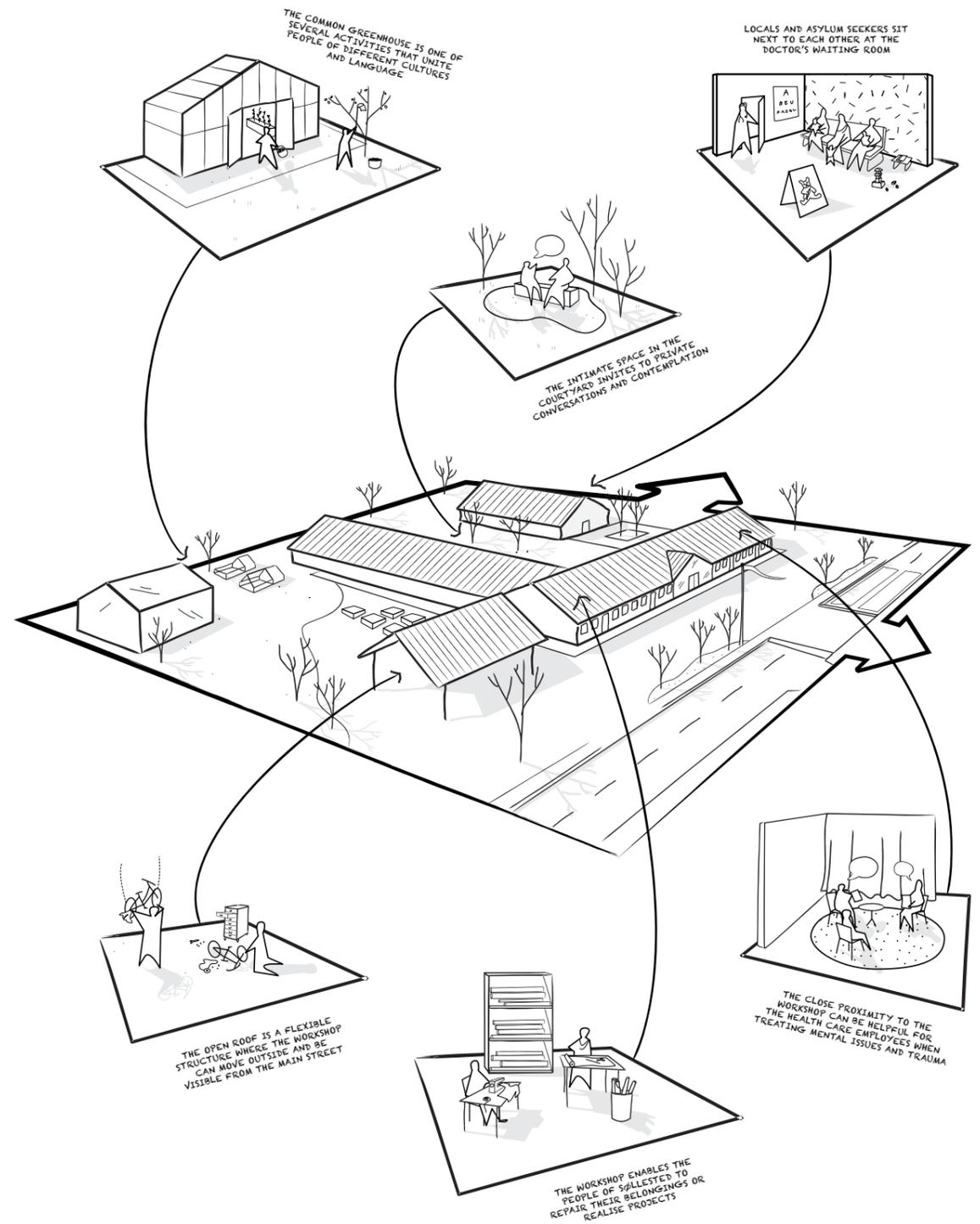
Another design element to make the activities of the administration even more visible is to create open spaces close to the main street where the workshops are able to move their work outside. Accordingly, the front square is kept open and clear and a roof in prolonging with the facade facing the street is added in case the users wish to be covered. This makes it easy and softens the threshold for people passing by or going to the administrative offices to go and join the work taking place in the workshops. The building features a painting, sewing and wood workshop that speaks to varying needs and interests. Here the users are enabled to repair old belongings or realise new ones with tools that they might not have the resources to own themselves. In these common workshops they also have the opportunity to collaborate with fellow citizens, being asylum seekers or locals, on creating something together.

Creating programs like these means that they get an interface where they are able to connect and interact with each other in a non-verbal way. Because when experiencing a language barrier, a way to interact could be to work together towards a common goal. This also involves the exterior spaces that the workshops open up to south of the administration. Here the asylum seekers and locals have common gardens and a grove of fruit trees stretching the entire backside of the administration area, where they can help and learn from each other and apply it to their own private gardens. The common garden also houses rabbits, chickens and bees, which are elements the asylum seekers are not able to own themselves due to the unknown timespan of their stay in Søllested. For children living in small towns, it is very ordinary to have pets, so by giving the children of the asylum centre the opportunity to have shared pets at the administration, the inequality between them and their peers are diminished, which is something that for children are especially important when living in an asylum centre.

This notion of inequality is observed by Signe Smith Jervelund who says that many of the children in the asylum centre compares themselves to their peers in school and the inequality they experiences can be deeply disruptive. She elaborates:

"This concern, that many of the children carry, in addition to the general stress, is much more difficult for children and adolescents to handle. It can cause them to develop depressions or behaviour disorders such as ADHD." (Information, 2015)

SIGNE SMITH JERVELUND
Associate professor from the Section
of Health Services Research at the
University of Copenhagen.





OPEN ROOF STRUCTURE
FOR OUTDOOR WORKSHOP

MAIN ENTRANCE

BUS STOP

III. 50 The Administration
Elevation 1:200



III. 51 The Town Square

the town square

- a meeting place for leisure and relations

Size: 350 m² interior space. 1350 m² exterior space.

Program: café, Internet café, bakery, library, square, playground

The framework done for this project show that not only does an asylum centre need its housing units and practical functions in order to be a meaningful frame around the asylum seekers' stay. It also needs functions and interfaces where the locals and the asylum seekers can meet and spend their spare time. These types of places and functions are apparent in small towns like Søllested. The new town square seeks to create an interior and exterior space that holds existing and new functions, centrally located by the main street and the station, to attract the inhabitants and build a strong common area that the community can take ownership of.

As the administration, the town square is established on a plot that today are unused and abandoned, which gives it the same feeling of building a social foundation on neutral ground. This space relies on local initiatives and local strengths to be established and to function. This means that the relations created here are not only between the inhabitants of Søllested, but also a relation to the space as something established by the community, and something they can be proud of.



III. 52 The Town Square, Site Plan

PROGRAM FOR LEISURE

Adding the asylum centre to Søllested brings an opportunity to create some of the functions that the locals have been missing, together with functions that benefits the asylum seekers. As with the administration, the mix of programs seeks to create interfaces that afford interaction between the asylum seekers and the locals even though they might not be using the same functions. The building connected to the town square holds a bakery, a library, a café and an internet café in an open plan.

A bakery is the most frequent answer when the locals are asked what they miss the most in the town. This is extended to also hold a café where people can stay and enjoy the products from the bakery. Furthermore the building holds a library and an internet café. The internet café is a very important element for the asylum seekers in order to stay in touch with the family they have left behind or family staying in other parts of the world. Even though it might not be for much use for the locals, having the internet café placed in close proximity to the other programs of the Town Square, the mix makes up interfaces where the locals and asylum seekers gain insight into each other's lives and engage in passive contact, while being engaged in different things. A library is also a big wish for the locals in Søllested, but the new library at the Town Square does not only contain books, but also practical equipment for the inhabitants to borrow. These are objects such as tools, bicycles, lawn mowers or other things that the asylum seekers either can't afford or things that aren't worthwhile purchasing because their home in Søllested is temporary. These are objects that are standard to most homeowners, so to give the asylum seekers an opportunity to live on equal terms as the locals, they are given the chance to borrow this equipment.

The Town Square in front of the building is an extension of the interior programs, and as in the administration, the renovated building have gotten large sections of windows to make the transition between exterior and interior space more smooth. The café and library can spread out into the open part of the square that is located close to the main street, which makes it an ideal spot to sit and watch people who is passing by. Also connected to the square is a playground in the shape of a small landscape, a fountain and tables with game boards. These are all inspired by children's' ability to interact non-verbally through play and games. Also the goal is to afford interaction between the parents based on their shared interest for the children, and be inspired by their ability to see beyond skin colour or language barriers.

While housing all the new programs, the building is also meant to house many of the local societies in Søllested as well as local events. Something that becomes apparent when getting to know Søllested is that the local societies are not visible at first glance, but you have to look closer and speak to the locals in order to discover the initiatives that take place in different places around the town. To make it apparent for the asylum seekers coming to Søllested what is taking place in their neighbourhood, the local societies can use the new spaces by the town square if they are interested. In this way these offers are brought into light and are thereby more accessible to the asylum seekers.



III. 53 The Town Square Elevation 1:200

THE TOWN SQUARE

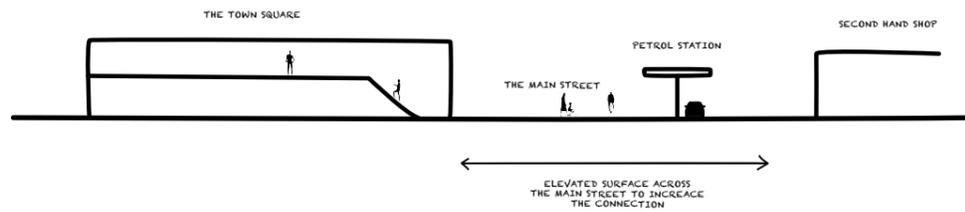
MAIN ENTRANCE

EQUIPMENT LIBRARY

CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONS

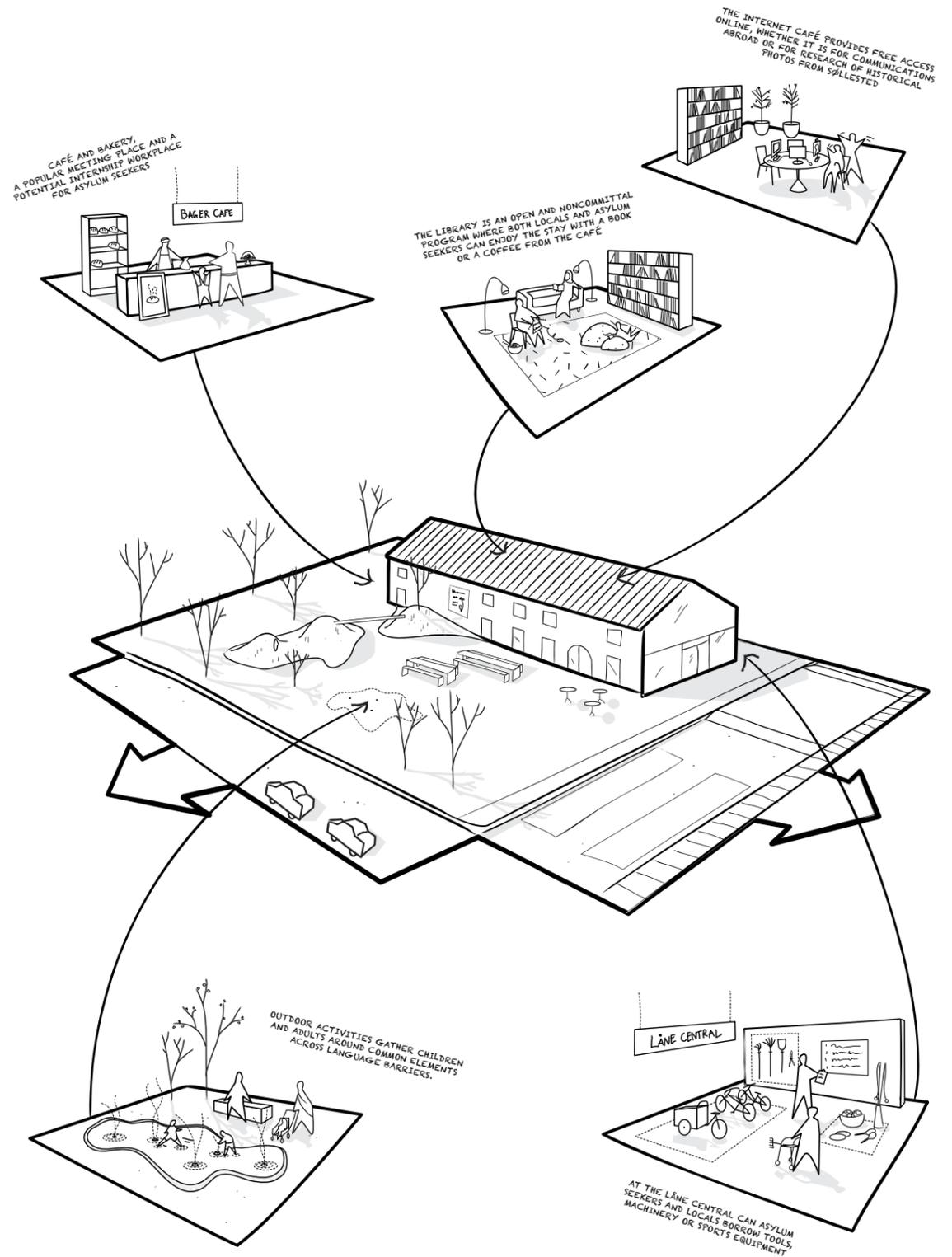
The Town Square and the connected building differ from the administration by being a community space very much dependent on committed locals that can help run it. Locals that already exist as important parts of the local community and its societies, such as the people working in the second hand shop. This will give the Town Square a homely feel and make it a place for local meetings where democracy can thrive. The varied program in the open floor plan makes it a pulsating building that houses activities throughout most of the day. This corresponds to the idea of it being a space that is open for the locals whenever because it is a building that it is to them. Having the square only partially programmed gives the locals the opportunity to plan different events, such as flea markets and community dinners, that can take place at the square.

To make a connection to another locally driven shop in Søllested, the second hand shop, the concrete pavement of the square is extended across the main street as an elevated surface that works as a chicane to slow down traffic. This creates a safe connection for pedestrians to the other side of the street and all the way to the entrance of the shop. This extension of the square frames the bus stops connected to the square and gives the impression of stepping of the bus and right into the square.



III. 54 Program and connection at the town square

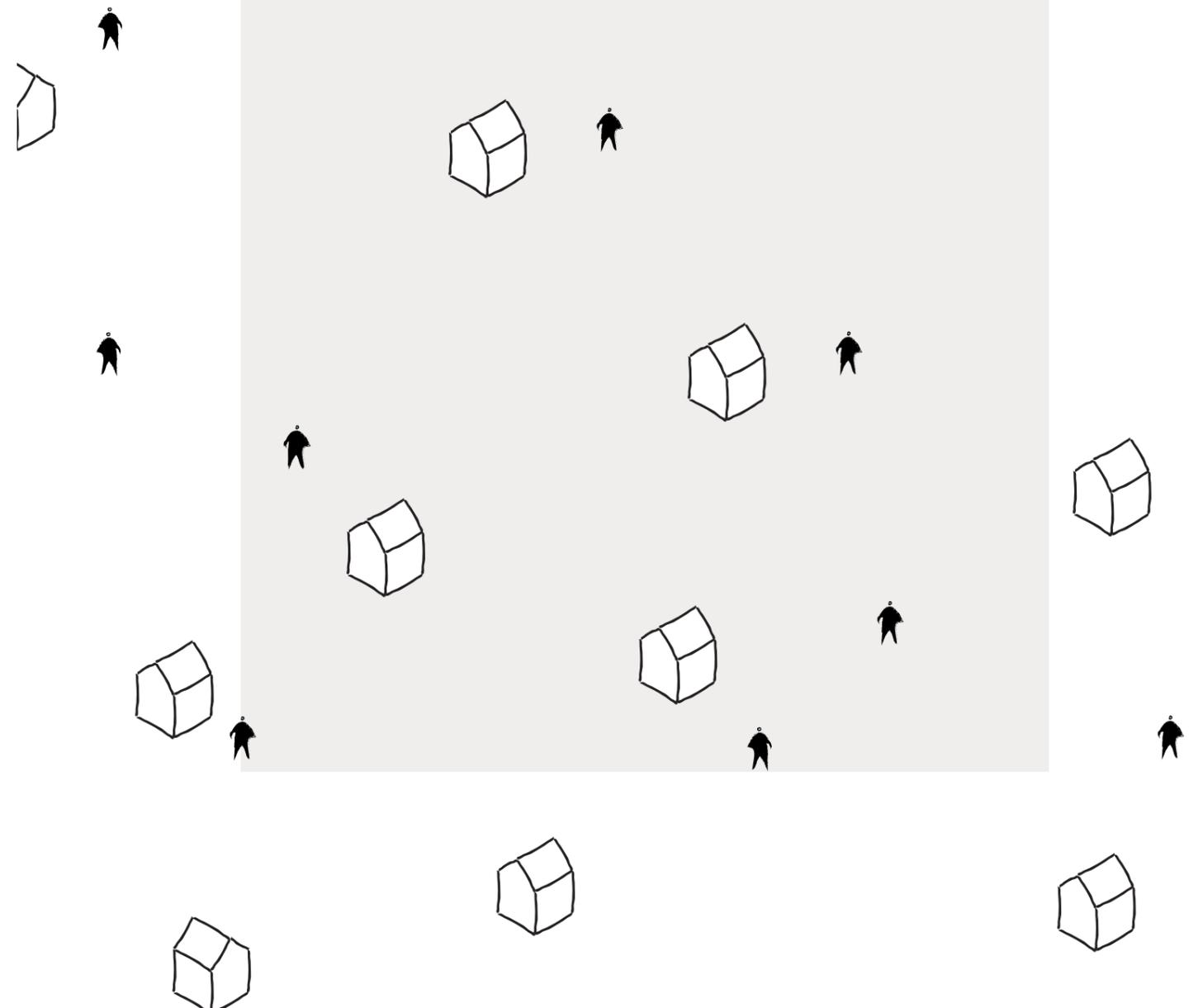
The design that has just been presented is a design that is placed in the cross field between global issues and a specific context with real human needs at stake. The handling of practical elements alongside individual and context related issues is summed up in the following design guide that serves as an inspiration for managing the implementation of decentralised asylum centres in different small town areas that share some of the same characteristics. The guidelines are all based on the experiences from this report and design case. Afterwards an epilogue follows as a conclusion and reflection about the project in its totality.



III. 55 The Town Square, Scenarios

DESIGN GUIDE

Decentralised Asylum Centres
in Peripheral Denmark



CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

decentralisation
integration
use of the design guide
method

-

DESIGN

the main street
home units
common spaces

-

NEEDS AND POTENTIALS

small town urban structures
the program of asylum centres

This design guide is based on the experiences and knowledge gained from a design project described in the report *Local Asylum: From Isolation to Integration*. The guide may be read on its own or accompanied by the report, which is referenced throughout the guide.

INTRODUCTION

The following design guide contains a collection of guidelines that have been derived from the report *'Local Asylum: From Isolation to Integration'*. It arises from the global refugee crisis where a rising number of people have to flee their home country, due to war or political disputes. Many of these refugees later find themselves in European countries that might not be prepared or willing to accommodate the high amount of new citizens. The facilities offered are often of a very poor standard and do not differ much from the conditions refugees were living under during and after the Second World War (Local Asylum, 'Challenges', pp. 12-15). The lack of improvement and entrepreneurship are continuing because the government wants to send a signal to other refugees about them not being welcome here. At the same time it sends a signal to the population that these people are not desirable to the country. In Denmark where 21.225 people applied for asylum in 2015, there have been examples of tent camps and barracks of a temporary standard that can have a negative effect on the inhabitants' well-being. Furthermore these types of asylum centres are often situated in desolated areas, which make both the mental and the physical barrier between the population and the asylum seekers immensely big. (Local Asylum, 'The daily life in asylum centres', pp. 22-25)

DECENTRALISATION

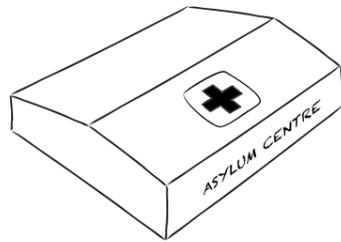
The report puts forth a solution that houses refugees in small towns in peripheral Denmark while they have the status as asylum seekers awaiting for reply on their asylum application. This is a solution that features the opportunity of splitting the traditional asylum centre into smaller housing units and incorporating functions of asylum centres (administration, healthcare, jobcentre and schools) into existing local functions. The small peripheral towns are able to facilitate the asylum centre in the many empty buildings and houses that have been left behind due to urbanisation (Local Asylum, 'Decentralised asylum centres in peripheral Denmark', pp. 34-37). Furthermore, these towns hold existing urban structures and social fabrics that can provide the asylum seekers with the opportunities to live meaningful lives where there are room for individuality and a sense of belonging to a place and a community. Instead of being an isolated centre separated from the local society, the decentralised asylum centre gives the inhabitants an instant impression of the country they have entered. Living in regular homes will create a sense of equality between them and the surrounding community and also in a wider provide them with equal ability to act as individuals. They become part of the local environment and should not be thought of as clients, but as part of the local community.

INTEGRATION

The asylum centre in this guide demonstrates an alternative to traditional asylum centres in a time where the numbers of refugees are rising and predicted to rise even further based on political and environmental conditions in exposed areas around the world.

The proposal ultimately wishes to strengthen integration and give the asylum seekers a better foundation to continue further out into the Danish society. It also puts forth a suggestion on how to turn the negative growth of small peripheral towns around and create attractive communities that demonstrates a new way of living together in these types of areas. This is done by implementing elements that tightens the social structure and affords social inclusion. The design of the decentralised asylum centre stresses a vision for the asylum seekers about the time in the asylum centre not being solely spent on waiting around for a reply that enables them to move on. The focus is to use the long waiting time, which most likely is over a year due to the current pressure on the system, to get to know the Danish language and society, and in a wider sense enable

Existing centralised model



Proposed decentralised model



Existing urban and social structure in peripheral Denmark

them to lead a meaningful life where identity and realisation of potentials are in focus. Here measures have been taken to empower the asylum seekers to take responsibility and control as individuals. This will mean that the time spent in the asylum centre will hopefully not feel wasted because of them either being prepared to step further out into the Danish society, or having gained trust, hope and competences to make the journey back to their home country.

Apart from the effects it has on integration it also gives the asylum seekers the ability to take control and continue habits from their former home as well as to process the potential trauma they suffer from their experiences and journey. Unified this type of asylum centre will assist them in getting a more smooth transition from there to here and create a safe foundation inside a complex asylum process (Local Asylum, 'Decentralised asylum centres in peripheral Denmark', pp. 34-37)

USE OF THE DESIGN GUIDE

The following design guide serves as a summary of the work conducted in the report translated into guidelines related to urban design, analysis and program. This gives stakeholders such as planning authorities, politicians, private investors or others a framework and an insight into physical and social initiatives when dealing with the implementation of decentralised asylum centres in peripheral towns.

The guidelines should specifically serve as advice for the type of asylum centre called an accommodation centre which is where the asylum seekers live in phase two after going through from their first interview with the Immigration Service (Local Asylum, 'The asylum process', pp. 18-21)

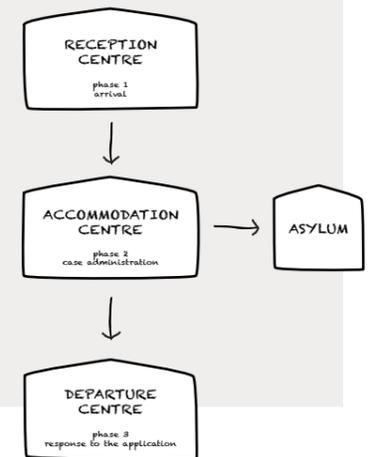
. Throughout the design guide the centre is referred to using the overall term asylum centre, which is usually used in everyday speech.

The guide should not be read as a definitive solution and the guidelines should therefore be thought of as advice and inspiration that highlights a range of opportunities that potentially can help integration in a new way. Furthermore, the asylum centre sheds light on issues in peripheral Denmark, that could be helped solved by means of the advent of the asylum centre, and potentially create a new way of living together in these small communities.

METHOD

The design guide and the corresponding report are created by urban designers and demonstrate how the problem of how to house asylum seekers can be helped solved by means of a designer's toolbox; A toolbox that is unfolded in this design guide. It is extracted from a design case that revolves around the town of Sollested on Lolland, where an imagined asylum centre is implemented. The necessity of a design case originates from the local interests at stake and to underline the importance of gaining knowledge and understanding its physical and social fabrics in order to create an asylum centre that merges and becomes one with the town.

The asylum centre in the design case is a unified expression based on analyses of theory and research related to the field as well as analyses of the physical and social environment of the existing town. This is interpreted and transformed into concrete design solutions that relate to the context in question as well as the overall design problems, which means that the essence and experiences of them can be extracted as universal principles and implemented into similar towns.



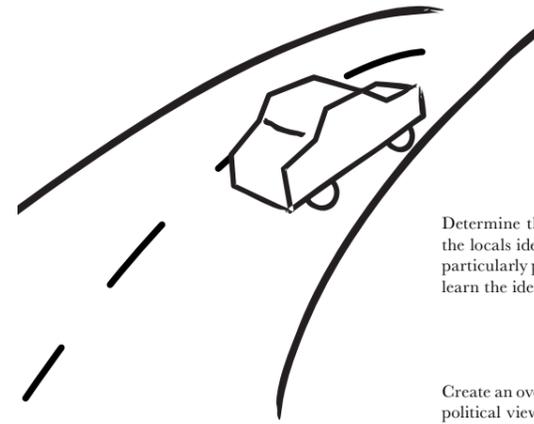
NEEDS AND POTENTIALS

SMALL TOWN URBAN STRUCTURES

The first part of the design guide concentrates on the analysis of the existing social and physical environment of the town in question. The tools are made specifically for peripheral towns holding potential for housing future asylum centres. The analysis is based on towns from 500-5000 inhabitants, which have experienced a decline during the last five years along with them being estimated to have a negative growth in the following ten years. Even though these towns experience a high number of empty homes and functions that are closing, they still hold communities of locals that thrive and are happy to live in these closeknit neighbourhoods. They have a strong sense of neighbourliness and are said to have a higher percentage of volunteers than in the bigger cities. (Local Asylum, 'Peripheral Denmark', p. 35-36)

Even though the analysis guidelines are on a general level, one should always pay special attention to other characteristic details of each specific town in order to make designs that are adjusted to the needs of the people who will be affected by the changes that come with the asylum centre. This is important in order to give the asylum seekers a good platform for integration, but also to make changes that make the asylum centre worthwhile for the locals, because they gain positive additions to the town's social and physical structures.

In the process of adding an asylum centre to a small peripheral town, the designer is able to contribute with knowledge on what structures hold potential as platforms for integration and facilities for safe living environments. The guidelines are tools for analyses based on the experiences and knowledge gained in the design case from Sollested, which shows where to look for facilities and unions that is going to go along with the asylum centre. These are used as the foundation to turn around the negative growth in peripheral towns and demonstrate a new way of living in these types of environments.



LOCAL CHARACTERISTICS

Determine the history, attractions and character of the town in order to understand what the locals identify themselves with and feel connected to. Characteristics that the locals are particularly proud of could be highlighted in the new design in order for the asylum seekers to learn the identity and history of the town and the local community. (Local Asylum, 'Design case Sollested, analysis', pp. 40-57)

DEMOGRAPHICS

Create an overview of the people living in the town in terms of age, gender, origins, education, political views, etc. in order to get an insight into what type of society it is and what types of functions they could benefit from or could attract new people. The latter can also be determined by investigating what types of people have left the town within the last ten years. (Local Asylum, 'Choosing Sollested', pp. 42-43)

THE MAIN STREET

Analyse the main street in order to determine where it needs physical upgrades and which spots have potentials for becoming important zones for potential new functions or public pockets. These spots could either be mapped out based on the physical surroundings or statements from the locals concerning their preferred spots. Furthermore, attention should be paid on the atmosphere of the main street in order to be able to create an intensified feeling of arriving in the town. The analysis should also consist of a mapping of important zones on the main street for potential public pockets. (Local Asylum, 'Connections and infrastructure', pp. 44-45)

PATHS

Investigate the routes of the pedestrians and cyclists to the important functions in the town. Since the asylum seekers will most likely be moving around by foot or bike, highlighting these paths is important in order to create a clear infrastructure of the town, that are easy to orientate within and easy to get to know for the asylum seekers. (Local Asylum, 'Connections and infrastructure', pp. 44-45)

LOCAL INITIATIVES

To understand the social fabrics of the town the common interests and societies within it should be located. These are often hidden and easiest to find by asking the locals. They can be potential elements to help facilitate the connection between the community and the asylum seekers. Also people who contribute to the community in a significant way can be an important force when it comes to integrating the asylum seekers in the community. (Local Asylum, 'Functions and actors', pp. 46-47)

EXISTING FUNCTIONS

The existing functions in the town should be mapped in order to recognise which programs exist and which are missing. The buildings containing the existing functions should be analysed in order to discover if there is enough space to merge them with similar functions connected to the asylum centre. This is usually the case due to the decrease of population, which leads to fewer pupils at the school. (Local Asylum, 'Functions and actors', pp. 46-47)

EMPTY HOMES

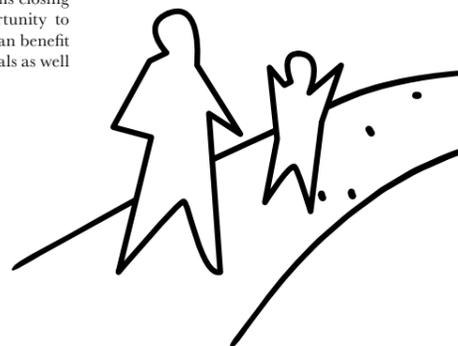
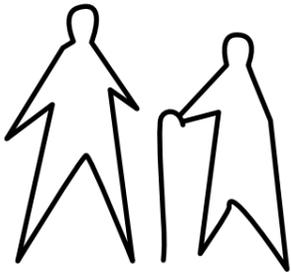
Map the empty homes that should be used as asylum homes. These can either be homes that are for sale or abandoned homes that have been left behind, but should nonetheless be buildings of a reasonable standard. They can be located by contacting the municipality or by looking up real estate agencies. (Local Asylum, 'Empty homes and buildings', pp. 48-49)

EMPTY BUILDINGS

Apart from homes, the larger buildings that are standing empty should also be mapped and analysed in order to discover their potentials. The buildings should preferably be spacious and be located on or close to the main street. This is in order to be accessible for locals and asylum seekers and be able to hold several functions. (Local Asylum, 'Empty homes and buildings', pp. 48-49)

LOCAL NEEDS

The towns in question have often or are perhaps experiencing shops and institutions closing due to negative growth. By implementing an asylum centre, there is an opportunity to maintain and to create new functions that both the asylum seekers and the locals can benefit from. Accordingly the program should be determined based on the needs of the locals as well as the needs of the asylum seekers. (Local Asylum, 'Program', pp. 56-57)

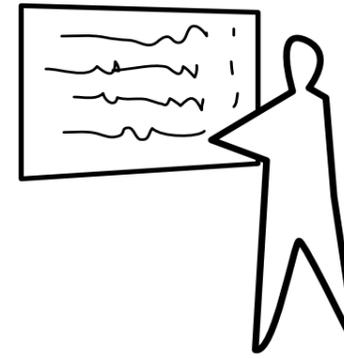


NEEDS AND POTENTIALS

THE PROGRAM OF ASYLUM CENTRES

The second part of the design guide deals with the program of the asylum centre. It holds knowledge on which programs are mandatory for an asylum centre, which is based on analyses of the asylum process and today's asylum centres driven by the Red Cross or by municipalities. (Local Asylum, 'The asylum process', pp. 18-21) The program is divided into two sections, a 'mandatory' and an 'additional' section, to be able to distinguish between the functions that are obligatory for the asylum centre and the additional functions that are equally important, but of a more light and leisurely nature. The mandatory functions are necessary in order to help the asylum seekers through the process of applying for asylum and to cover their needs in terms of healthcare. But research and analyses show that apart from housing units and practical functions, an asylum centre also needs to be connected to other functions of a less practical character in order to add value and improve the well-being of the inhabitants while staying at the asylum centre. This is essential to afford integration and make a holistic design that both the locals and the asylum seekers can benefit from. These additional functions are made possible due to the asylum centre being added to an existing urban structure where they perhaps already exist or are able to be established so that both the locals and the asylum seekers can benefit from them. They are meant to afford social interaction among or between locals and asylum seekers and give them the opportunity to use their skills to realize their potentials and continue habits from their former home. To be able to create interfaces that afford interaction between asylum seekers and locals, diverse functions should be paired to create interfaces that afford both direct and passive contact between people engaging in different or same activities. The knowledge on programs from this section should be mixed with the knowledge on existing functions and needs of the locals gained in the analysis section (Local asylum, 'Concept', pp. 60-63).

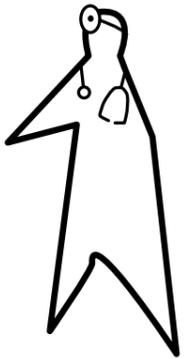
To not create an asylum centre that is too overwhelming on a local community, as well as to increase the risk of conflicts that arise due to high concentrations of asylum seekers living closely together, the guide recommends adding no more than 10% of asylum seekers out of the current number of inhabitants. This percentage has been derived from experiences from other asylum centres in Denmark. (Local asylum, 'The 10% estimation', p. 36)



MANDATORY FUNCTIONS

These are the functions that are obligatory and are found in most asylum centres today. They exist to help the asylum seekers through the asylum process and to keep them healthy. They speak to basic human needs and are therefore usually similar to the functions that the general public needs, and can thereby easily be paired or replaced by similar or identical functions in an existing town. Due to the asylum centre becoming decentralised, it needs good infrastructure in order to make it easy for the users to find their way to the different functions. (Local Asylum, 'The asylum process', pp. 18-21)

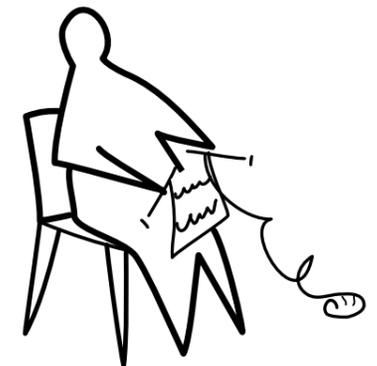
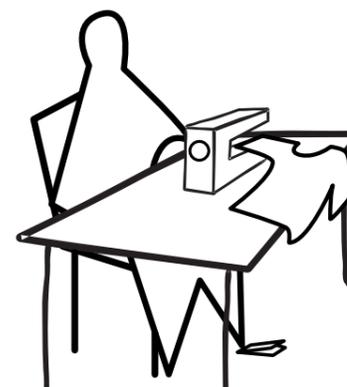
- Housing units
- Administration and offices
- Healthcare
- School
- Language centre
- Job centre
- Connecting infrastructure



ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONS

These functions are of a more light and leisurely nature and are based on the needs of the asylum seekers. While the mandatory functions are essential in terms of covering practical needs in the daily life of asylum seekers, these additional functions are essential in terms of empowering and enabling them to lead meaningful lives. These functions are made possible due to the decentralisation because they either exist already or have a potential of being established in empty buildings in the town. If they are established from the ground they demand strong forces from the community to help it along in order for it to become important community hubs. Being functions that perhaps already exists and that the population expect of the welfare state, shows a recognition and equality towards the asylum seekers. (Local Asylum, 'Summing up', pp. 30-31)

- Workshops
- Kindergarten
- Grocery store
- Café
- Internet café
- Playground
- Second hand shop
- Common rooms
- Urban spaces
- Sportsfacilities
- Community kitchen



DESIGN

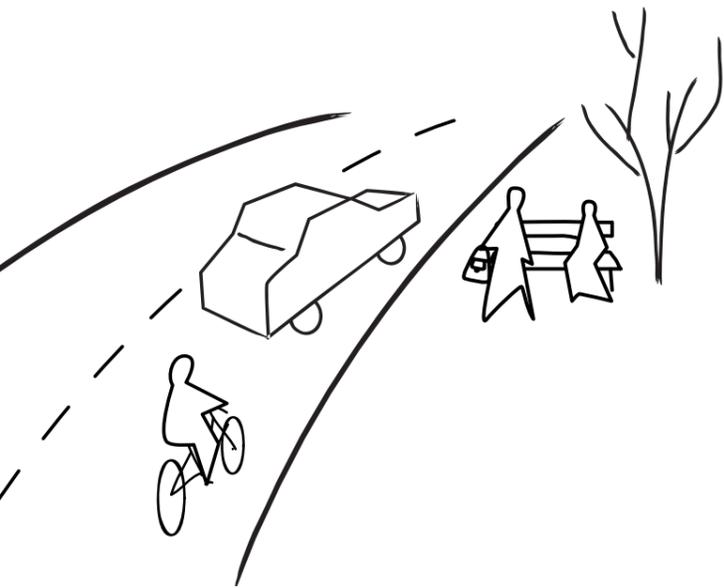
The last part of the design guide holds a collection of guidelines to specific design interventions that can manage the infrastructure of the asylum centre as well as create the frame around social interaction. The guidelines are specific, but exist on a level where they are still meant to be adapted into a context based on a meticulous understanding of the existing structures and characteristics found in the analysis. This means that all guidelines are still presented in a form that is open for interpretation, to make them relate to the local context at hand.

The guidelines are extracted from two concrete design solutions in the design case from Sollested, that were designed to pay special attention to design that integrates both socially and physically. This is expressed as urban structures that connect the asylum centre to the rest of the town and as buildings or urban spaces that hold programs that afford interaction among or between asylum seekers and locals. Each guideline in this section refers back to design elements in the report, which can be used as inspiration for concrete design solutions.

The investigations in the report led to conclusions on three important elements when designing a decentralised asylum centre inside a small town; the main street, the home units, and lastly the common spaces. Each element is presented and elaborated on in the following sections. (Local Asylum, 'The 10% estimation', pp. 58-87)

THE MAIN STREET

TRANSIT SPACES FOR PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS



A SPACE OF TRANSIT AND A PLACE TO MEET

The mobility part of the design is crucial in terms of getting the decentralised asylum centre and its scattered elements to come together and function. This infrastructure should evolve around the main street as a recognisable and already important structure in many small towns in peripheral Denmark. Instead of being a symbol of decline and decay, the main street should be a symbol of the opposite and be the focal point for the asylum seekers as well as the locals. Here it should be easy to navigate to the shared functions that are located on the main street as well as to other functions further away from the main street, by means of signs for wayfinding and pedestrian and cyclist paths from where the asylum seekers can discover the town in detail. Apart from being a space of transit, the intensified main street should also be an important tool for developing the social structure of the town by being a place to stay and to meet. The meeting places included in the transformation is something that the locals will also benefit from. They will experience the turn of the town and the life that have been vanishing coming back to the main street. (Local Asylum, 'The main street, pp. 64-65)

MEETING PLACES

As an already significant structure in the small town, the main street should be intensified in order to make it a more desirable place to stay and to meet. The stretch is made more attractive by creating small pockets containing furniture, greenery and lighting. Here it is possible for asylum seekers and locals to meet and to keep an eye on what is taking place in the town. (Local Asylum, 'Social contact', p. 66)

ORIENTATION

In order to make the physical structure of the town clear to the newcomers, important functions should be sought placed on or near the main street to make them as accessible as possible. Functions located further from the main street should be easy to navigate to from the main street through signs that hold both letters and symbols that are easy to understand. (Local Asylum, 'Connection and orientation', p. 66)

A NEW EXPRESSION

By filling in the empty and abandoned spots on the main street and inviting people to use it as an urban space, the stretch from where visitors experience the town becomes an expression of the pulse of the town and its socially inclusive way of living. Adding positive symbols, e.g. flags and greenery that welcome both asylum seekers and visitors can enhance this. (Local Asylum, 'The main street', pp. 64-65)

SAFETY

Make it easy, clear and safe to move around town for local as well as asylum seekers, who might not be used to the Danish traffic regulations, by clearly defining spaces for all types of mobilities and prioritising good pedestrians and bicycle paths. Slowing down car traffic by narrowing the street or integrating chicanes can also decrease the risk of accidents and make drivers aware of the life of the town. (Local Asylum, 'Safety measures', p. 66)

VISIBILITY

Make local initiatives visible for newcomers who are interested in joining the social life of the town. This can be done by creating exterior and interior settings for them along the main street or by advertising them through signs and paths from it. By highlighting the initiatives, the threshold for interaction will decrease and it will make it easier for asylum seekers to enter into the local community. (Local Asylum, 'Social contact', p. 66. 'Program for leisure', p. 83.)

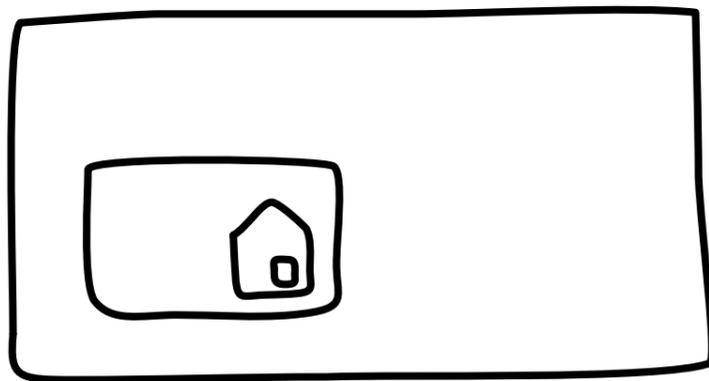
SURROUNDINGS

Efficient public transportation and a clear way of navigating to it is important in order to keep the asylum seekers connected to the natural environments surrounding the town and to potential acquaintances who also live in Denmark. This access also provides them with freedom by enabling them to move freely inside and outside the borders of the town. (Local Asylum, 'Connection and orientation', p. 66)



HOME UNITS

EMPTY HOMES AS A FOUNDATION FOR INDIVIDUALITY AND EQUALITY



PRIVACY AND SOCIAL COMMUNITIES

The home unit should make up the secure and stable base from where the asylum seekers can approach the public in a gradual manner. The asylum seekers should be able to be private and have access to enter into the different types of common spaces that hold different types of social communities. Surrounding the private room, the home constitutes a union between the other inhabitants which unfolds in the shared spaces in the house and garden. The neighbourhood have a union of neighbours that look out for each other. Finally, there is the community of the entire town that shares a common interest for the town and comes together by the common functions and urban spaces by the main street. (Local Asylum, 'Social communities', p. 69)

GROUPINGS

The asylum seekers should be placed together depending on the size and spatial lay-out of each house. To avoid conflicts the number of people living together should not be more than two families together or an average of 5 adults in each house. The regular house signals equality and the low number of people in each house makes it easier for the locals to see them as individuals and neighbours. (Local Asylum, 'A home unit', pp. 68-69. 'Equality', p. 70)

PRIVACY

Every person in the house should be able to have a private room to be able to protect their privacy and have a personal territory to call their own. This decreases the risk of conflicts between the inhabitants of the house and enables each individual to lower their level of stress and provide a room for personal fulfilment. (Local Asylum, 'Privacy and individuality', p. 70)

COMMON AREAS

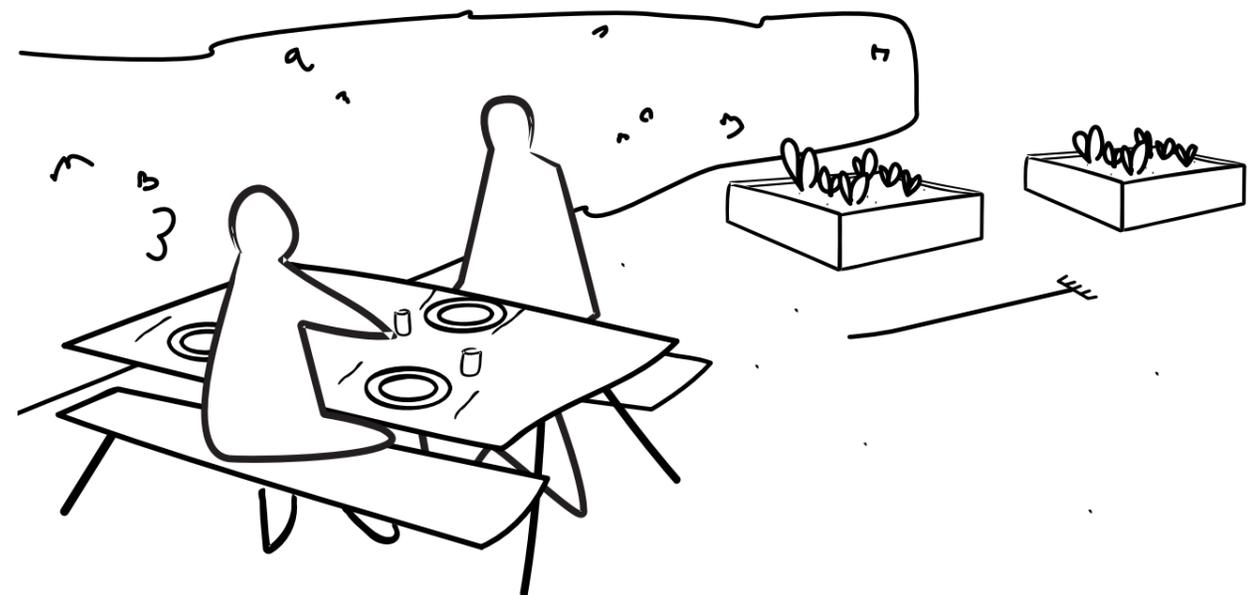
Each home should feature common rooms where the inhabitants can engage in social activities together or simply be in each other's presence. The homely feel to the house and the small number of people living together makes it easier to form social relations and get an insight into each other's lives. (Local Asylum, 'Social communities: The home', p. 69)

NEAT SURROUNDINGS

To live up to the expectations of the neighbours, the surrounding exterior of the house must be neat when the asylum seekers move in, as well as easy for them to maintain in the long term. Both exterior and interior spaces should be of some basic standard in order to make room for the asylum seekers to take ownership of them and leave their personal mark on them. (Local Asylum, 'Equality', p. 70)

OWNERSHIP

To empower the inhabitants and enable them to feel a sense of ownership of the home, the asylum seekers should be responsible for maintaining it while living in it. This means that they should be able to borrow equipment and seek guidance about how to maintain it from the administrative parts of the decentralised asylum centre and possibly from volunteer neighbours. (Local Asylum, 'Privacy and individuality', p. 70)



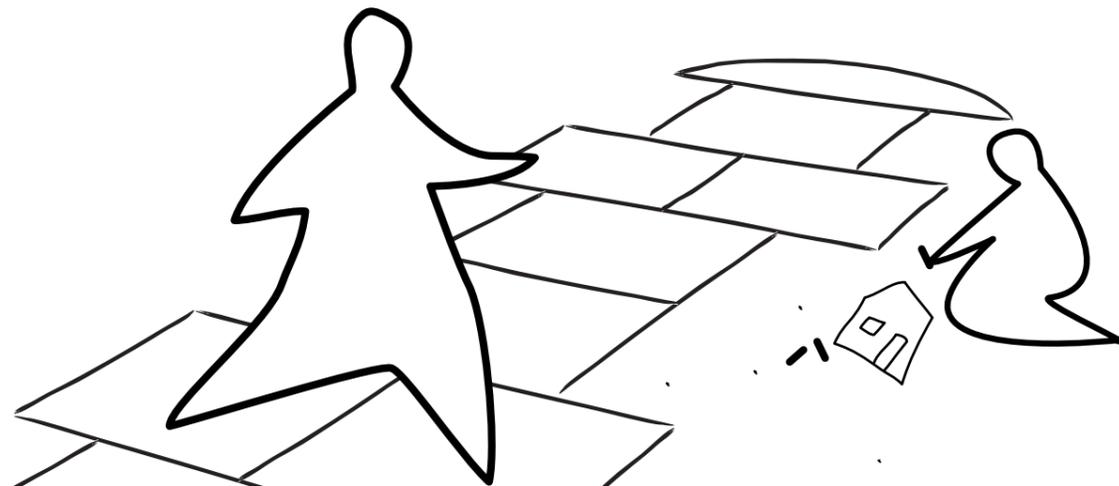
COMMON SPACES

PLACES FOR RELATIONS AND REALISATION



SOCIAL AND PASSIVE CONTACT

The design of the common spaces should afford integration and be organised around a sense of community. They will function as the spaces that decrease the physical and mental threshold between asylum seekers and locals and where they can meet around common interests. The sense of community is often strong in small towns, but to prevent them being excluding, these spaces for social interaction is meant to act as catalysts for the social structure of the community to evolve into new social communities and push new types of contacts. These spaces ultimately wish to magnify the close-knit communities that characterise the structure of small towns and use it as a foundation for a more socially inclusive way of living together. (Local Asylum, 'individuality and community', pp. 26-28. 'Program and leisure' p. 83)



MIXED FUNCTIONS

To create interfaces for direct and passive contact, the functions of the asylum centre should be paired with local functions. These multifunctional buildings and urban spaces bring a vivid atmosphere and make it easier for asylum seekers to use existing facilities and to form relations with the locals. (Local Asylum, 'Plan', pp. 61-63)

NEUTRAL GROUND

Assemble new mixed functions for the locals and the asylum seekers in empty buildings placed in close proximity to the main street. Establishing something entirely new in a space that would not otherwise have been used means that the asylum seekers feel equally welcome and that the locals feel that they have gained something positive due to the advent of the asylum centre. (Local Asylum, 'Scenarios and zoom-ins', p. 63)

SCATTERED FUNCTIONS

Spread out the functions for the asylum seekers to imitate the urban structure and integrate the decentralised asylum centre in the town. This gives the asylum seekers a reason to leave their home and move around town by means of the improved infrastructure and thereby become a natural part of the urban environment. (Local Asylum, 'Plan', p. 61-63)

NONVERBAL INTERACTION

Try to create facilities that hold programs that can connect people in spite of language and cultural barriers. These could include elements for play for both children and adults or practical facilities where people can work together towards a common goal and share experiences creatively. Elements that speak to people across cultures are, e.g. music and food. (Local Asylum, 'Realisation', p. 76)

PLAY

Another common interest among adults are children, so in order to bring parents together, the urban spaces should feature playgrounds or other playful elements that speak to children. Adding furniture gives parents the opportunity to meet and possibly be inspired by their children's ability to interact in a nonverbal manner. (Local Asylum, 'Program and leshure', p. 83)

PASSIVE CONTACT

In order to enhance contact between the asylum seekers and the locals, the town should hold attractive urban spaces and spaces of transit that concentrates the inhabitants and makes it easy for them to engage in passive contact. This means that they are able to see and hear each other and be aware of each other's presence. (Local Asylum, 'Social contact', p. 66. 'Program for leisure', p. 83)

ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Create exterior and interior spaces that invite people to stay and use them throughout the day. This can be done by means of open buildings with mixed functions that lead to long opening hours, or by creating urban spaces that are clear and lit, and thereby feel safe during the evening and night time. Make sure the materials used are able to withstand the increased use. (Local Asylum, 'Connection and relations', p. 84)

TRANSITIONS

In order to have accessible functions, the buildings should be of an open nature that are welcoming and decreases the threshold between inside and outside as well as between being a viewer and participant. This can be done by breaking down the facade with window sections or making the urban space in front of the building a continuation of the interior program. (Local Asylum, 'Care and attention', p. 75)

SHARED EFFORT

If the buildings that are meant for the new functions are not of a desired standard, it should be possible for volunteers among the locals and the asylum seekers to help renovate them. This will give the community a sense of ownership and a stronger connection to the buildings. Furthermore it can help strengthen the social connection between the people who are involved in realising it. (Local Asylum, 'The town square', p. 81)

VARYING TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

Both exterior and interior spaces should be able to facilitate permanent as well as temporary activities. These could be different types of local initiatives and spontaneous ideas that arise among the inhabitants. Thus, urban and interior spaces should feature some degree of openness in order to facilitate temporary or spontaneous events. (Local Asylum, 'Program for leisure', p. 83)

OPEN OR INTIMATE SPACES

In order to create spaces for diverse atmospheres and different types of interaction there should be both open and intimate spaces. This goes for both interior and exterior spaces and can be expressed by dividing the spaces into different sizes by means of covers such as trees or walls. This creates contrasts in how one experience the space and give people the opportunity to retire for a moment. (Local Asylum, 'Care and attention', p. 75)





III. 56 Epilogue. At the car park behind the administration.

This final chapter contains a conclusion and a reflection regarding the material presented in the report. It summarises the thoughts and wishes that have gone into the design project and discusses the designer's role and influence in the debate and handling of the refugee crisis.

epilogue

conclusion

The framework studies show that the Danish asylum centres roughly offer the residents what they need in terms of practical basic needs, but they leave much to be desired when it comes to activities and opportunities for the asylum seekers to realise their potential. This, in addition to humanised spatial surroundings, has shown to be important in order for them to lead a meaningful life, improve their well-being and feel in contact with their identity as individuals.

The often isolated asylum centres of today appear to be temporary, but with the political climate surrounding the asylum crisis and the increased pressure on the system, the arrangement is in danger of striking roots, which leads to people staying in the temporary facilities for much longer than intended. This, in combination with them living too many people cramped into the same place leaving no opportunity to have a room of one's own, often leads to conflicts due to the inhabitants feeling distressed and unable to take control of their lives. Taking into consideration that these people might have experienced troubling things in their home country and on their journey to Denmark, the conditions they should be met with ought to be of a higher standard in a country that strives to have a public sector that protects the most vulnerable.

The decentralised asylum centre that the project proposes takes today's asylum centre and splits it up into smaller units where the asylum seekers live together in smaller groups and where the administration is not physically connected to the home units, but still within a distance that makes it present and accessible. This empowers the asylum seekers and provides them with the equal ability to act as individuals. Furthermore, the location inside an existing urban and social structure enables them to form relations and interact with people outside the asylum system. This helps integration that benefits from the simple premise of asylum seekers being present on the streets and by the common functions, where the locals can become used to their presence (and vice versa) through passive contact.

The decentralised asylum centre should be placed inside small towns in peripheral Denmark where there are high numbers of unused vacant homes and buildings that have the potentials of being used to accommodate the asylum seekers and the attached functions. This brings back life to the empty homes and helps maintain the exposed local functions due to an increase in population. Also the emotional bond the locals have to the town could be strengthened, when they experience the territory they identify with, that they know have seen better days, come back to life and be something they can be proud of. The advent of asylum seekers does not only bring life back to the streets and the buildings, they have also proved to have an economic impact on the small towns due to them spending money in the local shops and bringing workspaces connected to the asylum centre to the towns. (Larsen et al., 2015, p. 48)

The opportunities of the decentralised asylum centres and further details have been explored by means of a design case that takes point of departure in the small town of Søllested on Lolland. This is in order to highlight the possibilities in a small town and investigate the needs of both the locals and the asylum seekers and how they can be implemented in Søllested on a detailed level. The design case also highlights the necessity of gaining an extensive knowledge of the town in question in order to reach a result that affects both the physical and social structures of the town in a positive manner. The design of Søllested that includes the decentralised asylum centre is rooted in a thorough analysis of the town, which makes it site specific and down-to-earth, but still attention has been put on extracting universal features that can be applied to other towns with similar urban structures, typologies, social fabrics and challenges.

The design of Søllested is based on three important elements:

- The main street: The main street is a key element if the decentralised asylum centre in Søllested is going to function. Because spreading the functions and homes out, means that the asylum seekers need a clear structure that can lead them to the different offers in a smooth manner, and enable them to get to know the town. While being a space of transit, the main street, as the central structure that it is, is also transformed into a place to meet and a place to stay and form relations by adding new functions and urban spaces. This intensifies the otherwise decaying street that exposes the

empty homes and buildings, and instead creates a new vivid expression for people moving through it.

- The home units: The 30 home units that are spread across Søllested are important in terms of accommodating the asylum seekers and facilitate their ability to feel at home and to exist as individuals inside the community. At the same time the homes, which are similar to the ones the locals live in, help create a feeling of equality between the asylum seekers and the locals and shorten the mental and physical distance between the two groups of inhabitants.

- The mandatory and additional functions: These refer to both the practical functions connected to the asylum centre as well as additional functions, that can benefit both the asylum seekers and the locals and create interfaces that make the social structure develop. While adding most functions to existing similar functions there are also added additional functions of a more leisure-like nature. Still these functions are crucial for the concept in terms of covering both the practical and social needs of the asylum seekers. Here they are able to realise themselves and their potentials while giving them an opportunity to interact and form relations based on common interests.

These elements facilitate the practical functions that the asylum seekers need while also giving them the mental and social stability that they were otherwise not able to attain in a centralised centre.

The universal elements of the design have been extracted to create a guide that contains advice for the process of creating a decentralised asylum centre in peripheral Denmark. It serves as a summary of the work conducted for the project and contains concrete advice on analyses, program and design that is based on the framework and design case. This is to unfold the knowledge and tools used in the project and share it in a simple and accessible manner, to give possible municipalities, politicians or private investors dealing with the issue, an insight and shortcut into the design of decentralised asylum centres. The design guide is also created in recognition of the global nature of the issue and thus it presents inspiration for solving or thinking differently about the problem on a national or perhaps even international level.

The design show how the asylum centre can exist inside Søllested without taking anything from the existing structure and without completely dominating the town. So without being overwhelming to the locals the asylum centre can help solve a general issue that many small peripheral towns struggle with. Theaster Gates states about his experiences working in Chicago, that even though a neighbourhood has failed it still has a pulse to it. (Gates, 2015) Perhaps even a strong pulse due to a will to improve the current state of the neighbourhood. This pulse is something the asylum centre can use to become a part of a community in terms of using the energy from passionate locals to enter the community while contributing with new energy and life to the pulse of the community. Through mutual engagement with the locals, the asylum centre thereby becomes a means of giving a town experiencing negative growth a boost to help it survive.

Out of all asylum cases in 2015 74% was granted a residence permit (Flygtning.dk, 2016). The high percentage shows that starting integration from day one is not wasted. As described in the project it might not be wasted on the people who are rejected either because a positive stay in the asylum centre can have an effect that means that they are prepared to face the journey back home. The holistic design of Søllested means that instead of spending an indefinite amount of time just waiting for their final letter they have the ability to lead a meaningful life that, regardless of the outcome of their asylum case, will not feel wasted. This is especially important for the asylum seekers who have children in the asylum centre. They want to be able to give their children a meaningful life, because as Dadashova Lamia Sezhan, who lives in an asylum centre in Esbønderup, states:

"My daughters' lives begin here." (Politiken, 2016a)

reflection

This project is a comment on how to handle the thousands of refugees coming to Denmark in a more humane manner. It stems from the recognition of us as designers having an influence in society and that we should use our voices in the debate in order to change it to the better. The debate about the conditions that the asylum seekers live under should be recognised and not exaggerated nor understated. In collaboration with other relevant fields designers are able to create a platform that does not ignore the current problems, but strives to see them as potentials rather than burdens. This is relevant due the fact that Denmark are expecting to receive an additional 17.000 refugees in 2016 (Arkitekten, 2016a), and presumably even more in the future due to wars and climate changes. It means that there is an immediate and relevant need to think more long-term and show a progression since the Second World War regarding how we handle refugees. In a wider sense the project also presents a new way of dealing with a problem that is not merely connected to design. Because while having created a design guide that inspires design solutions in a hands-on manner, the design guide and the project in its entirety also serves as a proposal to use the process and creative thinking known from design fields to highlight or solve other issues in society.

This project exists as one of probably many design solutions to a complex issue that will never have a definitive solution. Here the focus is to handle the problem in a more down-to-earth manner by investigating concrete design solutions. Using a specific case study, the project seeks to mediate between the global problem and the concrete human challenges. Using a qualitative method has its limitations in terms of not being able to generalise from a single case study, as Søllested do not present a general miniature version of a standard peripheral town. On the other hand, a case study leaves the possibility of demonstrating in detail the different situations appearing in the local communities and from that extract the possibilities that have arisen and add to the bigger picture of general knowledge. (Flyvbjerg, 2006)

The project uses the design angle to shed light on some of the problems that are apparent in the asylum process today, while also highlighting potentials for alternative solutions. Still the project is very aware that design is not the only and definitive solution for the refugee crisis and that the crisis cannot be thought of as an isolated design issue. Ruben Pater states in his critique of a Dutch design competition dealing with shelters for refugees that it is impossible to come up with design that can solve 'a crisis that is political and socio-economic at heart'. (Dezeen, 2016) It is important to understand one's agency, or lack thereof, when going into this issue, which is also why the political and economic elements have played an important role parallel to the design project, that to some extent is used as a method to highlight the lack of integration agency and lack of innovation that could help prevent the asylum process from coming to a standstill. Furthermore Pater expresses that designers developing shelter for asylum seekers should not become a pretext for inaction on the government's part:

"Designers should be wary that their work does not end up being used to legitimise a state of permanent temporary living, deliberately created to prevent refugees from coming to Europe – or risk affirming the horrible reality of a growing global underclass of stateless citizens permanently living in shelters, not houses." (Dezeen, 2016)

He argues that architects, planners and designers dealing with the issue should be aware of their limitations before trying to find solutions and be aware that in the long run it is only in collaboration with the government that the asylum seekers can be provided with the resources, infrastructure and laws that they need. (Dezeen, 2016) Regarding this specific quote it is also important to this project to underline that even though the asylum seekers are provided with 'regular' homes they are not permanent and it is crucial that the asylum process continues in order for them to not end up leading stateless and rootless lives.

The solution demonstrates a significant change in the way of thinking about the refugee crisis, which could possibly be a solution for some of the general problems that peripheral Denmark is experiencing with people moving from rural to urban areas. One of ways that small peripheral towns should stand out compared to bigger cities is through engagement in the social life that unfolds at the town's meeting places. This is something that the asylum seekers could benefit from and help maintain by their presence in the town. In a feature in Politiken, Stig L. Andersson writes that peripheral towns should survive through solutions that constitutes a whole other way of living. According to him, the small towns should be based on aesthetical and social communities, on the strength and experience of nature and on the will and power to create. He explains it like this:

"Imagine if we instead envisioned a new type of welfare society in peripheral Denmark that did not focus on material things to the same extent as earlier, but instead on people becoming whole and on the human values in the local community." (Politiken, 2015b)

Even though the influx of asylum seekers in a small community might be challenging for some locals in the beginning, there is no reason to think that it wouldn't be a positive change for others and might even attract new people who are inspired by this new socially inclusive way of living in a small community. The recent year has shown that a large number of the population in Denmark is ready to donate both their time and belongings to help the refugees on the way to a better start of their life in Denmark. Also there has been a backlash regarding people living in urban areas moving to smaller towns where they are able to be a part of a smaller community and have a closer connection to recreational environments.

We have seen many Danes demonstrate a strong will to help refugees in a manner that is dynamic and hands-on. Also designers have proved to be able to take action and help where help is needed the most, when four Danish architectural offices sent out a delegation of volunteers to help at Lesbos by using their skills to organise and built the necessary accommodation. Even though there is already a huge number of volunteers these places need people who are experienced when it comes to management and being able to think creatively and built something out of nothing. (Danske Ark, 2016) This is an important way of sending a signal about this being a real issue that should not just exist as a debate behind closed doors at the government or on the drawing board. Due to this wish, this thesis has also been passed on to the European Social Innovation Competition (Ec.europa.eu, 2016) and to Architects Without Borders in the hope of making it evolve and possibly be used as inspiration for actual solutions in peripheral municipal districts that wants to help the asylum seekers as much as possible.

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