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# Pair effect - Solutions for Making Volunteer Work Practices Inclusive for Asylum Seekers

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<p>The goal of this functional thesis was to create volunteering possibilities for asylum seekers. The work life partner of this thesis is Kalliola Settlement, which is a joint operation of different associations that organize social services, civic and voluntary activities in the capital region. The common goal in this project was making Kalliola Settlement volunteer work practices inclusive for asylum seekers. Behind this is an aspiration to promote social inclusion, embracing everyone's contributions as an equal member of the community.</p> <p>Volunteer work has many benefits on well-being. Volunteering seemed to have great potential to help overcome some challenges that asylum seekers are facing and a way to promote social inclusion of asylum seekers. However, volunteers often need to take part to a training before volunteering can start in order to understand the values, rights, and obligations of volunteer work. Taking part in the training and doing volunteer work can be challenging without adequate language knowledge or understanding of the Finnish culture. To find solutions for this challenge and to implement a successful practice in the future, a pilot project was developed together with Kalliola Settlement.</p> <p>Prior to the implementation, background data and ideas were gathered from those who participated in the pilot project. Based on the results, the pilot project was developed. One of the solutions was to start volunteering in pairs of a local volunteer and an asylum seeker in order to make orientation smoother, overcome the language barriers and support social connections. The pilot project was named Pair Effect and it started with five asylum seeker volunteers and five local volunteers.</p> <p>This pilot project had three parts: training, volunteering and reflection during a period of one week. The facilitators modified Kalliola Settlement's original training material to the. The training was held in Kalliola Settlement premises. After the training the pairs volunteered together. The pilot project concluded with a reflection day where the participants' ideas, comments and feedback were gathered and later used for preparing the suggestions for the work life partner.</p> <p>Kalliola settlement will use the findings to implement a practice for asylum seekers, but it also gives valuable information for others who plan similar practices. The work life partner was very pleased with the results and they are currently under process to take the idea further.</p>	
Keywords	Asylum seekers, Volunteer work, Social Inclusion, Pair Effect, Facilitating, Multicultural groups, Wellbeing

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<p>Tämän toiminnallisen opinnäytetyön tavoite oli luoda mahdollisuuksia turvapaikanhakijoille osallistua vapaaehtoistoimintaan. Työelämän kumppani oli Kalliolan settlementti, sosiaalialan palveluja tuottava yhdistys, joka järjestää muun muassa kansalaistoimintaa sekä vapaaehtoismahdollisuuksia pääkaupunkiseudulla. Yhteinen tavoite projektissa oli tehdä Kalliolan settlementin vapaaehtoistoiminta mahdolliseksi myös turvapaikanhakijoille. Toiminnan tarkoituksena oli tukea turvapaikanhakijoiden osallisuutta.</p> <p>Vapaaehtoistoiminta vaikuttaa myönteisesti hyvinvointiin. Osallistumisella vapaaehtoistoimintaan nähtiin olevan potentiaalia tukea turvapaikanhakijoiden hyvinvointia ja keinona tukea heidän osallisuutta. Vapaaehtoistoiminnan aloittaminen vaatii usein järjestön koulutukseen osallistumisen muun muassa järjestön arvojen sekä vapaaehtoisen oikeuksien ja velvollisuuksien sisäistämiseksi. Koulutukseen osallistuminen sekä erilaiset vapaaehtoistehtävät voivat olla haastavia ilman kielitaitoa tai ymmärrystä paikallisesta kulttuurista. Ratkaisun löytämiseksi näille haasteille pilottiprojekti kehitettiin yhteistyössä Kalliolan settlementin kanssa.</p> <p>Ennen pilottiprojektin järjestämistä projektiin osallistuvia haastateltiin tiedon keräämiseksi sekä osallistujien ideoiden kuulemiseksi. Yksi ratkaisusta turvapaikanhakijoiden perehdyttämisen helpottamiseksi oli muodostaa vapaaehtoispari turvapaikanhakijasta ja paikallisesta vapaaehtoistyöntekijästä. Tämä auttaa myös pärjäämään kielimuurin kanssa sekä tukee yhteyksien luomista. Pilottiprojektille annettiin nimi Pair Effect ja se tehtiin viiden turvapaikanhakijan sekä viiden paikallisen vapaaehtoisen kanssa yhden viikon aikana.</p> <p>Pair Effectissä on kolme osaa: koulutus, vapaaehtoistoiminta sekä palautteen keruu. Hankkeen ohjaajat sovelsivat Kalliolan settlementin koulutusmateriaalia vastaamaan monikulttuurisen ryhmän tarpeita. Koulutus järjestettiin työelämän kumppanin tiloissa. Koulutuksen jälkeen parit tekivät vapaaehtoistehtävät yhdessä. Pilottiprojekti päättyi tapaamiseen, jossa osallistujilta kerättiin ideoita, kommentteja sekä palaute. Palautteen pohjalta tehtiin ehdotukset Kalliolan settlementin tulevaa käytäntöä varten. Ehdotukset antavat hyödyllistä tietoa myös muille jotka kehittävät samanlaista toimintaa. Työelämän kumppani oli tyytyväinen ehdotuksiin ja he kehittelevät parhaillaan toimintaa idean viemisestä eteenpäin.</p>	
Avainsanat	Turvapaikanhakijat, Vapaaehtoistyö, Osallisuus, Pair Effect, Ryhmänohjaus, Monikulttuurinen ryhmä, Hyvinvointi

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## Introduction

This functional thesis is about finding a solution for making a volunteer work practice inclusive for asylum seekers. The idea of our thesis came in the peak of the migrant crisis of 2015 when millions of people had to leave their homes resulting to masses of people looking for safety and a better life. This became the biggest migrant crisis since the Second World War (Finnish Ministry of the interior, 2015). By October 2016 over 37 000 asylum seekers came to Finland (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016a). Those individuals will stay from month to even years as asylum seekers waiting for the asylum decision. During this time finding a place in the society can be challenging.

Even though asylum seekers are safe after arriving to Finland, the asylum procedure is often a challenging period for them. Asylum seekers often have to bear with extremely traumatic experiences happened to them in their home countries or on the long way to Finland which is a challenge on their well-being (Segal and Elliott, 2012, pp.1-6). The uncertainty of what happens the next day and the hardships of being far from their families in a new country, exhaust many. One of the asylum seekers interviewed for this project described living in the Finnish reception centres as demanding because of the conflicts arising from different groups and religions living at the same place without private place to retreat. Others talked about not being able to make friends and connect to with Finns. Furthermore, the risk of the negative asylum decision can make the situation more stressful.

We have acquainted with asylum seekers through our work practices and work in a reception centre and in a low threshold counselling service centre. We have seen how motivated asylum seekers are and experienced that many would like to be more engaged and contribute in the community much more than they can. Survey carried out by the Finnish Immigration service (2016b) in 81 reception centres in Finland revealed that most of the residents of reception centres hoped to have more meaningful activities and 25 % were very dissatisfied with the amount of things to do. There are lack of opportunities for asylum seekers to participate which stems from reasons such as language barrier, lack of information and the limited rights. Asylum seekers are also in a demanding situation in Finland because they are not considered as residents but they still live in the local

area. They do not have the same rights and opportunities than those with resident permits (Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers, 1999). When we saw the motivation, skills and the will to contribute from the asylum seekers, we saw a possibility for responding to this motivation. Our experiences stressed the need for inclusive practices and directed the thesis towards creating and implementing a pilot project to support this group.

Exclusion is present in the structures of the society and many services are not made inclusive. We believe that much can be done to change this situation and there are simple ways to make a significant difference. We find it important and beneficial to embrace the contributions of everyone in the society. Social inclusion gives the frames and inspiration for this thesis project. In an inclusive society everybody's skills and contributions are valued. There is much potential contribution, skills and resources that is hidden within the excluded. Promoting the social inclusion is therefore of great importance. Social inclusion can be promoted by supporting the excluded groups to overcome an injustice, supporting the capacities of the mainstream society to involve everybody and transforming the existing practices to be inclusive to everybody who are sharing the same area. It is important that in the globalized cities people can embrace diversity and live together for the common good. A condition for social inclusion is found in the bridge to connect the willing individual and the community. We realized that volunteer work has a great potential for an environment of social inclusion.

At the time of planning our functional thesis, most volunteer work was done for asylum seekers and not with them, such services keep asylum seekers on the receiving end without providing a possibility to give something back. We have volunteered in different organizations before and experienced the positive effects of doing something meaningful for the individual and the community as well. Moreover, volunteer work supports the mental health of volunteers, raises their skills of employability and the level of their subjective wellbeing (Hogan, 2007).

Kalliola Settlement was already looking for similar ideas and became the work life partner of this thesis. Kalliola Settlement has decades of experience in working with migration and asylum seekers and warmly welcomed us to write our thesis for them. Kalliola Settlement is organising several projects that supports the interaction of people from different cultures. They needed information on what kind of aspects has to be considered

when creating a project that makes asylum seekers participation in volunteer work possible. Together with the work life partner we decided to create a pilot-project to find solutions on how a future practice could be carried out.

Our pilot project involved three stages: training, volunteering and reflection. Our core idea was that asylum seeker are paired up with an already practicing Finnish volunteer. This will help to create interactions and make participation in volunteer activity easier for asylum seekers. Since the volunteer work is done together in pairs creating a positive effect, our project was named Pair Effect

This paper is the report of the pilot project and it introduces first Kalliola Settlement and the situation of asylum seekers. Next the paper will go in depths of social inclusion which leads to the idea of using volunteer work as a source for social inclusion having the benefits of volunteer work explained. Planning of the pilot project is shown resulting for the background ground data collection. This will be followed by the implementation of the Pair Effect pilot project and the description of the happenings. In the end the pilot project is assessed and the results discussed with possible solutions.

Based on the feedback, ideas and suggestions that we received during the pilot project, we helped Kalliola Settlement to better organise volunteer work projects for asylum seekers in the future. These projects will be carried out in the spring of 2017 and are currently under development.

## **1 Kalliola Settlement**

Kalliola Settlement is the work life partner of this functional thesis. The association was founded in 1919 and it is one of the oldest non-governmental organizations (NGO) in Finland. Kalliola Settlement is a joint operation of different associations and foundations such as Kalliola Patron's Association, Kalliola Youth association, Kalliola Senior Services Foundation, the Real Estate Helsinki Kalliola Ltd. They are also one of the owners of Settlementtiasunnot OY that produces affordable housing services. They are member of the Finnish Federation of Settlement Houses and part of the International Settlement Movement. (Kalliola, 2016)



Kalliola Settlement provides different social services and organizes civic and voluntary activities. In their premises they provide adult education, child welfare, youth work, substance misuse care, services for people with disabilities and much more. They are also the umbrella organisation for other NGO's like "Ne-Rå" that provides low thresholds social counselling services and also other projects such as "Vertsi" which provides peer support for immigrants. They also have community houses in Pasila and Espoo. (Kalliola, 2016)

Their activity is remarkable in organising volunteer work providing possibilities to engage in different events and happenings, becoming a support person, lead or help out with language learning activities, become a friend of someone who is new to the country or a language learning friend of an immigrant. Moreover, Kalliola Settlement is open for discussion with people who wish to share a volunteer work idea or start a new project. (Kalliola, 2016)

Since its foundation Kalliola Settlement is politically and religiously separate in order to better provide universal help. With their services Kalliola Settlement's aim is to support lifelong learning, help people stay in control of their own lives, to communicate with each other more fruitfully and to implement communal values. The association values equality and diversity, looks at people as individuals valuing their ability in solving their own problems independently. (Kalliola, 2016)

The pilot project of this thesis has been carried out in Vertsi. Vertsi is about developing an action model that supports integration and strengthen the life management skills of people through cooperation with public services and organisations. Vertsi promotes interaction between people of different cultures through peer support. It organises different groups such as Finnish learning group, women's circle, read together in Finnish group, Arabic women's group, senior Somalian men's group and more. Because of these peer support services, it is a place often visited by immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. This gave a great premise for practice carried out with asylum seekers. The supervisors taking part to this functional thesis from Kalliola Settlement were the volunteer work coordinator and the project manager of Vertsi. (Kalliola, 2016)

## 2 Asylum seekers in Finland

The right to apply for international protection is declared by many international conventions and protocols such as the United Nations' 1951 Refugee Convention, The Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, binding Finland and other EU countries to receive asylum seekers (Kuosma, 2015 p.1). After arriving to Finland, asylum seekers apply for international protection from the police or from the border guard authority and the asylum procedure begins. (Kuosma, 2015, p.32) Asylum seekers are addressed to a reception centre where they can live during the asylum procedure. An accommodation is given from a centre where there are free places and asylum seeker cannot choose the location (Pakolaisneuvontary, n.d). During the European migrant crisis of 2015 and while this thesis project was implemented the reception centres in Finland were overcrowded and many new centres had to be established. In the hectic times asylum seekers had to share a room with many people and relocations happened more frequently in short notice. (Asplund, 2015, Lapsiasia valtuutettu, 2016). An alternative for reception centre is the option to live in private housing, in which case asylum seeker must find the place to stay independently and separate money for the housing is not offered. (Pakolaisneuvontary, n.d)

Reception centres organise services for asylum seekers defined in the Act on the Reception of Persons Seeking International Protection and Recognising and Helping Trafficking Victims (2011, s.3). Asylum seekers are entitled to basic health and social care, which is offered in reception centre by nurses, social counsellors and social workers (Kotouttaminen, 2016). Additionally, asylum seekers can apply for reception money which is meant to cover the basic livelihood and independent living if it is not afforded otherwise. Possible earnings and wealth affects to the amount of the money (Pakolaisneuvontary, n.d). Law entitles reception centres to organize work and study activities for asylum seekers to support their self-reliance (Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers 2011, s.3, c. 29). This work activity usually means cleaning or repairing tasks in reception centres and study activity can be for example studying Finnish or Swedish, learning about Finnish culture or learning IT-skills. (Pakolaisneuvontary, n.d)

Asylum seekers are free to come and go from the reception centre as they wish. (Pakolaisneuvontary, n.d). Asylum seekers can work after three months of arrival in case they had an identity document. If the document was missing to right to work will apply

after six months. (Aliens Act, 2004,c.79) Asylum seekers can take courses in adult education schools and it is up to the vocational schools to decide whether asylum seekers are welcome (Pakolaisneuento ry, n.d).

Asylum seekers have the right to reside in Finland during the asylum procedure (infopankki, 2015). The asylum application is handled in the Immigration Office and the decision should be made within 6 months from the application. In case of a delayed decision, the applicant must be informed and the reasons for the delay has to be explained (Kuosma, 2016, p.33). If a negative decision is received, it is possible to appeal the decision to the Administrative court (Infopankki, 2016). The asylum procedure can take even years, but the typical duration is half a year (Salla Hekkala, 2015). The procedure times became longer since the amount of asylum applications multiplied in the summer 2015 (Finnish Ministry of the Interior, 2016).

## 2.1 Migrant crisis 2015 in Finland

In 2014 there were 3 450 asylum seekers stationed in 22 reception centres in Finland: 3 300 adults and 150 minors. A number that one year later increased to approximately 30 000 in 212 reception centres providing temporary home for 27 300 adults and 2 500 minors (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016b). Most of them were from Iraq (65 %), Afghanistan (15 %), Somalia (6 %) and Syria (2 %) (Kuosma 2015, p.ix). The average waiting period for application processing time for asylum decision in the beginning of 2016 was 160 days (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016c).

Even in the autumn of 2016, applications from 2015 are still being processed. From the almost 30 000 applications in 2015 there were 7 466 that the authorities were able to review. (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016d). All together in 2014, 2015 and by 2016 summer 5 955 positive decisions were made from the re-viewed 25 128 asylum seeking applications and 10 000 applications have not yet been reviewed. If a negative asylum decision is received, there is a possibility to appeal the decision, so there are still those who are waiting for a second evaluation. This raises the number of those who are waiting for a decision. In 2015, 279 people were deported and 3 186 applications were cancelled by the applicants. Based on these numbers the amount of people waiting for asylum decision is still very high. This number will change after asylum decisions are done but there is a chance that some of those who received negative decision will stay in Finland because they might have nowhere else to go.

## 2.2 Challenges during asylum procedure

The duration of the asylum procedure can be a very difficult period. Asylum seekers arrive to Finland often from war torn countries and the way they have come to Finland is often hard and dangerous. (Segal and Elliott, 2012, pp.1-6) Many have to bear with extremely traumatic experiences which often challenge well-being and mental health. Asylum seekers, unlike students or work migrants, leave their home countries from different profound reasons such as safety. Many of them go through the process of leaving their home country, relatives, family members and friends behind.

Asylum seekers often deal with insecurity, exclusion and a feeling of not being accepted. Fear, a lack of control over their own life and a feeling of not belonging to the society are issues that asylum seekers are often facing. (Thomsson, 2008, pp.28-33). In addition to the above mentioned issues, the receiving country has a strong effect on the well-being of asylum seekers. The prevalent attitudes towards migrants, social networks and the ability to speak the language of the country has a strong influence on the well-being of the asylum seekers as well (Kotouttaminen, 2016). The time during asylum procedure is characterized by waiting for the decision and efforts to invest oneself to the society is challenged in different ways.

Asylum seekers have many traumatic and hard experiences to deal with while they settle in the new country and apply for international protection. Asylum seekers are more vulnerable to exclusion during asylum procedure, a time filled with uncertainty and not knowing what will happen. (National Institute for Health and Welfare, 2015) Asylum seekers do not have social security number or permanent residence permit so their rights are limited. According to the National Institute for Health and Welfare to the support by the public sector, support from the community would be extremely beneficial. All activities that bring together asylum seekers and Finns build solidarity. Furthermore, a space that is experienced as welcoming increases the feeling of independence and coping. (National Institute for Health and Welfare, 2015)

## 3 Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is a concept that was guiding the thesis project and gave the frames for the actions. It is a broad concept explained in several ways in different contexts without

one universally agreed definition. (United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2009, p.11) Understanding social inclusion can be easier when it is viewed together with social exclusion. Often social inclusion is understood as the opposite of social exclusion and an outcome of influencing the causes that lead to social exclusion. (Charity Commission, 2001) Social inclusion is used to explain different dimensions, it means both the process where actions are taken to create a state where everyone in the society are and feel included, as well as the ideal outcome of having a fully inclusive society as described in several sources. (Wordbank, 2013, UNDESA, 2009) In the core of the term lie equality, diversity and dignity (DESA, 2009).

The vague concept of social inclusion may rise questions such as who is to be included and to what? (Nivala and Rynänen, 2013). To answer these questions and make a clear understanding of the meaning of social inclusion is important in order to guide action to the right direction and avoid weak effects due to the vague objective. Nivala and Rynänen (2013) have explored inclusion from social pedagogical perspective offering direction for actions promoting social inclusion. According to Nivala and Rynänen inclusion in social pedagogical understanding would be best defined to refer to the inclusion in a community and in a society. Furthermore, they conclude that these dimensions hold also the inclusion of other aspects such as inclusion to well-being and to possibilities to participate. (Nivala and Rynänen, 2013, pp.25-26)

Social inclusion stems from the relationship between an individual and the community (DESA, 2009). Exploring social inclusion from a social pedagogical perspective gives a holistic understanding of the concept explaining it through this relationship (Nivala and Rynänen, 2013, p.26). Nivala and Rynänen (2013) suggest three dimensions that must be present for social inclusion. Social inclusion can occur when people are present in a community, if they participate in that community and if they feel that they are included in the community. Social inclusion is the union of these dimensions. From being a member of a community and participating in that community stems the feeling of being included. In inclusive communities it is possible to participate and be seen, heard and recognized as a unique person and as a valuable part of the community. (Nivala and Rynänen, 2013, pp. 26-28). Busatto (2007) also emphasizes the recognition of everybody as unique persons in the following quotation:

...Inclusion is connection to the network of community development, it is to become more than a speck of dust, to have a forename and surname, with one's own distinctive features, skills and abilities, able to receive and give stimulus, to imitate and be imitated, to participate in a process of changing one's own life and collective life.  
(Busatto, 2007 cited in UNDESA, 2009, p.12)

### 3.1 Promoting social inclusion

One of the main elements in promoting social inclusion is supporting socially excluded groups to defeat injustice and overcome discrimination. Working towards equality and diversity promotes social inclusion. Social inclusion strives for equal opportunities for all. Moreover, it contains the aspiration to respond to the larger needs in society. (Charity Commission, 2001, p.3) Understanding that all people holds attributes to contribute (Lombe, 2007 cited in UNDESA, 2013, p.12) and that everyone should be able to reach their full potential promotes social inclusion. (UNDESA, 2013, p.3) According to Nivala and Rynänen (2013) social inclusion provides power to affect issues but it also sets responsibility and commitment to those issues. In the ideal inclusive society individuals develop and they also take responsibility of their decisions.

Something is expected both from the individual as well as from the community where the social inclusion is to happen (UNDESA, 2009). For social inclusion it is needed that the community embraces an individual as a member and also that the individual wants to become a member of that community. There must be opportunities for participation in the community for everybody and on the other hand for social inclusion to flourish, participation is needed from individuals. (Nivala and Rynänen, 2013) Thus, when promoting social inclusion, it is vital to consider also the mainstream population, not only the marginalized groups. Acceptance of everybody should be supported and contacts between different groups who might not share the same religion or culture, may not value the same things in life or may not be fond of each other's should be encouraged. Efforts should focus not only on empowering the marginalized but also on building the capacities of the whole community to embrace everyone and feel comfortable about the participation of the people who have so far been excluded. It is important to support the realization that the inclusion of people who are from different ethnic backgrounds and who may have different views and merits does not threaten them. (UNDESA, 2009, pp.32-33)

Social inclusion is related to the growth to good citizenship. Ryyänen's and Nivala's view of social pedagogical perspective is that social inclusion stems from small communities where individuals start to be active. Social inclusion in small communities such as family, work and school attach an individual to the structures in society and provides the conditions for social inclusion in societal level. Inclusion in this sense refers to functioning as a member of society and living and interacting together with other members, developing social identity and a feeling of belonging in the society. These processes arise from own growth process and societal factors. Growing to social inclusion is related to becoming a member of society through the process of socialization. Socialization means the learning of certain skills and acquirements that are needed in the society in order to become an active part of it. Skills, knowledge and aspiration to observe and assess own operational environment are needed for the growth to social inclusion. This is important to acknowledge when promoting social inclusion. Thus, promoting social inclusion is about supporting the growth processes of individuals and developing possibilities to participate so that everybody would see their situations for what it is and express themselves as members of society. (Nivala and Ryyänen, 2013)

Promoting inclusion can also be justified in economic perspective when viewing the costs arising from discriminative policies. Exclusion increases insecurity, crimes, conflicts, violence and the division in societies. While people are excluded their ideas, skills and contributions are not helping the larger community and this is a loss for the society. In addition, diversity itself has value in different communities when it is embraced. Institutions, companies and municipalities with participants from different cultural backgrounds have greater chances to succeed. This is because diverse communities are able to support shared understanding of people from different backgrounds, different cultures and values. Communities with such understanding attract a wider range of people which has great value in the globalized urban societies. Furthermore, companies which hire people from different cultures are more creative and innovative. (UNDESA, 2009, p.37)

When approaching social inclusion, it is important to detect the marginalization of certain groups in order to realize the exclusion in societal level. Institutions, authorities and organizations in different sectors should address that exclusion and respond to the needs of these groups. Different groups in different countries face challenges of engagement and this cycle is hard to overcome alone. People living in poverty or with disabilities, women, children, youth and elderly are more vulnerable for social exclusion. People who come from different cultures, religions or ethnicities than the mainstream society are also

often excluded because of social tensions and intolerant policies. Recent migrants are often target of exclusion in local communities or by larger population. (UNDESA, 2009, p.21)

### 3.2 Social inclusion of asylum seekers

Social integration and social inclusion are similar concepts and they overlap in their definitions (UNDESA, 2009, p.11). Still social inclusion can seem as a more tangible objective for a practice that addresses asylum seekers. This is because of the nature of their residence in Finland and the consequent effects. Asylum seekers know that they might not stay in Finland after the asylum decision is done which can affect the way asylum seekers invest efforts to integrate in Finland. It might be hard to find motivation to learn Finnish, get to know the city, country and culture if they know that they might have to leave the country. Furthermore, the migration policy in Finland does not either provide actions of integration for asylum seekers until they receive the refugee status (Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers 1999, s.1 c.3). The integration process starts later, but during asylum procedure, having opportunities to participate and feel included should be available. After all, many wish to be included in the community but only a few wish to be “integrated” to the rest of the society (UNDESA, 2009, p.11).

Transform the existing practices to be more inclusive is important because of the recent changes in the urban population structures. Cities host increasing amount of people from different cultures as people come and go in the globalized world more frequently. People have to learn to live with other dwellers of society who come from different cultures. (Coakley and Stavrou, 2009, p.42) Also cities in Finland receive new residents from different cultures some of whom may stay in Finland only for months or years. People like asylum seekers, students, exchange students, work practitioners, seasonal workers and travellers are dwellers in the cities in Finland for a while but they do not have the same opportunities as people with Finnish citizenship, permanent residence permit or social security number. Imbalanced social situations for groups who are different from the majority of the people can lead to exclusion of these groups. Exclusion causes feeling of temporality lowering the motivation to contribute to the society. When groups experience a lack of connection to the community, it can lead to collective act of violence. (Coakley and Stavrou, 2009, pp.42-43)



In the diverse world people often identify themselves easier with the city they live in and contribute, rather than with the whole country. Cities are growing through internal and international migration and from the year 2008 more than half of the people in the world are living in cities. By the year 2030 the amount of dwellers of cities is estimated to be 60 %. (UNDESA, 2010 cited in UNDESA, 2006, p.4). UNESCO and UN-HABITAT have developed an approach of "Right to the city" to support the access to the city of all of the dwellers and to support "inclusive cities". Migrants are one of the groups that the initiative introduces. Even though migration has been rising, not many cities have found good structures to support this group. Migrants' levels of social inclusion are changing based on employment, religion, education of the migrants and the support levels from the locale. (Balbo, 2006 cited in Urban Policies and the Right to the City, 2009, pp.30-31 ). Social inclusion of migrants must be addressed in cities and in order to have effects the diverse, multicultural background of migrants must be noted. Migrant may have different understanding of citizenship as well. Inclusive practices should target the migrant communities and a good way is to make the practices "as diverse as the communities it embraces" (Balbo 2008 cited in Urban Policies and the Right to the City, 2009, p.31)

Asylum seekers stay in the community to wait for the asylum decision and this time can be spent with learning new skills, creating new connections and having positive experiences. Inclusive practices would provide these processes, support well-being while providing possibilities to become active members of the community. Thus, promoting social inclusion would be beneficial for asylum seekers themselves and for the locale. Moreover, this could have global value as well. If a negative decision is handed to an asylum seeker, they might return to their home country and these skills, experiences and ideas can benefit the communities in their home countries. Travelling often lets people to reflect their own situation, get new ideas and the needed distance to see own situation from "outside of the box".

Social inclusion during asylum procedure is also beneficial for the time when asylum decision is positive. After asylum seekers are entitled to international protection they receive a municipality placement, move away from reception centres and start to live on their own. According to Owczarek (2007, pp. 52-53) sometimes refugees are not able to adjust to the new situation when they are expected to live alone. For example, if the asylum procedure is spent passively, asylum seekers can face challenges to manage independently when the support and services offered in reception centres are unavaila-

ble. (Owczarek, 2007, pp. 52-53) Thus, being active during the asylum procedure, building knowledge and skills and learning to live in Finland is important also in order to take control of own lives when a positive asylum decision is made.

The increasing amount of migrants from different countries creates a challenge for policy makers in local levels. The new situation requires new policies of two different kinds. There has to be integration policies for the new dwellers in the society while the old practices, communities, structures and areas has to turn inclusive. (Coakley and Stavrou, 2009, pp.42-43) To face the migrant crisis of 2015 properly and to embrace all new residents in the cities in Finland promoting social inclusion would be a useful effort. According to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs every person in the community benefits from a society that is inclusive and supports people's development and empowerment. Social inclusion can seem like an abstract state or an ideal conception, but when it comes to action it is a practical societal goal. (UNDESA, 2009, p.21)

Developing a more inclusive and intercultural society is about inclusion by design, not as an add-on or afterthought. It is essentially about creating the conditions for interaction, equality of opportunity, understanding and respect.

(Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2005, p.38)

The above quotation from The National Action Plan Against Racism (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2005, p.38) supports the idea that social inclusion can start from small grass root changes in the designs of practices. This gives foundation for the idea to make an inclusive practice for asylum seekers that was so far unavailable for them. In the following chapter the sing volunteer work as a source for social inclusion is reasoned and the benefits of volunteer work are introduced.

#### **4 Volunteer work to promote social inclusion**

Volunteer work in this functional thesis is portrayed as a source for social inclusion of asylum seekers in two dimensions. First of all, creating a practice where asylum seekers can start to volunteer promotes social inclusion in a very grass root level. As mentioned above social inclusion is about design. It is up to the authorities and policy makers in different sectors to create inclusive practices and transform existing practices inclusive.

Here an inclusive practice for asylum seekers is designed in the third sector with Kalliola Settlement.

In addition to this practical dimension, volunteer work promotes social inclusion also in a deeper level. Volunteering itself is an activity that supports one's growth to social inclusion. Volunteering provides opportunities for learning, connection and attachment to the locale. Volunteers learn about the society's structures, language and culture that helps them to become active members of society. Thus volunteering remarkably supports the social inclusion of asylum seekers. The explicit benefits of volunteer work are introduced in the next chapter.

#### 4.1 Wellbeing through volunteering

Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) carried out studies about the benefits of volunteer work. It is an intergovernmental organization of 35 countries worldwide with a mission to improve social and economic development. OECD carries out comprehensive studies about subjects such as intercultural well-being. In 2015 they measure the role of volunteering in well-being. The study found that there is a clear connection between people's well-being and participation in volunteer work. (OECD, 2015)

Based on the study volunteering has many long lasting benefits. Doing volunteer work in a young age can promote a healthy lifestyle and protect youngsters from issues such as dropping out of school or violent behavior while having an important role in reducing different risks. The study states that volunteering in old age can have a good effect on one's social life, prevents isolation and gives a sense of purpose in social roles when other roles such as raising or taking care of children are no longer needed. Volunteering also boosts self-esteem and greatly contributes to other positive psychological benefits. While meeting new people volunteers create and strengthen social bonds, make new friends, gain valuable experience and new skills. The study argues that while volunteering, volunteers develop a social network that helps them in confronting stress issues and decreases the chance of mental illness in the future. (OECD, 2015) Putnam suggests that volunteering has great value for societies stating:

...Volunteering also benefits society at large. As an expression of a vibrant civil society, volunteering helps create social capital, building and consolidating bonds of trust and cooperation, while cultivating norms of altruism, solidarity, civic mindfulness and respect for diversity, in other terms, volunteering is an essential component of the fabric of a good society...

(Putnam 1995, cited in OECD, 2015, p.190)

While those greatly affected by mental health issues may be prevented by their illness in participating, those dealing with these issues could greatly benefit from volunteer work by creating connections and developing a sense of belonging to the local society. (OECD, 2015, pp.206-212). The OECD study looking at the connection of wellbeing and volunteer work classifies the benefits of volunteering into three main domains. Based on the study volunteer work effects an individual's health status, skills and earnings and subjective well-being (OECD, 2015, pp. 212-219). In the following these aspects will be further discussed.

#### 4.2 Health status

Based on the OECD study, the benefits of volunteer work for one's health are long lasting and are especially measurable in older age. The research shows a significant connection between health and volunteer work, discovering that the self-reported good health is significantly higher and depression is diagnosed less frequently amongst those participating in volunteer activity in all of the researched countries. (OECD, 2015, p.213)

The traumatic experiences and hardships that asylum seekers face makes them vulnerable towards different health problems. Because of this volunteer work can serve as an important tool supporting their physical and mental health. (Segal and Elliott, 2012, pp.1-11)

#### 4.3 Skills and earnings

The OECD study states that activities as simple as participating in volunteering can increase employability by expanding skills, knowledge and work attitude. The study measures the cognitive, physical and learning skills that are needed for people to participate in societies and support economies to prosper. The cross national table below (table 1) shows the results of 40 countries with at least 5000 participants from each country.

Based on the table, levels of proficiency in literacy, numeracy, problem solving are significantly higher in all the examined countries than of those who do not volunteer. Looking at the results one can see that people who volunteer score higher in all fields than those who do not. The study argues that participating in volunteer activity improves the volunteer's skills of language, information technology, customer relations, communication, team work, time management and discipline that are very important in the labor market. This suggests that offering volunteer work possibilities for asylum seekers can function as a bridge towards their economic participation. (OECD, 2015 pp. 209-213)

Taulukko 1. OECD, 2015 Adult Proficiency Levels and Hourly Wages by Volunteer Engagement and Country, PIAAC database p.214

	Proficiency in literacy		Proficiency in numeracy		Proficiency in problem solving		Hourly wages <sup>1</sup>	
	Do not volunteer	Do volunteer	Do not volunteer	Do volunteer	Do not volunteer	Do volunteer	Do not volunteer	Do volunteer
Australia	272	293	259	281	284	295	18.3	19.8
Austria	266	276	270	285	282	287	18.6	20.0
Belgium	269	288	273	295	277	288	21.6	23.5
Canada	262	285	254	277	273	291	18.9	21.1
Czech Republic	272	283	273	287	280	294	8.8	9.9
Denmark	264	279	271	287	280	287	23.3	24.4
Estonia	272	287	269	284	274	286	14.5	17.1
Finland	282	295	276	291	288	291	9.4	10.2
France	257	277	247	275			18.6	20.2
Germany	263	283	263	288	278	290	18.1	20.1
Ireland	261	275	249	266	274	280	20.4	23.4
Italy	248	260	244	260			15.8	17.4
Japan	295	298	285	294	295	293	15.6	17.1
Korea	270	280	260	272	282	284	17.1	20.4
Netherlands	279	291	275	289	284	290	20.8	22.7
Norway	269	286	267	287	281	290	23.0	25.3
Poland	264	280	257	273	272	284	8.8	11.1
Slovak Republic	272	281	273	285	280	285	8.6	9.9
Spain	248	267	243	261			16.3	19.3
Sweden	273	291	271	293	284	295	18.4	19.3
United Kingdom	265	288	254	280	275	291	15.1	16.8
United States	256	281	236	266	267	284	19.5	23.1
<b>OECD 22<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>267</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>18.7</b>
Russian Federation	273	285	268	277	275	282	5.0	5.3

Note: Data for Belgium refer to Flanders; data for the United Kingdom refer to England and Northern Ireland only. Data for the Russian Federation exclude the Moscow municipal area.

1. Hourly wages include bonuses and are expressed in PPP-adjusted US dollars. The sample includes only working-age employees. The wage distribution was trimmed to eliminate the 1st and 99th percentiles.

2. Except for proficiency in problem solving, for which it is OECD 19.

Source: OECD calculations based on data from OECD (2012), OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC database), [www.oecd.org/site/piaac/](http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/).

As it was already mentioned, asylum seekers have the right to work three or six months after arriving to Finland. However, finding a job can be difficult for a person who does not speak the local language, lacks the necessary skills or documents that are needed for employment. A good level of work life skills that increase a person's employability is

crucial in order to take an active part in the society, get work and be able to provide for oneself and family.

A Dutch study carried out in 2015 examines the participation of resettled refugees. It argues that even after receiving resident permit, refugees find it extremely difficult to find a job. Based on the study many would like to work but cannot find employment or their attempts are hindered by not having time because of taking care of children or having physical or mental issues preventing them from looking for a job. The study states that in order to find a job it is important first to learn the language and participate in the society. In order to become an active working member of society one needs to first participate in the social life of the host community, learn the language, find possibilities and create connections. Without being active in these areas integration to the work life will rarely happen. (Rengers, Geerlings and Cortooms, 2015 pp.32 - 38)

Since volunteering can help a person to learn useful skills it can be considered a bridge towards being employed and finding a place in society, thus an important element for social inclusion.

#### 4.4 Subjective well-being


The following table (table 2) displays statistics done in 34 countries that compares the life satisfaction of those participating in volunteer work to those who do not. On the left side we can see the work-life satisfaction of volunteers rated on a scale from 0 to 10. and on the right it portrays the self-reported quality of life of volunteers.

Taulukko 2. Subjective Wellbeing Indicators, by Volunteer Engagement and Country, 2014 based on Gallup World Poll p.217

Country	Life satisfaction		Affect balance	
	0-10 Cantril Ladder		% of respondents reporting a positive affect balance	
	Do not volunteer	Volunteer formally	Do not volunteer	Volunteer formally
Australia	7.2	7.5	75.9	76.2
Austria	7.0	7.5	79.5	83.5
Belgium	6.8	7.1	75.9	77.9
Canada	7.2	7.4	76.9	77.7
Chile	6.8	6.9	77.2	79.4
Czech Republic	6.5	6.6	70.4	78.2
Denmark	7.5	7.7	80.0	85.8
Estonia	5.4	6.2	72.1	81.2
Finland	7.4	7.6	81.7	84.7
France	6.4	6.8	77.4	81.3
Germany	7.0	7.3	77.0	85.3
Greece	4.7	5.9	59.2	72.7
Hungary	5.1	5.3	67.3	85.9
Iceland	7.5	7.7	84.5	86.5
Ireland	6.7	7.1	76.9	80.8
Israel	7.3	7.7	66.6	70.7
Italy	6.0	6.1	63.5	64.6
Japan	5.7	6.1	77.0	86.9
Korea	5.7	6.3	66.5	71.2
Luxembourg	6.8	6.9	81.3	83.9
Mexico	6.4	6.9	81.5	84.4
Netherlands	7.2	7.4	85.5	84.5
New Zealand	7.3	7.7	78.4	84.0
Norway	7.4	7.7	79.2	84.4
Poland	5.1	5.6	74.3	75.6
Portugal	5.1	5.7	61.5	67.3
Slovak Republic	5.8	6.0	71.9	78.8
Slovenia	5.4	6.4	64.5	78.5
Spain	6.4	6.4	70.3	69.2
Sweden	7.2	7.6	80.7	79.0
Switzerland	7.4	7.7	83.4	86.2
Turkey	5.4	5.7	61.0	70.8
United Kingdom	6.5	6.8	78.9	79.6
United States	6.9	7.3	75.5	76.7
OECD	6.5	6.8	74.5	79.2

Note: Data refer to 2013 for Iceland and Turkey.

Source: OECD calculations based on data from the Gallup World Poll, [www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/en-us/worldpoll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/en-us/worldpoll.aspx).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933260165>

Examining the results one can see that people participating in volunteer work reported a higher level of life-satisfaction and also a higher quality of life than those who do not take part in such activities. Based on comparing all of the countries in the last line of the table, people participating in volunteer work reported a higher level of life-satisfaction and life quality in all of the examined countries.

The OECD study points out that volunteer's experience pleasant feelings eight percentage units higher daily than those who do not volunteer (OECD 2015 p.218). Interpreting the results to the asylum seekers the OECD study suggests that asylum seekers can gain lifelong experiences and harvest the benefits from participating in volunteer work by gaining self-esteem and a sense of belonging to the new society while reducing their own risk of isolation by acquiring useful work -life skills and strengthening their own mental health. The OECD study also reinforces this idea stating:

“...Volunteering can benefit volunteers themselves, bringing new skills and knowledge that may enhance career development or employment prospects. Volunteers also report higher life satisfaction than non-volunteers. This suggests a virtuous circle, where people do well by doing good...” (OECD, 2015, p. 2.)

A low threshold activity therefore that raises life satisfaction and subjective well-being of asylum seekers is of great value. Volunteer work brings people together and facilitates interaction between different groups of people while promoting well-being. People who do volunteer feel happier, healthier, are more connected making it a suitable tool to respond to the challenges that asylum seekers are facing and promote social inclusion.

## **5 Designing the pilot project**

Creating volunteering opportunities for asylum seekers appeared to have a lot of potential in dealing with some of the issues that asylum seekers are facing and a great way to support their inclusion. When presented the idea, Kalliola Settlement was interested in creating such possibilities. In order to obtain proper information on how an ongoing practice could be done in the future, they wanted to test the idea with developing a pilot project. For this they set some objectives: to carry out a training adapted to asylum seekers' needs making volunteer work accessible to them and to gather feedback about the process. With this they also wished to increase the number of volunteers in their practices.

When the process of developing the idea started, such activities were hard to find even though there were many asylum seekers interested. Because of this, the idea had to be developed from the beginning and considered from different angles. Organized volunteer work for asylum seekers has a few characteristics that are different from the volunteer work carried out by the local people and Finnish citizens. This would have made it hard to include asylum seekers straight to the practices of Kalliola Settlement. In order to understand these characteristics, they were further explored with the asylum seekers through a background data collection. In the following paragraphs the gathering of background data and the results are discussed.



## 5.1 Gathering background data

In order to create a project for asylum seekers it seemed important to learn about them and get to know their situations so that different aspects could be considered and that the project would be tailored towards their needs. Gathering information with background data collection about the key issues of the project from the asylum seekers was vital. Through this they became part of creating this pilot project. The key issues investigated were areas of volunteer work in their home countries, how they understand volunteer work, their images of the Finnish society, hopes and needs in their lives in Finland, what kind of needs they have and how could they participate more (Appendixes 2-5). Contacts to asylum seekers were found through Finnish language classes, reception centers and through Kalliola Settlement.

Background data was collected through semi structured interviews arranged with three asylum seekers and one Finnish volunteer. These interviews were arranged in public places such as cafes, in a manner of relaxed discussions. The interviews had two interviewers, the authors of this thesis. This was done in order to share roles and observe the situation better. During the interviews English language skills were sufficient to communicate except for one where translation was done by another interviewed asylum seeker.

## 5.2 Findings

In the following, the results of the background data will be discussed in more detail. These results are based on the received answers, given suggestions of the asylum seekers and the observations made by the authors.

### 5.2.1 Differences between informal and formal volunteering

“We see them, and go, and help them”

Through background data collection the forms of volunteer work in the participant’s home countries were explored. The ways of performing volunteer activity appeared to differ greatly in the home countries of the asylum seekers from how it is done in Finland. The interviewees emphasized that if there is an emergency situation and immediate help is

needed aid is offered directly without contacting a third party. This is understandable in places where emergency situations arise frequently and the place of action is more evident. If there is no emergency situation people still tend to help through their contacts on an informal way.

In Finland volunteer work is often organized by NGOs who tend to have their own rules and practices, thus many organizations arrange trainings for their new volunteers to convey the values, rules and the mission of the NGO. In Finland it might not be possible to just show up for example in an elderly home to volunteer without contacting the place beforehand. While having helping other people spontaneously is a great virtue, at the same time it is important for asylum seekers to understand organized volunteer work in the Finnish context. Because of this communicating the concept of volunteer work to the asylum seekers had to be emphasized in the training.

### 5.2.2 Using the skills of asylum seekers

It was important to consider the skills and interests of the asylum seekers in the project which was also asked. Some of the interviewees expressed interest in translating from Arabic to English, some wanted to motivate other people and work with the elderly while others were preferring to do physical work such as demolishing old cars. All in all, an overwhelming enthusiasm was experienced and they were all happy to just help on any way possible.

### 5.2.3 Using metaphors and figures of speech

“People are like my fingers, some are better in some things, some are not”

During the interviews metaphors were used frequently by the interviewees. It seemed like the participants used to describe feelings and deeper concepts of life. When talking about different people being good or bad our interviewees used the metaphor of having different fingers all being better or worse in the same group. When asking about the reason behind helping others one referred that “it is a beautiful thing of nature”. These details showed that the participants were receiving for metaphors and creative ways of describing happenings of life. Thus, in the pilot project metaphors could be used to explain some concepts, that would otherwise be too complex to explain in easy English.

Because of this finding it was decided to make use of metaphors in the materials of the project. Still it is important to note that some groups might not be as receptive towards metaphors as others, therefore it is important to find out beforehand whether they could be useful.

#### 5.2.4 Cultural attitudes towards gender

“Yes, I like if my boss is a woman, it happens more and more lately.”

The background data collection was also a great opportunity to find out whether the participants have any issues with working with the opposite gender or being supervised by a woman or a man. This issue was addressed in the questions. Concluded from the interviews is that at least this young generation and those who will participate in volunteer activity would happily work with anybody regardless of gender and there is no problem from being supervised by a woman.

#### 5.2.5 Providing a space for sharing

Through these interviews the asylum seekers wanted to talk about their life stories and showed a great interest in a place where they can openly share with others. The background data collection questions were made with great consideration not to go into areas that could be in any way challenging for the participants, still asylum seekers started to share their personal experiences freely. Thus the interviews turned out to be eye-opening and rich of personal life experiences and stories. It was noticed that for the participating asylum seekers a place and time for sharing where they can be heard is very important and needed. This led to the conclusion that the workshop should include space and time for sharing.

#### 5.2.6 Flexibility and commitment

Committing to a certain task, coming in time and finding the place might not be evident for people who have recently arrived to Finland from a very different culture. The early meetings of the project and the discussions with the asylum seekers suggested that some asylum seekers come from cultures where timing is not as strict as in Finland and being late is tolerated. Also, finding places in Helsinki with public transport using mobile

applications or maps seemed to be demanding for some. Furthermore, asylum seekers' place of residence can change abruptly because of different reasons such as relocations, moving to private accommodation or leaving Finland. Because of these issues, an inclusive volunteering practice should be flexible and not require long-term commitment. Such requirements would rule out many who would otherwise be interested.

#### 5.2.7 Considering language skills

Another important aspect to be considered when planning volunteering options for asylum seekers is language skills. If an inclusive practice is to be created, it is important to make a practice where people who do not speak Finnish, Swedish or English could be able to participate. Since only half of the asylum seekers in Finland in 2015 speak some English and one third can write in English (Sandberg and Stordell, 2016), it is important to create inclusive options. As participation in Finnish society is especially difficult for asylum seekers who do not speak Finnish, Swedish or English it was important to try to find a way to create a practice where language skills would not be required.

#### 5.2.8 Understanding the need for volunteering in Finland

"I don't know why I volunteer, it is nature, it is a beautiful thing. You feel like a real human being when you do it"

Asylum seekers seemed to enjoy helping others and expressed desire to work with people of the local community in the hope of making friends. Many of them were emphasizing that they have a "big heart" and that they want to express it by doing something meaningful. However, even though interest of participation was high, during some of the discussions with asylum seekers it started to seem that they do not necessarily realize the need for volunteer work in Finland. It showed that the key concepts of volunteer work are often culturally constructed while the needs can be relative. Many asylum seekers come from places where there is war and a crying need for help. Seeing the needs for volunteer work in a welfare state can be hard before understanding the Finnish culture. In discussions with asylum seekers many were surprised by the fact that there is poverty in Finland and there are people who need help and support. Asylum seekers who saw a bread queue in Helsinki for example were confused and asked how they could help those people. Since many were shocked that social problems exist in Finland, it started to seem necessary to include a part in the project with an introduction to the Finnish society and

social system in order to create mutual understanding of the fundamental concepts for the project.

“No needy people in Finland because strong government”

### 5.3 Creating the idea of volunteering in pairs

The above mentioned findings posed some challenges that needed solutions. The background data collection implies that good orientation when starting volunteering is important with this target group. In addition to the above mentioned challenges asylum seekers might also have personal issues and traumas to deal with while being in a new and unfamiliar city and in a new culture. Therefore, taking roles which require responsibility, commitment and knowledge of Finnish culture might be too demanding, at least in the beginning of volunteering. It seemed like that either asylum seekers will receive a lot of supervision from the beginning with instructions about public transport, basic language and cultural knowledge that requires lots of time and resources or a better, easier and more sufficient way had to be developed.

Pondering on the challenges and opportunities, one of the main characteristics of this project was invented. Volunteering will be done in pairs of an asylum seeker and a practicing Finnish volunteer. This way the practicing volunteers who already know about volunteering can have an asylum seeker with them and provide friendly, face to face orientation. This idea had great benefits and assisted other aspects of the project as well.

Volunteering in pairs provides an opportunity to interact with each other and learn from their experiences and their different cultures. When doing their tasks together asylum seekers can learn about Finnish culture easier while the local volunteers can also have a great opportunity to learn from the asylum seekers. The role of the practicing volunteer is not to be a supervisor who instructs the asylum seekers through the process, but a friendly pair who provides guidance if needed with transportation, meeting before the task to find the location together and help with translation or in learning Finnish.

Pair work is beneficial also for the management of the project. Organizations for example often have a busy schedule and scarce resources, so it is important to make a project where the work life partner does not need to invest extra time and personnel for the

implementation. This way additional resources will not be needed with understanding instructions, communicating and understanding the tasks among other things.

Because of all these benefits, volunteering in pairs became a core characteristic of the pilot project that eventually led to the name “pair effect”. Pair Effect is named after this aspiration to have two people connecting for a common goal in order to have a positive effect on the society while mutually affecting each other on a way that supports social inclusion.

## **6 Preparations for the pilot project**

The project was discussed and shaped in close co-operation with Kalliola Settlement and the key principles were established. Values and rules of the Kalliola Settlement and understanding the volunteer work in Finland were things that needed to be presented in the training. Kalliola Settlement welcomed the idea of pair volunteer work and the possible ways of implementing it were discussed. Together with Kalliola Settlement a structure for the pilot project was developed.

In order to test the idea of Pair Effect in a short pilot project within one week of time, starting with the training. During this week the participants had different task options to choose, from what they had to pick one to carry out. It seemed to be most beneficial that each pair takes part to only one volunteer work task in order to keep the project organized and manageable. One week from the training a feedback meeting was organized for reflection and collecting feedback.

The initial idea was that Kalliola settlement offers the volunteer work tasks through their volunteer practices and the Finnish volunteers would come from the places where the volunteer work is carried out. This idea would require that there are many Finnish volunteers who are interested to take part in the project. Invitations for Finnish volunteers were sent to all of the volunteers of Kalliola settlement. Unfortunately, only two responded and were interested in taking part. Both of them were volunteers in Finnish courses so they were already working with immigrants and asylum seekers. In those places asylum seekers could not help much volunteering. Because of this and the lack of interested Finnish

volunteers the initial idea had to be changed. For this reason, Kalliola Settlement found the places where help was needed, just before the pilot project started.

The pilot project is for five asylum seekers and five Finnish volunteers. Having only ten participants was ideal in order to keep the project organized meanwhile it still provided adequate amount of feedback. In the end, Kalliola Settlement found the Finnish volunteers to take part in the project. The current volunteer training material of Kalliola Settlement required Finnish knowledge and was long and complicated. For this pilot project the facilitators had to develop competence on how to interact with different people and facilitate multicultural groups.

### 6.1 Facilitating multicultural groups

The participants for the pilot project of Pair Effect came from many different cultures and it needed to be recognized so that everybody would feel comfortable. The pilot project had to be carried out in a manner that supports diversity and equality. With this in mind, Diversity Checklist for Workshop Design (UNESCO cited in Hogan, 2007 pp.26-30) ushered the process of Pair Effect.

The checklist offered many practical suggestions that were useful in the planning process of Pair Effect. Practical things such as considering the dates of workshop were important to check, so that different occasions such as religious festivals, cultural celebrations or daily structures of some of the participants would not stop people from taking part. Learning about the participating cultures beforehand is advised in the checklist in order to avoid misunderstandings. When planning activities, it is recommended to consider whether physical contact should be included in the facilitated activities because it might be an issue in some cultures. In order to make an inclusive practice for men and women from all cultures where everyone feels comfortable, icebreakers that would contain physical contact were left out.

According to the checklist it is important that facilitators acknowledge the diverse experiences and knowledge of participants and provide opportunity for sharing in the workshop. According to Hogan (2007, p.190-211) using multisensory activities such as pictures and storytelling enables those participants who learn on different ways to absorb the message and to understand the society for what it is. This and the usage of short

sentences makes the training less tiring for those who are not fluent in English. Encouraging participants to get to know each other and providing time and space for sharing and listening should be of core elements. Participants should be also encouraged to understand that there are different viewpoints and perspectives of the world. Speaking in plain English with patience to repeat or rephrase sentences if needed gives the backbone of communication. For those who do not speak Finnish or English small breaks should be used to give time for translation. To initiate a project where participants feel that they are vital parts, opportunities for sharing feedback, both anonymous and informal should be provided. The above mentioned aspects were taken into consideration during the project and are assessed later.

## **7 Implementation of the pilot project**

The happenings of the pilot project took place during one week. The training day was organized on a Saturday in March 2016. Volunteer tasks has been carried out on the next week and the reflection day was held on the next Saturday. In the following part the implementation of the project is described through the three different stages.

### **7.1 Training**

The training was organized during three hours with five asylum seekers, five Finnish volunteers, two Kalliola settlement workers and the authors of this thesis who were the facilitators of the training. The training had two important parts: fun activities in a relaxed atmosphere to get to know each other and learning about Kalliola Settlement, volunteering and Finnish society. The facilitation of the workshop was organized with an attitude of learning together where the facilitators are not teaching, rather learning together with the participants by solving problems. This non-hierarchical style leads to a warm and inclusive atmosphere where everyone is equally teaching and learning and everyone's voice is important. It is the atmosphere where real learning can take place based on the pedagogical style proposed by Paulo Freire. (Freire, 1970 pp. 54-67)

Since the training day started at noon, food was provided in the beginning to make participation possible even for those who would otherwise miss their lunch offered to them in the reception centres. After the meal, facilitation started with games focusing on getting



to know one another. The first game focused on introduction, the participants stood in a circle said their names and shared with everybody something that they like. After this everyone went around in the room and met someone who they do not know to discuss in a few minutes what they enjoy to do in their free time. This was repeated several times. In the next game everyone shared in turns one word that they like on their mother tongue and enacted it with a descriptive movement. Others repeated the movement and the word, then they tried to guess its meaning. These games were followed by the learning part.

Kalliola settlement and the project were introduced in the beginning which was followed by a discussion about volunteer work. This was introduced by slides with lots of pictures, easy English and metaphors. Open discussion was included and ideas shared to achieve a common understanding of the concept of volunteer work. It was important to emphasise that volunteer work is unpaid, it is done from one's own free will to someone outside of family and friends and that participation is open for everyone. These were taken from Kalliola Settlement's original material to train new volunteers.

Discussing the volunteer work structures of Kalliola Settlement and what kind of practices it possesses was included. Showing the different levels where volunteer work takes place such as helping family and friends, working professionally or working for an organization gives the whole picture of volunteering. After this, the rules of Kalliola Settlement which are presented in their training programme were introduced, emphasizing the freedom of choice and the importance of commitment to those choices. In volunteer work when one commits to a task it is necessary to show up at the agreed time and place because others are relying on the help of volunteers and arrangements are done accordingly.

It was important that the values of Kalliola Settlement are presented to the participants. Individuality, diversity and equality should be respected in Kalliola Settlement practices. Values have been presented with easy metaphors and pictures in a discussing manner where participants could share their perceptions and ideas on what those values mean and how people act on them.

#### 7.1.1 Facilitated discussion framework exercise through picture analysis

The main exercise on the training was based on the facilitated discussion framework for picture analysis for multicultural groups (Hogan, 2014). The need for this exercise raised

from the background data collection which made it clear to explain that Finland is facing social challenges of its own and there is a need for help. The purpose of this exercise was to develop critical consciousness in order to acquire new perceptions and develop knowledge of the reality that people live in by familiarising themselves of the need of volunteer work in Finland and thinking of solutions together. Through this exercise, participants had the chance to learn about Finnish society and get confronted with the surrounding social reality with its contradictions through reflection. Freire (1970, pp.68-105) proposes that when developing awareness on the reality of the world, one's perceptions are challenged providing the possibility to gain consciousness and shape the world. For this as a tool the facilitated discussion framework has been used and altered to the needs of the participants (Hogan, 2007 pp. 192-194).

For this exercise, participants formed four groups and were given pictures with questions. They had ten minutes for discussing the pictures and the related questions. The pictures portrayed different people with challenges in Finland to discover the areas where volunteer work is needed. These pictures displayed four topics, people living in poverty, people with disabilities, marginalized youth and lonely elderly. Questions to discuss were based on the facilitated discussion framework.

First the participants had to have a good look at the pictures answering the following questions:

1. What is happening in the picture? How are the people doing? If you could talk to the people what do you think they would say?
2. Can you see any challenges? Are the people facing some challenges? What?
3. Why are the problems happening? What could be the causes for the problems?

After this the groups came together and presented their discussion. Next the whole group discussed about possible solutions to the challenges they have found answering the following questions: What can be done? What would you do to help? What kind of volunteer activities could be organised for them? This was done in order to guide the participants to discover solutions and ideas of their own, to raise consciousness of the importance and usefulness of their own ideas and to emphasize that something can be done.

### 7.1.2 Choosing the volunteer tasks

The last programme for the training day was to present the volunteer tasks that were available. Kalliola Settlement presented three different options of volunteer activity from which the participants could choose one: helping in a dancehall event organised in an elderly home, helping in another dancehall event in a community house or helping in a sports group organised for the youth. The participants could choose which task they would like to perform and the pairs were formed, matching the wishes and time schedules. After everybody has found a suitable place and a pair, all the volunteers were given the place details, contact information for their pair and contact person in Kalliola Settlement were shared. After this volunteers made arrangements in pairs for finding the volunteer places and possibilities of sharing transport.

### 7.2 Volunteer activity

Volunteer activity was carried out during the week between the training and the reflection day. The pairs volunteered together in the agreed times without supervision from the facilitators. This was important in order to see how the idea works out in real life to provide reliable information about the project. The activities were done in an elderly home, a youth club and a community house. The details and observations of these activities will be discussed in the assessment chapter with the collected reflection of the participants.

### 7.3 Reflection meeting

The final meeting of the workshop was for reflection, feedback and brainstorming. This took place on a Saturday one week after the training day. In the beginning of the training day there was time for reflection. The pairs shared their experiences, challenges and emotions they experienced during the volunteer day and these themes were openly discussed together. After this a more structured feedback session started. As a reflection participants commented on three topics in groups: training, volunteering and pair work. Each group received a big sheet of paper where they could write their reflection under three questions, "What did you like?", "What could have been done better?", and "How could it be done next time?" (Appendixes 6-8)

Participants also received a feedback form that contained twelve questions scaled from excellent to very poor displayed with five different emoticons. After finishing the forms Kalliola Settlement provided everyone a reference of volunteering and those who wished to continue doing volunteer work were given a contract and further orientation.

## **8 Assessment of the Pilot Project**

The main objective of this functional thesis was to create a way to include asylum seekers in volunteer work and test it as a pilot project. From the findings the work life partner Kalliola Settlement will develop a new inclusive practice. Pair Effect pilot project gave valuable insight to the work life partner on how asylum seekers can become their volunteers. In the following the findings of the pilot project will be discussed and suggestions will be given.

### **8.1 Assessment of the training**

“When we went there we already knew what to do because you already explained everything”

“Should be less background info and more concrete”

“From the presentation I learned that we are in the same team. Together we get ideas on how to make something useful”

The objectives of the training were communicated to the participants through multisensory learning tools such as open discussions, stories, pictures, metaphors and facilitated discussion framework. It seemed that these methods were particularly helpful in order to understand the concepts even for those who do not speak the language very well and for those whose understanding of volunteer work differed strongly from what it is in Finland.

During the training participants were in good mood, discussion was open and people were sharing a lot. Feedback was mainly positive, many found it very useful and interesting. But, since some of the Finnish volunteers have gone through a training already, they found some parts of it repetitive. It seemed that some of the participants became tired by the end of the training as there was a lot of material that had to be discussed with the new ones. The training had to include the pairing process and the choosing of

volunteer works which seemed to be demanding at the end, yet these things were all necessary in testing the pilot project.

## 8.2 Assessment of the volunteer work day

“We were real people and we were happy”

“I know that they take care of them, but they also need people to visit, make you happy and make you know that you are not forgotten.”

“It looked like all of the people lit up when we helped.”

“I danced with this lady five times, she forgot me every time. “

“We made them smile and someday maybe someone will make us smile”

Volunteering had been mainly successful according to the participants. They were enthusiastic and happily shared their experiences in the reflection meeting. Participants had taken many pictures especially from the dancehall in the elderly home which they were showing. This meeting was so successful that a local newspaper had published a small article the participants of the pilot project volunteering.

Some participants felt that when they were volunteering there was not enough supervision given in the hosting premises and they had felt confused. Because of this one participant suggested that it would be better to include a person from the place hosting the volunteer activity in the training process. This way the hosting party could represent the premise, introduce the volunteer activity and be there as the contact person during the activity. This would provide more confidence and help to avoid confusion that some of the volunteers were experiencing.

Still, another participant expressed that feeling confused is a natural part of starting a new volunteer work. It was suggested that the training day could include discussion about this feeling of uncertainty in the beginning.

## 8.3 Assessment of pair volunteering

“It looked like we talked with the eyes and understood each other”

“Situation was a bit confusing due to lack of orientation”

In order to assess the idea of volunteering in pairs the idea was examined with real volunteer tasks and feedback was gathered from all the pairs after the activity. Since the original idea of having the local volunteers from the volunteer tasks where the volunteering will take place did not happen, the pair volunteering lost a bit of its full potential. In the pilot projects the places that hosted the activity was new to both the asylum seekers and to the Finnish volunteers. If the original idea would have been possible the confusion that some participants were feeling could have been avoided.

Another factor that hindered the pair volunteering from reaching its full potential in the pilot project was the fact that by the end of the training when pairs were to be formed there was only a little bit time left and participants started to be tired. Facilitators did not have enough time to explain the idea of pairing thoroughly and the pair exercise to connect the pairs already during the training had to be left out completely.

Still, the idea of pair volunteering was carried out and feedback was gathered. The strength of the Finnish volunteers in supporting the orientation of the asylum seekers were their language and cultural knowledge and their experience in doing volunteer work in Finland. Based on the feedback working in pairs was mainly well received by the participants. The pairs helped each other with finding the location of the volunteer work, translated the instructions for the tasks and even arranged shared transportation.

Doing volunteer work where one person who has experience in volunteering helps with another's orientation is a good way to save time, facilitate interaction, come over the language barrier and save some resources. An asylum seeker can have a contact person who can show them how to do the volunteer task. To understand some things without this personal contact can be difficult with language barriers.

From the results of this pilot project it is recommended to have a closer co-operation with the facility that hosts the activity and that the local volunteers would be from there. This would make the process even more fluent. In order to have enough volunteers and tasks, it is advised to start this co-operation early. Volunteering in pairs is a simple and efficient way to help the orientation of new volunteers and it only takes a practicing volunteer who can take someone along for the day and show them what he is doing. This way the new volunteer will receive first-hand experience on how the volunteering is done.

The possibilities with such activity are limitless. It can be used to give orientation to people new to a certain task or to advertise volunteer work by showing others what volunteers do. Volunteering in pairs can provide an easy possibility for people who want to try out volunteer work. It is also sufficient for those who could not commit for a long time or do not speak the local language and it is a great way to facilitate interaction between different people and cultures.

#### 8.4 Asylum seekers time management

It was noted already in the background data collection that some asylum seekers do not find punctuality important. Asylum seekers asked to be reminded of the dates of the training thus, small flyers were given to help them remember the meetings. Before the training asylum seekers were given a call to wake up. However, even though asylum seekers were frequently reminded there were still considerable time management issues.

One asylum seeker could not come for the training and informed just shortly before the event. For the reflection meeting all of the Finnish volunteers were there, but only one of the asylum seeker attended. Others informed about their absence only minutes before the event. Still, all of the participants came in time for the volunteer activity. Because of these experiences it is suggested that the future projects would be tailored with space for flexibility. One of the advice from participants was to emphasize more the fact that once participants commit to volunteer work people are counting on them. In future projects it is suggested to consider these time issues and tailor a project as flexible as possible.

#### 8.5 Pop-up volunteering

From this realization rose the idea to offer possibilities for pop-up volunteering where volunteering is possible in short notice. Asylum seekers would still have to be trained but after the training they would be notified when help is needed for different events, even on short notice. This way flexibility would be ensured and there would be no need for commitment. This way their attitude to volunteering informally by simply “seeing the problem and helping” observed in the background data collection could also be embraced while absences would not cause problems. Pop-up volunteering would be a great way

to respond to the needs of the target group, which have been observed during this pilot project.

#### 8.6 Finding asylum seekers to volunteer

“People who comes here sometimes want to rest couple of months, don’t want to get up early, some people do nothing.”

While volunteering is beneficial and can help many asylum seekers in their situation, some asylum seekers are not yet ready to be active. Many asylum seekers are very active and want to contribute more than they can at the moment while others need time to heal and get better after their hard experiences. As ASAP group states it, asylum seekers are living in situations that would put many of us down. The hard experiences that asylum seekers have had in their home countries, losing home and bearing with traumas are issues that can diminish motivation and hope. (ASAP group, 2007, p.9) Pop-up volunteering would be something that those who want to try volunteering but are not ready to commit could also benefit from. From the feedback of the participants it became evident that volunteer work makes them feel good and connected to the society.

#### 8.7 Finding Finnish volunteers

“There are people who are more reluctant to try but if they would just try it once and see how nice it is they would want to do it again”

In order to get Finnish volunteers to join Pair Effect an invitation was sent to about 200 Kalliola Settlement’s volunteers. Unfortunately, only two persons were interested, this lack of participants became one of the main practical challenges of this project.

To overcome such issues, it is recommended to advertise the practice face-to-face to possible participants. Those who were already involved could share their experiences with other local volunteers. One of the Finnish volunteers in the pilot project said that if Finns try out working with asylum seekers they would be more willing to continue. Another Finnish volunteer mentioned that many Finns would be interested to take part, but there should be more support for this. Altogether, the Finnish volunteers who took part to this project seemed to enjoy it throughout and gave mainly good feedback.



## 8.8 Considering the needs of multicultural groups

The authors familiarized themselves with concepts of facilitating multicultural groups adopting suggestions from different sources. These considerations were beneficial and it is suggested to dwell on these aspects for those who continue this project or wish to do similar projects in the future.

Some of the considerations for the facilitation were proved to be useful while others were not as necessary with this group. Facilitators accustomed themselves to the cultures presented. When offering food everyone's cultures were considered thus there came no issues with eating together. Icebreakers did not include physical contact even though this group seemed to have no problem with such issues. Icebreakers included learning about each other's cultures so that everybody could share where they are coming from. This was indeed found to help people with getting closer to each other because they felt that others were interested in their culture. Explaining values and more complex concepts was successful with the use of metaphors and multi-sensory learning techniques. Explaining such important values of Kalliola Settlement as the trust in people's ability to find solution to their own problems was shown by the example of the man who did not get a fish but a net in order to go fishing and manage on his own. These supported the understanding especially when language barrier was present.

The exercise based on the facilitated discussion framework (Hogan, 2007, pp.192-193) was the main group exercise in the training and a good way to learn about societal issues in Finland. Pictures resembling Finnish societal challenges were presented to the participants and they had to think of a cause, an effect and a possible solution in groups. It was successful and made the realization of the challenges possible and it would have been very complicated to explain this issues without such a creative way. Therefore, such exercises are much encouraged to use for similar projects.

## 8.9 Overcoming the language barrier

In order to create inclusive volunteering opportunities for asylum seekers Finnish or English language skills should not be a requirement. Not all asylum seekers speak Finnish, Swedish or even English and this can be a barrier for many practices. The practice should rather provide creative ways to communicate. After all, helping can be just as much about actions than communication. In the pilot project it was possible to test how

to develop practices where language barriers are present because there was a participant who did not speak Finnish or English and a Finnish participant who could not speak English. To overcome language barriers, the facilitator of the practice should make sure that there is at least one person in the training who speaks the languages of those who are present. This way someone can translate the discussion during the facilitation.

During volunteer work tasks it can be discussed whether their pair can communicate the instructions for the asylum seekers or they can form a group of three where Arabic and Finnish/English speaking volunteer would join to translate when needed. There is a lot of help needed that does not require language knowledge such as helping in events and helping someone with house chores, only the structure to connect the people to the tasks was missing. In pair effect pilot project, the person who only spoke Arabic joined the training having another participant translating for him to Arabic. With the help of others, he could join the discussions, volunteer and no other resources from Kalliola Settlement were needed for his inclusion. He danced with the elderly and tried to speak Finnish with them. It seems that including those who do not have the language skills that are usually required can be an issue to overcome with the right arrangements. Pairing can be a good method to use for this issue as well. In the training a language pair can be formed of two asylum seekers and other one possessing the responsibility to translate.

#### 8.10 Volunteer work as a tool for well-being

“I was very excited and comfortable. It made me forget bad things. I don't know why; I was very happy”

Here the asylum seeker's feelings shown through their comments and feedback are assessed. On the reflection day lots of comments were received on the positive feelings that they felt during the pilot-project. All the participants seem to have a good time during the training and feedback day. They were smiling, making jokes and were generally in a good mood. People were very talkative and sharing deeply about their lives. During the feedback some participants said that they made lifetime memories for which they will always remember and were very enthusiastic in doing volunteer work in the future. They not only had fun but also made connections during the activity and it could be seen as a good group spirit in the reflection meeting. Some of the participants met later to go to the gym together and participated in other projects and events of Kalliola Settlement. It is important to note that the benefits of volunteer work arise from the social connections.

Pair Effect provides an environment for creating connections. It was also noted in the feedback that helping people have made participants feel good. These aspects of volunteer work are very beneficial for well-being.

### 8.11 Assessment of social inclusion

“I feel really happy, I feel that I’m useful to the community and I will remember even from five years back and it will make me happy”

This functional thesis was aimed to support the social inclusion of asylum seekers by creating volunteering opportunities. This project had two dimensions of promoting social inclusion: the practical grass root designing of an inclusive practice and supporting the growth to inclusion by the benefits that volunteering provides. Other elements in promoting social inclusion are also tangible in this project. Pair Effect pilot project strived for supporting excluded groups to overcome injustice, working towards equality, diversity and creating equal opportunities for all.

#### 8.11.1 Designing an inclusive project

One dimension of social inclusion is that it stems from practices that are available for every dweller in the society, it is a practical tool about making societies inclusive. Asylum seekers who might have faced difficulties on finding meaningful things to do had now an equal opportunity to participate. This thesis project was tailored in detail to the needs of the participants so that nobody would feel neglected or find issues that would prevent their participation. It was made as inclusive as possible, so that the emerging need from asylum seekers to participate (Finnish Immigration Office, 2016) could be responded to.

#### 8.11.2 Building the capacities of the mainstream society

While promoting social inclusion the capacities of the mainstream population should be supported. The local participants of the pilot project got a chance through this project to get to know asylum seekers and their cultures during meeting and volunteering in pairs. The authors of this thesis got also acquainted with the asylum seekers. Any connections that brings together people from different groups that do not get acquainted often supports acceptance, solidarity and promotes social inclusion. Asylum seekers contributed

in the society and they were recognized by many other actors of the pilot project such as the elderly in the service home, the youngsters and the people who took part to the other dance event.

#### 8.11.3 Embracing the contributions of everybody

In the pilot project asylum seekers took an active and important role in Finnish society by volunteering and helping others. They could contribute in the community and their skills and unique personalities were recognized, expressing themselves as productive members of the society. As an example of the appreciation of the volunteers, the dance-hall event in the elderly home was discussed still long time after it took place by the elderly, because they have enjoyed so much the efforts of the asylum seekers. This project strives towards that communities would embrace an individual with their skills and contributions.

#### 8.11.4 Growth to social inclusion

Asylum seekers learned about the Finnish culture, society and customs during the training and volunteering. Asylum seekers got a chance to speak Finnish for example by communicating with the elderly while dancing. Asylum seekers saw what kind of services Finnish society offers and how they take care of the elderly. Asylum seekers' learning about Finnish society was supported during the training as well by discussion and different exercises. The new skills and knowledge supports the process of socialization and acts as very important aspects of social inclusion. Furthermore, social inclusion requires understanding of cultural structures and heritage and during this project, asylum seekers learned about these aspects.

#### 8.11.5 The dimensions of social inclusion

Social inclusion stems from the relationship between an individual and the community. Asylum seekers are dwellers in the societies but often they do not have the chance to participate as much as they wish. In that case only the first dimension of social inclusion presented by Ryytänen and Nivala (2013) is present. Asylum seekers are there but not really participating. During this pilot project, asylum seekers had the chance to participate

in the society as active members. This supports the other dimension of inclusion of participating in the society. Still, this pilot project offered the chance to participate to only one volunteer activity so it does not make a fundamental difference yet in the third dimension of social inclusion, feeling of being included. Soon, though, asylum seekers have the chance to take part to the future practice, and start volunteering more regularly.

#### 8.11.6 Detecting the social exclusion in societal level

In this thesis the exclusion of asylum seekers was noted and ideas to support social inclusion of asylum seekers are provided. Through these solutions asylum seekers will not gain the same rights as Finnish citizens and that is not the goal of the thesis. The main aspiration is to give more opportunities for those who are in such depriving situations. As mentioned above, when approaching social inclusion, it is important to detect the marginalization of certain groups in order to realize the exclusion in societal level. During this pilot project this was noted through information and discussions revealing the difficulties of everyday life for this group. Institutions, authorities and organizations in different sectors should address that exclusion and respond to the needs of these groups.

#### 8.13 Assessment from Kalliola settlement

In the following is Kalliola Settlement's evaluation about the work of the authors. Kalliola settlement and the authors of this functional thesis had the common goal to start to implement possibilities of social inclusion and to create a training of volunteer work for asylum seekers. This objective was approached through volunteer work opportunities. As it seemed to be a fluent way to become an active member of the society. Because the resources of Kalliola Settlement's were limited, they were interested to have students to develop a pilot-project together. In the end Kalliola Settlement was happy about how ambitiously the project was implemented and considered through different points of views. Together common vision of the project was created during regular meetings. Kalliola Settlement was very satisfied about how the key values and policies were communicated in the material and their wishes were considered. They state that the work was well prepared with much consideration given to the different point of views. According to Kalliola Settlement the authors of the thesis were very active, devoted and brave to try out something that has not been done before. The working life partner was happy

how the authors used many different sources and interviewed asylum seekers and locals in order to lead the project to the right direction. Kalliola Settlement states that this functional thesis responds to its real needs and it will help the implementation of the new training practice for asylum seekers. With this thesis Kalliola Settlement can understand easier the special needs of such groups when providing a training. Kalliola Settlement found it to be an especially good idea to make pairs of Finns and asylum seekers in order to overcome language barriers and support cultural understanding.

A multicultural volunteer work co-operation with Syystie Service Centre will continue based on the good experiences of Pair Effect project. Kalliola Settlement was pleased that the authors were so devoted that they also participated after the thesis project in the meeting where this cooperation was developed further. Kalliola Settlement wrote in their assessment that they are thankful for the author's part in this project and their excellent work.

#### 8.12 Assessment of the effects of the voice of the participants

"Bringing people together was good especially now with all the hatred towards asylum seekers, we could show ourselves. This is the best way to do it, making to cultures meet so they find out about each other's."

During the pilot project the participating asylum seeker has shown pure interest and true inspiration to do something helpful in Finland which has given encouragement for the project. The discussions with the participants resulted in a great food for thought in describing the importance of such action and giving insight for the development of similar projects. The participants' feedback and comments throughout the project and the inspiration that these comments gave, have shaped the pilot project and the findings greatly and will therefore shape the future practice based on the pilot project.

## 9 Ethical considerations

Ethical principles in research with people were guiding the thesis. According to Block, Riggs and Haslam (2013) when working with vulnerable people it is important that the study is well intentioned but also that the specific aims of the project are realistic and

achievable. As asylum seekers are often in vulnerable positions it is vital that the study's outcome would serve their needs to prevent exploitation. Block et al. suggest that to investigate with integrity, the report has to be honest whether results are supportive or opposing to the aim of the project in order to widen common knowledge and the understanding on the subject. (Block, Riggs and Haslam 2013. p.29)

In regard of the project it was important to make sure that the background data collection and the workshop supports the aims to create an inclusive practice for asylum seekers. For the background data collection, a list of questions has been created in order to receive useful information to realize the needs of the participants and make the project inclusive and successful. Devotion to the disclosure of the results of the workshop despite them being favorable or unsupportive towards the pilot-project was ensured.

Ethics based on the respect for human beings proclaim that everyone is valuable and autonomous. In order to preserve such autonomy a person must be well informed about the details of the project. (Block et al., 2013) To achieve this, all relevant information was given to the participants in order to share a common understanding of the process. Participation was voluntarily and all members were informed about the purpose, methods, demands, risks and potential benefits of the project to create and maintain understanding while avoiding unrealistic expectations or misunderstandings. Equality between participants and facilitators was emphasized in order to create a relaxed learning environment and increase reliability of the project. Before the project the participating asylum seekers were told that volunteer work is unpaid and that it does not ensure a work position although it might provide useful experiences. This was important to note already before the training begun. Autonomy was further supported during the project for example by creating space for everyone to be heard, providing possibilities for participants to influence the workshop and a choice on what volunteer tasks they would like to perform to ensure that everybody feels that their opinions are taken into consideration because it is valuable.

To act as the facilitators of multicultural groups and to avoid ethical issues arising, the facilitators adopted an attitude of cultural intelligence (Early and Ang cited in Hogan 2007 p.16) and learned about the process of facilitating different multicultural groups. According to Early and Ang (Early and Ang cited in Hogan 2007 p.16) facilitators need to possess a will to learn about new cultures with a mindfulness to interpret new situations and have the ability to adapt their methods to other cultures in order to avoid unnecessary

conflicts. It was realized that multicultural groups considerations must be focusing on creation of a safe and welcoming atmosphere for discussing topics. (Hogan, 2007) Thus, the topics were carefully chosen beforehand.

It was crucial that the project stayed diverse and strived towards equality. Hogan (2007 p.3) points out that facilitation always has its own values rooted in participation, diversity and equality and that facilitators need to be aware that in some cultures those values can be inappropriate or not accepted. Some cultures for example differentiate between what is appropriate and acceptable for a man or a woman. Some of the participating cultures could face challenges when working or being supervised by someone of the opposing gender. In some cultures, it might be also hard for somebody to be instructed by a younger person. (Hogan, 2007) Therefore, it was important that the project is inclusive but also that the participants are able to adapt in order to avoid discrimination and oppression of any kind. Because of this, participation of both men and women, young and old, asylum seekers and local Finnish residents were welcomed in order to facilitate the workshop in a diverse and equal manner, providing the time and space for everyone to voice their opinions and be heard. The pilot project had both men and women participants, some young coming from the university while others were already retired.

Another ethical consideration was the fact that marginalized groups participating in unsupervised activities could give ground for unethical conditions such as using the volunteers as cheap labor. Because of this volunteer work activity were chosen in a way that there is no risk of exploitation nor a damaging work environment. The cooperation was done with trusted partners in good environment through Kalliola Settlement in order to provide a beneficial volunteer work experience and avoid such exploitation. Asylum seeker's perceptions on volunteer work, wishes and preferences were investigated to provide accordingly.

## **10 Conclusion**

The aim of this functional thesis was to create a way to include asylum seekers to Kalliola Settlement's volunteering practices. This aim was reached by implementing a pilot project to provide information about good practices. The pilot project was successful in many ways and provided useful information for Kalliola Settlement. The purpose behind the



idea was to support social inclusion of asylum seekers, many of whom are striving to contribute more than there are possibilities at the moment.

Social inclusion does not happen by itself and it takes more than just the will of the individual to be included. Social inclusion can be promoted through creating inclusive designs and by providing equal opportunities. At the time of starting this thesis, volunteer activities relating to asylum seekers were mostly done for asylum seekers and not with them. Including groups without Finnish language knowledge, cultural knowledge and the limited rights of asylum seekers possessed a challenge for some organizations especially those with scarce resources. The pilot project provided solutions to overcome these challenges.

In close cooperation with Kalliola Settlement, the pilot project was developed and implemented. Pilot Project tested the idea to volunteer in pairs of a Finnish volunteer and an asylum seeker. Also other characteristics that were developed based on the background data collection from asylum seekers were tested. The pilot project was successful in providing information about how asylum seekers could be involved in volunteering practices. Many initial ideas such as pair volunteering, using multisensory teaching methods and including discussion about Finnish society were proved to be useful. From the results of the pilot project pop-up volunteering was proposed to respond to many of the needs of the target group. A flyer was made to present the project and the core findings (Appendix 1). There have been other requests for the findings of the project and this flyer will be delivered for them as well.

The materials, tools, frameworks and the results can give useful tools to those who wish to plan and implement similar projects in the future. Kalliola Settlement was pleased with the solutions and projects taking the idea further are currently under development. The association has started to work with Syystie Service Center where pop-up volunteering will be organized. It will be a flexible way of volunteering made in close co-operation with Syystie service center. Another wider practice is under development as well within the work life partner and it is also based on the finding of this project. This functional thesis also provided an insight for those who wish to learn more about the subject of inclusion and well-being through volunteer work and will hopefully inspire many to add their own ideas and create various inclusive projects in the future.

## 11 Final words

Harvesting the benefits of volunteering in pairs of a local volunteer and an asylum seeker was a new idea that had to be developed from the very beginning, therefore we spent a lot of time dwelling on the details and possibilities to make the project as good as possible. Finding solutions for a real challenge was a great opportunity to work on the field and experience real social field work.

The interviews we had in order to familiarize ourselves with the participants, were life changing. We both think back to these discussions with those amazing personalities as treasures that greatly influenced our mind-set and attitudes towards the project. We are really thankful for all of the asylum seekers who took part to this project and helped us shaped the project by with theirs great ideas and suggestions. We wish that we responded to their ideas and that the project feels like it is theirs also. We are happy to see that many have kept on with the active life and we hope they will have more opportunities by time.

The idea of pair work was with us from the early stages while other aspects and characteristics had to be changed, adjusted and modified to respond to the arising needs and challenges. We feel that we learned a lot from this project and it guided us forward on the way of becoming professionals. Creating something new from the beginning can be risky but we feel that once planning it properly, taking the risk was worth it. During the project we often had to adapt to the circumstances and find a way to work around problems. This taught us about the importance of flexibility, staying in the presence while responding to the arising situations.

For writing this paper together we ourselves worked as a pair harvesting from the benefits as well as the challenges from it. We are also from different cultures, genders with different personalities and this gave added insight when two different perspectives contribute to something together. Making this thesis as a pair was very fruitful but it also posed some challenges had to be overcome. Fitting the time tables together was one of the challenges. We used these experiences to understand pair work better. By working together on this thesis for over a year, we learned about working in a team, time management, flexibility and being goal oriented.

We would like to thank Kalliola Settlement for being the work life partner of this thesis project. We are very grateful for their support and expertise and that they trusted us with creating something new, providing the project to become as successful as it was and connecting us with the volunteers and Syystie Service Centre. We are very thankful for the Finnish volunteers of Kalliola Settlement who were ready to try out something new and helped us with their participation.

The sources that were used during our project have been a vital part in shaping our thesis. They were inspiring and proved to be very useful and we warmly recommend them for anyone who wants to know more about the subjects.

We were happy to notice that during the thesis project there have been more and more initiations starting to create volunteer opportunities for asylum seekers and that our project received interest from some of them. We hope that those who read this paper will be inspired and develop even better and more comprehensive projects, adding their own ideas and dreams to it. We believe that the interaction of people joining for a common goal that also brought Pair Effect alive will have an effect on the world to be "Pairfect".

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## Appendixes of the thesis

The flyer of Pair-Effect made by the authors of this thesis:

*Quotes from*  
**Pair-Effect**  
*Participants*

*Volunteer Together*

**PAIR EFFECT**

SOLUTIONS FOR MAKING VOLUNTEER WORK PRACTICES INCLUSIVE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

A FUNCTIONAL THESIS

Emma Lavonen × Agoston Feher

Would you like to know more?  
To read the whole paper and learn more about the pilot project read our thesis at: [www.theseus.fi](http://www.theseus.fi)

"...I feel really happy. I feel that I'm useful to the community, and I will remember even from five years back and it will make me happy..."

"...Bringing people together was good, especially now, with all the hatred towards asylum seekers, we could show ourselves. This is the best way to do it. Making two cultures meet, so they find out about each others..."

"...I have a big heart, I want to express it..."

"...I learned that we are in the same team. Together we get ideas on how to make something useful..."

"...I was very excited and comfortable. It made me forget bad things. I don't know why, I was very happy..."

**PAIR EFFECT SOLUTIONS**

How can an organisation support asylum seekers to be more included in the society?

Offering volunteer opportunities would be beneficial for well-being, it is a great way to learn the language, culture, society, find friends and learn useful skills.

How can an organisation make their volunteer training inclusive for those who don't speak the language or understand the core concepts such as Finnish societal needs and organised volunteer work?

By modifying the training material, using simple language, pictures and other multi-sensory techniques.

How can we overcome the language and cultural barriers in orientation and volunteer work?

In Pair Effect an asylum seeker and a local volunteer form a pair to volunteer together. Pairs help each other to overcome challenges.

**T R A I N I N G**

- Bring together asylum seekers and local volunteers
- Learn about the participants and their culture
- Modify training to the needs
- Use easy language with breaks for translation
- Recognize and involve the participants culture.
- Use multi sensory teaching methods such as pictures, group work and story telling
- Support participants understanding of the society for example with picture analysis exercise.
- Discuss together about core issues of volunteering
- Provide space for sharing,
- Be present
- Embrace suggestions and feedback
- Plan well but be flexible, anything can happen
- Pop-up volunteering provides flexibility

**FORM THE PAIRS**

Pair up a local volunteer with an asylum seeker to help understand the task, find the place, support interaction and learn Finnish amongst many other things!

**V O L U N T E E R I N G**

PARTNER ORGANISATION × KALLIOLA SETTLEMENT

Volunteers Provide Tasks Host Activity

Asylum seekers Provide Training Develop Partner.

The set of questions asked during interviews:

Male/Female

Age:

Nationality:

Date:

1. How would you explain volunteer work to a friend?
2. Is there something similar in your country? What?
3. How do you help people in your country?
4. Why do you feel like volunteering?
5. What volunteer work do you think is needed in Finland?
6. Are there people in need in Finland? Where?
7. What would you gain from doing volunteer work?
8. Do you think other asylum seekers could get involved?
9. Do you see any obstacles why they wouldn't?
10. During the activity we will work in pairs. Would you rather work with a man or woman?
11. Can men and women work together? Why?
12. Do you know other people around you who are interested? How many?
13. How do you feel about the upcoming activity?
14. Everyone is welcomed and needed to do volunteer work. Do you have some skills that you would like to use?
15. Is there anything you would like to know or ask us?
16. Additional information, wishes of the participants?



## Example of the given answers 1/3:

Male Female

Age: 26

Nationality: IRAQ

Date: 20.02.2016

1. How would you explain volunteer work to a friend?

First of all I have to choose some people to explain to. You help people in some place where they need us and it's good for us. We want to be volunteers because <sup>many</sup> people have "nature" to help others.

2. Is there something similar in your country? What?

There is many poor people without place to stay so you can arrange them something, a place, clothes, some money. We see them and go and help them.

3. How do you help people in your country?

See the problem and help.

4. Why do you feel like volunteering?

I don't know why it is nature, it is a beautiful thing. You feel like a real human when you do it.

5. What volunteer work do you think is needed in Finland?

Community needs to be more open. Work with teenagers because they don't know what to be. You can make him a different person if you talk to him.

6. Are there people in need in Finland? Where?

There are lonely people, young and old. People don't trust each other. They don't have to be alone.

7. What would you gain from doing volunteer work?

8. Do you think other asylum seekers could get involved?

Have to talk to them about the good points of volunteering. You have to tell them to meet people, make friends and improve themselves if you want to get them.

9. Do you see any obstacles why they wouldn't?

People come here sometime, want to rest couple of month.  
People don't want to get up early.  
Some people do nothing.  
If they already take money from the government it's hard to do something.

## Example of the given answers 2/3:

10. During the activity we will work in pairs. Would you rather work with a man or woman?

*Doesn't matter*

11. Can men and women work together? Why?

*Yes. I like if my boss is a woman.  
It happens more and more lately.*

12. Do you know other people around you who are interested? How many?

*Yes*

13. How do you feel about the upcoming activity?

*Really happy, I feel that I'm useful to that community and will  
remember even from 5 years back and it will make me happy.*

14. Everyone is welcomed and needed to do volunteer work. Do you have some skills that you would

like to use? *English, translation*

15. Is there anything you would like to know or ask us?

*I want to ask you why you want to volunteer.*

Additional information, Ideas and wishes of the participant:

*I don't want to volunteer with refugees*

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## Example of given answers 3/3:

Male/Female

Age: 24

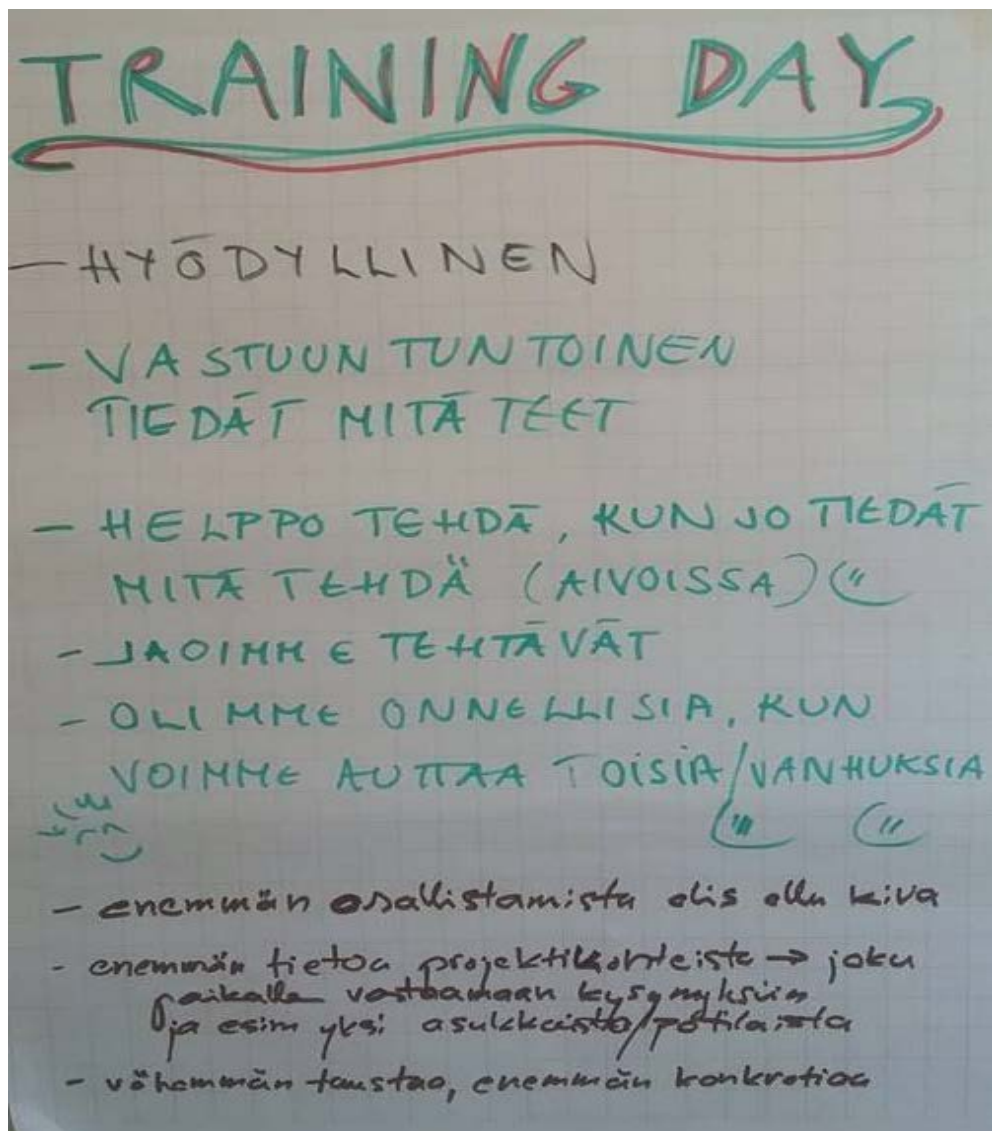
Nationality: IRAQ

Date: 11.02.2016

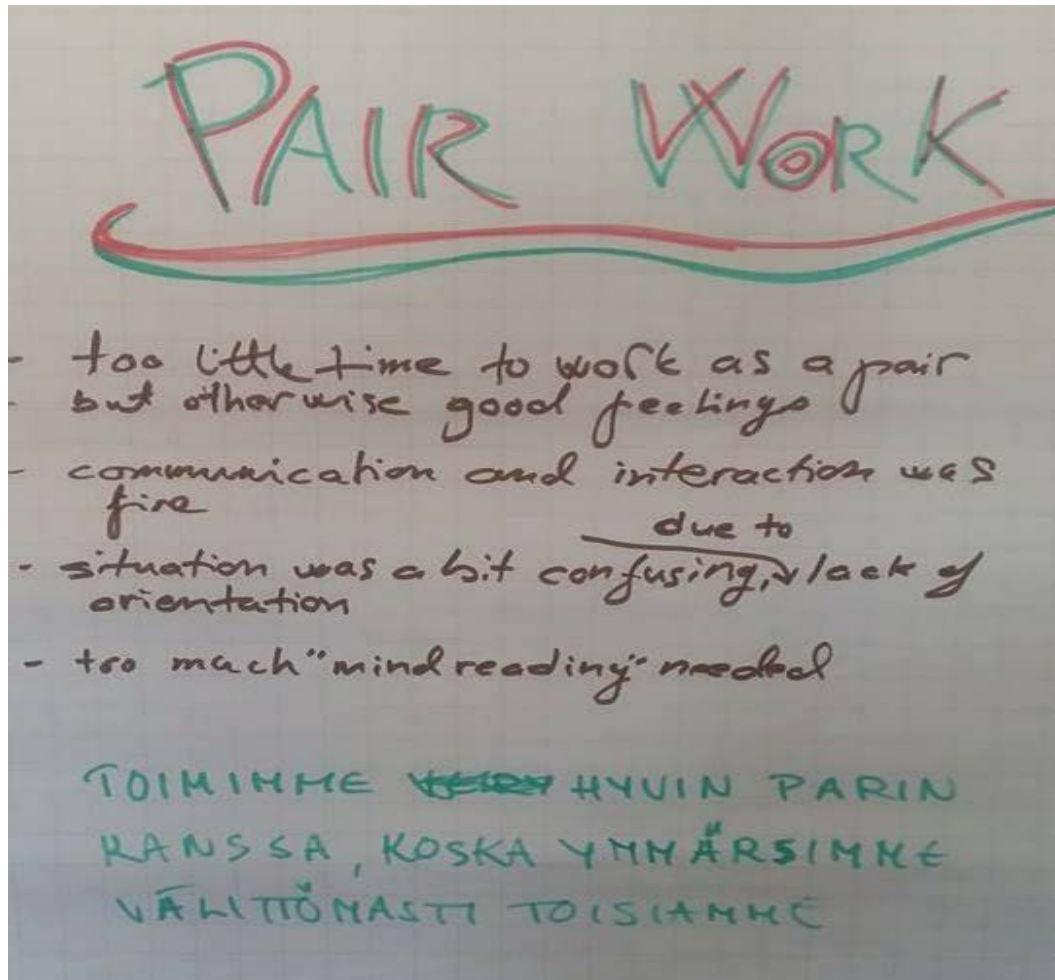
1. How would you explain volunteer work to a friend?  
*I like helping people, helping people is nice it makes me happy*
2. Is there something similar in your country? What?  
*In our college / area we do it together, no boss  
I'm a volunteer teacher*
3. How do you help people in your country?  
*For poor people we can give money but some people  
need something else like stuff and furnitures or comy things*
4. Why do you feel like volunteering?  
*We like to help people and we have time*
5. What volunteer work do you think is needed in Finland?  
~~Something~~ *Something to activate people and share*
6. Are there people in need in Finland? Where?  
*No, strong Government*
7. What would you gain from doing volunteer work?  
*Making friends, be happy, make experience*
8. Do you think other asylum seekers could get involved?
9. Do you see any obstacles why they wouldn't?

*Have to leave*

Group reflection of the Training:

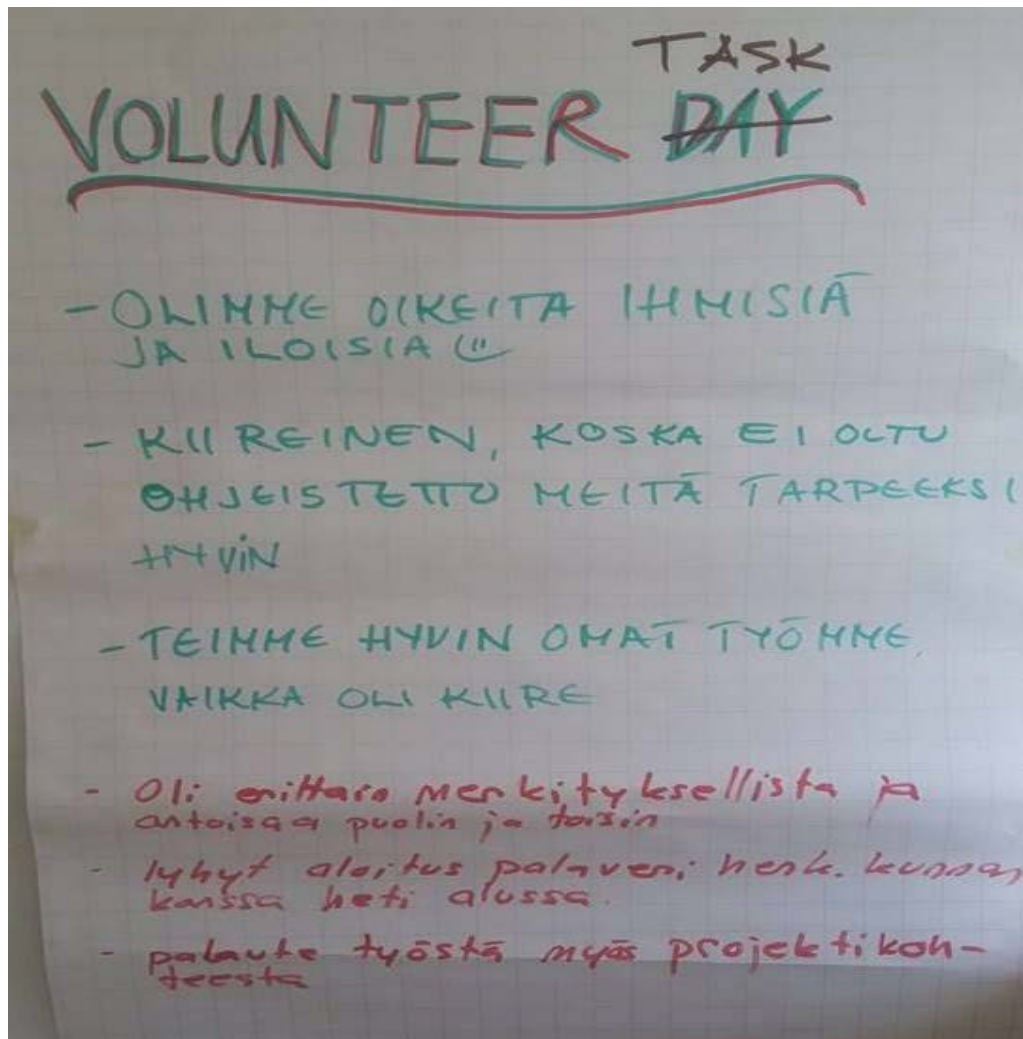


Group reflection of the Pair work:















Group reflection on the performed volunteer activity:



Example of the emoticon feedbacks received at the end of the pilot project 1/2:






Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
				
strongly agree<----->strongly disagree				

**1. Before the project, did you have enough opportunities to be included in the local community?**

				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>






Comments: I just had some, but this one was great.

**2. Do you feel that your thoughts and opinions mattered during the project?**

				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>






Comments: Yes I do. I felt it during the project alot.

**3. Do you feel that you helped people during the project?**

				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>






Comments: The women we helped she was very happy at the end.

**4. Did you make good connections?**

				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>






Comments: Yes some connection.

**5. How was it to work with you pair?**

				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: it was good having a companion.

**6. How useful was it to have a pair?**

				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Did you learn something new during the presentation?



Comments: Yes specially about the voluntary work we got alot.

8. Do you feel that you did something meaningful?



Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Did the training day inspire you to do volunteer work?



Comments: Yes, the way the trainers trained was amazing.

10. This project gave me opportunities to be included in the local community.



Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Overall the project was...



Comments: because I saw that it brought smile in the face of people

12. Would you like to continue as volunteer/pair for other asylum seekers later on?



Comments: Yes, I will be glad.

Anything else you would like to add:

overall the project was awesome, the way it helped people was great, when I saw an old lady became so happy after the volunteer work was so much nice.



The received feedback shown with graphs:

