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Between Empathy and Understanding

Experiences of Finnish host families offering social care for asylum seekers

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Abstract

The interest of this research lies in the nexus between the state and the individual in providing social care for people searching asylum in Finland. The study explores the experiences of host families involved in offering home accommodation for asylum seekers. More specifically, it aims to understand the subjective role that host families assign to themselves when providing social care for this target group, which traditionally has been seen as the sole responsibility of the state. This inquiry is grounded within the framework of two theoretical blocks – first, normative foundations and ideology embedded in the social democratic welfare regime, and second, individual agency within the frame of structuration theory. This theoretical framework has been applied to analyse the subjective understanding of the participants in regard to welfare provision and ideology of the Finnish welfare state. This has illustrated that individuals, by means of their agency, become active contributors for providing social care. The research was conducted by using qualitative research methodology, looking at the experiences of six host families living in Helsinki, Finland. Data was collected with the help of semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic content analysis. Findings of the study reveal that the main contribution of the home accommodation for asylum seekers was seen in its potential to offer cultural integration. Furthermore, findings suggest that host families did not perceive home accommodation as a replacement of the services that should be provided by the state, but as an additional input to the social care for asylum seekers.

Keywords: *home accommodation, asylum seekers, welfare state, Refugees Welcome Finland, structuration theory, social democratic welfare regime, social care*

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”The world always felt like a small place for me”

– Participant of the current study

1. Introduction

‘We don’t know what globalization is, but we have to act!’ – the opening quote in Jan Aart Scholte’s book “Globalization: A Critical Introduction” (2005:1) captures the departure point of this study. It emphasises the difficulty of understanding the complexity of the processes united under the term of globalization, yet denotes the potential for individual actions in shaping and crafting the world we want to live in. Globalization can be understood as constant interconnected transformative processes within the societies, which reshape the political, economic and cultural dimension of the social life. These processes seek to accommodate changes that a global interdependence is bringing into the local settings (Held et al., 1999). In this framing, globalization requires an active reflection about the changes and the emerging needs of a given society; at the same time, it can also be translated into an empowering slogan for the individuals to take part in those processes. Whereas the proliferation and the increasingly complex appearance of global affairs and concerns are making it difficult for an individual to grasp a holistic picture, some changes, however, penetrate the local more direct than others.

Violent conflicts in the Middle East in the past few years have unfolded in processes that are reaching local settings in many parts of the world in different forms. In Europe, the conflict infiltrates the private sphere of the individuals by embodying itself in the imagination through the media and other information channels. It also materialises itself through an influx of people forced to leave their homes and lives for unpredicted future of uncertain asylum in the 'European fortress' (Heitz, 2016). The broad interest of this study is to examine the ways how individuals are interacting with and making sense of the changes that globalization brings, as well as how individuals perceive their own role in these processes.

1.1. Research Problem and Research Questions

Changes in the social structures of the European community in a result of the unfolding processes of so-called “European refugee crisis” vividly illustrate the interconnectedness of the global community. The sudden flood of people searching asylum in a territorial domain of the European Union reveals many burning issues for welfare states (Heitz, 2016). The interest of this study is situated in the settings of Finland, where the “European refugee crisis” ensued in an increased amount of asylum claims, raising the numbers from 3 600 in 2014 to 32 500 during 2015 (Finnish Ministry of the Interior, 2016a). The responsibility for providing social care for a sharply increased number of asylum seekers challenges the prevailing forms of the Finnish welfare provision and exposes operational and financial pressures on the existing social structures (Keskinen, 2016). Moreover, the demographical transformations in the society as a result of the influx of non-citizens in national territories raise questions about solidarity - who is eligible for the welfare provision and which services should be socially sponsored? These issues by themselves are not new and have been discussed in relation to welfare and migration for a long time (Bommes & Geddes, 2003: 1-2). What is new is the acuteness of the situation. More specifically, an unprecedented nature of contemporary European refugee crisis which unfolds in the irreversible transformation of societal structures. This calls for reflections upon the structural reforms and normative understanding of welfare as well as opens the space for individual involvement.

The ongoing “European refugee crisis” has also affected the personal lives of people in hosting societies in many different ways. In Finland, various political responses to the influx of asylum seekers not only stimulated a heated public debate about the issue, but also gave a start for a broad range of reactions from individuals. While some were hostile, as examples of numerous violent attacks against asylum seekers reported all over Finland (e.g. Lehtinen, 2016); others had a welcoming stance. The latter was manifested in different voluntary initiatives organised by NGOs with aims to offer support to asylum seekers and promote solidarity (e.g. Finnish Red Cross). The diversity of the individual responses demonstrates that many people do feel personally affected by the global changes and take it as a personal matter. Yet, the contrast of the individuals’ responses

makes one wonder, what makes people engage in those specific actions and why some opt to oppose while others choose to welcome. Triggered by those questions, this study looks at the experiences of people who in the response to increased number of people searching asylum in Finland, choose to invite the distant ‘others’ to share their home with them. Those people opt to engage into offering home accommodation for asylum seekers, therefore provide social care for the asylum seekers, which is traditionally seen as the responsibility of the state. These activities such those open spaces for questioning the solidarity norms and for re-examining the relationship between individual and the welfare state – where does the personal responsibility end and the state’s obligations begin? And what are the different forms of contribution which individuals can devote to the welfare society?

Thus, the interest of this research lies in this nexus between state and individual. It intends to explore individual experiences of host families offering home accommodation for asylum seekers with the purpose to a) explore why individuals feel their involvement is needed; b) look into how individuals evaluate their contribution to the wellbeing of the asylum seekers they accommodate; and c) delve into how they feel their actions contribute to larger societal change. This inquiry, therefore, looks at the intertwined circle of interaction among the individuals and welfare state in the settings of providing social care for asylum seekers on Finland by addressing following research question:

- How do the Finnish host families experience that hosting asylum seekers in their private homes contributes to the provision of social care?

This will be done by engaging with two sub-questions:

- i. What is the motivation of Finnish families in hosting asylum seekers?
- ii. How do the Finnish host families assess the outcomes of hosting the asylum seekers?

To envision the circle, I employ the Esping-Anderson’s welfare state theory and its account of regimes and pillars to look at how individuals engaged in hosting asylum seekers incorporate and understand the normative foundation of the social life and the division of labor in the welfare society. Secondly, the structuration

theory and his accounts of agency and structure are applied to elucidate the mechanisms standing behind the individuals' ability to influence and reproduce the social structure and facilitate social change.

1.2. Study Design

The study unfolds as following. The second chapter presents the discussion of the existing body of the research relevant to the topic of inquiry and further outlines the need for current study. Chapter three depicts the settings of this study by outlining the background information about Finnish asylum procedure, Finnish response to the "European refugee crisis" and denotes the description of the activity of home accommodation for asylum seekers. Following that, chapter four portrays the theoretical mold of this research project. While chapter five elaborates the methodological account of this study, clarifying the justification, procedure and limitations of the methods applied in this research. Findings and analysis are in length described in chapter six, which is followed by the conclusion and recommendations for further research in chapter seven.

2. Previous Research

Constant flow of people seeking asylum in Europe has provoked discussions in various fields e.g. law, human rights, welfare, migration studies, political science and European studies. Questions about asylum as a form of forced migration were intensively present as the agenda of scholars and policy makers already in the end of the 80's (Bloch & Schuster, 2002:393). Within the literature about the nexus between asylum seekers and welfare state, the predominant question is whether the forced migration is a threat for the welfare state organization or not (Bommes & Geddes, 2003; Boräng, 2015), moreover the issue is predominantly seen as a global social problem that should be addressed by the international community. Hence, substantial amount of the comparative and quantitative studies addresses the challenges of dividing the responsibility for reception of asylum seekers among EU states and future of Common European Asylum Strategy (CEAS) (Angenendt et al., 2013; Bloch & Schuster, 2002; Geddens, 2000; Hatton, 2005; Perusel, 2015).

Another branch of scientific inquiry has been dealing with the policies and conditions of reception for people seeking asylum in receiving countries, and problematise the issues arising within those domains from the perspective of human rights, basic needs, health and wellbeing of the asylum seekers (Bales, 2015; Bank, 2000; Darling, 2009; Morville et al., 2015; Szczepanikova, 2013; Rosenberger & König, 2012). However, researches predominantly address asylum seekers as subjects of policies and see asylum seekers' welfare and their lives in receiving country as external to the local community.

Heitz (2016) comments that the outbreak of "European refugee crisis" in 2015 and its impact on financial costs berried by the states, threats for national security, and increasing turbulence in the national political spheres have increased suspicion, fear as well as racism and xenophobia surrounding public debates of asylum policies. At the backdrop of increasing public hostile sentiment towards newcomers (e.g. Gregurović, 2016), it is becoming important to take into account the initiatives in the local communities, as a response to increasing numbers of non-citizens. Although the amount of such initiatives have increased rapidly in the course of 2015 (Karakayali & Kleist, 2016), little has been done in this regard within academic research. Only very few research has looked at the motivation and attitudes of volunteers working with asylum seekers (Jones & Williamson, 2014; Larruina & Ghorashi, 2016). Traditional forms of voluntary involvement of local population in engaging with asylum seekers is usually seen as participation in periodical activities organised by NGOs or material contribution of monetary funds and materials. Offering accommodation for asylum seekers in private households on the voluntary bases, however, is conceptually different form of involvement. It requires different level of commitment and reflections about own motivations, this makes it even more relevant to explore.

During the course of this study, the only research I found that talks about hosting asylum seekers in private households was conducted in Australia in 2015. Psychologists Aparna Hebbani, Nigar G. Khawaja and Janece Famularo (2016) looked at the motivations of 24 hosts for asylum seekers and outlined main benefits of home accommodation. The study was conducted within the theoretical framework of altruism, acculturation and intergroup contact. Main findings suggested that what united experiences of hosts was their interest in diversity and

humanitarian issues as well as the fact that participants regarded the experience as positive, enriching and beneficial for fostering intercultural settlement (ibid.). Although this study is located in same settings, the fundamental difference among the cases is that the home accommodation for asylum seekers in Australia was founded and initiated by the government, while in Finland it is run entirely on voluntary base of the individual initiatives. Therefore, this research takes a different perspective and aims to explore experiences of host families for asylum seekers through addressing those from the point of view of assumed responsibility to provide social care imbedded in Nordic welfare ideology. Thus, this study is aiming to not only bring light and recognition for this novel phenomenon which is not yet studied in depth, but also explore the subjective understanding of the individuals about the reasons and needs for such type of involvement. To get the better grasp of the phenomena in the focus of this study following chapter will denote more detailed description of the Finnish context where the study is physically located.

3. Background

In order to understand any social phenomenon there is a need to understand the settings where the action is taking place (Holliday, 2007). Therefore, this section outlines social and time context of the study. In following, the legal framework for asylum reception outlines the rights and conditions set for the people seeking asylum in Finland. Later part describes how the influx of people seeking asylum regarded as “European refugee crisis” was received in Finland; this will provide the background for the last section of this chapter which lays out the description for the home accommodation for asylum seekers and Refugees Welcome Finland – the community network that facilitates that form of engagement.

3.1. Asylum in Finland

Asylum policies in Finland are enforced by the “Finnish Law for the reception and the identification of victims of human trafficking and persons seeking an international protection” [my translation] (17.6.2011/746), which is prepared in

correspondence with the Common European Asylum System¹. Joint European strategy compels Finnish state to provide social care to all individuals who had filed their claims for asylum in Finland.² Two main official institutions accountable for the process of the asylum reception are Finnish Ministry for the Interior and Finnish Immigration Service office. They carry out the entire responsibility for processing asylum applications and organizing reception services for the applicants (Finnish Ministry for Interior, 2016b).

All the social care services for asylum seekers are compiled under the roof of reception centers – these are residential facilities that are designed to accommodate asylum seekers for the period of their applications being processed (17.6.2011/746, §13). Local authorities have the right to appoint asylum seekers to the reception centers without consulting the needs or wishes of asylum seekers; furthermore, they reserve the right to relocate residents of the reception centers according to the situation (Finnish Ministry for Interior, 2016c).

Reception services are authorised to fulfill all the basic needs of asylum seekers appointed by the law of asylum reception and international protection. These comprise coverage of basic needs including adequate accommodation, cloths, food and basic medical care; and social care, in terms of counseling and mental health services. Furthermore, centers are obliged to provide residents with basic Finnish culture and language education (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016a). Conditions of the centers vary in their size and locations, however as a rule, residents share rooms with several other same sex dwellers. Additionally, in most of the cases reception centers are not able to provide an opportunity for the residents to prepare their own food and instead cater them meals. Apart from social services, asylum seekers are entitled to the financial assistance, which is on an average 266 euros per month or 76 euros if reception center provides meals (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016b). While all asylum seekers are entitled by the law for gainful employment in Finland, this becomes possible only after either three or six months from the submission of an asylum application and depends on

¹ More about CEAS in section 4.2.4

² In case of the positive decision upon asylum claim, the person is granted status of refugee. The social care for the refugee is organized according to a different policy framework and is not connected to the set of law assigned to resolve the asylum procedure.

the ability of Finnish officials to establish the identity of asylum seekers (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016c).

3.2. “European Refugee Crisis” in Finland

The “European refugee crisis” is regarded by the Finnish Ministry of the Interior as the worst after the Second World War and it has increased the amount of the asylum claims in Finland dramatically. Instead of 3651 asylum applications in 2014, Finland received around 32 476 in 2015, which so far is the biggest among of claims of international protection seen in Finnish contemporary history. Although the sudden escalation in the numbers of asylum seekers has put the state under a pressure in its ability to provide an adequate reception for the newcomers, Finnish officials affirmed that this has not emerged into a crisis in Finland (Finnish Ministry of Interior, 2016a). With support of municipalities the state has managed to keep the situation under control by expanding the amount of the reception units across the country. In May 2016 there were around 140 units (Finnish Ministry of Interior, 2016d) compared to only 17 units in March 2015 (Mäntymaa, 2016). However, the prompt increase of the units resulted in a limited ability of the state to monitor and ensure adequate standards of services across reception centers, which was widely discussed in media during the fall 2015 (e.g. Konttinen, 2016).

The procedure of applying for asylum for individuals is estimated to be 117 days on average (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016d). However, the increasing amount of asylum seekers in 2015 has extended the procedure time for even longer. By May 2016, around 25 000 asylum seekers were still waiting for the decision about their asylum claims (Jämsen, 2016). Moreover, it is predicted that 60-65% of the current asylum claims in Finland will be rejected (YLE uutiset, 2015).

Although, the influx of non-Finnish population is not considered a crisis by the government, the situation is unprecedented for the Finnish society, hence poses challenges for the Finnish welfare system as well as for the community to process and address the changing situation. On the one hand, the sharp inflow of the newcomers has increased the costs borne by the Finnish state to ensure basic needs for persons seeking asylum, which is estimated to be around 15 000 euros

for a person per year (Finnish Ministry of Interior, 2016e), on the other hand, it has also led to the heated debates among the general public (Keskinen, 2016).

Keskinen (2016) point out from the historical perspective of Finnish state that several repressions during the last decade in 20th century and a high hegemony among population during the post-war period has led to the strong economic rhetoric at the center of the Finish politics. Moreover, current financial crisis has resulted in several adjustments cuts of public funds in regard to social care. This has also made the cultural and national belonging even more crucial in discourses regarding the redistribution of public goods (ibid.). In result the opinions about the responsibility of Finland to welcome foreign nationals has become a widely discussed issue. From one side, the nationalistic views are calling for the restriction and the exile of asylum seekers from Finland (ibid.). In this regard, it was reported by the Finnish police that the numbers on extremist Islamist and anti-immigration hate crimes has enlarged following the influx of asylum seekers (SUPO, 2015). At the other end, many Finnish citizens feel compelled to show their support for the newcomers; therefore, numerous grass-root community projects and organizations are actively involved in engaging with asylum seekers.³ One among other remarkable forms of support for asylum seekers from individuals is to physically open up own homes for them.

3.3. Home Accommodation for Asylum Seekers

A widely discussed topic in the Finnish media in summer 2015 was the shortage of the accommodation and bad conditions in the existing reception centers for asylum seekers in Finland. As a result, many Finnish citizens became concerned about the wellbeing of the people looking for asylum in Finland. Home accommodation for asylum seekers is one of the forms that are aiming to address those issues. It is a voluntary initiative commenced by local people to offer individual asylum seekers the opportunity to live in their private homes instead of reception centers while waiting for the decision about their asylum claims. The community network that unites people in Finland ready to engage in such

³ E.g. the list of NGOs in capital area if Finland available at: <
<http://www.hel.fi/www/helsinki/fi/kaupunki-ja-hallinto/tietoa-helsingista/yleistietoa-helsingista/turvapaikanhakijat/auttaa>> [Accessed 10 June 2016]

initiative is called Refugees Welcome Finland (RWF) which was established in August 2015 (Refugees Welcome Finland, 2015). RWF is not a unique creation, but is a Finnish version of the initiative “Flüchtlinge Willkommen” that was founded in Germany in 2014 and since then has spread in many European countries. The initiative aims to promote inclusion and solidarity, its main purpose is to establish a platform to connect people interested in offering accommodation to the asylum seekers in their private homes (Flüchtlinge Willkommen, 2016).

What differentiates the Finnish version of the Refugees Welcome community is that in Finland, unlike in other countries, RWF is not supported by the state neither by any other internal institution. Furthermore, RWF in Finnish context is characterised more as a forum rather than an official body - it is not officially registered⁴ and does not have a board, neither written organization rules. RWF is run by active contributors on a voluntary basis and during the course of this study, RWF did not receive any monetary support from the state. Therefore, RWF is not able to be legally responsible for any of its members’ activities.

The arrangements among host families and asylum seekers are not monitored and therefore might vary. The minimum criteria, however, is that the host family should provide accommodation for free (though the host family is not expected to provide any other financial assistance for their guest/s). Additionally, hosts should be able to offer a separate room and should be committed to accommodate the asylum seeker until the person’s asylum claim has resolved or the least for one year from the moving-in date (Refugees Welcome Finland, 2015).

The role of RWF is strictly limited to facilitating the link between the individuals and asylum seekers and providing them with general guidance regarding legal and ethical considerations for home accommodation (Refugees Welcome Finland, 2015). The active members of the community have no legal responsibility, neither to the host families nor to the asylum seekers with regard to their arrangements, and nor does RWF officially follow up on them.

⁴ All the association and NGOs in Finland are officially registered, which entitles them to become a legal entity with the right to protect own rights and own property (Finnish Patent and Registration Office, 2016 - Available at <<https://www.prh.fi/en/yhdistysrekisteri/act.html>> [Accessed 20.05.2016])

Home accommodation for asylum seekers is not monitored by the state either. In fact, state does not recognise home accommodation as a form of care provision. Although Finnish law does not restrict asylum seekers from finding other forms of the accommodation outside of the reception centers, asylum seekers shall remain being officially registered in the assigned reception center in order to receive the financial support and other social care (17.6.2011/746, §18). Therefore, it is the appointed reception unit that receives governmental funding for delivering the full range of services, and state is not responsible to provide any financial compensation nor any other forms of support for the households offering asylum seeker a home (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016e).

As a result, individuals who engaged in offering accommodation for asylum seekers in their private homes are engaging in this activity totally on the voluntarily bases and can rely only on the peer support and non-official guidance of RWF. According to the broad estimation of the RWF team, there are around 100 host families in Finland via RWF in July 2016; however, because of unmonitored nature of the home accommodation for asylum seekers, the exact numbers is impossible to estimate.

To conclude, this chapter outlined the strict norms of reception assigned to asylum seekers, allowing them minimum range of possibilities and liberties during the extended period of time of anticipation for a decision about their claims for international protection. It also depicted that apart from the uncertainty about their future in Finland, asylum seekers are also faced with unfriendly sentiments of the local community. However, there are also people who are willing to help and willing to welcome them to the extent of inviting to share home with them. The host families, at the other end, find themselves in the ambiguous settings where the responsibilities and obligations towards the individuals and the official institutions accountable for providing care for that target group are not outlined loud. While this chapter outlined physical settings of the phenomena at the core of the study, next chapter will explore in details the theoretical lenses used to explore the experiences of the individuals involved in this study.

4. Theory

To set the ground for a discussion of the theoretical tools applied in this study, I start with a brief remark about the ontological and the epistemological stance for this research. Therefore, the first section of this chapter presents a philosophical account of the social theory of structuration. This further navigates towards the two main theoretical blocks – first, the discussion about the meaning of welfare and the theoretical foundation of welfare state ideology and its interplay with individuals; and second, the discussion about agency and structure, and the abilities of individuals to interfere and engage with their social environment.

4.1. Structuration Theory

The overarching interest of this research is situated in the nexus between the individual and the welfare state. This study is looking at lived experiences of Finnish families who decided to invite asylum seekers to share their homes; hence, voluntarily engaged in providing social care to newcomers, which is traditionally seen as a responsibility of the state. More specifically, this study is aiming to explore why the participants of this study felt that their contribution is needed based on their understanding of the organization of the Finnish social welfare. Consequently, this study is grounded in the constructivist perception of the reality, seeing social life as not fixed, but having the capacity to be constructed and transformed by different actors and interactions. An individual within the constructivist perspective is seen as “an active agent in coconstruction his world of meaning”, thus, as being actively involved in determining their own environment (Kondrat, 2002:439). Further on, it is also assumed that the state and other institutional bodies are not fixed entities, but should be seen through the performative social relationships that they embody and are putting in motion (Brand, 2013). Departing from here, I draw upon the theory by Giddens (1984) that social structures do not exist without individuals performing them. Therefore, to engage in a better understanding of the relation between individuals and institutional arrangements they embody and to unpack the influence individuals can bring into their environment, it makes it relevant and justified to take a closer

look at how individuals understand and experience their environment in the private sphere.

Processes of interaction between the individual and society have been the focus of many social theories (Kondrat, 2002:436). Macro theories, such as functionalism and structuralism, advocate for the objective understanding of the reality and envision society as predetermined for a human agency. Instead, micro theories, such as hermeneutics and other agency theories, look at the subjective interpretations from within the social structure and argue for individual actions being the foundation of a social construction (Giddens, 1999; Kondrat, 2002). The main contribution of the structuration theory conceptualised by Anthony Giddens is that it aims to reconcile the dualism that exists in the sociological explanation of the relationship between social structure and the individual. Structuration theory, places itself in the middle, arguing for the “duality of structure”, implying that the individual and the structure both have equal potential in having influence over one another – social structures enable social actions, at the same time social structures are the product of those very actions; thus, both are parts of constantly recursive relationship of interdependence. This relationship manifests itself in a continuity of transformations which is called the *structuration process* in which the individual and the structure are in a constant cyclical interplay of reshaping and reproducing each other (Giddens, 1999:120-130).

To engage in understanding the nature of the interconnected circle of the interaction between social structure and the individual I approach these processes separately. Therefore, to understand how the structure shapes individuals' subjective perception of the world and to outline a subjective view on the changes and transformations individuals experience on their social environment, I look at expectations and patterns of social behavior prescribed by the welfare state's normative and operational nature. Further on, to get insights into the ways how individuals are engaged in constituting and reshaping (renewing) their social structure I am using Giddens' structuration theory's account of agency and social structure to frame and illustrate the impact of individual's actions.

Before proceeding with unpacking the aims and structure of the welfare state it is important to define what welfare is – a term that is widely talked about, yet the meaning of the word is rarely defined (Bent 2008:51; Deacon, 2002:4).

4.2. Welfare

Oxford dictionary assigns two meanings of the word ‘welfare’: (1) “Well-being, happiness; health and prosperity”; and (2) “the financial support from the state” (Oxford Dictionary, 2001 cited in Bent, 2008:51). Consequently, welfare simultaneously refers to the value of good life as well as to the means to achieve it. Let’s first explore the first meaning of the welfare.

Bent (2008) suggests that welfare stands for a mix of values united under the expectations of the quality of life at a micro and a macro levels. At the micro level welfare is a synonym for individual well-being. At a basic level it is interpreted as a coverage of basic needs (Pinch, 1997:5) or can represent the individual expectations of a good life (Bent, 2008:51-52). The modern society assigns a wider meaning for needs and defines them in “the adequacy of existing conditions in relation to some socially acceptable norm” (Pinch, 1997:5-6). With the reference to the contribution of H.T. Marshall’s social rights, the well-being goes beyond the definition of a basic survival and incorporates other values such as happiness, security, freedom of choice, justice and social integration (Fitzpatrick, 2001). This in turn implies that although a personal wellbeing is an individual property, it is heavily dependent on a community and social structures that are able to secure and supply those values. Therefore, the macro dimension of welfare incorporates collective needs and conditions of the society in order to promote wellbeing of individuals (Bent, 2008:52). Collective welfare ergo stands for moral guidelines to navigate social relationships among members of the society (Spicker, 2000:55-70). A more pragmatic view of the collective meaning of welfare is that collective welfare reflects a common interest in preventing social illnesses, such as poverty and crime, which in turn facilitate social cohesion (Brandal et al., 2013:95). In the regard to that, Esping-Andersen (1990:23) states that welfare “is an active force in ordering of social relations”. Provision for the individual needs comes with strings attached, which manifests itself in the set of obligations that individuals are expected to fulfill in return (Spicker, 2000:89).

The interdependence of benefits and obligations constitutes prescribed patterns of social structure, which maintains the social order in the community. Thus, welfare is an individual value, embedded in the social settings, which simultaneously refers to the needs of the individual and the needs of the society.

Returning back to the Oxford dictionary's second definition of welfare, Pinch (1997:9) formulates that "the term welfare is often equated with the direct public provision of services such as health, housing, and education on a non-market basis", he also points out that welfare is also "a system of arrangements that ensured a relatively high standard of living for the majority of the population through [various social] policies". Therefore, while welfare is a set of ideological principles that are aiming at the well-being of an individual and a community, it also refers to the social organization intended to deliver promises of a good life which can be characterised as welfare state. Based on this it can be concluded that the welfare state is a material and immaterial organization of social order that aims to negotiate between individual and collective expectations of welfare. Whereas it is expected that all the states intend to safeguard the well-being of their citizens, they vary according to the ways how the welfare is provided (Hilson, 2008:88).

4.3. Welfare State

Although there were many different attempts to categorise welfare states (e.g. Huber and Stephens; Korpi and Palme cited in Hilson, 2008:90), the most influential and well establish typology was offered by Gosta Esping-Andersen (Edwards, 2003; Hilson, 2008:91; Pinch, 1997). For him welfare state is more than a system of social amelioration or merely an organization of the state's structure, but it has the central role in prescribing political and economic organization of the capitalistic order in modern national states (Esping-Andersen, 1990:18-23). Consequently "welfare state is becoming deeply embedded in the everyday experience of virtually every citizen" (ibid.:142). According to his definition, the primary purpose of the welfare state is to be seen in "decommodifying" of human needs. In other words, welfare state is committed to provide public goods (social care) with the purpose to enable individuals to not be dependent on their labor and market in sustaining their adequate living standards

(ibid.:22). Another key feature of the welfare state is that it prescribes a system of stratification and social order. Meaning that welfare organization depicts the underlying principles of collective solidarity inherent in the logic of organizing social policies (ibid.:56). Esping-Andersen proposes that the welfare state organization can be understood in conjunction of *regimes* and *pillars*. Regimes, in his terminology, represents the structure of institutional arrangements and understandings upholding the national state's organization in its capacity and intention to decommodify social relations (ibid.:27-29). Pillars describe actors involved in welfare creation, which according to him are government, market, and family (Esping-Andersen, 2002:11-13). Further he argues that "the real world of welfare is a product of how the three welfare pillars interact" (ibid.:13). The extent to which the public welfare is aiming to decommodify social relations and the proportions in which welfare organization depends on different pillars prescribe three main types of the welfare states: Liberal, Conservative and Social Democratic (Esping-Andersen, 1990:27-29).

Within the scope of this study, which focuses on the subjective understanding of individuals about the function on the welfare in Finland, I address only the description of social democratic regime - pillar relationship, under which Finland is placed according to Esping-Andersen's typology. However, his theory was criticized for its oversimplification of regimes (Edwards, 2003; Hilson, 2008:88-90). Therefore, I complement his description of social democratic regime with reference to features attributed to the Nordic welfare model – a more precise description of welfare organization in Scandinavian region – which underpins the construction of the Finnish state organization.

4.3.1. Nordic Model – The Social-Democratic Regime

The Nordic model falls under the social democratic regime classification and is characterised by a high commitment to decommodification. Welfare in the social democratic regime is delivered through the medium of universal welfare provision and is implemented through redistributive social policies made possible by a high tax burden (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hilson, 2008:90-91).

High decommodification in the scope of social democratic regime indicate the aims of the society to reach a high degree of social equality among the population.

This implies that social care exceeds the modicum of basic needs and is distributed on a universal basis, which means that it covers all citizens regardless of their social status or performance at the labor market (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hilson, 2008). What is outstanding about the social democratic regime is that social equality is translated into the intention of the state to provide “equality of the highest standards, not an equality of minimal needs” (Esping-Andersen, 2002:27). Within the Nordic model this converts into an objective of the society to raise individuals above the inherent privileges (and disadvantages) and to ensure equal opportunities among the population to reach their full potential. Further, it places the principles of solidarity and egalitarianism at the very core of the Nordic welfare model. The popular slogan of “no one left behind” corresponds with those principles being traceable in its legislation and forming a backbone of the virtue of welfare (Kildal & Kuhnle, 2006: 13).

Nordic welfare in its determination to provide equal opportunities also assigns social responsibilities to the members of the society (Brandal et al., 2013:96). The extensive coverage for individual needs is delivered through redistributive policies, implying that welfare is funded by the tax on labor of all members of the society. This generates the financial pre-condition of the social-democratic welfare organization in expectation of full employment (Esping-Andersen, 1990:148; Edwards, 2003). Furthermore this formulates the direction of the Nordic welfare support in aiming at maximizing the employability and productivity of the population (Esping-Andersen, 2002; Hemerijck, 2002:196-96; Hilson, 2008:92-93). This, from one side, illuminates the respiratory obligation of the members of society to engage in employment; from the other side, it determines scope of social policies aiming to secure the possibilities of each bodily capable individual to be enrolled in the labor market (Edwards, 2003:5; Hemerijck, 2002:196). As a result, employment becomes a key virtue in the Nordic welfare societies, not only as a sign of a successful and decent lifestyle but also as the main attribute of a good citizen who contributes to the common good, thus is entitled for social security.

When it comes to the notion of universalism of the welfare provision within the Nordic model, it actually appears that very few of the social schemas designed to target the entire population, instead they are allocated according to the needs at

different life-cycle stages or assigned to the specific groups e.g. benefits/social services for children, families, unemployed, elderly (Goodin & Rain, 2001:777; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2006:14-17). This underpins by the moral value of the community that resources should be channeled to those who are in need, and corresponds with expectation of the state to publicly/collectively manage the social risks in society i.e. unemployment, disability, illness etc. (Esping-Andersen, 1999:37; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2006:16). From the other side, this further reinforces the value of individual independence and the notion of the social contract rooted in the social democratic welfare state ideology - an expectation of active position of individuals to bear responsibility for their own well-being most of the time, and relying on public welfare as a means to ensure individual independence (Esping-Andersen, 2002)

The functional structure of Nordic welfare provision corresponds with Esping-Andersen's account of social justice "according to which a benefit to some is demonstrably also beneficial for all" (Esping-Andersen, 2002:8). This supports the argument of Deacon (2002:14), who argues that the essential goal of welfare regimes prevailing in European societies is in its core intention to ensure social cohesion. In the Nordic welfare model, this is reached by the means of reducing inequalities among the population and leaning on Richard Titmuss' idea of unconditional and altruistic nature of welfare promoting communal consciousness in "regard to the concerns and needs of others" (Deacon 2002:15). The Finnish welfare state corresponds with all the main attributes of the social democratic regime such as universalism, solidarity and employment orientated social policies. However, according to Keskinen (2016), Finnish universal welfare is based on the pragmatic approaches of post-politics. She argues that the contemporary welfare in Finland is increasingly driven by the competitiveness and efficiency of policies (ibid.), which in turn highlights the functionalist approach associated with the Nordic mentality in general (Hilson, 2008).

4.3.2. Social Care Provision in the Nordic Welfare

The ideology of the welfare regimes is strongly connected to the way how responsibilities to deliver social goods are distributed among the pillars (Esping-Andersen, 2002:13). One of the outcomes of the extensive concern of the state for the well-being of individuals in Nordic countries reveals a high emphasis on the

public pillar as the main resource of a social welfare (Esping-Andersen, 2002:13-14). In the case of social democratic regime, while the provision of the welfare services could be widely distributed among the actors, yet, the state bears the accountability to compensate financially for the social services (Goodin & Rein, 2001:779; Hilson, 2008).

The economic logic of full employment inherent to the social democratic regime not only determines the nature of the welfare provision, but also emerges in the extension of the scope of public services in order to absorb labor supply resulted from women entering the labor forces (Esping-Andersen, 1990:148-149). Thus, while traditionally, family pillar is assigned with the responsibility to provide for the 'non-earning members of the household' (Goodin & Rein, 2001:779) in the process of "de-familiazing" of social needs family became invisibilised from the general frame of service provision. In other words, households are released from social responsibility of care for children, elderly or sick by public institutions and care professions who carry out the care provision for those groups (Esping-Andersen, 1999:61-62). Consequently, the notion of care in the Nordic states is transformed into highly institutionalised social care; thus, became to be perceived not as an individual obligation to produce, but as a social right to be entitled for. This further reinforced the closure of solidarity within the community (as the entitlement for the services should be deserved by contribution through taxes) and drew sharper lines between public and private, where the care provided within the family is not accountable within the welfare provision.

However, in reality the division among the pillars is not that clear and fixed; therefore, Esping-Andersen emphasises the flux nature of the pillars in providing welfare and highlights the compensatory relationship between the actors. This means that when one of the pillars fails to provide adequate services assigned to its responsibility this causes the welfare deficit, which two other pillars are forced to absorb by engaging in redemptive actions (Esping-Andersen, 2002:12). Furthermore, Esping-Andersen sees pillars and the interplay among them as means for the welfare production, whereas for Goodin and Rein (2001) the changing constellation among the pillars and the shift in responsibilities among the actors reveals the changing nature of the welfare states.

Until now this section described rights and obligations expected from subjects under the social democratic regime. Therefore, it depicted social structures and social principles prescribed by the social environment where the participants of this study have been growing up and live. Before turning the gaze to possibilities for individuals to interact with those structures, I take a detour to look at the structural and social framework of how the care for asylum seekers is perceived in the welfare state. While section 3.1 and 3.2 gave the overview of the Finnish context of receiving asylum seekers, the next section outlines more general challenges that welfare ideology is facing with regards to providing space for meeting the needs of non-members of the society.

4.3.3. Boundaries of Welfare and Asylum

Welfare provision is inherently attached to the concept of the nation-state, hence social citizenship is among the main attributes associated with the welfare states (Ferrera, 2005:11). From one side, citizenship (along with the right for residence) is a positive element of the democratic states that validates the equality of members of the state in the relation to law and political status (Kildal & Kuhnle, 2006:13-14), it is also a crucial condition for being entitled to the social care in social democratic welfare states (Goodin & Rein, 2011:777). From the other side, Ferrera (2005:12), argues that “citizenship rests on boundaries that separate insiders from outsiders”. Hence citizenship provides a conceptual ground for “us” and “they” and outlines the closure for the notion of solidarity embedded in the ideology welfare state (Crepaz, 2008:2-3; Ferrera, 2005:44). In other words, the universalism of the Nordic welfare is restricted to the national borders and is extended only to the people who are recognized as members of the given community either by birth or acquired citizenship. This presents the dilemma that contemporary welfare states are facing in regard to the obligation of taking care for the non-citizens seeking asylum within their national territories.

Unconditional care for the nationals from the third states is not directly implied in the national welfare policy’s context; however this responsibility is prescribed by the power of the International Human Rights Declaration (Bank, 2000). According to which, asylum is one of the fundamental human rights that should

be granted to people subjected to physical harm or life threat in their countries of origin (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016a). Asylum seekers⁵ often lack financial resources and social networks in the receiving country. Therefore, due to the logic of division of responsibility for individual needs within welfare pillars, neither market, nor family can provide for their basic needs. Consequently, the state is assigned with the foremost responsibility to cover and satisfy the needs of newcomers.

In the European Union the asylum seeker's social care is outlined in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU) and Reception Directive (2013/33/EU) as a part of it, provide guidelines to how the asylum policies should be organised in EU member states (Perusel, 2015:124). While the first one prescribes a procedure of applying for the asylum, the latter outlines the standards of treatment that applicants of the asylum are entitled to receive in all the EU member states. The provision for the needs of asylum seekers should correspond to the understanding of the individual welfare incorporated within the welfare ideology of the receiving country. According to the Asylum Reception Directive applicants are entitled to a coverage of their basic needs (2013/33/EU, §2), which are defined as minimum standards of material provision basic health and social services (2013/33/EU, §13), the right to education for children and access to the labor market (2013/33/EU, §15).

Roland Bank (2000), problematises the asylum reception policies by outlining that they are framed “in the opposite direction of welfare benefits, because the treatment of asylum seekers during the reception phase actively seeks to impede integration” (ibid.:149). He further explains that exclusionary strategies imbedded in asylum policies are deliberated by the states in their intention to “ensure that law enforcement against rejected asylum seekers is not impaired by the development of strong social ties” (ibid.). Bank argues that asylum seekers are intentionally limited in their freedom of movement and a choice of residence, as

⁵ Asylum seeker is person who is applying for the international protection in a foreign country. The asylum seeker is not entitled automatically for the refugee status or other form of international protection. The term of asylum seeker designates the legal status of the person in the process before the decision about her/his claim was made. (Finnish Immigration Office, http://www.migri.fi/asylum_in_finland/applying_for_asylum/decision/asylum_and_international_protection).

they are assigned to the reception centers right upon arrival, where they are expected to stay for the time of procedure of the allocation for asylum. Furthermore, he outlines the restriction of the economic rights in limited opportunities of asylum seekers to participate in the labor market. He also points out that the organization of social and health services granted to the asylum seekers portrays the intention of the state to segregate asylum seekers from the host community. The services available for asylum seeker are not only aiming at securing only their very basic survival, but are also located at the reception centers, therefore, prevent asylum seekers from any further interaction with the local society (ibid.). In this regard, Larruina and Ghorashi (2016:220) categorise reception centers as gated communities providing “reversed expectation of security. [as s]uch centers do not provide safety for those inside but keep societies safe from the intrusion of these asylum seekers”.

The section so far portrayed the macro view of the relationship between system of social organization and the individual in frame of social democratic welfare regime. It outlined the social norms accepted in the society and depicted the moral principles that the structure donates to the members inhabiting it. However, the structuration theory emphasises the equal possibilities of structure and individuals to affect each other, therefore next section focuses on the view from the inside, thus explain the mechanism and opportunities available for individual to affect and contribute to own social environment.

4.4. Structure and Agency

Structuration theory is based on the assumption that individuals and social structure are two constitutive parts in the process of mutually sustaining and reproducing the social order of a given society (Giddens, 1984). Although, many other thinkers have outlined the dialectical bond between individual and her/his social surroundings (e.g. Bourdieu, Berger & Luckman, Goffman), the very practical account of Giddens’ structuration theory that aims at illustrating this process in practical terms, is suitable to capture the experiences I explore in this study. The following section engages more closely with Giddens’s formulation of apparatuses that enable individuals to alter the existing social structures, namely – knowledge, agency, structure and system (Kondrat, 2002).

4.4.1. Knowledge and Reflexivity

Giddens defines individuals as active agents capable of self-transformation and self-reflection, who can act as a starting point for greater social change (Kondrat, 2002:439). The main asset of an active agent is personal knowledge about her/his social world - “Every social actor knows a great deal about the conditions of reproduction of the society of which he or she is a member” (Giddens, 1984:63). This awareness about the society can be conceptualised in two different types of knowledge – *practical* and *discursive* knowledge⁶. Practical knowledge is a tacit understanding integrated into social practices about how to act and how to understand actions of others. It is also the type of implicit knowledge that holds social structures together, reinsuring that everyone plays according to the same rules and making it possible to anticipate reactions from others (Kondrat, 2002: 440). Practical knowledge is often taken-for-granted and it is rarely reflected upon or talked about in everyday life (Kaspersen, 2000:35). On the other hand, discursive knowledge refers to the personal understanding of the world which one can verbally express and engage with; in other words, it stands for the ability of individuals to explain themselves to the outer world (ibid.:35). To illustrate, when one wakes up with an acute tooth pain it is practical knowledge that informs that one needs to consult a dentist; however, in order to finally end up at the dental clinic, one has to apply extensive discursive knowledge of how to engage with the health services in a given community.

Furthermore, the knowledgeable agent according to the structuration theory also possesses the capacity of *discursive reflexivity*. This depicts the ability to reflect on one’s own deeds and articulate personal meanings of those actions. Discursive reflexivity can be stimulated when the actions undertaken by the individual do not correspond to the socially defined patterns; in other words, when something brakes out of the routine (Giddens, 1984:41-45). To illustrate in terms of this study we can look at the practice of co-living. Sharing the household with other people is a cultural practice that is present probably in all parts of the world. But, when a person shares the home with people outside of their kinship ties or other

⁶ Originally Giddens referred to it as practical and discursive **consciousness**, but for the purpose of this study I will be using the formulation of Kondrat (2002), as practical and discursive knowledge.

socially accepted relations, the notions of co-living and private space become a part of discursive knowledge, which can be further discussed in wider social settings. This process of translating the practical knowledge into discursive knowledge according to Giddens is the precondition for human agency (Giddens, 1984:5-14).

4.4.2. Agency

Agency in structuration theory is understood as a continuous process that streams throughout the life of the individual (Kaspersen, 2000:37-40). In Giddens' view, agency is translated into the power of individuals to act differently at any moment of their lives regardless of prescribed rules (Giddens, 1984:9). Therefore, "agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place" (ibid.:9). To elaborate on this - agency is not limited to the purposes individuals are attaching to their actions, but agency has an unintentional potential to facilitate broader change. Accordingly, motivation for the action in Giddens' interpretation refers to the ability of the individual to reflect upon the potential and possibilities s/he have for action (ibid.:63). Thus, the capacity of agents to translate and bring implicit knowledge into the discursive domain creates an opportunity to enlarge and redefine the socially embodied and taken-for-granted practices (Kondrat, 2002:441). In the case of this study, inviting an asylum seeker to share home is not only an action that influences the actors involved, but it has the capacity to intervene in the larger social structure by bringing the discourse of individual values into the wider social space.

Furthermore, by emphasizing on the duality of the social structure, where individual and system have equal roles of simultaneously producing and reproducing each other (Kaspersen, 2000:34), structuration theory provides the base for human agency to be manifested not as external, but as inherent to the process of co-constituting and recreating the society (Kondrat, 2000). By manifesting this, agency in structuration theory is able to bridge the micro-macro dimension of potential of human actions (ibid.:439). However, the capacity of an agent to affect their own environment and the nature of the knowledge the individual possesses is shaped by the social position one is embodying in society. This in turn determines the power and resources an individual has to inform their own agency. To better understand spaces where human agency comes into

interplay with the society, there is a need to open up another key components of structuration theory, namely *structure* and *system*.

4.4.3. Structure and System

Interpreting structuration theory Kaspersen (2000:50) suggests that the strongest part of Giddens' analysis of social theory lies in his reformulation of the concepts traditionally embedded in understanding the agent - structure interaction. Thus, Giddens alters the mainstream understanding that structure and systems act as restrains of individual agency. He points out that “constrains [of social structure and system] do not operate like [inevitable] forces in nature”; therefore, while structure and system can set the restrains, they also have a capacity to enable individual actions (Giddens, 1984:15).

Giddens (ibid.:17) argues that *structure* is “a matrix of admissible transformations” and it exists only virtually, as it does not exist without actions that reproduce it. In other words, structure is a pool of enabling conditions in the form of rules and resources attributed to the commonly shared social order (ibid.:16-25). Rules in Giddens' interpretation are “generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social practices” (ibid.:21) and they can be divided into *moral* and *procedural* rules. Where first define the rights, duties and obligations and latter outline ways how such moral obligations should be carried out (Cohen, 1987 cited in Kondrat, 2002:442). Resources, on the other hand, are structured properties that individuals can draw upon in their interaction with the social system. Resources can be *allocative* or *authoritative*. Allocative resources refer to socially achievable and monetary assets, such as money and education; whereas, authoritarian resources mirror the position in social organization and demonstrate power or status of an individual (Kondrat, 2002:441). Here we can come back to the example of tooth pain and dental care. Being a citizen in the country devoted to the Nordic welfare model, it is an accepted *moral rule* that each person is entitled to the dental care. According to the *procedural rule*, dental care should be delivered by the state sponsored dental clinics. However, an individual is free to use her/his *allocative* and *authoritarian resources* to choose where and how s/he will be treated according to her/his capacity to allocate own monetary or social assets. Therefore, a person is free to choose whether it will be municipality hospital or a private clinic.

System in Giddens' understanding of the word does not have structures but rather exhibits 'structural properties'; hence, it stands for reproduced relations between actors, which are shaped by social practices based on the available resources and rules (Giddens, 1984:17). He further argues that structure and human actions are constituting the process that upholds the system. As the structure is not external to human action but a very part of it, individuals rely on the structural attributes to inform their own actions; accordingly, human actions become a medium to reproduce and uphold the system. Consequently, a system is produced and reproduced by the human agency of knowledgeable individual agents, which not only hold in-depth knowledge of the social structure and system but are also conditioned to free will and reflexivity, which allow individuals to alter social practices (Giddens, 1984:163-169).

To conclude, I apply the elements of structuration theory to the case of this study in the following manner. The *structure* is a class structure or a rule of social democratic ideologies; *system* is manifesting itself in the state's welfare organization that uses attributes of structure to stabilise itself in social practices, such as benefits and entitlements available for individuals within the welfare state. Following the logic of structuration theory, systems are produced and reproduced by the means of *human agency*, meaning that at the end of the day it is in the hands of individuals to reproduce the social order in everyday practices, such as participating in the labor market, paying taxes and making use of the available services produced by the system. Furthermore, individuals have an ability to reflect on the system's attributes and make use of *recourses* and *rules* of the structure available at the individual level. They are also use their agency and *choose to act differently* than the prescribed social order; in the example of the social phenomena of this research – when individuals are acting as a provider of the social care for the people that culturally do not belong under their responsibility.

5. Methodology

The purpose of this study is two folded. From one side, it aims to gain insights about why individuals engage in hosting asylum seekers in their homes in Finland

and why they think their involvement is needed. From the other side, the theoretical underpinning of the welfare theory and the agency incorporated into this study allows me to approach those experiences on a more theoretical level. It makes it possible to explore home accommodation as a form of engagement of families in providing the social care for the people whose wellbeing is traditionally seen as a responsibility of the state. Therefore, the second aim of this study is to explore how individuals understand their own role in social welfare provision, as well as to inquire about their relationship with the social structure from the perspective of global changes apparent in local environments.

This study is conducted by making use of qualitative methodology. Data was collected through semi-structural interviews and analysed using mode of thematic content analysis. This chapter presents the overall description of the research process and the rationale behind the research methodology. Finally, it is concluded with elaborations upon the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

5.1. Qualitative Research

This research is situated in the nexus between private and public and it is aiming to bring forward individuals' understanding of the social world and their role in it. This makes the qualitative inquiry seeking exploration of subjective understanding of social affairs (Carey, 2012:6-7) applicable in conducting this study. The interpretive methodology embedded in the qualitative research pursues the aim to depict and bring forward personal and subjective realities of the individual (Carey, 2012:79). This coincides with the purpose of this research which is to depict inner motives and motivations people attach to their action rather than explain their deeds.

Furthermore, qualitative research methods enable one to inquire into changing settings and reveal new insights of the new/changing phenomena (Boeje, 2010); this corresponds with the intention of this study to explore the novel for Finnish settings phenomena of home accommodation for asylum seekers. Although qualitative research does not provide results that could be generalised on larger population groups, it is able to offer an in-depth information about smaller groups and provides a space for new forms and understandings of a social world (Carey,

2012:6-7). Hence, it is suitable to address the changing nature of the Finnish social context and the involvement of individuals in providing social care for asylum seekers. Finally, qualitative research emphasises on the situatedness of knowledge, hence it seeks to understand experiences in relation to their specific social environment (Szczepanikova, 2013: 91-92). This allows me to investigate the social phenomenon at the center of this study simultaneously at the personal and structural level.

5.2. Data Collection

5.2.1. Sampling

The participants for this study were chosen on the basis of purposive sampling technique. Due to the focus of this study, purposive technique was helpful for the selection of informants on the basis of their experiences relevant for the research (Carey, 2012:39).

The participants were recruited through mailing lists and the Facebook-page of Refugees Welcome Finland (see Section 3.3 for description of the RWF). To narrow down the selection, only host families residing in the capital area were approached. In order to ensure the anonymity and privacy of the participants, the role of the RWF was limited to forwarding the invitation letter (see Appendix A for invitation letter) to host families. The individuals who wanted to be part of the study were asked to contact me for further information and cooperation. Taking into account the scope and the qualitative focus of this study, the sampling size was determined to six participants.

Participants

At the time the material for this study was collected, all six participants of this study had experience of hosting asylum seekers for a period between few weeks to five months. All the participants live in the capital area of Helsinki, Finland and got involved in hosting asylum seekers through the RWF community. All of the interviewees are women and all of them have higher level of education. Four out of six participants were working or have been working for the public sector. Furthermore, four participants had been involved in civil activities, such as engagement in various NGOs or community work; two of the participants said

that they became more active in civil activities due to the experience of hosting asylum seekers. The age of the participants varied between 33 to 66 years. Participant's marital status and living arrangements also varied: three participants lived with their partners and had children, all under 10 years old; one was sharing the house with a partner and other family members and two were living alone.

The decision to interview only one member from the household offering accommodation for asylum seeker was taken because of the intention to gather a diverse spectrum of experiences. However, throughout the course of interviews, it became apparent that the decision to get involved into offering home accommodation was based on a consensus with the other inhabitants of the house and experience of hosting an asylum seeker had an effect on all the members of the household. Moreover, while being interviewed participants often referred to common experiences of the family - talking often about "we" and "us". For that reason, in order to incorporate the experiences of the other household members, the sampling unit for the analysis of this study is defined to be the entire household engaged in hosting an asylum seeker. Therefore, further in the study, the term "host family" will be used alongside with "participant".

5.2.2. Qualitative semi-structural interviews

Boeje (2010:62) states that interviews give "participants [...] an opportunity to share their story, pass their knowledge, and provide their own perspective on a range of topics". The personal stories and perspectives are the key interest of this study; moreover, it is acknowledged that this project goes to a potentially sensitive area of the private domains of the individual's life and feelings; therefore, the choice of individual face-to-face interviews is perfectly in line with the aims of the project. Furthermore, qualitative interviews are a useful tool to get deep and descriptive understanding of the social life of specific persons. Matthews (2005 cited in Boeje 2010:63) elaborates that when engaging in collecting material with the help of semi-structural interviews "researchers do not ask questions to elicit answers to specific questions but rather to make it possible for participants to talk about something in their own words". In this research, semi-structural interviews are designed to extract the subjective understanding of the social environment of the individuals and provide an opportunity for the

researcher to explore unknown side of the individual's private world and experiences.

Interview guide

In order to collect meaningful material, it is important to define and carefully consider the process of data collection (Carey, 2012:109-116). In the case of semi-structured interviews, it is vital that the open ended questions have a direct link to the research problem (Boeije, 2010; Mason, 2002). A crucial aspect of this research lies in unraveling the incentives and the motives behind the decision of participants to provide home for asylum seekers at a personal and a societal level; alongside with their understanding of how their action fits in the social structure in general. In designing the set of open-ended questions aiming to navigate the interview in the direction of the research problem, I relied on the previously gathered information regarding the context of the home accommodation for asylum seekers' activity and theoretical assumptions incorporated in this research. Finally, the interview guide covered four wide topics – (1) personal expectations and motivations to engage in home accommodation; (2) participants' perception and experiences with the asylum seekers; (3) understanding of the institutional settings of the social care available to asylum seekers and (4) general opinion about societal context of contemporary Finland. (See Appendix B for interview guide)

Interviews

All six interviews were conducted during March 2016 in Helsinki, Finland. The interviews lasted approximately one hour, were conducted in Finnish and were recorded for the further transcription. The interviews were conversational and were guided through with the help of a set of open-ended questions. Interviews took place in various locations, i.e. coffee shops, work places and the participants' private homes, according to their wishes and the possibilities available.

Ethical principles involved in conducting qualitative inquiry with the focus on private lives and individual experiences, demand the researcher to be cautious about the moral accuracy and transparency in communication with the partakers of the research (Boeije, 2010:44-48). To reassure the transparency of my interaction with the participants of the study, I sent the interview guide to the

interviewees prior to our meeting, so they could have time and opportunity to think about the questions beforehand. This, however, did not compromise the findings' validity, as the research is based on the assumption that the participants decided to host asylum seekers based on consciously made considerations rather than as impulsive act. Hence, the interviews were aiming to explore conscious motivation and not reveal unconscious reasons. Another instrument for insure the voluntarily and informed participation in the study is *informed consent*. Therefore, before starting the official part of the interview, I restated the purpose of the research and explained the nature and purpose for which collected data would be used. I also asked each participant to verbally confirm their understanding of the aims of research and their voluntary participation in this research.

5.3. Data Analysis

5.3.1. Transcribing Technique

The selective transcribing technique was applied to process the raw material of this study, which refers to the method of reducing material already at the stage of the re-coding data into textual format (Carey, 2012:117). The decision to exclude some parts of data already at the transcribing stage was guided by ethical consideration related to the privacy of the individuals involved in this study. As motioned above, semi-structural interviews allow an open flow of information. In order to get a better picture of the participants' experiences it was essential to include more personal questions about their family life and relations with people they were hosting. Hence, participants' stories unintentionally included private details and reflections about people they were hosting. Although the stories were valuable, guided by the ethical considerations I deliberately choose not to include personal stories told from second source in the analysis of this study; thus, I excluded these already at the transcribing stage. On the other hand, selective transcribing provided space for more active interaction with the data and allowed me to actively reflect upon the material and incorporate my own observations already at the stage of re-coding.

5.3.2. Thematic Content Analysis

The main task of analysis of qualitative data, according to Boeje (2010:67), is to reduce material to meaningful interconnected narratives and categories which

would illuminate the essence of the data. He further elaborates that two main activities involved in analysis is to *segmentate* and *reassemble* data in a meaningful manner. In order to segmentate the data of this study I applied the thematic analysis technique, for it is known to be a suitable tool that allows researcher to identify the patterns of the individual attitudes and values (Carey, 2012:222). This study followed three main steps of analysis suggested by Aronson (1994 cited in Carey, 2012:223): (1) Identifying patterns within the main themes of the data (this was done in three stages of coding); (2) Collecting themes together to produce a comprehensive story of the participants' collective experience; (3) Incorporating the arguments emerged into the theoretical framework underpinning the research in order to compose the final storyline depicting the process of analysis. (See Appendix C for the coding chart)

Thematic coding often starts from the list of themes already known to the researcher as they often are included in the process of data collection (Ayres, 2008). The main themes for this study's analysis were established prior to the transcribing process and arose from the structure of the interview guide. The four main themes (CODE 1 in the coding chart) were: background, personal, structure and society. The raw data was re-coded into shorter passages within the main categories and the data was transferred into excel sheets (each interview separately). Each interview transcript was at this stage reread and corrections to the categories were made. The process of theming according to Williams (2008) requires 'line-to-line' labeling which allows a researcher to further explore nuances of the main themes and create sub-categories. Therefore, the second stage involved process of looking for emerging sub-categories within each theme (CODE 2 and 3 in the coding chart). After this was done, all the interview transcripts were merged into one excel sheet and organised according to the main themes. The joint transcript was reread several times in order to explore the correlations within the common patterns emerging across the interviews. At this stage, I turned to theories incorporated in this study to extract the correlations of the data with the theoretical basis of this research. In the result one more layer of coding (CODE 0 in the coding chart) was added to the data, classifying the entire data into two main groupings of 'motivations' and 'outcomes', This navigated the

final reassembling of the material and determined the structure for presenting the findings.

5.4. Research ethics

To provide meaningful information, research ethics within this study are approached from several perspectives. This includes the reflection about my own position as a researcher and the general stand point of the research, as well as deliberations in regard to transparency and integrity of the study.

5.4.1. Personal position and ethical choices

Leaning on the constructivist tradition at the foundation of this research project, I recognise the “fluidity of knowledge production” (Carey, 2012:34); therefore acknowledge that the research problem addressed in this study can be approached from various different perspectives. The choice of looking at home accommodation from the perspective of the relationship between the individuals and state is rooted in my professional stance of being a social worker. In my interpretation, social work aims to address a social problem from the perspective of the individual and to facilitate the balance between individuals and society. Therefore, exploring the different forms of this relationship is relevant to inform the development of social practice.

Furthermore, while designing this study I faced the ethical dilemma of determining the point of view of the research. Choosing to explore home accommodation for asylum seekers through the experiences of the host families further reinforces existing power dynamics in regards to this vulnerable group. It, as well, contributes to the prevailing approach within the field of research concerning asylum in addressing asylum seekers as passive subjects. However, taking in consideration the time and resource constrains of this project, I felt incapable to incorporate the views of people being hosted. Nevertheless, it is in my intention that this piece of research could be used as a base to address home accommodation in a more inclusive framework allowing voices of people being hosted to be heard as well. Another ethical dilemma I faced while writing the findings of this study is the limitation of the vocabulary available for my use in referring to the people being hosted. Using the political term ‘asylum seeker’

appears to be degrading of the interpersonal relationships that host families established with the people they invited to share their home. However, I did not find any other suitable word that would illustrate the relationship in more humane manner; moreover, this was also the term that most of the interviewees also used in their stories.

5.4.2. Reliability and trustworthy

With regards to the processing of the empirical material, I acknowledge the responsibility for and the influence of my personal viewpoints and professional assumptions in organizing and interpreting the research findings. In order to contribute to the reliability and trustworthiness of the of the research findings, in addition to the measures to ensure the confidentiality and the privacy of the participants outlined in description of the process, all the supplementary documentation of the process, such as the invitation letter to the participants, the interview guide and the code chart can be found in attachments A, B and C, respectively. In order to acknowledge and ensure that the findings of the study correspond with the initial opinions of the participants, the extract of the data and the full report was sent to the participants for the accuracy check.

5.5. Limitations

The main limitations of this research is the nature of the sampling group of this study. Despite the clear view on the sampling technique and choice of the target group, I acknowledge three key limitations of the sampling unit. First, I chose to interview only one member of the household while still setting the sample unit to be a household (in more details in section 5.2.1). Thus rely only on a subjective interpretation of the person interviewed about the interplay and interpersonal dynamics between the family members. Secondly, while conducting the interview, I realised that approaching individuals who had already hosted asylum seekers for a period of time made it difficult to fully depict the rationales for their actions prior the decision of hosting. The familiarity with the person who moved in, and experiences of co-living put forward different feelings and reflections and made it difficult for individuals to recall and acknowledge motives and thoughts they had before inviting asylum seeker to move in with them. Nevertheless, underpinning this inquiry by Giddens structuration theory I see a greater potential of looking at

the lived experience of individuals to explore the impact they feel they are bringing to the lives of their guests and community. Lastly, within this study I am not able to incorporate and reflect on the demographic characteristics of the participants, such as gender, social status, educational level and occupation. Although I realised that those factors have an influence on their experiences it is out of the capacity of this research to reflect on those attributes. Therefore, rather than looking at these demographical aspects, I chose to look at the stories and experiences that participants chose to share with me.

6. Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents findings and the analysis of subjective narratives of six Finnish host families involved in offering home accommodation for asylum seekers. Findings are presented in two parts. First part outlines how participants understand the need of their actions, in other words it presents their motivation and reasoning to engage in offering home accommodation. Second part explores the outcomes of their action, hence explores how participants felt their actions changed their own lives, lives of people they were hosting and the potential larger change in society.

6.1. Motivation – “It just felt right”

The quote in the title resonates with the general thought shared by all the participants; however, interviews revealed that ‘it felt right’ for a numbers of reasons. For Giddens, motivation is dependent on the knowledgeableability of individuals about resources and rules embedded in the system they are part of (Giddens, 1984:63). Furthermore, according to Giddens “motivation refers to potential for the action rather than to the mode in which action is chronologically carry out” (ibid.:6), hence it is rooted in recognizing the potential of a situation and possibilities one has for an action. Empirical data of this study has revealed three components in the subjective reasoning of why participants invited asylum seekers to share their home. First, they identified personal resources that they could share. Secondly, they saw faults in the system with regard to the services and opportunities that asylum reception framework in Finland outlines for the newcomers. Lastly, the motivation to host asylum seekers also resonated with the

participants' understanding about the role of social care and ideology of the Finnish welfare.

6.1.1. Personal Story and Personal Assets

Reasons behind the participants' personal motivation correspond with the finding of Hebbani et al. (2016). Similarly to the Australian case explored in Hebbani et al study, participants of this study stated that personal motivation played a big role in the decision to invite asylum seeker/s to their home. Interviews have shown that all the participants felt compassion towards the people searching for asylum in Finland and all of them reflected about their decision as an act of help.

In addition, personal motivation in context of this study also includes reflections about participants' life-experiences and background which inform their personal beliefs and values. None of the participants had previous experience of seeking protection in another country nor had encountered asylum seekers before. Nevertheless, participants felt that they could relate to some of the challenges that they thought asylum seekers faced. As an example, one participant said that home and family are very important for her; therefore, she could relate to the loneliness one would feel while being apart from their dear ones. Other participant said *"I have an experience of leaving home and arriving to the middle of unknown"*⁷ referring to the experience of studying abroad and having been familiar with the feeling of isolation in new settings. In addition, two of the participants noted that the memory of lived experiences of their grandparents after Second World War was still present in their lives:

"We have Karelian refugees⁸ in our family – my grandparents had to leave their home on several occasions. And we have been talking about this a lot... the stories were told about how grandmother walked for several days from Karelia and had to give up everything she had."

Most importantly, all the participants experienced that they had something to give - *"I had strongly the feeling that this is what should be done. I have the possibility*

⁷ All the quotes of participants presented in this section were translated from Finnish to English by the author of this thesis.

⁸ After the IWW Finland had to give up the territories in East North called Karelia to Russia as a part of peace agreement, to keep own independence. In the result hundred thousand Finnish people living in those territories were internally displaced.

and in some way it is also my ethical responsibility". Ethical responsibility in this context referred to the general resources, and privilege associated with Finnish citizenship and having much more than people who had to flee their homes from the Middle East. Participants reflected that the motivation to invite asylum seeker to share their home was rooted in recognizing their own position in the society, next quote elaborates on these feelings:

"I always thought that if you can help others, it means you are in a very privileged position. And I feel that about my life... my life has been relatively easy on a world scale. And I have a lot of resources I can share and helping brings a very selfish joy. Like, when you are in a helping role you feel like an enabled and strong person, and you get real joy out of helping people"

However, it was also pointed out that the decision to invite a person to share their house was not only dependent on these privileges, as *"not everyone has an opportunity to host"*. Therefore, as the quote above highlights, the pre-conditions for the decision were grounded in physical assets which participants of this study had and could give. These included a spare room they could offer to the asylum seeker for an extended period of time, and the fact that their financial resources allowed them to offer the room for free. In addition, time was mentioned by two participants as a valuable asset that they could offer to the asylum seeker living in their homes.

To conclude, the motivation of participants to host asylum seekers resonates with Giddens understanding of how personal assets predetermine motivation. Reflections about their own position as Finnish citizens refer that participants recognise what Giddens calls *authoritarian resources* available for them within the Finnish society. Physical assets that were mentioned as pre-conditions to the decision correspond to the *allocative resources* (Kondrat, 2002:441). Additionally, background and life experiences were told to play a role in participants' deliberations upon the potential needs of asylum seekers, hence those were built upon reflections about their own expectations of individual welfare. Thus reflect the intention imbedded in Nordic state to ensure the possibility for everyone to reach their full potentials. However, it also depicts that participants did not consider asylum seekers as outsiders, which contests Ferrera's (2005)

statement that national belonging outlines a closure for solidarity within welfare states.

6.1.2. Institutional Dimension and Individual Reflectivity

This section presents how participants viewed the system of social organization in delivering welfare for asylum seekers. Furthermore it outlines what was seen as main challenges within the system for individual welfare of people seeking international protection in Finland. This also illustrates what Giddens calls *personal reflectivity*, which refers to the ability of individuals to critically reflect upon taken-for-granted practices, and helps to convert *practical knowledge* into *discursive knowledge* (Kondrat, 2002). In the present developments in Finland, it can be observed that the increase in the numbers of people seeking asylum was the moment which triggered personal reflexivity and provided space for the participants of this study to reflect and rethink their understanding about social care offered by the state to the asylum seekers.

All the participants agreed on the central role of the state - *“It is a state which is 99% responsible for them [asylum seekers]. As it is the state which processes the applications and funds their livelihood in Finland”*. This corresponds with the expectation from a Nordic Welfare state to decommodify basic needs, which should provide care services for people who are not capable to sustain themselves or are not able to participate in labor market. Asylum seekers, in a result of their yet unestablished legal status are not entitled to the right of employment in Finland; thus, the Finnish state is fully responsible to cover their basic needs (Finnish Ministry for Interior, 2016a). Furthermore, issues raised by the participants were mostly found in the services provided in the reception centers. This further match with legal framework of the welfare provision for asylum seekers being centralised under the roof of reception units (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016a). Initially most of the participants were concerned about shortage of accommodation and poor conditions of the reception centers loudly discussed in the media, and were concerned how this would affect the individual welfare of asylum seekers.

“I probably wouldn’t have even considered to become a host if I had known that there is enough space in reception centers to accommodate all the asylum seekers... However, there were

many conversations about how they will be accommodated in tents and how bad are the centers.”

Participants emphasised that “*reception centers are demotivating, isolated and hostile places*” where individuals experienced lack of privacy and personal space and had very little control over their lives. Reception centers were described as being overcrowded, lacked personal space and unequipped to offer possibilities for residents to prepare their own food. Poorly accessible locations of the reception centers, lack of activities and lack of possibilities to interact with the outside world were also seen as further restrains of the social life of the residents. Moreover, four interviewees stated that the main reason for the asylum seekers (they were hosting) to look for home accommodation was the fear of being separated from their families and friends by a relocation to a reception center in another part of Finland. As a result of those factors, reception centers emerged as being limited in their possibilities to offer a ‘decent life’ for the residents.

However, the main limitation all the participants stressed was that reception centers were not viable spaces for asylum seekers to access Finnish culture and Finnish people in their everyday life - “*in the reception centers they [asylum seekers] are all the time among each other and have very limited contact with local people*”. In addition, all of the participants highlighted that constrains go beyond physical limitations of the reception centers and reflect the deficiency of the overall services for asylum seekers. The existing asylum policies are seen as inconvenient, both in how they are organised and what they offer. The biggest problem was seen as the incapability of the system to provide broader integration into the society because of the lack of possibilities for employment and cultural integration.

The challenges that the participants present in the system of asylum services in Finland are in line with the critique Bank (2000) brings regarding Common European Asylum System. He argues that asylum policies are driven by the intention of the state to limit the interaction of asylum seekers with local population (Bank, 2000). The inability of the system to offer means to ensure personal welfare of asylum seekers was exactly the reason and the space where the participants of this study saw themselves compelled to alter the social order and offer their support. Revisiting Giddens, the gaps in the service provision for

asylum seekers is a point of departure for the individual agency of participants to alter the prescribed rules of the system. Before exploring what the participants felt when they offer their homes to asylum seekers, the next section explores how their actions contest the prevailing attitudes in the Finnish society and why they thought asylum seekers should be offered support.

6.1.3. Society – “Can we afford to be ethical?”

Keskinen (2016) emphasises that welfare ideology influences normative and ideological foundations of the society and is intertwined with the national and cultural identity. In fact, the interviews shown that ideological foundation of Nordic welfare model is also predominantly present at the individual level. The interviews revealed that participants shape their understanding of social and moral values, which they have presented as an integral part of their personality, in correspondence with the larger shared principles of the Nordic welfare model. The notions of empathy, solidarity, and egalitarianism were regarded by the participants as essential components of their own self-identity. These values are also integral for the Finnish social organization and are embedded in the ideology of Nordic welfare (Kildal & Kuhnle, 2006:13). However, data shows that participants felt that “European refugee crisis” had put pressure on as well as had raised questions about values inherent to Finnish society. Following outlines what participants identified as main tensions in the society regarding the asylum seekers and the role of individuals in addressing those issues.

Firstly, participants pointed at the tension in regard to the need to welcome and offer space for asylum seekers in Finnish society, which unfolded in a predominantly hostile and unwelcoming attitude towards them in Finland. This is seen as a result of perceiving asylum seekers as an external group to the Finnish community – *“the problem in Finland is that we see ‘us’ and them”* – which corresponds with the discourse about national belonging. The main principle of the distribution of welfare provision within the social democratic regime rests on the notion of social rights prescribed to people on the basis of the membership (Goodin and Reis, 2001:776). Moreover, the notion of citizenship also outlines a boundary for solidarity which defines who is included in the welfare provision in welfare states (Ferrera, 2005:44). This interdependence between membership and

social rights creates a challenge for providing social care for asylum seekers who are not accepted members of the society.

Not surprisingly, all the participants involved in this study feel that it is an ethical duty to help asylum seekers. The obligation to welcome and take care of asylum seekers is rooted in their understanding of the global obligation to share responsibility for the crisis, which has forced people to flee their homes - *“Europe and the US can look in the mirror in finding whom to blame for the Syrian conflict”*. Three participants accused Finland for accepting lesser number of asylum seekers than other countries, hence emphasised the responsibility to share the common burden. This resonates with the commitment to the Universal Human Right Declaration signed by all the EU states (Bank, 2000). Moreover, one of participants also noted that *“we have been here before”* and that it is not the first time when Finland had to face the challenge of accommodating large groups of people in short time, and Nordic values of hospitality and solidarity should be extended to all the individuals in need, not only to Finnish citizens. In general, participants appealed to the need for global solidarity, as the next quote illustrates:

“We only have one planet, and we all live here, we are the same species. And if somewhere conditions are getting worse, animals run away from there, and so do people. Therefore, it’s hard for me to accept the concept of borders, like when you were born inside of particular borders you are entitled to those particular things. And yes, I was lucky to be born in Finland and get all the services attached to it. But I cannot find reasonable explanations why people from Iraq cannot get the same services. I just can’t figure it out what have I done, and what that Iraqi person did”

Public worry about the monetary resources allocated to the reception of the asylum seekers was reflected upon as the second major tension in Finnish society, which arose due to the escalation in numbers of newcomers whose welfare is dependent on public funding. The worry is composed at the backdrop of the norm for social responsibility to contribute to the economy, which is inherent in the ideology of social democratic welfare states and uphold the notion of deserved benefits that are gained through contributing to the common pool of financial capital through taxes (Esping-Andersen, 1990:148). However, regarding this, one of the participants said that *“if we have money to sustain our generous*

unemployment benefits, we should be able to offer minimum help for people who are really in need of assistance". This also depicts the shared understanding of the participants about the ultimate goal of Finnish society to seek for social equality. This corresponds to the nature of the social democratic social policies that assumes the paternal role of the state in redistributing resources in a fair manner and offer support to those who have less (Esping-Andersen, 2002:27; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2006:14-17).

"Society has a huge responsibility towards people. Of course, everyone tries their best, but I think that human can do her/his best only when his/her life is in order, only then s/he can concentrate on reaching forward. I feel one cannot completely rely on the society to provide, but we can also not just say "come, but be sure to survive by yourself, no one will help you"

Therefore, while participants recognised the dominant argument of financial burden that reception of asylum seekers places on the national economy. Yet, they argued that it was not a question of limited resources, but of ethical choices that society should make while redistributing wealth. In this regard, some of the participants also referred to internal challenges that Finland had faced as a result of austerity measures undertaken in the past year. Therefore, ethical choices with regard to services for asylum seekers also mirror the challenges faced by other demographic groups in Finland; the next quote illustrates these thoughts:

"On one side, I really appreciate what we have [Finnish citizen], but from the other side, I also often question are we actually doing it right? Especially, when listening to the political conversation in Finland at the moment about whether we have the resources for taking care of handicap people, or whether we have resources to take care of old people... These are all ethical questions, and nothing is a must, no matter what anyone would say... And this makes me worried about where are we going"

Ultimately, participants agreed that the welfare of asylum seekers is a national issue; and it is the responsibility of the state to design a convenient system for providing efficient services that corresponds not only with the basic needs of the asylum seekers but also offer a means of integration. Subsequently, the need for integration highlights not only as an ethical obligation and concerns about

individual wellbeing of asylum seekers, but simultaneously depicts concerns about common wellbeing of the Finnish society. Participants emphasised the role of integration of asylum seekers in upholding social order in the society. The opinion that *“this is hardly a phenomenon [refugee crisis] that will disappear in the near future”* was articulated in all the interviews. It was said that in order to uphold social order in the Finnish society asylum seekers should not be considered as a burden of the state, but they should be provided with a chance to become active participants in the society.

“We can make the choice of not helping these people, but then we have to live with the consequences that they will fall out of the sledge ... There is not such an option that they would activate themselves, and it is naïve to believe that they can learn the language and find the working place by themselves, without any help.”

Integration, therefore, should aim to support asylum seekers in becoming *“active and useful members of the society”* and by this ensure the possibility for them to find their place in Finland by maintaining their livelihood independently and contributing to the common good. This resonates with the general direction of the social policies in Nordic Welfare model which is designed with the purpose to maximize employability and productivity of the population (Hilson, 2008:92-93; Esping-Andersen, 2002) and the value of employment as a virtue of a decent life and an attribute of a good member in the society. Furthermore, offering opportunities for integration through employment was seen by participants as not only as a way to ease the burden of financial assistance, but to also enhance social cohesion.

“Maybe it would be easier for Finish society to accept asylum seekers if they would see that they want to work and actually contribute and not use the resources of the state”.

The quote above outlines that most importantly, integration of asylum seekers is not solely dependent on the services and structures provided by the state – making Finland comfortable for everyone *“depends on more than just money”*. It is reliant on changing negative attitudes towards newcomers among Finnish people:

“It is clear that there is no way back. People of different colors and different cultures are coming to Finland all the time... and

somehow we have to find a common way how we all can live here happily. And we cannot live here if we have prejudices against each other, and will not be able to overcome them if we do not encounter each other."

Thus, while participants acknowledged that there was a need for improvement in addressing the needs of asylum seekers on a structural level, they emphasised that the deconstruction and unpacking of the prevalent prejudices among Finns against asylum seekers required individual actions. Participants were convinced that one of the crucial reasons for the hostile attitude towards asylum seekers is rooted in the segregation of the society. Asylum seekers live their lives within the reception centers and the only contact most of the Finnish people have with them is through the media, which portrayed them as homogeneous and aggressive groups. Participants felt that if more spaces and opportunities would be created for Finns to meet asylum seekers in their everyday life, they would be able to find out that *"we are more alike than different"* and would be able to feel compassion which would eventually lead to understanding and acceptance.

The motivation of participants resonates with the findings of Hebbani et al. (2016). Their study depicted that hosts families of asylum seekers in Australia were similarly motivated by the feeling of compassion and the will to support asylum seekers in integrating into the local society. However, they also mentioned that the reasons to get involved for some of the people were to show dissent against asylum policies in Australia (ibid.). Whereas participants of this study did not explain their action as an active form of disagreement with the prevailing policies, instead they showcased increasing worry about public attitudes against asylum seekers.

6.2. Outcomes

While the previous section outlined *why* participants of this study engaged with hosting asylum seekers, this section describes *how* participants evaluate their actions; and outlines the space where they felt they could offer help and make a difference. Structuration theory allows one to see the relationship between individuals and their environment as recursive and interdependent (Giddens, 1984). This implies that while social systems prescribe and enable social actions and behavior, at the same time the system do not exist without individuals

activating it. Therefore, individuals are empowered by their agency to not only alter the prescribed order but also reshape the existing system (ibid.). The previous part laid out how participants viewed the system of social organizations for asylum seekers, as well as how the normative logic of social democratic regime informed their understanding of the social environment. Hence, it showed how the social system influenced actions and life of individuals. In the following I present an overview of what participants of this study felt that their actions added to the existing environment, and highlight the spaces where the agency of the individual comes into play while reshaping the system of social order. Agency in case of this study appears in action of voluntarily taking on themselves responsibility of the state in providing care for asylum seekers. Therefore, while the study by Hebbani et al. (2016) presented the *benefits* of home accommodation, in this study I aim to take that thought further and explore the *outcomes*. In other words, to inquire how the actions of participants changed their own lives, lives of people whom they are hosting and the potential change that it can bring to the society.

6.2.1. Personal Experiences - “We got much more than what we gave”

In order to explore outcomes at the individual level, it is important to outline that relationships among the host families and their guest/s developed in various ways. While four participants regarded that the asylum seeker they hosted came to be important and loved member of their family, two others referred to the asylum seeker becoming flat mate or friend. Most of the participants also said they did not feel restricted in their homes in their presence; while for few privacy was something that challenged their everyday life⁹. Moreover, for those host families who had guests who did not speak English fluently, communication appeared to be an obstacle in the everyday-life. Another obstacle was associated to the uncertainty of what the future would bring and how the situation would develop regarding the transition of asylum seekers from home accommodation to independent life. It was also mentioned by some of the participants, that it was sometimes difficult to find extra time to spend with their residents. It was also

⁹ The challenges to privacy were mentioned by participants who had been hosting for the shortest duration, therefore, one may assume that this feeling may disappear over time.

challenge for the hosts to not be able to support the asylum seeker with emotional and mental support regarding to traumatic experiences on their way to Finland.

Despite the differences in participants' accounts, the experience was generally regarded as positive and enriching and as stated in the title of this section, participants felt that they had gained more than what they had given. All participants regarded that the experience of opening up their private homes to asylum seekers has extended their awareness of other cultures and traditions. One participant expressed that *"It is very eye-opening to get to know other cultures, people and issues in that manner"*. It was also mentioned that this experience gave the opportunity to reflect upon values and habits of their own culture. The participants who have children especially emphasised that sharing their home with a person from another culture has enriched the lives of their children. Apart from improving their linguistic skills and expanding their knowledge about other cultures, it has enabled them to engage in discussions about complexities of the contemporary world.

"This is a unique opportunity to show our children what this is about. So they would get an experience that can illustrate this all in practical terms. Therefore, I feel that we are getting a lot out of this experience. I also noticed that things change in my own mind too; I see many things in an entirely different way. I can also see how privileged we are, with regard to all the indicators, even so I don't consider us to be very wealthy, but oh my gosh, we have things covered here! While comparing to those people who are out there in the middle of Iraq war and don't even have a right to dental care. While our media makes it look like things are getting better there."

The quote above highlights that participants felt that this experience had increased their understanding about the world, as well as has had an irreversible impact on how they reacted to the news and other public discussions about the "refugee crisis" and Middle East. For all the participants, the life stories of the asylum seekers had an immense impact. One of interviewees said *"when it is told by a person [who actually experienced] how did it happen and how did it feel, it becomes a lot closer"*. Next quote illustrates these changes in more details:

"I am familiar with some of the history of Iraq, but it has been very distant, as it was just one-of-those Middle East countries"

and it didn't interest me at all. But now... It has been a real eye-opener... Now I understand a lot of things better, although not all, and there are many things that I am not able to accept about their ways of thinking, but now perhaps I can understand why they think that way."

Most significantly, all interviewees brought out the important outcome of the unique experience was to get to know asylum seekers in private settings. It helped them to get to know their guests as individuals, hence to disassemble their prejudices about asylum seekers as a group. Additionally, four participants said that it changed their perception of cultural differences. In the words of one of the participants - *"in the end, we are not that different, of course, there are cultural differences, but in the end, many things worked out easy"*. Thus, the challenges that might appear in everyday communication were dependent on the personal differences, rather than cultural.

"Most of the people are very nice and cultural differences are sometimes overrated, and too much importance is placed on them. One should dig below the cultural surfaces, or one gets stuck on them, at least I think so."

To conclude, the main contribution of sharing a home with asylum seekers at the individual level was that this experience had an impact of their awareness of self and others. To translate it in Giddens' terms, if agency is an ability of the individual to alter the prescribed practices, then it also appears in the capability of the individual to reinvent their own practices. Thus, opening up their homes to the distant 'others' and extend their own knowledge and understanding of the world outside of familiar settings; hence, this is a strong example of using agency to transform individual's own worldview. From the other point of view, this further illuminates limitations of the prevailing asylum policies and depicts the incapability of it to address challenges of the segregation of the population, thus not able to enhance opportunities for Finnish people to explore cultural dimension of new demographical settings.

6.2.2. Asylum at Finnish Homes

While participants stressed upon the challenges that asylum seekers face in Finland as a group, the act of opening up their homes for asylum seekers aimed not to change the system, instead to provide help to the individuals. Participants

felt that their homes offered physical assets to ensure privacy and ability to be in control of own daily practices and habits of asylum seekers, which reception centers were not able to provide. Yet, what was regarded as the foremost contribution for the persons sharing home with them, is that they could get a better grasp of the Finnish culture in practical terms.

“The main thing that asylum seekers get from home accommodation is that they get to see ordinary Finnish life. When the first asylum seekers came to Finland in early 90’s, everyone was surprised why they weren’t able to do this or that, well I think it wouldn’t be that surprising if they would actually have a chance to see how things are done here.”

Participants strongly felt that being part of the Finnish family would help to increase their guests’ awareness of general cultural codes accepted in Finnish society. It provided an opportunity to see the ‘real’ Finnish life and understand customs and values that are embedded in the Finnish society¹⁰. In addition, living among Finns offered their guests a better chance to learn Finnish language. Participants also felt that they could help their dwellers in practical matters such as navigating the administration in Finland, as they had better knowledge regarding the system. From the other side, home accommodation was also seen as a source of wider network and connection in Finnish society. Through sharing home with them, asylum seekers became part of a bigger commune which builds up through various relationships that individuals bring into their regular life.

Participants put forward that being familiar with culture and system was crucial for adapting to new settings. Therefore, sharing practical knowledge about the Finnish culture with newcomers in the settings of co-living was seen as a means to enhance their integration into Finnish society. This bridges the individual wellbeing of the asylum seekers back to the common values in the society. From one side, participants of this study felt that getting a better grasp of Finnish culture would benefit asylum seekers and enhance their agency to become more independent in new settings. From the other side, it is also in line with the

¹⁰ While participants emphasized on the need for asylum seekers to get integrated, it is important to note that they were self-reflective in how much of the Finnish culture one can embody, hence recognized the right of newcomers to preserve their cultural identity - *“It doesn’t seem to me that she [the asylum seeker] wants to become a Finn, but she wants to fit in, to find own path in this society”*

common need of the society to incorporate newcomers into the structure of contributing to the common good in order to maintain social order and cohesion.

While home accommodation was perceived as substantial contribution to the welfare of asylum seekers, participants stressed that “*asylum seekers should not be the hosts’ responsibility*”. Participants emphasised that it is the state’s obligation to arrange social care and ensure minimum standards of living for this population group. Hence, the role of private households offering home accommodation for asylum seekers should not be seen as a means to compensate for the lack of proper facilities. Outlining the relationship between individuals and the state with regard to home accommodation, participants stressed that recognition from the state is essential to enhance possibilities of individuals to contribute to the cultural integration of asylum seekers in such form. In addition, participants wished for formal arrangements and a pool of resources such as services of interpreter, formal guidelines and monetary support that would ensure the maintenance of home accommodation and would demonstrate the support of the society in acknowledging and valuing individual actions. Thus, participants argue for the need of cooperation, rather than splitting responsibilities.

This brings the discussion to one of the most important findings of this study. According to the participants, the value of home accommodation for asylum seekers is in its unique possibility to offer personal contacts and insights into ‘real life’ of Finns, which simply cannot be delivered by institutions responsible for the reception of asylum seekers. Thus, it was foregrounded that home accommodation was not regarded as a replacement of the services produced by the state, but seen as an additional input. This further contests the notion that Esping-Andersen puts forth about the compensatory nature of relationship among pillars – where welfare deficit, as a result of failure of one of the pillars to provide adequate services forces the other two to absorb those failures by engaging in redemptive actions (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 12). In case of this study, voluntary involvement in providing social care was not so much motivated by the failure of the state, but was inspired by the conceptually new challenges of the globalizing world, which institutionalised care simply not able to address. Therefore, it illustrates not the switching of responsibilities among pillars, but the expansion of the needs recognised by the participants.

6.2.3. Society - “Everyone should do their own part in this world”

Giddens’ structuration theory perceives human agency as a vehicle for social transformation. He sees individual agency is a medium for wider social change due to two reasons – first, individuals are not external to the system, therefore their actions have a direct effect on it. Secondly, agency is not limited to motivated actions, hence it has an ability to provoke various unintended outcomes (Giddens, 1984). This section elaborates upon the effects of individuals’ actions beyond the intentions initially embodied in them and its’ potential in a larger social scene. Although, most of the participants were very modest in discussing the social consequences of their actions and regarded their involvement as a way to help particular individuals motivated mainly by personal reasons, they did feel that their actions could have a wider social impact.

Participants felt that home accommodation was perhaps not something that every Finn could offer and they also acknowledged that not everyone should. However, as pointed out in the section discussing societal motivation, they stressed that there is a need to engage in dialogues; start interacting with each other; and loose fear and unpack the prejudices in order to find a way to have a good life for everyone in Finland. In this manner, sharing their own experience was way to expand the effect of the transformation participants experienced in themselves through sharing home with asylum seekers.

“I feel that somehow this adds to understandings, my own understanding, as well as through sharing my experiences to other people about what this is [home accommodation], why I am doing it, and why people are coming here, others can benefit from this too. Because not everyone can host...”

Thus, while providing safe and comfortable environment for asylum seekers to explore the Finnish culture was seen as the main end of home accommodation, participants also regarded as their duty to share their experiences with others.

“It is our responsibility to introduce them to the neighbors and people around us who would otherwise shut this issue outside, so that they could encounter and meet them and maybe change their minds”

Participants of this study engage in different forms of activities to spread the word, starting dialogues and providing an opportunity for others to meet asylum seekers as individuals and not as a group. All the participants reached out to people in their surroundings by introducing their guests to their friends, family and community they live in. Apart from that, three of the participants blogged their experiences and observations. Yet another participant encouraged asylum seeker who lived with them to establish her own blog and share her experiences about asylum in Finland.

Participants stated that a significant part of the experience was to witness the change in people's opinions as a result of their actions. One of the participants said that because of her own experience, few of her close people also decided to host asylum seekers; she stated that *"most importantly for me, was to see the change in my sister"*. Many participants mentioned that despite the fact that some of their friends and family members were resilient to their decision to offer home to asylum seeker at the beginning, most of them changed their opinions overtime.

"My physiotherapist met X while one of the home visits. Afterwards, he said that meeting X changed the way he now reads news articles about asylum seekers now. He said that meeting X and seeing how friendly, happy, calm and well behaved X is made him think differently about people who seek asylum in Finland"

One of the heartwarming observations which appeared during this study was that all of participants saw asylum seekers not as outsiders but as equal to them - as people who deserved and should be allowed to build their lives in Finland with equal opportunities. To conclude I postulate that perhaps not seeing asylum seekers as external to own world and opening up to the stories and experiences of other people, from other parts of the world, could be a key to understanding, acceptance and compassion. For the participants, this was understood as the starting point for more inclusive Finnish society and this was the message they wanted to spread on a global scale.

Another dimension of their experience, was the reflection about taking an active stance about issues that are traditionally not seen as individuals' responsibility. While some of the participants were actively involved in civil society activities,

and one of the participants mentioned that she have got more involved through Refugees Welcome Finland, all of them regarded that there was a need for more active involvement of an individual in the social life of the community. One of the participants said that in her opinion *“people do not act because often they do not realise how much their actions can actually influence the order of things”*. Therefore, all of them agreed that small deeds matter, because *“when many people start to do something small it becomes a big thing in the end”*.

To conclude, the findings illustrate that although hosting asylum seekers was intended only to enhance the wellbeing of the individuals involved, yet, it also has a direct impact on challenging the scope of existing asylum policies by offering an alternative view on the aims and objectives of the integration of asylum seekers as well as illustrating new forms of individual engagement in providing social care for distant others. Furthermore, wider social value of the actions of participants have reached far ahead of their individual intentions; this thesis is an example of this impact within the larger spectrum of social change.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of individuals involved in offering home accommodation for asylum seekers in Finland. More specifically, this research aimed to acquire the subjective understanding of the role host families assign to themselves in regard to providing social care for this target group, which is traditionally have been seen as solely the responsibility of the state. This inquiry was grounded in the theoretical framework comprised of two main theoretical blocks – first, normative foundations and ideology embedded in the social democratic welfare state, and second, individual agency within the frame of structuration theory. This allowed me, from one side, to analyse the subjective understanding of the participants regarding the welfare provision and ideology of Finnish welfare state; from the other side, it gave me tools to illustrate the contribution of the individuals in social care provision by means of their agency. The research was conducted by using qualitative research methodology, looking at the experience of six households living in Helsinki, Finland. Data was gathered with the help of semi-structured interviews with one representative from

each household. The empirical material was then analysed using thematic content analysis.

The activity of home accommodation for asylum seekers and the work of Refugees Welcome Finland community network has emerged out of the citizens' concern with regard to the state's capacity to accommodate basic needs for the increasing amount of people seeking asylum in Finland. However, the experiences of host families have shown that while home accommodation offers better living conditions for the asylum seekers than the poorly equipped reception centers, the main contribution of their actions was seen in the possibilities for cultural integration that home accommodation offered. It was also noted that while the asylum seekers who shared the house with them were the most immediate beneficiaries, this experience not only enriched the lives of all members of the household, but also had a wider social impact.

The necessity of cultural integration was seen as being crucial for three reasons. First, understanding cultural codes increased the possibilities for the newcomers to find their own place in Finland. Secondly, this in turn allowed asylum seekers to become active members of the society. Thus, participants' motivations and reflections about the outcomes of home accommodation showed intention to contribute to the individual welfare of the person being hosted; this, in turn, also constituted the input into the common welfare of sustaining social order and cohesion in the Finnish society. Lastly, it was also remarked that the newcomers' cultural integration is important for changing hostile attitudes and challenging the prejudices concerning asylum seekers prevailing in the media. Therefore, participants felt that their actions also brought about positive change by opening space for dialogues and deliberations about the newcomers in Finnish society.

Most importantly, it was perceived that cultural integration in the form of personal contacts and experience of 'real' Finnish life is something that the scope of institutionalised asylum services would not be able to provide. Thus, this study has shown that home accommodation is not seen as a replacement of the services that should be provided by the state, but perceived as an additional input. This contests my initial assumption, guided by Esping-Andersen's thesis about compensatory relationships among the welfare pillars, which suggests that in case

of failure of one, other two pillars are forced to absorb the welfare deficit by engaging in redemptive actions (Esping-Andersen, 2002:12). In this study, participants' reason to engage with providing home accommodation was not motivated by the need to compensate for the failure of the state, but was inspired by the will to address the newly emerged needs of individuals and the community in a result of change of conceptual spaces and emergence of new realities within the Finnish society.

This, further, revealed a subjective understanding of the relationship between individuals and the welfare state with regards to the responsibility to meet the needs of social care. The organisation of the social democratic regime and Nordic welfare model implies the division of responsibilities where the state is responsible for delivering care for individuals by means of institutional care provision. However, findings in this study demonstrate that the people involved in this research regarded individual contribution and the use of their own agency as crucial in upholding the principles embodied in the ideology of the Finnish social organization; social organization which they considered to reflect their own personal beliefs and values.

Finally, in relation to Giddens' account of agency, which in his terms is built upon personal reflectivity and the free will of the individual to alter the prescribed order, this study has shown that the participants of this study actively reflect upon the changes globalization brought to their personal realities. Moreover, they actively accommodate those changes by making space in their own homes and hearts.

The findings of this research are relevant and offer meaningful insights about the private experiences of host families in offering accommodation for the asylum seekers. However, the conclusions are limited by the sampling group of this study. The scope of this study did not allow me to address the account of the demographic characteristics of the participants. Similarities among the participants with regard to their gender, age and occupation suggest that more quantitative and qualitative inquiry about those aspects would help to elaborate upon the influence of social position on the motivation to engage in such types of activities. Furthermore, in order to further explore the potential of home

accommodation for asylum seekers to meet the emerging needs of the contemporary society, there is a need for a wider perspective. Including the voices of people being hosted would offer a more just and inclusive view on the phenomena.

To conclude, although findings of this qualitative study cannot be generalised, neither are they aiming to present an objective description of the questions raised for this study. Instead, this research presents immensely thoughtful and touching details about the subjective interpretation of the realities of the participants of this study. The study presents how the individual negotiate between empathy towards people and understanding about the underlining reasons to strike for an inclusive society. The experiences of the people included in this study further urges us to rethink our own responsibilities towards our communities, state and the people who at a first glance might appear as distant and alien, but as one of the participant of this study said “in the end they are not so different from us”.

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Appendix A – Invitation Letter

Dear host,

My name is Valerija, I am a social worker and currently I am undertaking the Master Degree in Global Studies in university of Lund in Sweden. I am very interested, both professionally and personally, to look at how the global changes affect and transform the local realities of individuals. I am curious and eager to understand different forms of how people find and make space in their lives and thoughts for new aspects, happenings and changes that come into their realities. This is why in my Master thesis, I would like to explore and understand different forms of how people in Finland react on the current refugee crisis. In my research I want to explicitly focus at the experiences of home accommodation of asylum seekers and especially at the motivation to become a host for an asylum seeker.

Therefore, I would be very grateful if you would dedicate me a few hours of your time and talk with me about your experience and thoughts. The notes of the interviews will be used strictly for the purpose of this research and participation is totally anonymous. The interviews are meant to take place in March 2016 (while my visit in Helsinki) and should take in total 1-1,5h of your time. I would really appreciate if you will have an opportunity to meet me in person, but if it feels more convenient to you also Skype/phone interview is possible. If you have a chance and you would be interested to take part in my research please either inform Jenny and she will pass me your contact information, or contact me directly.

Best regards,

Valerija Lapina

Valerija.lapina@hotmail.com

Appendix B – Interview Guide

Background

- Age
- Occupation
- Family

You

- What made you consider of taking an asylum seeker to your place?
- How do they proceed with the decision?
- What is it you are getting out of it?
- What were the main doubts/challenges you thought of when making decision?

Asylum seekers and refuge

- How do you see asylum seekers? (What is their motivation to leave home? What you think they are looking for in Finland?)
- What do you see as main challenges for asylum seekers?
- What do you think are asylum seekers' needs?
- Tell me about person who is living with you

State & welfare

- What did you know about the procedure of application for asylum and living conditions of asylum seekers before you became a host?
- Why you think living at your home is better for asylum seeker than living in the reception center? (What needs of the asylum seekers system is not able to fulfill?)
- Do you think/feel that you need a support from welfare system in hosting? What kind of support?
- Do you think asylum seekers should be supported by the welfare system? What kind of support?

Society

- How people around react?
- Who do you think should be responsible for providing for asylum seekers needs?
- Do you think hosting have a wider social value? What are the benefits of such actions?

- Are you actively involved in civil society / social movements?
- Do you follow debates regarding the refugee crisis in Finland? Are you taking part in those debates?
 - What do you think government should/could do?
 - What do you think individuals should/could do?

Appendix C – Coding Chart

CODE 0	CODE 1	CODE 2	CODE 3	additional	
0.1 [BLANK]	background	age			
		family members			
		residence			
		household			
		occupation	Public sector		
			other		
		origin			
		(other)			
0.2. MOTIVATION	personal	assets	time		
			money		
		compassion			
		curiosity			
		doing a bit more			
		Previous experience	Work		
			Family history		
			Studies		
			Other		
		felt right			
		helping feels nice			
		justice			
		moral obligation			
		reaction			
		expectations			
		structure	reception centers	lack of activities	
				lack of privacy	
				lack of space /isolation	
				Passive places	
				poor conditions	

			sexual harassment	
			relocation	
			Limited resources	
			exclusion	
		other services	lack of cultural experience	
			poor employment	
			poor health services	
			Poor language courses	
	society	challenges	polarization	
			exclusion/ othering	
			unwelcoming attitude	
			fear	
			prejudices	
			Limited resources	
		justifications	global responsibility	
			solidarity	
			past	
			social justice	
			permanent change	
			right for self fulfilment	
		envison	join strategy	
			integration	
			employment possibilities	
			individual actions	
			Places to meet each other	
			community	
0.3 OUTCOMES	personal	expectations	change in personal life	
			change in family life	

		Cultural differences	
		Language barrier	
		Lack of privacy	
		Interpersonal dynamics	
	get	Awareness	cultural
			self
			political
		general feelings	better karma
			get more than give
		cultural exchange	
		customs	
		Better understanding of own culture	Gender roles
			Things are good
			Challenges on own culture
		new language skills	
		own values	
		parenting	
		relations	friend
			family member
			flat mate
		religion/culture	
		stories	
	challenges	culture	
		interpersonal dynamics	
		language	
		not enough time	
		practicalities	
		privacy	
		What next?	

asylum seeker	get	connections	
		work possibilities	
		examples of Finnish life	
		Finnish society	
		integration	
		language	
		Finnish values	
		privacy	
		relations	
		ability to control own life	
		hobbies	
home accommodation	needs	recognition	
		financial support	
		network	
		better overall picture of the process	
society	impact	awareness	asylum seekers not one group
		influence on others	
		enlarge awareness	
		change the world one day at the time	
		asylum seekers not all the same	
		individual actions	
		change opinions of other	
	actions	blogging	
		organizing meetings	
		introducing to friends	
		introducing to community	

		reactions of others	positive	
			negative	
			neutral	
OTHER				