

Displacement: a mass of women's refugee stories conveyed through one

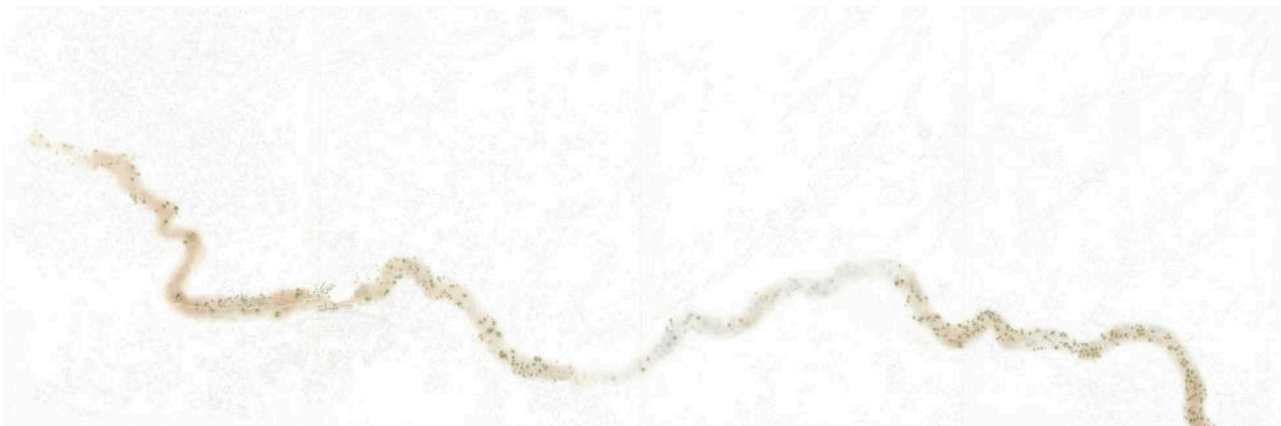
Materializing recollections and experiences of place, raising consciousness about our profession's potential to engage with aspects of fleeing and belonging.

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Our diploma deals with women's experience when forced to flee. From the first step away from home, during the fleeing, to the process of finding refuge and eventually or possibly ending up living in a diaspora. What is it like to live and be in temporary, at-risk environments? What sacrifices are made? What are the reasons and consequences of leaving? And what is gained? An important aspect of our project is to enter others' perspectives and situations and to find a genuine and credible way of displaying compassion.

The theme is far-reaching, affects a large part of the human population, and is steadily increasing. Within the experience of fleeing, there is a large degree of intersectionality, which gives us reason and interest in locating the perspective of females in the state of refuge.

130 000 000 (130 million). According to the UNHCR, this is the number of people they expect to be forcibly displaced or stateless by the end of 2024. Tackling the topic of forced migration on this gigantic scale, we believe, will create a gulf between the people affected and each of their individual life stories. In search of a truer understanding of how fleeing affects a woman's experience both during and after the flight, we decided not to present the big picture as a whole, but one of the puzzle pieces that is fundamental to creating it. In order to illustrate the stories of many in an earnest and credible way, we approach one person and their story as a case that can represent many women all over the globe.



Site plan of the mountain she crossed by foot, 1:2000

The diploma project emerges from the personal experience of a woman who was forced to flee her home and land. Through conducting a 1:1 interview, we followed her journey from peril to physical safety. Listening to her story, we felt a warm feeling filling our bodies, which made us aware of the potential such close encounters have, both for the storyteller and the listener. The meeting we had with her became fundamental to

our approach and the direction the project took thereafter. From beginning with the big numbers and statistics, we now guided the project to take an intimate and personal path, where we, with our perspective and immersion, joined the journey.

With insight into her history of fleeing, we seek to connect her memories of home and places to her experiences and events, questioning how her memories of place affected her experience of space and if this meeting and sharing of experience can help others reach a more intimate understanding of what it's like to be forced to flee.

Springing out from this interview, we locate the project in four places chosen from fundamental moments in her life: where she grew up, a ruin in a mountain range, a capital city in Eastern Europe and her new home in Bergen. Through architectural drawings, models, and diagrams, we have, after her descriptions, rebuilt and visualized the vastly different situations she lived through. The drawings focus on the experienced space and emphasize her remembrance of the life and atmospheres in the spaces rather than the exact structure of how the walls were. By doing this, we wish to highlight architectural methods' potential to narrate stories by showcasing her refugee story. This is in order to represent, through her lived experience, the many other women forced to endure fleeing. One personal story is more hard-hitting in attempting to understand the situations of forced migration than statistics over the 130 million people that share this reality. The compendium of her story becomes an informational work for fellow human beings who have not experienced fleeing themselves.

Emerging from the experience of the aforementioned interview and with a desire to find ways to approach a sensitive theme within a group of people in which neither of us inhabit personal experience, we arranged three events, all revolving around how to approach "the other." Our focus gradually moved towards exploring how experiences and memory affect our participation and reflection of spaces.

First, we developed a Cross Course at BAS, where we, in the course of 4 days, together with two participants from BAS, two from KMD, and artist/PHD candidate/sociologist/radio host Karen Werner (KMD and Radio Multe), read texts touching on the subject of "otherness" and shared reflections through notes and conversation. Our reflections were shared within the group as well as spoken into a radio transmitter on the abandoned FM network. This resulted in many thought-provoking exchanges, both about the texts as well as drawing from our own personal stories and lives. The course culminated in a final performance where we, sitting in a circle, crouched over the radio equipment and were surrounded by our process, left strewn in our studio space. Our overlapping voices read fragments from

our notes, with the rest of the school as an audience and the unknown audience on the FM network.

Next, we arranged a dinner at Bergen Assembly, where we invited people with a cross-cultural background to dine with us and share their migrant experiences. We hung up posters in the city, in places we have observed attract people with a multicultural background, and urged specifically women with a migrant background to share this exchange with us. This resulted in a dinner with heartfelt conversations between us and the four young women who arrived. Our goal was to create a safe space to share and to test this approach for our learning purposes. From this, we gained even more first-hand knowledge about the feeling of "otherness," and from the feedback, we learned how cathartic spaces for sharing around this topic can be.

Most recently, we initiated a workshop for children with a focus on memory and place. We had the chance to execute this over an hour with children from the 3rd year in their classroom environment. We invited them to reflect on their memory of places and how to project this into our common areas in the places where we live. The method was to divide the classroom into small groups, provide them with a board representing a common space, and invite them to collage and model their own experiences into these commons. According to the teacher, this workshop united the class noticeably in that they were more focused and quieter, at least externally, while working together. This suggests that the task was perceived as meaningful and engaging. When the hour came to a close, we asked the groups to present their boards/spaces and share what they placed and how it connected to their memories. Some of the children shared moving reflections on how experiences and memory affect their experiences of space, which enriched our perspective on how creating something together about stemming from our memories can be an interesting tool in connecting both to others and to root ourselves more in the places where we dwell.

Based on our work, we believe countries and societies are in need of more compassionate and hospitable accommodation for migrating women. We intend to use architecture as a tool of communication and enlightenment on this pressing issue that involves and impacts all societies.

We believe that the work we have done through the diploma has guided us to the beginning of an approach, not to an end. By narrating a story of fleeing, we seek to raise awareness and create space for coming closer to ways of approaching, working with, and representing the topic. Therefore, following the aspects of the diploma, the exhibition will facilitate an accommodating space for reflection and for further conversations. Our ambition is to activate the space and reach out to colleagues by

holding a workshop for students at BAS in the upcoming fall. This will be in connection to the exhibition and will aim to engage by inviting a plurality of perspectives, both through the participants and the material in which to be immersed. Also part of the ambition is the conviction that by understanding individuals' histories and memories of places, we are closer to making a future and a society where all are accounted for.

Through recollecting and reminiscing about places refugee women have moved through, the project aims to raise consciousness about our profession's potential to engage with aspects of fleeing and displacement. It aims to serve as a foundation for how we can understand each other better.

**UNPREDICTABILITY, ACCESS, INTERSECTIONALITY, SENSITIVITY,
COMPASSION, CARE, NERVE**

Kind regards,
Emma and Maia