

Social inclusion & integration

The process of redefining the identity of reception centers in Norway

Cheng-Han, Lee

Where / Context

The Norwegian asylum system was developed in 1987 when the first asylum reception center was established in Trondheim. In 1988, The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) was established. The UDI is responsible for processing asylum applications, supervising asylum reception centers, and deciding which cases will be dismissed. Somehow, there is a long process for asylum seekers to wait for legal right to stay in Norway, during this period, they cannot work and go to school, they do not have enough money for traveling, all they can do is waiting in the reception centers until getting result no matter it is positive or negative.

There were approximately 100 reception centers in Norway before 2015, but it decreased to 15 after the policy changed. Most of the reception centers were renovated from some abandoned facilities, so several buildings were not suitable for living.

What / Why

Asylum centers are the first places for asylum seekers when they arrived in Norway. It represents the value of humanity that how Norwegian society treats outsiders who are looking for support. During the long process of waiting for the result in the reception centers, architecture is in a crucial position to support asylum seekers to keep positive thinking and to help them do not lose their identity. Physical environment affects identity, not only through visual impressions, but also through how they facilitate the development of social networks, one's private life, and control over one's life situation.

How

Normally, UDI has the contracts with different private organizations to run the reception centers with very limited budget, so these organizations usually use the abandoned buildings to renovate to be reception centers. Depends on the global crisis, UDI should take responsibility back to operate the reception centers to have more efficient and compassionate quality for asylum seekers. The new type of reception center which is appropriate to be built is the urgent mission for Norwegian government if they decide to shift the policy in the future.

Program innovation

The idea is designing the new prototype of reception center which needs to be considered a new home not the institution for asylum seekers. In the limited budget, how to build a reasonable and homely environment to encourage asylum seekers to escape from depression in the long process of waiting is the main mission of the project. It also needs to be a long term plan and think about what it will be if we do not need reception centers in the future anymore. Besides, the new type of reception center should be opened to the public which gives the functions for the public using and make the opportunities to let asylum seekers interact with

local people, then, to understand each other deeply. The invention will base on the interview with people who are living in the reception centers in Bergen and some employees who are working in the reception centers to get insight what are the problems of the living condition here.

Architectural materials / elements innovation

Starting with the research about what kind of material could let people feel warm and relaxing, it is one of the factors to create homely architecture. The architectural elements like windows, flooring, ceiling, are also need to be considered the way to make asylum seekers have a new lifestyle. For instance, normally, asylum seekers do not have anything to do in daily life, a nice garden or a small farm could let them leave from the rooms and take care of these places. Besides, some asylum seekers who may have mental illnesses or traumatic experience need specific space for them to escape from crowd. The construction of new asylum center need to be consider as flexible system in order to modify in different conditions like expanding or shrinking.


Architectural methods

The main idea is integrating the reception center into the local community by deconstructing and reorganizing social and functional spaces from the center:

Spreading common/functional spaces, that are useful for the asylum seeker, into the typical meeting spots in the local community like the grocery shop, culture house, etc. This will open up the local community for asylum seekers and give them a chance to interact with the public in their community.

Creating new access in the building in order to open the reception center up to the local residents, by gathering the common spaces into one volume and create a new entry where they can pass through the building to the park directly from the grocery shop or bus stop. Therefore, there will be two entries in the reception center, one is for asylum seekers and one for public use, which means they will meet each other in the intersection.

By providing a small balcony and living room it can make the asylum seeker feel more socially active in their daily life. They have the chance to host guests and have the autonomy to manage the environment. In the new reception center asylum seekers, there will be more possibilities to interact with new friends and thereby enhance their living quality.



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.. the built environment is more or less isomorphic with the social system that is developed within it. Also because no human environment of any consequence can be perceived as a physical object in isolation from its social implications and behavioral activity patterns (Lee 2003, 33)

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Abstract

Back in history, Norway was one of the poorest countries in Europe and was occupied by Denmark and Sweden for several years. In the mid-1960s, Norway has started the petroleum industry and became one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Norway was used to help asylum seekers and refugees in many ways because Norwegians encountered the similar situation before, somehow, the attitude of treating them suddenly became worse and worse. Those asylum seekers and refugees in Norway are facing the most serious condition, however, they do not have many choices.

Introduction

The sites are generally perceived as low-standard housing in Norway. The fact of the Norwegian government has conceived accommodation in asylum centers as part of Norwegian immigrant policies and not part of housing policies (Stoa, 2017). Since 2015, the number of asylum seekers taken in by Norway has fallen dramatically. In 2017, the Department of Immigration announced plans to close up to 17 asylum reception centers as a result. Norway has for the time being (December 2016) approximately 14,000 asylum seekers who live in asylum centers, but there are only 2,535 asylum seekers currently (December 2019). Before 2016, the number had been above 4,000 for several years. The largest group of asylum seekers during the period came from Syria, followed by Turkey and Eritrea. However, the number of skilled migrants continues to increase. The figure now exceeds the previous peak years of 2012 and 2014. In the first half of 2019, a total of 2,187 immigrants came to Norway from countries outside the EU. That's 573 more than the same period last year. The immigration of seasonal workers to Norway also hit a record high in the first half of 2019 (Life in Norway, Nikel, 2019).

Sadly, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) has the absolute authority to determine the number of asylum seekers to live in reception centers every year. The essay presents about how to locate the identity of Norwegian asylum seekers and reception centers. Asylum seekers as the outsiders out of Norway, how they perceive the relationship to a new country and what are the issues would they encounter. Moreover, reception centers are the space that detaches individuals from society and shifted the purpose of the original meaning.

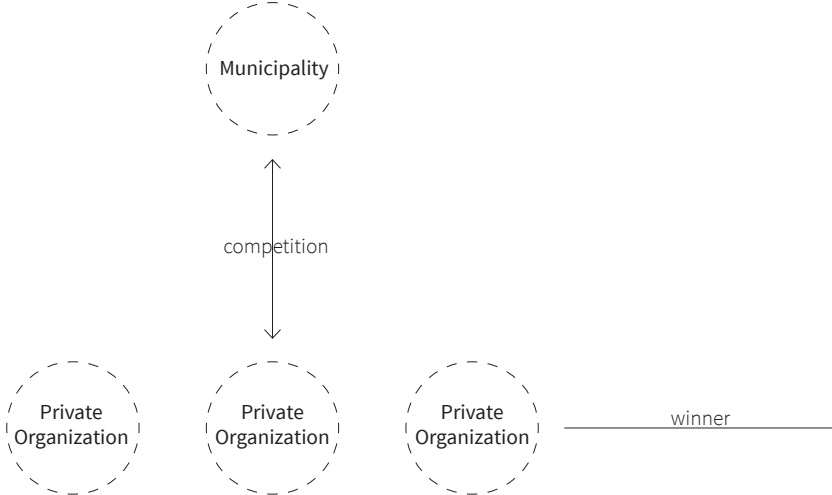
Background

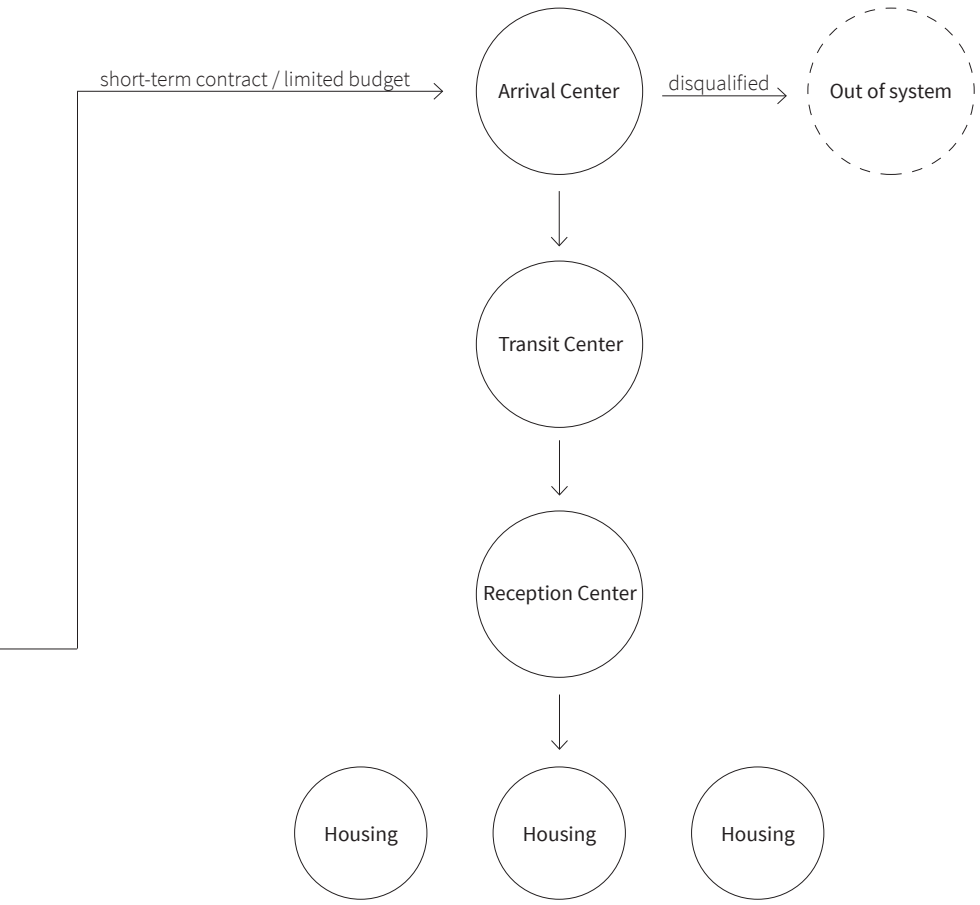
Norway is currently experiencing an increased flow of refugees, many from Syria. The first stop for these people is the arrival center which cooperate with the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration(UDI), the National Police Immigration Service(PU), the health care center, where they have to be registered.

The next stop for refugees, after they have been registered, is a transit reception center, and then an ordinary asylum reception center, of which there are many all over Norway. The situation is already becoming precarious in some of these centers, due to a lack of capacity, and eventually, all the asylum reception centers will probably face capacity problems.

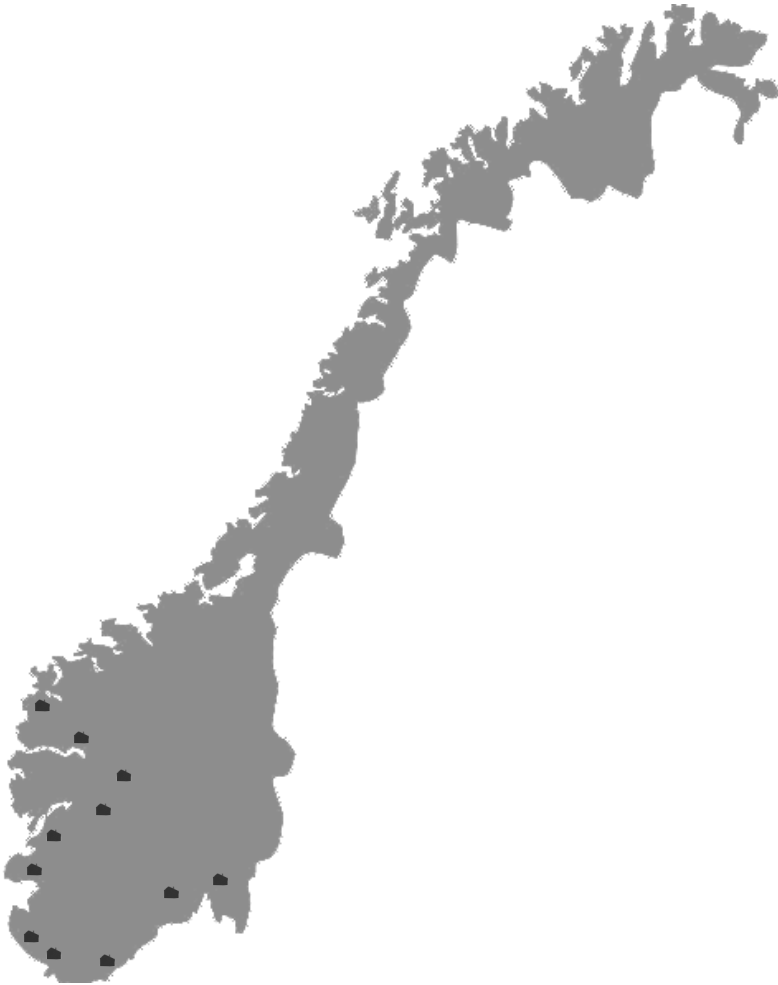
Besides, there are around 6-7 thousand asylum seekers who do not have the proper visa in Norway, but for some reason, they can not be repatriated to original countries. The situation is also creating a big issue in Norwegian society.

Working process in Norway





Asylum centers in Norway



Arrival Center

Private Organization

UDI

PU

Health care

Municipality



Capacity
(Ankomstsenter Østfold)
400 / 1000

Waiting time
2 - 7days

Transit Center

Private Organization

Health care

Municipality



Capacity
(Refstad transit center)
300 / 500

Waiting time
7days - several weeks
(Depends on situation)

Reception Center
&
Housings

Private
Organization

Municipality



Capacity
(Arna reception center)
26 / 30

Waiting time
several months - years
(Depends on situation)

The invisible man

... In 2006 I came to Norway as an asylum seeker. While the application was being processed, I was granted a temporary work permit and job at a hotel in Bergen. I had a place to stay. Until the final refusal came two years later. The Norwegian authorities do not believe that I am who I say I am, but cannot send me back either. I am stateless and unreturnable. At the same time, I am not allowed to work in Norway and live like you. Because of the rejection, I lost my work permit. And without income, I couldn't afford to live either.

... When I have no place to sleep, I spend the night at the Church City emergency room for poor visitors. In the dorm, I sleep with one eye open and the valuables close to my body. If there are more people in the queue than there are beds, the winners will be chosen by lottery. Some nights I go outside until the day lightens. As a rule, I am one of the first to enter the doors of Bergen Public Library when the reading room opens at 08. There I kill for a few hours, warm myself, read newspapers and borrow a PC. Then I move towards the Torgallmenningen. Moves me from bench to bench, sits an hour on each. A woman working in a shop there noticed that I was constantly sitting outside. Then I move towards the Torgallmenningen. Moves me from bench to bench, sits an hour on each. A woman working in a shop there noticed that I was constantly sitting outside. "Do you live on that bench," she asked, and I felt bad. It was a good while before I sat down on that bench again. Also at the Gallery and Clover House, I move from bench to bench upstairs. I go around Spar Buy and Fretex, or take the free bus to IKEA. In the summer, when the weather is nice, I lay on a patch of grass and rest there. I am constantly tired. All I want is a good night's sleep.

... My body does not endure this life in the same way as before. The muscles work, I have a backache, and my head is full of anxiety and anxiety. I can not sleep.

I need treatment, but I do not have the right to health care. I don't know how long I stay. I was 32 when I came to Norway. Now I'm 45 (anonymous asylum seeker 2020).

There are 6-7 thousand
asylum seekers in the
similar situation in Norway.



What

what the field is going to explore?



What are the factors to build identity?

How the spatial design can be a method to help keeping the identity of asylum seekers in Norway within the social process?

Why
what is the intention?

Asylum centers are the first places for asylum seekers when they arrived in Norway. It represents the value of humanity that how Norwegian society treats outsiders who are looking for support. As long as there is a long process for asylum seekers to wait for legal right to stay in Norway, during this period, they can not work and go to school, they do not have enough money for traveling, all they can do is waiting until getting result no matter it is positive or negative. Somehow, architecture is in a crucial position to support asylum seekers to keep positive thinking and to help them do not lose their identity. It also can be a bridge to connect local people and asylum seekers. For some asylum seekers who are out of the system but still live in Norway, architecture not only can be a temporary shelter but also can be perceived as an announcement to Norwegian society they are looking for help.

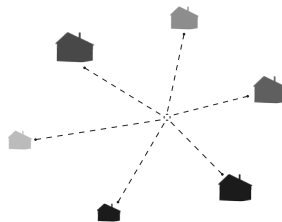
How

what the methodology is going to use?

1. **Interview** - Having an interview with asylum seekers, employees who are work in asylum centers, and local people who live in the community nearby asylum centers to explore the issue from different aspects.
2. **Literature** - Analyzing and extracting different works of literature and apply into spatial design.
3. **Mapping** - Figuring out and analyzing the current situation of asylum seekers.
4. **Sketching / Writing / Collage** - Casting the imagination of shifting the current position of asylum centers in Norwegian society.
5. **Workshop** - What the factors to create stereotype? The aim of the workshop is eliminating stereotype between people who are from different cultural background. How the spatial design as a method to deal with this issue?

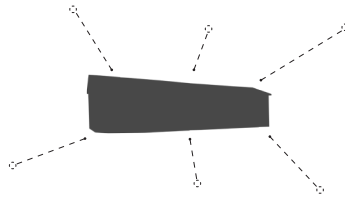
Site visiting / Interview

Arna reception center (Decentralized)



1. **Privacy** - Asylum seekers can own more private spaces because normally they do not need to share kitchen and bathrooms with others.
2. **Space** - Asylum seekers can have bigger spaces when they live in the decentralized center just like normal Norwegian housings.
3. **loneliness** - Asylum seekers can easily feel lonely and depressed when they do not have many opportunities to meet other people.
4. **City** (location) - It only needs 30 minutes by bus from the decentralized center to the city center.

Stord reception center (Centralized)



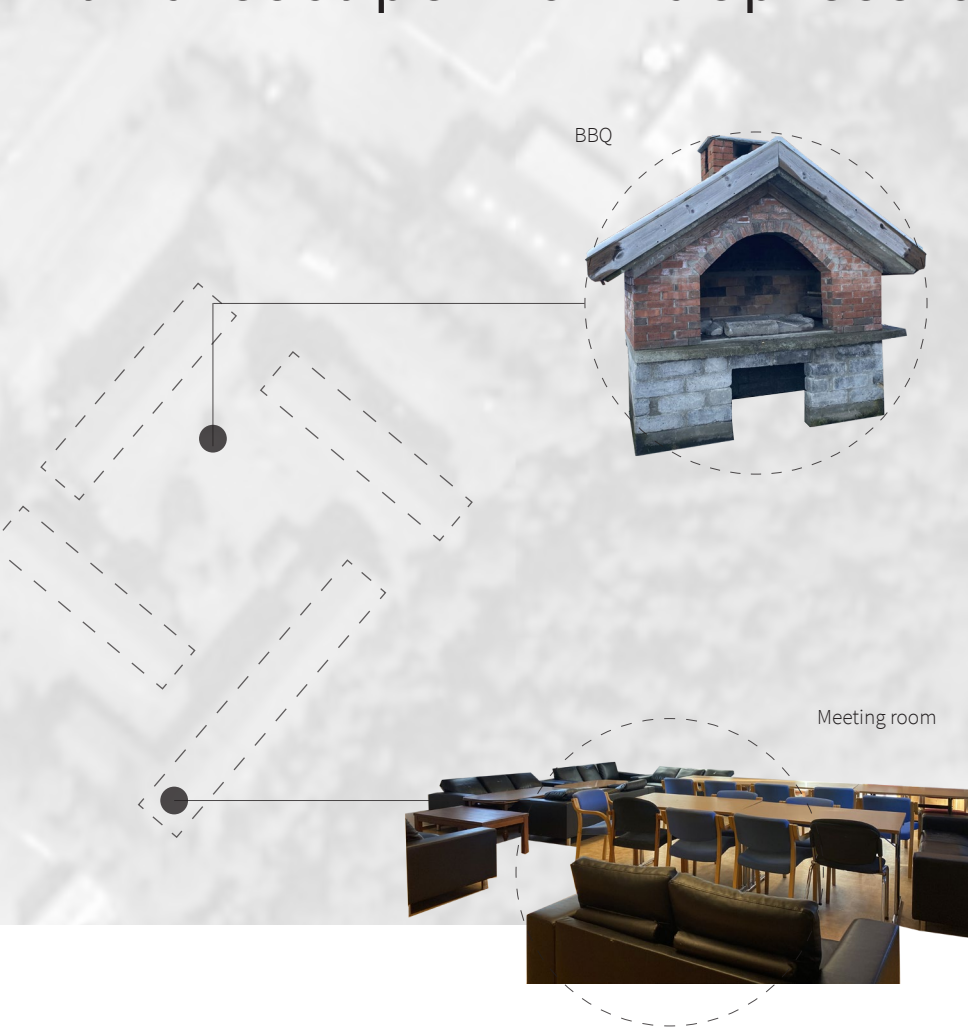
1. **Conflict** - It is easier to have a conflict with other asylum seekers who are from different cultural backgrounds in the centralized center.
2. **Companion** - Asylum seekers can easily gather and spend time for any activities together in the centralized center.
3. **Depression** - Asylum seekers can feel depressed readily when they live in tiny spaces.
4. **Countryside** (location) - The centralized center is far from the city center, so there are not many activities at night time.

Site visiting / Architectural elements

Stord reception center (Centralizd)



These places are in the very crucial position for asylum seekers to relax together and escape from depression.



Literature / Sociology essay

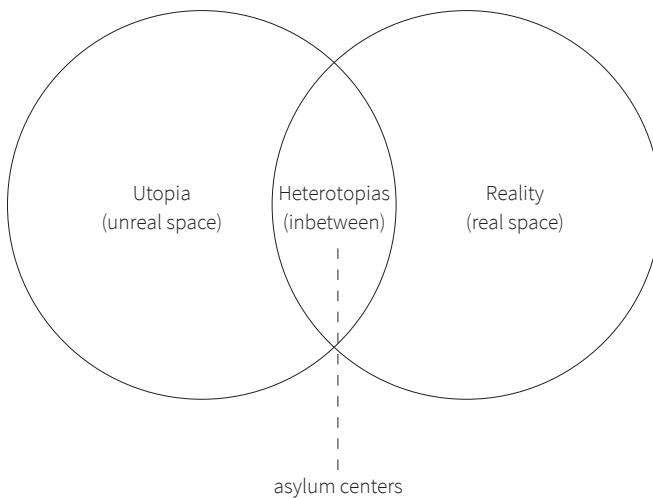
Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality (Foucault 1967).

First
Principle

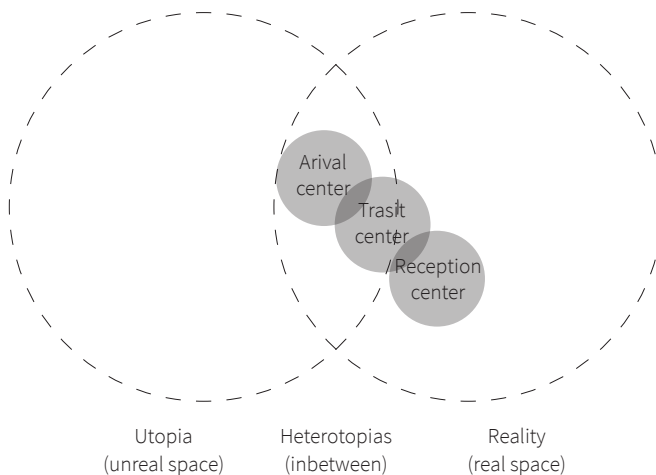
The places are privileged, holy, or abandoned places for individuals have a specific relation to society and the environment in which they live in. The places which can take place as “elsewhere” and cut off from society temporarily (Foucault 1967).

Fifth
Principle

There is a system of opening and closing, it has the penetrable quality to let citizens freely access like a public space. In general, the entrance is compulsory, but the individual has to have certain permission or make specific gestures to get in the space. (Foucault 1967).

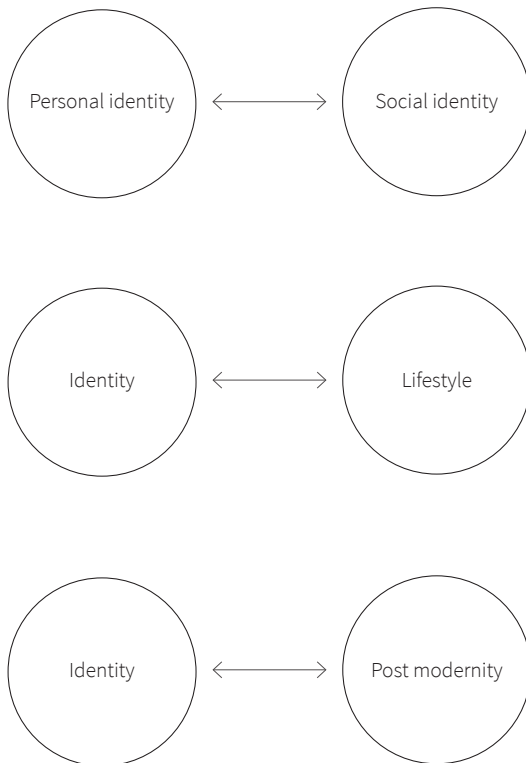


Asylum centers are on the borderline between the heterotopia of crisis and the heterotopia of deviation. Asylum seekers were placed at the asylum centers when they arrived in Norway because of illegal status for staying. Normally, it took a while to get the result of the application for living in Norway, if they fit in the qualification, otherwise, they will be repatriated to the original counties. Therefore, it is a paradoxical situation in the asylum centers that people who accommodate inside do not have proper right to move out even though they are definitely in Norwegian land. Referring to the fifth principle, the asylum centers seem to look like regular buildings or housings and open for the public, but generally hiding the exact situation which could not be observed. Foucault (1974) argued how buildings that are constructed for a certain purpose, but also can be changed and given new meaning for making use of. In this perspective, asylum centers also can be perceived as a similar condition in the social process. In general, reception centers for asylum seekers are renovated from abandoned buildings in Norway because of a limited budget from the Norwegian government (Stoa, 2017).



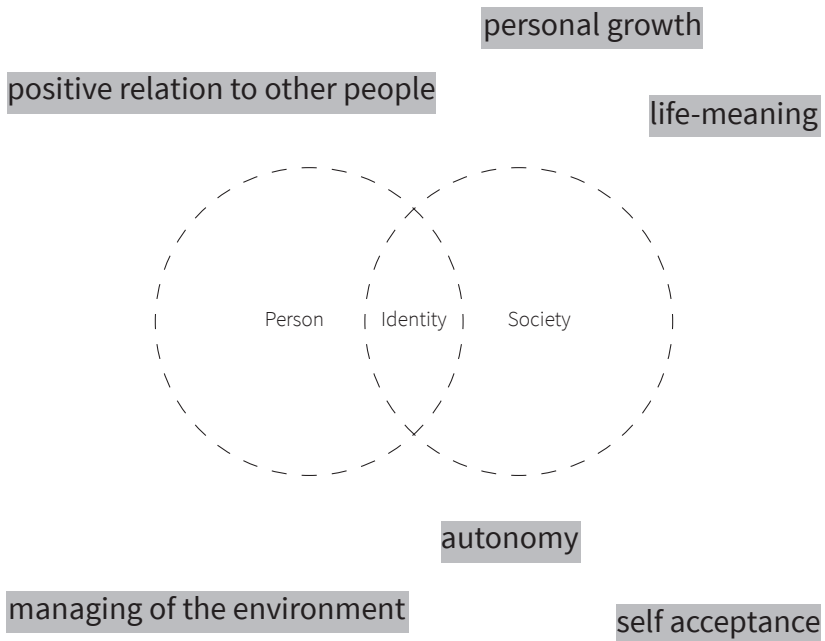
Research of identity

Identity is the human capacity, rooted in language, to know who is who. We attempt to identify ourselves and other people through embodiment, clothing, language, answers to questions, incidental or accidental disclosure of information, and information from third parties - more or less successfully. Identification is a basic cognitive mechanism that humans use to sort out themselves and their fellows. Identifying ourselves and others is a matter of assigning meaning, and meaning always involves social interaction. Identity refers to a sense of who we are as individuals, both about what makes us similar to other people, and what makes us dissimilar (Åshild Lappegard Hauge 2009).

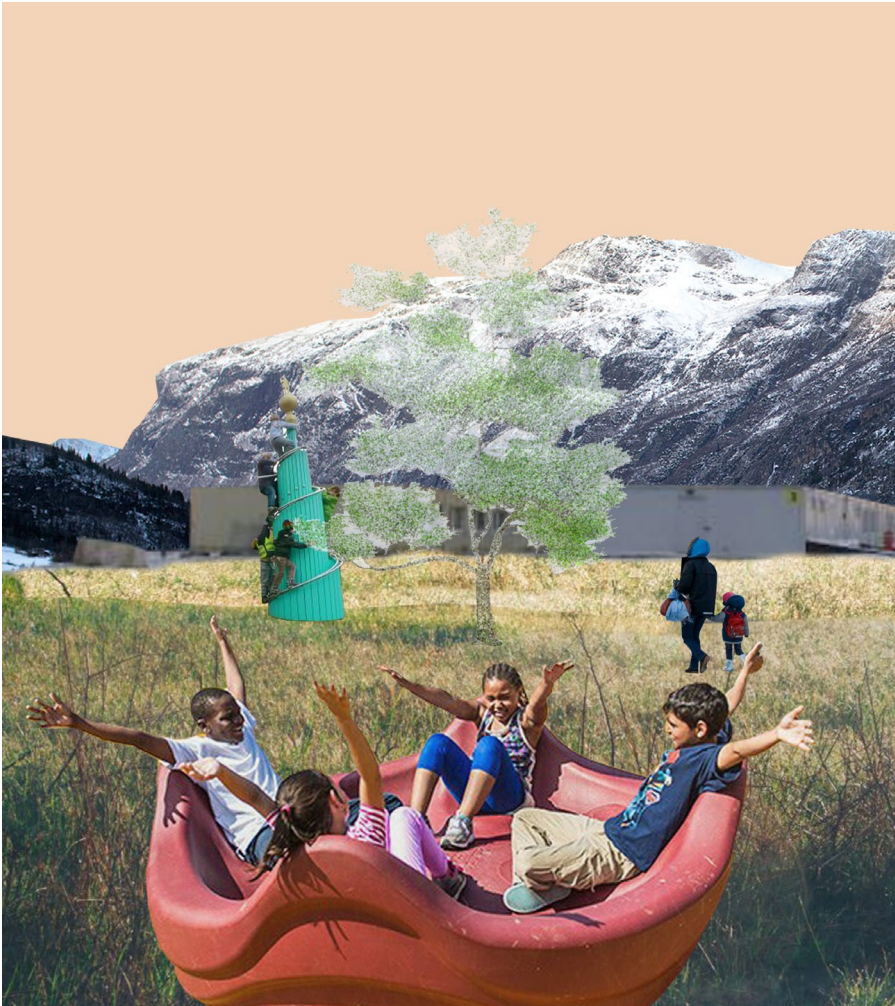


Breakwell examines what types of factors shape human identity, and identifies four principles of identity important in the western part of the world: 1) self-esteem, 2) self-efficacy, 3) distinctiveness, and 4) continuity. These four principles will vary in their relative and absolute salience over time and across situations. Self-esteem is defined as a positive self-evaluation, or a positive group evaluation of groups with which one identifies. Self-efficacy is the person's wish to feel competent and in control of one's life. Distinctiveness is the person's desire to emphasize uniqueness, when comparing oneself to groups and to persons. Continuity is the subjective, self-perceived continuity across time and situation, the connection between past, present and future within identity. All of these principles can be seen in relation to housing or place.

Social interaction creates people's identity



Collage / Vision



“Mental health is defined as a state of well-being potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, make a contribution to her or his community” (WHO)



in which every individual realizes his or her own
can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to
(2014).

Conceptual model

weaving



Calendar

January 2020

W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1							
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3							
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February 2020

W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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March 2020

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April 2020

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May 2020

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June 2020

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July 2020

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August 2020

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CV



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Education

2005 - 2008 Hein-Shang High school, Taipei, Taiwan
2008 - 2013 Bachelor of Architecture in Tamkang University, Taipei, Taiwan
2018 - 2020 Master of Bergen School of Architecture, Bergen, Norway

Working experience

2014 - 2017 D.Z. Architects & Associates

Architecture of humanity experience

2010 - 2010 "Classroom" project with ELIV international organization, Cambodia
2011 - 2011 "Classroom" project with Taipei university of Technology, Taitung, Taiwan
2012 - 2012 "House" project with Formosa charity organization, Hsintsu, Taiwan
2013 - 2013 "Renovating House" project by myself, Santzu, Taiwan
2016 - 2016 "Health center" project with worldvision and Taiwan ICDF, Nepal
2017 - 2018 "School" project with ELIV international organization, Nepal

Competition

2019 - 2019 Africa school project
2019 - 2019 Mexican emergency housing
2019 - 2019 Designing for the integration and inclusion of Syrian refugee in Turkey

Tools

Autocad / Rhino / Grasshopper / Sketchup
Photoshop / Illustrator / Indesign

Language

English / Mandarin / Taiwanese

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