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Midterm Evaluation THREAD

Andersson, Vibeke; Balslev, Helene; Kahil, Donya

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Mid-term Evaluation THREAD

March 9th 2018

Evaluators:

*Vibeke Andersson & Helene Balslev Clausen; associate professors, Donya Kahil; student assistant.
Global Refugee Studies, Department of Culture and Global Studies, Aalborg University*



Introduction

This Midterm evaluation forms part of the Research Project THREAD. The timeframe for the project is February 1st 2017 to October 31st 2019. The project is located at Centre for Textile Research (CTR) at University of Copenhagen and is including partners from research institutions, textile businesses, state and municipal institutions and NGOs

Method and Aim of Evaluation

This evaluation is an in-process evaluation, or ‘real time evaluation’. The research project was designed with the purpose that the evaluators follow the project closely and participate in many of its activities. The evaluation team evaluates the activities in work packages 1-4 with the specific aim to assess *social networks, job opportunities and integration* for participants (Basic project information document p. 10).

The evaluation team from Aalborg University, Global Refugee studies, consists of two researchers and one student assistant, who speaks Arabic.

The two main evaluators have designed an interview guide as basis for interviews with partners and participants in the project. We have been able to interview most of the partners during the first phase of the project. This has been crucial for our evaluation and the information obtained in this first round of interviews will lay the ground for next round of interviews, which will show the progress of the THREAD project in various fields.

Since we use the method of ‘real time evaluation’ we have addressed matters during the first phase of the project, when we found that we needed to comment on problems related to the THREAD project. We have participated in steering group meetings and commented on topics raised there. We made a ‘mini-evaluation’ of the Hijab Week in August 2017. This event we regard as a ‘pilot project’ for activities within the project, and important experiences were drawn from the mini-evaluation the evaluation team made after the ‘Hijab Week’. We find that this first, rather thorough, evaluation of the event prepared the ground for changes in future events. Later we held a meeting with the head of the THREAD-project, Marie Louise Nosch on December 8th 2017, where we gave feedback on issues we found necessary to address in the project. The feedback worked according to the purpose and the THREAD/CTR project team thus had opportunity to address the critical issues that were raised during the first year of the project period.

List of interviews and participation in events by evaluation team (In Danish)

Interviews med deltagere:

- Deltager 1, d.07.07.17: interview indsamlet sidste under første sidste dag af Hijaab Week workshoppen på papirøen
- Deltager 2, d.03.07.17:interview indsamlet under første dag af Hijaab Week workshoppen i KEA, på Nørrebro
- Deltager 3, d.03.07.17:interview indsamlet under første dag af Hijaab Week workshoppen i KEA, på Nørrebro
- Deltager 4, d.03.07.17:interview indsamlet første dag af Hijaab Week workshoppen i KEA, på Nørrebro

Interview med (samarbejds)partnere:

- Maria fra Henrik Vibsskov, 03.07.17: interview den første dag af Hijaab Week workshoppen i KEA, på Nørrebro
- Susanne fra KEA, d.07.07.17:interview den sidste dag af Hijaab Week workshoppen på Papirøen
- Lise Lotte fra FAKTI, d.29.08.17: interview hos FAKTI på Nørrebro
- Birgitte og Joy fra UCC, d. 12.09.17: interview på UCC
- Birgitte fra UCC, d.19.12.17: opfølgning interview med Birgitte fortaget over telefon.
- Munderingskompagniet, d. 10.10.17: interview på Østerbro (deres kontor)
- Diana fra Woolspire, d d.21.09.17: interview på café, Nørreport

Interview med THREAD

- Jane Malcolm-Davies og Egzona Haxha, d. 14.11.17: interview på KU

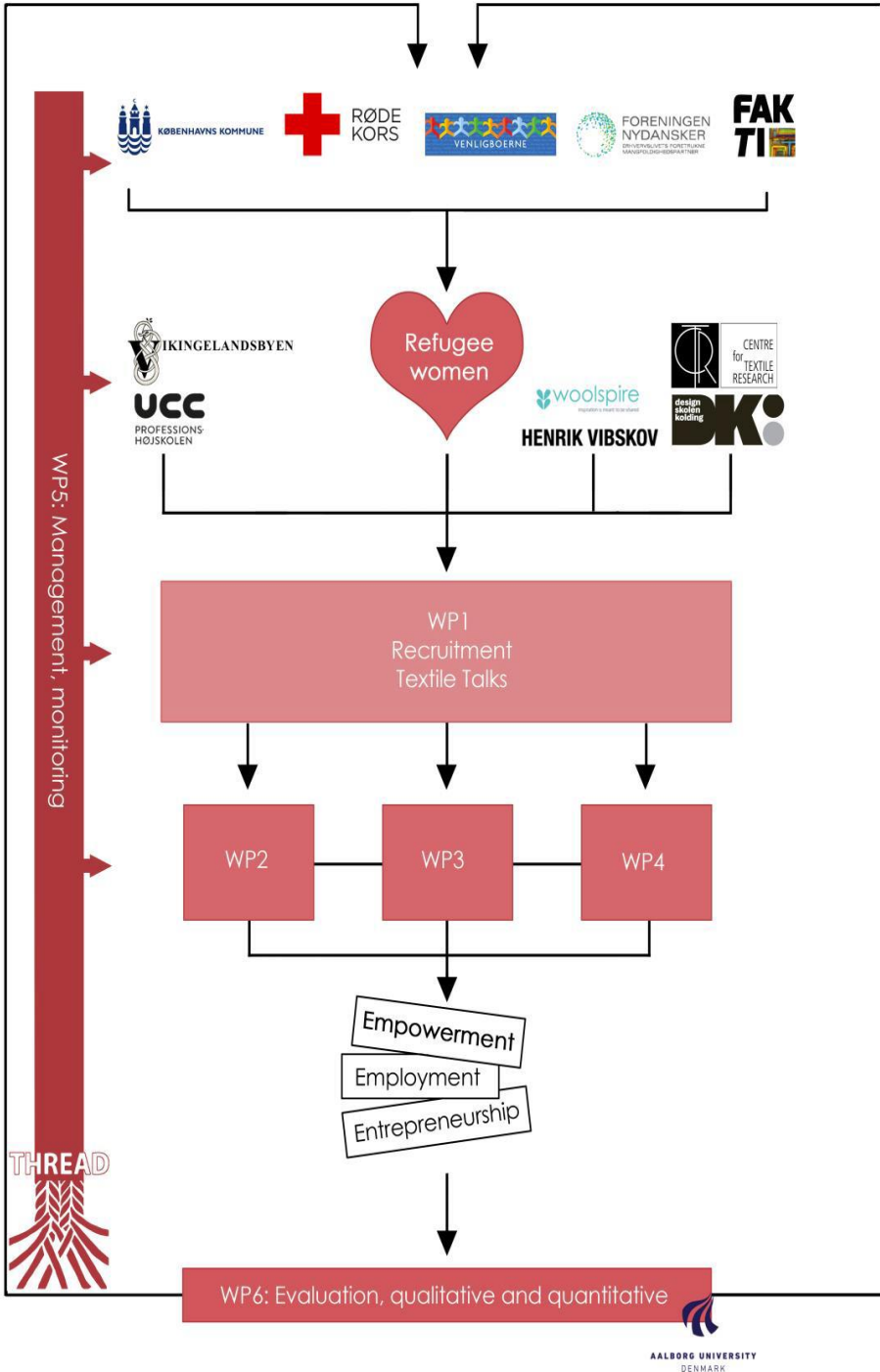
Vi har kontaktet et antal projekt- og samarbejdspartnere, som ikke har svaret tilbage på henvendelse. Vi vil kontakte dem igen.

Events:

- Textile talks, CTR, Københavns Universitet
- Textile techniques, CTR, Københavns Universitet/Fakti
- Hijab Week, KEA/Vibskov
- Besøg på Designskolen, Kolding
- Besøg hos Fakti, København

Deltagelse i Styregruppemøder og Advisory Board møde

THREAD's Project Model:



Virksomheder, foreninger og offentlige institutioner

Samarbejdspartnere og deltagere

Formidling og netværk

Iværksætter og virksomhedspraktik

Målet

Forskning og evaluering

Time frame

The project started earlier than first planned due to administrative issues. Due to this, the project leader, Jane Malcolm-Davies, was substituted by Egzona Haxha during the first months of the project. This meant, that the project had challenges in the first 6 months due to alterations in the time frame, which meant that some of the partners were unable to fulfil the aims according to the Gant chart. Matters were delayed because not all positions were filled in time. However, all working packages are running now and the early start (and subsequent delay of activities) is not considered to have had major influence on the project as such. In order to get activities started, during this first period, it was decided to host an event, the ‘Hijab Week’, which was arranged in collaboration with University College Copenhagen (UCC) and Vibskov (both partners in the project).

The project management team (and the steering group) are aware of startup difficulties and is adjusting the project plan accordingly. The evaluation team does not regard it as a problem that not all working packages are running to schedule, since there is a plan for them to deal with small delays.

Aim

“THREAD aims to build a dynamic hub of organizations and individuals from the public and private sectors offering creative opportunities for personal development, skills acquisition and self-employment to women refugees. THREAD tests how textile creativity, design and production can be used as a powerful means of integration through a range of practical activities directed at three main aims: Empowerment, Employment and Entrepreneurship.” (Project description p.10)

The THREAD project aims as creating a new integration model for refugee women. The project strive for a more ‘hand-held’ (Da: ‘håndholdt’) contribution to integration initiatives in Denmark. The special nexus of textile/women/empowerment, employment and entrepreneurship is aimed at directing integration efforts towards a specific group using specific methods: “THREAD'S main hypothesis is that a themed model of integration, which recognizes women refugees’ potential and engages stakeholders in a progressive partnership” (project description p.10) Refugee women are treated as active partners in the integration process, at the project aim at creating a new integration model as a ‘laboratory process’ where findings are included in new initiatives, thus creating a

dynamic process. There have been different challenges in order to reach this aim, which are unfolded in the paragraphs below.

'Refugee women': The evaluation team finds that the project tends to essentialize 'the refugee woman'. A more nuanced understanding of who the refugee women coming to Denmark from the world's conflict areas are, might have helped the overall understanding, and might also have prevented some of the start-up difficulties. The project description states in the description of the project: "Introductory events recruit participants and lead them to inspirational craft workshops and commercial internships, more demanding paid placements at businesses and universities/colleges, and an invitation to an entrepreneur program to aim at self-employment" (p.6). However, few refugee women arrive with the skills and are in a physical and mental state, where they can participate craft workshops and commercial internships or in demanding placements in business and universities. The knowledge and experience of partner organization Fakti, could have been a more central contribution to the project in the start-up phase, since this organization has extensive knowledge and experience with refugee women.

Assumptions about skills: The project description says that: "There are older women too (for example, approximately 500 individuals aged 40-50 years settled in 2015) who are likely to have relevant transferable skills. Refugees rarely arrive with documents proving their competences but nevertheless have knowledge and skills which are relevant for Danish design, research and business" (p.5). This assumption of refugee women having special skills in textile techniques is not well documented. In fact interviews with refugee participants reveal, that they feel that they do not have adequate skills for the specific activities, which they are supposed to participate in (Hijab week, internships). There has been slightly normative assumptions in the project that all refugee women come with textile technique skills, which they can use for entrepreneurship and employment. This assumption has a blind spot for men's engagement in textile production, which is relevant for some of the areas, where refugee women come from. In the Middle East men are involved in working with textile for example as tailors. This has, however, been dealt with as working with refugee during the project time has progressed, and the project is taking these experiences into consideration by expanding the field to include other areas than textile, but keeping the three E's (Employment, Empowerment and Entrepreneurship) central.

Practical challenges: THREAD's first activities were the Textile Talks series held at CTR at the University of Copenhagen. These talks are open to all, and the initial idea was, that refugee women should be integrated in the talks as participants. However, it has been difficult to attract the women

due to numerous practical challenges. The distance to university of Copenhagen, the costs of getting there, the other duties women had: language school, child care etc. This has led to THREAD/ the project management team changing their practices and starting reaching out where women are.

Reaching the target group: During the first year of the project it has become clear that it is difficult to ‘find’ refugee women who can participate in the project. There are several reasons for this, and a more comprehensive ‘mapping’ of the field before the project started could have helped solving this problem. However, the project management team and THREAD partners have gone through great efforts to reaching out to refugee women by including employees in targeted municipalities as ‘brookers’ in contacting the women. The evaluation team sees the new partner ‘Novaheim’, as a valuable partner for the project, since Novaheim bring in their contacts to refugee women, with whom they have an extensive collaboration at Avnstrup Asylum Center. Including Novaheim can be a very important asset to the THREAD project.

All of the challenges mentioned above are not foreign to the THREAD team. They have all been presented in the project plan (project description p.9) as risks:

Risk 1: Recruiting sufficient women refugees who wish to join the project

Risk 2: Finding women refugees with sufficient confidence

Risk 3: Logistical difficulties such as time/transport constraints for participants

The fact that the THREAD team have been able to foresee the challenges gives reason to believe, that solutions will be produced during the second half of the project.

Target Groups

The project has an optimistic plan for the number of participants recruited to the project. Reality has shown that it is difficult to recruit refugee women to the activities. There are several reasons for this: In the beginning the ‘textile talks’, which take place at university of Copenhagen were intended as a ‘meeting place’ for partners, researchers and refugee women. However, it turned out to be difficult to attract refugee women to these events, as described above. The project management team has instead tried to reach out to refugee women ‘where they are’ and has collaborated with municipalities and organizations in arranging events ‘here the refugee women are. This has been more successful than trying to attract refugee women to university and other institutions.

Another important point regarding the target group (the refugee women) is that the expectations of resources of the individual has been mismatched with the realities. The THREAD project management team is now aware of the complexity within the integration field. There are many, and different, actors involved and in order to reach the refugee women one has to get permission from a variety of municipal and other stakeholders. This has taken more time, than expected. Furthermore, the refugee women are more vulnerable, than expected, and therefore not always able to participate in the activities presented in the THREAD project. We see, that the project management and partners are becoming aware of this, and are adjusting activities accordingly.

Project Initiatives

According to the THREAD presentation material (power point presentation summer 2017) the E's (Empowerment, Employment and Entrepreneurship) has different prospects for integration of refugee women in Denmark. The aim of the first; Empowerment is to help 60 participants to form part of a network and share their knowledge about textile, design and handicraft. The prospect for Employment covers internships at THREAD partners and the aim is to support 25 internships in total. Regarding Entrepreneurship the aim is to initiate a workshop- and training program to inspire and support 16 participants in creating business ideas and help them through start up challenges. These are ambitious goals, and there have been some difficulties in getting started on these components.

The network formation has been initiated by the CTR/THREAD team by inviting to Textile Talks, textile Techniques and reaching out to refugee women, where they are.

Internships have been offered at Vibskov, at UCC and at CTR at University of Copenhagen. It is too early to assess how these initiatives have helped the refugee women who participated to get access to the Danish labour market, and the evaluation of these initiatives will be dealt with more thoroughly in the final evaluation (fall 2019)

Other initiatives: CTR researchers have written articles and comments in Danish newspapers, which shows that dissemination of THREAD results is important for THREAD members.

Project Organization

The project is managed on a daily basis by the project management team at CTR (Marie Louise Nosch, Egzona Haxha and Jane Malcolm Davies (project leader)). The project has a Steering Group

consisting of all partners. Marie Louise Nosch is chair person, Else Skjold (Design School Kolding) is substitute chair person. Both project management team and steering group work satisfactory and are characterized by an openness and willingness to collaborate with the partners. Because the steering group includes all partners, there is a high level of information sharing, and partners can learn from experiences from each other – both when they meet at steering group meetings, and at the more informal activities and events, where partners join in, when possible. The project organization works well, and the level of information sharing seems appropriate.

Project Activities

The partners are running different activities. A short summary for each partner is listed below:

UCC (University College Copenhagen) has received a smaller number of refugee women (4) on Mondays during fall 2017. The women were supposed to follow classes and students while they were there. This proved to be somewhat difficult, since most of the women had limited Danish language skills. As a solution to this UCC developed special activities for the women. One of UCC's motivations for being part of the THREAD project has been to contribute to empowerment of refugee women and a hope that some of them eventually would be able to start studying at UCC or other places.

Design School Kolding has completed 4 wardrobe studies and is planning 4 more. They are running to schedule now and one of the experiences of this work is, that it is very difficult to get in contact with people. They have succeeded, nonetheless, and are getting a network for further contact initiatives through the Kolding municipality, integration department and job-center. Furthermore they are reaching out through talks at both places. During spring 2018 Design School Kolding will offer a smaller internship for 6 refugee women for 6 weeks. This will be repeated in spring 2019, based on the experiences from spring 2018.

Viking Village, Albertslund, is in the process of identifying possible participants for internships in collaboration with neighborhood coordinators in Albertslund and Høje Taastrup. They have two different options for internship: 1) textile manufacturing in the sewing workshop or 2) teaching children textile methods. One of the experiences of the first year of the THREAD project is, that it is difficult to attract participants who are in a situation, where they can take up independent tasks as many refugee women are vulnerable for different reasons. This is the case for the Viking Village as well. As a consequence of this the Viking Village is preferring option one. And because results

from other partners show that it is easier to reach refugee women where they live, Viking Village is considering moving the sewing workshops to the neighborhoods where the refugee women are. The evaluation team supports this decision, since the possibilities of reaching out to the target group are better this way. Viking Village will also be hosting textile talks twice in the coming six months, and hope to reach participants through these activities.

Fakti hosts Textile techniques workshop run by THREAD once a week.

CTR hosts different activities, among these textile talks and techniques, seminars and workshops. The project management team is located here. This team assists partners in various ways by helping to form contact to external partners (municipalities) for getting participants for internships or activities.

Woolspire decided to withdraw from the project as partner (in the fall of 2017). Novaheim and Ganni have replaced Woolspire from January 2018. Novaheim and Ganni are new partners, and will therefore not be part of the midterm evaluation, since they have not yet had any activities within THREAD.

All partners have experienced difficulties in the start-up phase. The THREAD management team underscores, that there have been some start-up difficulties, which were not foreseen in the project application and planning. There are many reasons for this. Mapping out this complex field of refugees and integration is complex. However, CTR is located at the same department as Advanced Migration Studies, and maybe could have gotten expertise from one or more of the researchers in this center during the planning phase of the project. We acknowledge that THREAD is now organizing discussion workshops with AMIS students, so some form of collaboration between the two centers has been initiated.

Assessment of Project Organization and Activities

The project is organized with a project management team located at CTR, University of Copenhagen and several rather independent partners, who do independent work in relation the project. The strength of this kind of organization is that the project management team at CTR is responsible for a number of activities which include partners, if they want. Textile talks is a good example of this. Here everybody is welcome to participate and anyone, who wants, can present at the talks. Information and experience is shared at steering group meetings and events, and this form of organization seems to work well for partners. In relation to partners' activities, these are shared at

steering group meetings, where there is a high representation of partners present. This is a sign of dedicated partners, who want to participate in the project. The project management team, despite from being located in Copenhagen, initiates many activities and initiatives in order to include partners, who are outside the Copenhagen area. The decision to include Else Skjold from Design School Kolding as co-chair in the Steering Group opens up for knowledge- and decision sharing across geographical localities.

Collaboration between Research Partners

The first year of the project has been focused on establishing good practices for the collaboration between research partners. Meetings have been held at University of Copenhagen and Design School Kolding. Future meetings will be held at Aalborg University (April) and UCC (June). Until now research collaboration has concentrated on getting to know each other's fields. At the steering group meeting in Kolding in January the different research partners identified possible collaboration in terms of writing papers and participating in international conferences. The opportunity to work cross-disciplinary is there and researchers in the project are interested in using this possibility in their research and research dissemination. The possibilities for research between partners look assuring, and the THREAD project will gain from convening different academic knowledge within textile and refugee issues. The Advisory Board meetings form another possibility to establish academic collaboration. Another initiative used by the management team has been giving the possibility for students to intern at CTR. This contributes to broadening the academic collaboration between institutions and centers.

Collaboration with Organizations/Partners

All partners are reaching out to external partners as well. The municipality of Kolding has been an important actor for Design School Kolding. The THREAD/CTR team has reached out to several municipalities in the Zealand area and is also contacting organizations, where refugees are participating (Fakti, Velkomsthuset i Valby, Venligboerne Vesterbro). The evaluation team value the importance to reach out to these external partners to include other types of activities for refugee women. However, it seems like there has been a slight mismatch between expectations from partners/collaborating firms about who are in charge of finding refugee women for internships. Some report that they got the impression that the THREAD team at CTR would be in charge of finding and sending interns, since the organizations/firms do not necessarily have the contacts and

expertise to find interns among the target group. The mismatch described above has led the THREAD management team to focus less on including additional NGOs and firms and more on working with municipalities and other partners, because the target group is more vulnerable than expected in the project description for the THREAD project. We suggest that the project team establish clearer communication and balance of expectations between different partners and THREAD.

Competence Development

Because the project started early, the interim project leader, Egzona Haxha, was participating in a project leader management course at Harvard Business School. Participating in the course, Egzona had opportunity to network with other Innovation-Foundation project leaders, and developed contacts with people in other sectors than textile/fashion. The THREAD team has discussed using these contacts for additional internship placement for refugee women, if a match could be found. The evaluation team supports this effort. Participating in the Harvard course has helped to secure a competent leadership on a daily basis until Jane Malcolm-Davies took over the project leader position.

The THREAD project states, that it is an important factor, that textile researchers and partners not only disseminate their knowledge, but also learn from participants. Since the project aims at developing an integration model, which should be applicable in other areas than textile/fashion, this learning from participants seems an important factor in competence building. The project thus operates with both refugee women's *and* partners/researchers' competence building.

Project Resources

Use of resources are running to schedule. At the steering group meeting in January the project leader, Marie Louise Nosch, emphasized the importance of reporting consumption of funds. The overall responsibility of budget control lies within the project management at CTR, and all partners seem to be attentive to the importance of meeting the demands. Because activities have started later, the consumption of funds is low. It is important that all activities are implemented, and the second half of the project period might be slightly more packed with activities. We consider this as a minor problem, since all partners seem to be aware of the fact, that the activity level will increase, and they are planning accordingly.

Implementation

The Textile Talks series were some of the first events in the project. The weakness in the organization of Textile Talks is, that it is driven by a research group and takes place at the university. This allows only few people to participate as many partners are very busy in their daily life and cannot find time to participate. For the target group, the refugee women, it is not easy to get to the university. Different solutions have been tried – for example organizing busses for participants from Allerød municipality. However, THREAD activities are in increasing numbers taking place where the refugee women are already present: at Fakti (textile techniques), at asylum center Avnstrup (Novaheim), and at Design School Kolding and UCC, when they arrange classes for (bigger and smaller) groups of refugee women.

Another activity, the hijab week, took place at KEA (Københavns Erhvervs Akademi) in July 2017.

There were three contributors to this event: THREAD, KEA and Vibskov. The event included students from KEA, one teacher from there and a designer from Vibskov. It turned out to be difficult to find refugee women to participate, and only four women took part in the preparation of Hijabs, which were later displayed at Vibskov's Outlet at Papirøen. The event was evaluated by the evaluation team and interviews with participating refugee women showed that the effects of this event for the women were limited. However, the event gave good information about how to arrange events in the future and which issues to avoid (or enhance) in the creation of coming events.

As a result of the feedback from the in-process evaluation, the project management team at CTR has started more activities. More activities are taken to the places where refugees already are present (example: Fakti and Avnstrup), there is an increasing insight into the importance of defining the core concepts of 'Empowerment. Entrepreneurship and Employment'. Interviews with partners and participants in events during the first 6 months of the project showed, that there was no coherent understanding among the different partners on what these important concepts entailed. The evaluation team has encouraged that we find a common ground on which to build on concerning the three concepts. As a result, a new series of 'Discussion Workshops' at CTR has been initiated by the project leader, and we will, at the next steering group, continue the discussion about the concepts over a two-day workshop at Aalborg University where all partners are invited to participate.

Mile Stones

The project has a number of mile stones included in the different work packages.

Milestones Work package 1: Recruitment.

A number of women have been recruited in the initial phase through the activities mentioned in this work package. However, the number continue to be quite limited. The reason for this could be that one of the partners has withdrawn from the THREAD project. Including Novaheim and Ganni as new partners seem to be appropriate measure to obtain recruitment in a longer perspective.

Milestones Work package 2: Networking and internships.

A number of internships have been concluded with different partners. There seem to be obstacles to a successful internship: Refugee women are normally not able to participate full time during the week, which could weaken the results of internship in achieving network and empowerment. Project management team and partners in THREAD are aware of this problem, and are working on solutions to solve it, maybe by redefining the content of internships.

Milestones Work package 3: Research and Education.

At the time of the mid-term evaluation collaboration between research institutions has been initiated. Work with Tigrinya glossary is started by two researchers and two interns with Ethiopian background. A summer-school course is offered at CTR, where two refugee women can participate. Design School Kolding will initiate a process including 6 women at the school's programs, where refugee women meet students and teachers. Several conference papers have been/are being prepared for international conferences, so this work package appears to be working according to schedule.

Milestones Work package 4: Entrepreneurship.

This work package is lacking behind. That might be due to early start (not enough preparation) and the withdrawal of one of the partners (Woolspire), who was an important partner in creating entrepreneurship opportunities and new businesses. The difficulties in reaching qualified refugee women for entrepreneurship is another reason for this work package not being up to date. The difficulties in reaching qualified refugee women is described elsewhere. One way of mitigating this has been to look for participants among asylum seekers as well. Novaheim is important as facilitator of contacts. However, we suggest lowering the expectation of the resulting amount of independent entrepreneurs, for example from 16 to 10.

Work package 5 is Evaluation. There are no specific milestones here.

Milestones Work package 6. Project management:

The milestone in this work package is ‘all work packages running to schedule’. In general the work packages are up and running satisfactorily, even though they are not all running to schedule. Solutions are being implemented and the project management is working professionally and efficient in managing the THREAD project.

Concluding Comments

CTR researchers are giving a talk at the center for Advanced Migration Studies at Saxo department, University of Copenhagen. We suggest that THREAD establish a closer collaboration with migration and refugee experts from this center (which belongs to the same department as CTR) during the second half of the THREAD research project. This could spark a fruitful knowledge-sharing across the centers.

Language barriers seem to be a bigger problem, than expected. Some of the partners are challenged by this when refugee women come to do internships. If Manhal, who is Syrian refugee and employed at THREAD, is not around, it is difficult to do the activities planned. Since the project is directed towards refugee women, who have not obtained language skills, this could be mitigated by employing translators. This seems to be necessary sometimes, even though one partner points out, that teaching and learning within textile techniques does not necessarily include spoken language, since it is a learning process of imitating and learning from something others *do*. Generally there was an expectation of participating refugee women coming with skills and motivation to participate in THREAD activities. Reality has shown that this is difficult to achieve. There is awareness among the management team and THREAD partners, that the target group is more vulnerable and more difficult to work with, than expected. We are aware of and appreciate that THREAD is redirecting activities to be able to include the more vulnerable group of women and rescaling expectations to the outcome.

The work package 5 (evaluation) does not have milestones as such. Expected deliverables are mid-term report (concluded), final report and scholarly papers and lectures. The evaluation team will present mini-lectures at a steering group meeting and workshop in April 2018, to share knowledge from the field of refugee studies. We have also suggested that we discuss the three E’s (Empowerment, Employment and Entrepreneurship) at the workshop in order to have a common

understanding of these concepts among partners. This will help to get coherent results when the THREAD project is finished.

In process/real time evaluation is used here. There are pros and cons in using this method. Members of the evaluation team are close to activities in the research project and must at the same time keep some form of distance in order to be able to evaluate professionally. The opportunity to follow the project closely and the possibility to address certain issues during the process have been valuable contributions to the THREAD project. Members of the evaluation team have benefitted from the in-process evaluation by obtaining knowledge and provide insights to the project management team as the project is developing. And the project management team has benefitted from getting feedback during the first part of the project in order to address the issues raised by the evaluation team.