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## **Final Evaluation THREAD**

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# Final Evaluation THREAD

*February 14, 2020*

*Evaluators:*

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## *Introduction*

This final evaluation forms part of the Research Project THREAD. The timeframe for the project was February 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 to October 31<sup>st</sup> 2019. The project has been 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*

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 assistant.

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 and some of the participants. We base this final evaluation on results from the mid-term evaluation, the activities through the project time, and the collection of information for the final evaluation. The information obtained in this first round of interviews (in the beginning of the project and for mid-term evaluation) has formed background for the last round of interviews. Based on the interviews will include voices from partners and participants expressing what the THREAD project has meant for participants.

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

### Interview med (samarbejds)partnere:

- Maria Ojantakanen fra Forvaltning Børn, Sundhed & Velfærd at Vikingelandsbyen Albertslund, 21.10.2019.
- Henriette Rolf Larsen fra Husum and Tingbjerg workshop - Design Vanilje, 29.10.19: interviewed during a workshop's sessions at Tingbjerg.
- Susanne Lervad fra TermPlus, d.06.11.19: interviewed at the CTR- KU.
- Solveig Søndergaard fra Kolding Designskolen/Sheworks, d.26.11.19: Interviewed via Skype video conference.

### Interview med THREAD

- Alice Louise Fitzsimons-Quail, research assistant THREAD Project at CTR, KU, d.06.11.19: interviewed at the CTR- KU
- Marie Louise Nosh fra CTR, KU, d. 13.11.19: interviewed via Zoom conference.

#### Interviews med deltagere:

- Deltager 1, d.29.10.19: Interviewed during a workshop's session at Tingbjerg.
- Deltager 2, d.29.10.19: Interviewed during a workshop's session at Tingbjerg
- Deltager 3, d.29.10.19: Interviewed during a workshop's session at Tingbjerg
- Deltager 4, d.29.10.19: Interviewed during a workshop's session at Tingbjerg
- Deltager 5, d.29.10.19: Interviewed during a workshop's session at Tingbjerg

Some stakeholders who were not active during the last part of the project were not interviewed, such as Henrik Vibskov or UCC, who due changes in the management were not performing any activities related to THREAD and therefore not interviewed for this evaluation.

#### Events:

- Visit Vikingelandsbyen, Alberslund d.21.10.2019
- Tingbjerg Fashion Show, Tingbjerg Bibliotek d.05.09.2019
- Tingbjerg Workshop's Session 29.10.2019
- Visit, CTR at KU 06.11.2019
- Tingbjerg collaboration with Tingbjerg Kirke d.03.12.19

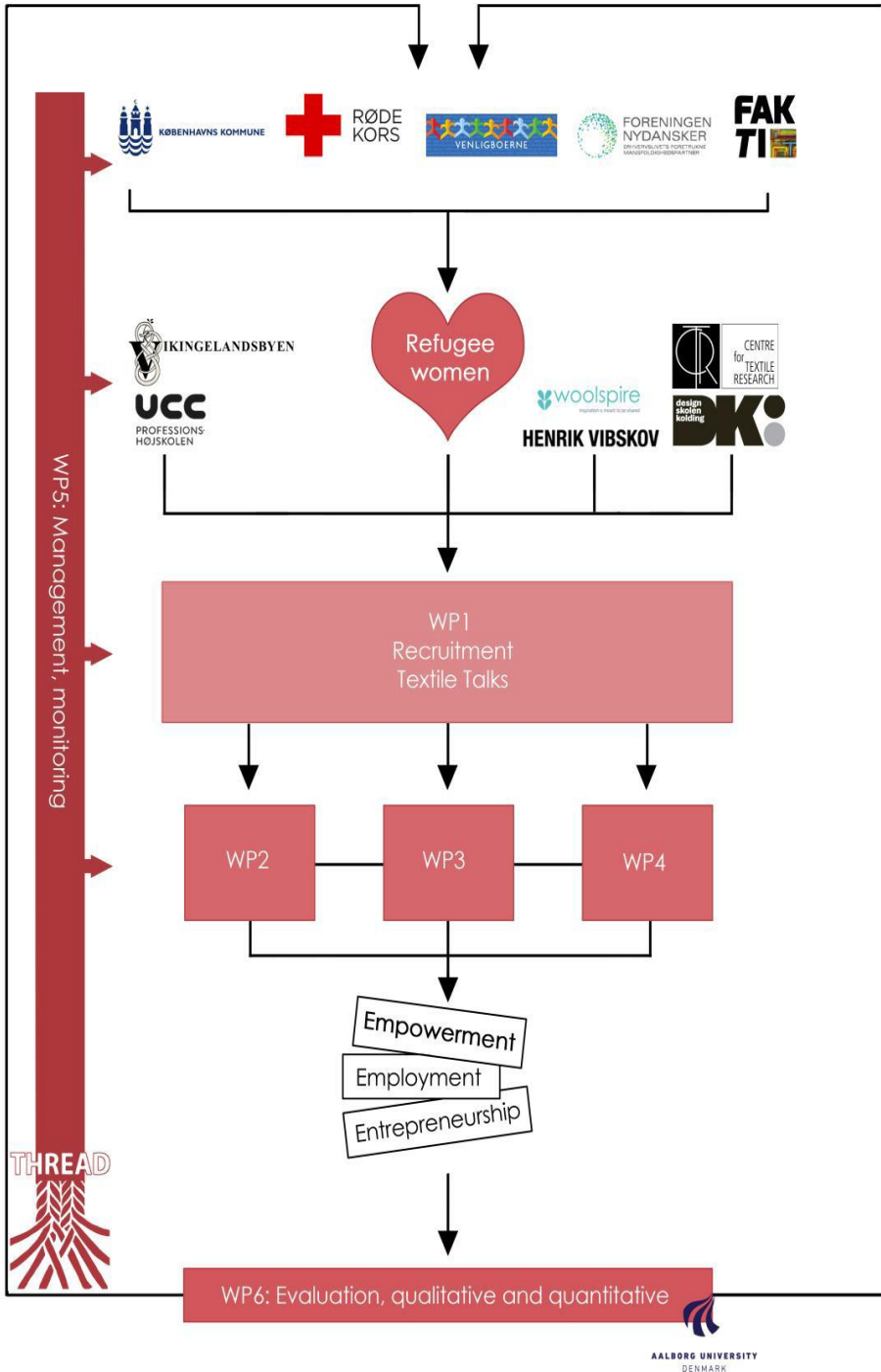
During the last six months several SoMe groups were identified in relation with THREAD project, mainly the following Facebook groups.

- Thread - Den Røde Tråd with 222 participants
- Fenuun / SHEworks: Håndarbejde & Integration with 202 participants from Kolding Designskolen.
- Igne:oya - made in Tingbjerg which has 107 participants from Tingbjerg/Hussum Workshops- Design Vanilje
- The Fabric of my life which has 35 participants following

The different groups were a place to share experiences and other relevant announcements.

#### 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

During the different phases of the THREAD research project, it became clear, that the three aims (*Empowerment, Employment and Entrepreneurship*) could be expanded with three additional aims:

*Enlightenment, Education and Evaluation*, which were added as core ideas of THREAD. The evaluation team finds this relevant and interesting. It shows how the THREAD research project has evolved in a dynamic way, able to make adjustments to core aims without losing sight of the central idea within the research project. The three new aims were added based on the experiences during the second year of activities in THREAD.

### *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 has aimed at creating a new integration model for refugee women. During the time of the project, it has become evident, that it has been difficult to define a singled model, since the context is so complex and challenging. Thus the project has aimed for a more ‘hand-held’ contribution to integration initiatives in Denmark targeted differently in different contexts. The special nexus of textile/women/empowerment, employment and entrepreneurship has been the core by 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 aimed at creating new integration initiatives as a ‘laboratory process’ where findings are included in new initiatives, thus creating a dynamic process. A result of this dynamic process was, that the CTR team and Design School Kolding saw, that the three original aims could be expanded with the three additional aims. We see this as a valuable result of dynamic research and practice, which aims at opening up towards the participants and include them in the research process.

### *Target Groups*

Reaching target groups has been a constant challenge, but the THREAD group has gone through thorough investigations on where to meet refugee women. The partners have reached out to refugee women in asylum centers, municipalities and other places (for instance Vikingelandsbyen and

Fenuun) and have managed to reach a large number of women, even outperform the original aim, stated in the project application, of women participating in different THREAD activities. In the beginning the ‘textile talks’, which took 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, for practical reasons. 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 where the refugee women are. This has been more successful than trying to attract refugee women to university and other institutions. Including new partners, Term+, Igne:Oya/Design Vanilje and designers from Kolding (Fenuun, and lately; SheWorks), has resulted in more activities and reaching more women.

The THREAD project management team has become aware of the complexity within the integration field and asylum system. 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. THREAD management team and partners have successfully overcome many obstacles, for example by teaming up with refugee law expertise and working with partners, who had already established contact with refugee and migrant women (Fakti, Design Vanilje, Kolding municipality)

### *Project Initiatives*

According to the THREAD presentation material the E’s (Empowerment, Employment and Entrepreneurship) have different prospects for integration of refugee women in Denmark. The aim of the first; Empowerment, was to help 60 participants to form part of a network and share their knowledge about textile, design and handicraft. The prospect for Employment covered internships at THREAD partners and the aim was to support 25 internships in total. Regarding Entrepreneurship the aim was 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 reaching these components, especially when it comes to entrepreneurship and businesses.

Internships have been offered at Vibskov, UCC, Term+, Vikingelandsbyen and at CTR at University of Copenhagen. Furthermore DSK have arranged pop-up shops and fairs have sold

products made by refugee women. Refugee women have enrolled as students at UCC, CTR and DSK for shorter and longer periods. THREAD members have been effective in establishing collaboration with designers and shops and this way have been fostering self-employment initiatives for participating refugee and migrant women.

Other initiatives: participating researchers have written research articles and comments in Danish newspapers, participated in radio shows and at ‘Folkemødet’, and academic conferences, which shows that dissemination of THREAD results is important for THREAD members.

### *Project Organization*

The project has been managed on a daily basis by the project management team consisting of Project leader Marie-Louise Nosch (CTR), head of steering committee, Else Skjold (DSK) and project managers Egzona Haxha and Jane Malcolm-Davies. At one point Else Skjold was appointed project leader, but due to Else Skjold’s job change, Marie Louise Nosch re-entered as project leader. The project organization has worked well, and the level of information sharing has been appropriate. The collaboration with partners has worked successfully and the THREAD management has reached out to include new partners through the time of the research project. This has created a dynamic flow of initiatives, which has benefitted both partners and participants.

### *Project Activities*

As stated in the annual report the THREAD project has met its goals when it comes to deliverables, activities and results. The aim was to build relationships and contribute to refugee women’s integration into society. A total of 516 women has participated in THREAD workshops, social events and internships.

DSK had hired designers to conduct workshops and work in close collaboration with participants. During these workshops participants had an opportunity to acquire a more customer-based business understanding of standards and quality of products. This was shown in the successful event of a ‘pop-up shop’.

The THREAD project had important results creating ownership and participation through websites and social media. A lot of the communication and sharing was done through Facebook, where both partners and participants were active.



In Vikingelandsbyen they had interns and volunteers, and especially the tranquility of that space has attracted refugee and migrant women with special challenges. They have had a ‘safe space’ to get away from home and be among other people, something that was also seen at the workshops in Tingbjerg and Husum. These workshops were inclusive spaces for women with personal challenges – both Danish and refugee and migrant women.

### *Assessment of Project Organization and Activities*

The project has been organized with a project management team located at CTR, University of Copenhagen and several rather independent partners, who did 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 and participants, if they want. Textile workshops is a good example of this. Here everybody was welcome to participate. Information and experience was shared at steering group meetings and events, and this form of organization seems to work well for partners. In relation to partners’ activities, these were shared at steering group meetings, where there has been high representation of partners present. The project management team, being located both in Kolding in Copenhagen (for a period), initiated many activities and initiatives in order to include partners. The decision to include Else Skjold from Design School Kolding (at the time) as co-chair in the Steering Group opened up for knowledge- and decision sharing across geographical localities.

### *Collaboration between Research Partners*

The first years of the project were focused on establishing good practices for the collaboration between research partners. Meetings were held at University of Copenhagen, Design School Kolding, Aalborg University and UCC. The opportunity to work cross-disciplinary was there and researchers in the project have been interested in using this possibility in their research and research dissemination. The THREAD project has gained from convening different academic knowledge within textile and refugee issues. Another initiative used by the management team has been giving the possibility for students to intern at CTR and inviting external academics into the collaboration. This contributed 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 has also been contacting organizations, where refugees are participating (Fakti, Velkomsthuset i Valby, Venligboerne Vesterbro, Design Vanilje, Fenuun). The evaluation team value the importance to reach out to these external partners to include other types of activities for refugee women, as stated in the mid-term evaluation. However, as mentioned in the mid-term evaluation, there has been a slight mismatch between expectations from partners/collaborating firms about who have been 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 led the THREAD management team to working with municipalities and other partners, because the target group is more vulnerable than expected in the project description for the THREAD project. Collaboration with Henriette Rolf Larsen and her team in Husum and Tingbjerg has proved valuable for the activities in the Copenhagen area, as has the collaboration with Fenuun in Kolding.

*Securing sustainable results from the project:* Unfortunately there have been shifting partners through the project and the amount of money allocated to each partner has been different. The effect has been uneven contribution from different partners. Those, who have received smaller amounts of money have not been as active as those, who have received larger amounts of money. Nevertheless, the project management has been innovative in finding and suggesting new partners, most recently Igne:Oya/Design Vanilje and Term+. The outcome of the work by the hired designers in Kolding has also been successful with the creation of SheWorks, an outcome of workshops and collaboration within the THREAD project. The evaluation team see good prospects for continuing the THREAD work (maybe in different forms) in the mentioned organisations. Furthermore it is expected that these partners will benefit from the toolkit, which is currently (February 2020) being developed by partner Jane McDougal to ensure sustainable practices as a continuation of the ideas formed within the THREAD project.

## *Implementation*

*External challenges:* The realization of activities have been active and adjusting to the government and administrative policies, which have been implemented during the project period. Because the

application was written one year after the 2015 refugee crisis, the ideas and expectation from the call for projects then were adjusted to this particular situation. However, policies have changed during the project period, and the THREAD research project similarly had adjust their initiatives and results to a new policy and administrative situation. This has, on the one hand, created a dynamic process, but, on the other hand, it has also required additional resources in order to fit activities to current rules.

Working with municipalities has been demanding, since there were different practices in each municipality. Design School Kolding established a very fruitful collaboration with the municipality of Kolding, since the Design School is located in the municipality of Kolding. For CTR and partners this has been more difficult, since they have worked with a number of municipalities in the greater Copenhagen area. However, the members of CTR have been consistent in contacting municipalities, and have had successful results in workshops and activities.

*Internal Challenges:* Even though the THREAD team originally had included experts within refugees and integration (Fakti and AAU) there has been a lack of knowledge among core members of the research group with expert knowledge on refugees and integration. Through the project time period THREAD has made up for this in collaborating with University of Copenhagen colleagues and lawyers who could add knowledge about themes, which were not core knowledge of the CTR and DSK groups. One of the learning outcomes from the experience with THREAD is the type of impact humanities and social science can have on society in suggesting alternative solutions to policy challenges. There is, for example, a theme concerning gender: During the work with the THREAD project, it has been visible to participating researchers, that government policies on refugees and migrants are mostly addressed towards men, and there is a blind side when it comes to solutions addressed at refugee women. This was a ‘hidden’ fact, which the research team had to handle as the research project developed.

## Results

Milestones, Work package 1: Recruitment.

As stated in the annual report, the number of people (women) which have been involved with THREAD activities have exceeded initial goals. The evaluators credit this fact to one of the partners; Design Vanilje/Igne:Oya located in Tingbjerg and Husum. Because of the well-established networks and organization of Henriette Rolf Larsen's activities, THREAD have gotten a number of participants to their activities – and vice versa. In Kolding the Design School has been had a large number of participating migrant and refugee women by collaborating with Kolding municipality.

Milestones, Work package 2: Networking and internships.

Henriette Rolf Larsen and her colleagues mention that the collaboration with THREAD has provided important collaboration. One participant in the Husum/Tingbjerg activities has been in a two months internship at CTR at University of Copenhagen (interview participants October 29 2019). She wants to finish HF and continue to study to be a teacher after having been in closer contact with CTR and University of Copenhagen. The Design School has had good support from the municipality in creating a network locally and across the country. DSK has collaborated with Hennes and Mauritz, for example.

Women, who are not receiving any funds from the municipality remain 'hidden' in the official system. The women remain in the shadow, once their husbands get a job, and they get out of the statistics, which for the municipalities means that they do not need any integration anymore. Consequently, it means that especially for the women, that they remain quite isolated and are not offered any help for their integration anymore, because they do not get any benefits. The result is that they do not learn the language well, and they are not being offered the same opportunities as their husbands. The 'refugee crisis' seems to be over, and the women are not 'seen' by the municipality and other official stakeholders. This makes the women dependent of their husbands but also of their peers and their community. Networking, internships and other activities like the ones described in Kolding, the Vikingelandsbyen, Husum and Tingbjerg, help the women out of their isolation.

Milestones, Work package 3: Research and Education.

Collaboration between research institutions has been initiated, for example THREAD has been contacted by colleagues abroad, who work with similar projects. Researchers from both Design School Kolding, University of Copenhagen and Aalborg University have successfully participated

in workshops and conferences, sharing results from the THREAD research to a broader audience. Work with Tigrinya glossary was started by two researchers from University of Copenhagen and two interns with Ethiopian background. A summer-school course was offered at CTR, where two refugee women participated. Design School Kolding initiated a process including 6 women at the school's programs, where refugee women meet students and teachers, and UCC had interns following classes.

Milestones, Work package 4: Entrepreneurship.

The difficulties in reaching qualified refugee women for entrepreneurship has been a problem throughout the project's activities. The goals have been set too optimistic, as it has proved difficult to find well qualified refugee women to take up entrepreneurship and start small businesses. However, the entrepreneurial spirit has been there, but logistics and rules have hindered, that the project could work extensively with this issue. In Kolding there is a start-up company, which work with refugee and migrant women, however, the company has been started by two Danes.

One of the results of the THREAD project is to create a framework, or toolkit, to be used by other sectors when creating entrepreneurship among refugee women, but presently (February 14) this toolkit has not been completed, so we cannot assess it.

Milestones, Work package 5: Evaluation.

The evaluation team has completed both midterm and final evaluation reports. We have conducted ethnographic interviews to gather material both for midterm and final evaluation. This has been done by the two research assistants, who have worked with us as part of the team.

Milestones Work package 6. Project management:

In general the work packages have been running satisfactorily, even though they have not all been running to schedule. Solutions have been being implemented and the project management has been working professionally and efficiently in managing the THREAD project, even though there have been alterations of roles in management between Marie-Louise Nosch and Else Skjold for different reasons.

### *Voices and comments from participants:*

In the following we present experiences and insights from some of the women who have participated in THREAD activities

*Guler* who works for with the Tingbjerg and Husum workshops and activities shares her opinions and thoughts about the THREAD project and the collaboration with Design Vanilje and Igne:Oya: It has been valuable for the activities in Tingbjerg and Husum that THREAD facilitated contact to National Museum and Arbejdmuseet in Copenhagen. The women, who often do not leave Tingbjerg, were empowered by having the chance to go to the workshops at Arbejdmuseet and share their knowledge about handicrafts with Danish participants at the events there.

Having textile workhops in Tingbjerg – also in collaboration with THREAD, and the creation of the ‘Venneforening’ has brought interest and positive media coverage to the group.

*Yldiz* has participated in the activities in Tingbjerg for a long time and has benefitted by going to the workshops and learning new skills doing handicraft. She mentions that after meeting with other women and Igne:Oya she is now considering starting her own entrepreneurial business because of what she has seen and learned.

*Nagreem* has had an internship CTR for two months. The meeting with the formal education system in Denmark has made it clear to her, that it will be possible to pursue an education within the formal Danish education system.

*Esme* has an internship in Tingbjerg and experience a greater self confidence in being out among other people and participating in workshops and activities in Husum and Tingbjerg.

These four examples are showing that empowerment, employment and entrepreneurship have been well chosen topics to be focusing on in the THREAD project. The examples also shows that is has been relevant to include the three additional E’s: Enlightenment, Education and Evaluation.

It has been through evaluation of activities internally within THREAD team and participants that the project has been able to develop over time.

Even though the sample here is very small, the overall impression from the interviews we have made and the events we have been participating in as evaluation team is, that there has been considerable impact of the ideas originated in the THREAD project among partners in both Copenhagen and Kolding. It is not only refugee and migrant women who have learned and

developed personally from the activities. Danish women also mention, that it has been important to meet refugee and migrant women and ‘do’ something together, i.e. working with textiles. This has resulted in conversations and friendships, they could not have had, had they not been able to meet during THREAD activities.

### *Concluding Comments*

The THREAD research project is characterized by being a dynamic project allowing changes to happen and adjusting to challenges and problems in implementation of activities whenever needed. The evaluation team considers this as positive. For example CTR and DSK experienced serious problems in reaching refugee women and involving them in the activities planned in the project application. This was primarily due to lack of knowledge of the Danish asylum system, immigrant law and rules in municipalities. Project leader Marie-Louise Nosch acknowledges this and states, that should she apply for the same project again, she would ensure integration and immigrant experts as participants in the project. We agree that this would have strengthened the outcomes of the research project. However, THREAD members have been innovative and agile in their thinking and have come up with alternative tasks and results. They have used the experience, they have and because of very dedicated members, they have attracted a large number of refugee women in workshops (Køge area and Kolding, for example). In Kolding the THREAD team have been persistent in trying to establish contact with the municipality and they have succeeded in establishing a platform, where they can continue to work with the municipality and other partners, as well as continue the academic work they have also developed during the THREAD research project’s period.

One comment the evaluators have heard over the time of the project period, both from academic partners, companies and refugee women is, that the participants have learned from each other. Researchers have learned from refugee women about their lives and challenges and this knowledge have also been forming background for the adjustment of goals and topics. For example the THREAD team decided to add three more E’s (Enlightenment, Education and Evaluation). Refugee women have been invited into university space and partners have contributed with their time and expertise in making internships, workshops and pop-up shops happen. This has all resulted in a dynamic process and successful results within the project.



According to data obtained from the interviews conducted for this final evaluation and the activities enlisted above, Thread has mainly focused their final activities in building human capacity: a) by facilitating training opportunities to their participants through workshops and internships b) by incentivizing the entrepreneur or employability aspect of the project, by providing collaborations with local stakeholders. By doing so, the actors interviewed claimed that the participants were empowered by learning new skills and competences not only related to textile making. Their previously acquired skills were recognized and in some cases used for entrepreneurial initiatives.

*Graphic Presentation of THREAD Project.*

*Source: presentation at 'Women Deliver Conference', Vancouver 2019.*

