RESPECT

Challenge the norms and expand the idea of what is possible

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Specialization Individual Study Plan in Design
Konstfack 2017-05-29
Abstract

In this project I have explored the situation for unaccompanied refugees in the ages 15-22 years. Being seen as part of a homogenous group was something that the girls described as frustrating and prohibiting. They, as all youths, have a need to talk about them selves, on their own terms.

My design proposal is an exercise for students and teachers in high school where you are given an arena in the class room to talk about your self, your values and the norms in society. By choosing a role model and create something to wear, challenge the pre-conceived ideas of what is expected, create positive forward looking conversations and an opportunity to give a glimpse of who you are.

I have looked at the relations between the individual, the unaccompanied refugee girl, and the people working in the Swedish welfare system. With the help of materiality I have explored the notion of individuality, personal space and respect.

How to challenge societal norms, prejudice and expand the idea of what is possible?

All quotes in this essay are stated by individuals I have meet during the project. All have chosen to be anonymous.

Front image: The wearables the girls at TRIS created with inspiration from their role model.

Typeface headline: **PHOSPHATE**

Chosen by the girls at TRIS from a selection of typefaces.

Typeface text: Mrs Eaves

To honor one of the forgotten women in the history of typography. 1996 Zusana Licko named her reinterpretation of the typeface Baskerville, to Mrs Eaves. The name refers to Sarah Eaves who finalized her husbands John Baskervilles unfinished work after his death 1775. (MYCKET, 2013)

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Abstract

I detta projekt har jag undersökt situationen för ensamkommande flykting tjejer i åldrarna 15-22 år. Att betrakta sig som en del av en homogen grupp var något som tjejerna beskrev som frustrerande och begränsande. De, liksom alla ungdomar, har ett behov av att få prata om sig själva på sina egna villkor.

Projektet resulterade i ett designförslag i form av en övning för alla studenter och lärare på högstadiet som skapar ett utrymme för att prata om värderingar och de normer vi har i samhället. Genom att välja en förebild och att skapa något att bära, kan man i klassrummet utmana förutfattade meningar om vad som förväntas av en, skapa positiva framåtsyftande samtal och ge de personer som finns runt dig en liten skymt av vem du är.

Jag undersökt relationerna mellan de ensamkommande tjejerarna och personer som jobbar i vårförsvaret. Med hjälp av materialitet har jag utforskat begreppen individuallitet, att ta plats och respekt.

Hur kan vi utmana våra fördomar, rådande normer och vilja tanken på vad som är möjligt?
Time line for an unaccompanied minor from arrival to starting a high school class

This shows a simplified time line for a unaccompanied youth, from the arrival in Sweden to the transition from a language introduction class to a high school class.

If you arrived in Sweden in September 2015 you would transition from your language introduction class in approximate September 2017. The large amount of unaccompanied youth who arrived in the fall of 2015, 35,369 children, creates an urgency in how to make the transition from the language introduction class to a high school or upper secondary school class now in the fall of 2017.

The time line is the result of workshops with municipalities and authorities like the migrations agency and NGO’s operating close to the children such as BRIS. But foremost through workshops and conversation with children who are in or have been through this process.
"We got a blue wristband when we arrived. You know the kind you get at a fun-fair, but this feels more like a prison."

Unaccompanied youth
November 2015
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Introduction

This project has been a perfect mess. I have struggled between the areas of systems design, policy making, participation, materiality and norm criticism.

One reason for starting the project was how to use co-design when moving in-between a group of young users and a huge system of welfare provided to these youth.

Another reason was a curiosity on how I can use the materiality of design in a systems or strategic design context.

I have also challenged myself in working with an highly exposed group, unaccompanied refugee girls in Sweden. Exploring the notion of identity politics first hand.

This has been a bumpy journey through Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, the sculpture studio at Konstfack, Policy-labs in Brussels, language introduction classes with fantastically inspiring youths and very much myself. I have challenged myself in my preconceptions, my designerly practice and in getting all the thin threads of knowledge woven together in a graspable mess.

Welcome to my world.

Aims

My aim is to explore the designers responsibility in the area of social sustainability when using co-design as an approach. How can the designerly knowledge of materialisation contribute?

Project aim
I aim at making the unaccompanied refugee girl visible, not within a homogeneous group, but as an individual in response to a social context.

Social Sustainability
I aim to explore social sustainability by focusing on the individual.

Norm Criticism
To be assumed to belong to a certain group based on age, gender and/or ethnicity was stated as one of the main frustrations by the girls that have arrived as refugees to Sweden. The project did not start of with a norm critical aim, but from the results of the conversations with the youths, I had to look at the norms in society today.

Aim for developing the design practices

Co-Design
Co-design is used as the design approach to explore the situation both with the unaccompanied youth and the system around the youth. I aim at exploring a designerly approach on how to move between the micro to the macro, the individual and the system. What responsibilities do I as a designer have in co-design aiming at improving the situation for exposed youth?

Materialisation and systems design
Use materialisation in both the interactions in workshops and as an outcome in a strategic design context. What can materiality bring to the field of service and/or systems design?

Identity Politics
One of my biggest struggles have been to motivate if and how I, can speak for unaccompanied refugee girls. Who am I in my privileged-white-konstfackstudent-body to talk about the experiences of unaccompanied refugee girls?
"Vi går inte med svenska elever, inte alls. Vi är på våning 5 de är på våning 6. Vi har språk. De har gymnasium.”

Student i språkintroduktionsklass

“We do not study with Swedish students, at all. We are on floor 5, they are on floor 6. We just have language. They have High School.”

Student attending a language introductions class
Reflecting and Decision Making

I have explored the relations between the welfare system and the individual. Gaining insights from the girls, the welfare system, or through my own reading and reflecting, and slowly moved forward through the project.

Förnyelselabbet is a pilot project started in the fall of 2016 by SKL—Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions and SVID - the Swedish Industrial Design Foundation to create a cross-functional platform for working with complex societal issues. My master thesis is done within the frame of Förnyelselabbet and my result will feed into the work done there.

Förnyelselabbet received a request from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in improving the social youth and health care, with special focus on unaccompanied refugee minors. Förnyelselabbet have several partners to aid this challenge, for example the Migration Agency, Barnombudsmannen, BRIS, RFSL—youth and approximately forty municipalities.

Collaborator – TRIS, Tjejers Rätt I Samhället

When I joined Förnyelselabbet, starting the project of improving the unaccompanied refugee youths situation I quickly realized that the girls were not present.

At the same time I read Eskil Wadensjö’s paper regarding the situation for unaccompanied youth. He states that the youths are establishing themselves better in terms of study result and jobs than the refugee youth arriving with parents or other guardians. But there are differences in how unaccompanied boys and girls are able to establish in Sweden. Unaccompanied girls are less often in school or working. For youths with a Swedish background there are no such major differences, (Wadensjö, 2015).

I contacted the NGO TRIS, Tjejers Rätt I Samhället, to get in contact with unaccompanied girls. I got to spend time with the girls at TRIS open activity for homework support. In our meetings we used creative methods, like draw your day or creating in clay. Some knew Swedish well, while some helped friends to translate when there was something that was hard to communicate.

What came up in the conversations was the girls ambition to study, we talked about boys with nothing to do, and the school was constantly described as a positive space.

The group consisted of around 20 girls their ages varied from 15 to 22, originating from six different countries Somalia, Eritrea, Syria, Afghanistan, one girl from Thailand and one from the US.
"Det borde finnas mer aktiviteter för killarna. Vi tjejer behöver inga aktiviteter, vi jobbar, vi vill jobba!"

Tjej i workshop på TRIS

"There should be more activities for the boys. We girls do not need activities we are working, we want to work!"

Girl in workshop at TRIS
Approach

While exploring the situation for the unaccompanied refugee girls I fell headlong into a deep hole of intersectionality, gender theory and norm critics. I started following inspiring women at Instagram, my feed filling up with girls fighting, making visible the total lack of respect shown to their objectified bodies. Feeling a gap of my knowledge, and an awaken urgency to get a better understanding of the skewed power relation due to e.g gender, ethnicity and age, I decided to go in the direction the project was taking me. Seeing the struggle within the refugee girls to live with many of the societal norms opened up my eyes for other structural inequalities. Even though this is not completely new to me, I felt a need of more reading and understanding of what theories have what base in what, this would be my first attempt to use intersectionality- and feminist theories up-front in my practice.

Co-design is used throughout this project when creating knowledge together with the participants (Agger-Eriksen, 2012, Seravalli, 2014). Both with the youths and the people working in the welfare system. But the post-modernistic feminist approach (Lena Taguchi, 2006), has helped me make decisions in the process, aiming at an including practice, and this is what I aim to explore further in my essay.

Hillevi Lena Taguchi describes to be a subject means to be able to stand up for your self and experience the right to choose, to speak your mind and claim a space. (Lena Taguchi, 2006, p:205). The literature has given me a vocabulary for analyzing power structures in my project and in my surrounding.

I have used a sensory ethnographic approach (Pink, 2015, p. 4) for understanding the effect of my position in relation to the situation of exploration. During my work within this project, my own position is very much in the spotlight. And the question of who, in what body of experience (Pink, 2015, p. 27), is allowed to work with certain issues. I aim to use my privileged position, being a white Swedish-born student at Konstfack, to suggest changes in the system to increase the wellbeing for the young newcomers in Sweden.

Li Jönsson’s research is driven by the question “how can our designerly contribution acquire participatory capacities, or power of engagement.” She is stating a shift to see that what design is contributing with is new models of relations of being in the world. The outcome of the design process are things, in Latours definition, not necessarily being objects, but system changes, services or suggested strategies (Jönsson, 2015, p:5). I want to articulate the designers role, and the contributions that can be made when using participatory design methods for problematizing, make visible and create tools for understanding in complex systems.

Point of Departures

Point of departure #1 – Wristband as object

“We got a blue wristband when we arrived. You know the kind you get at a fun-fair, but this feels more like a prison.”

This was stated by a boy who had fled alone from Syria arriving to Sweden in the fall of 2015. He was given this wristband when he arrived at his first transit accommodation. He had been in Sweden for four weeks wearing the wristband, still not knowing why he had to wear it.

After a brief research, the reason behind the wristband was for the staff to know who was to be served lunch at the housing.

I thought that this could make visible a situation of a huge lack of information and communication. But when I was talking to others about this, the wristband came to circle more around the lack of respect inscribed in a society when forcing a youth to ware something unknown.

Point of departure #2 – The role model

Young women who manage do the quite tough journey into the Swedish culture often break the relation with their own countrymen. This was stated during an interview, with a woman who arrived unaccompanied to Sweden in the beginning of 2000. She claimed that it is easier to break with one culture instead of balance the pressure of how to behave from two different sets of values. This, she believed, is one reason why the knowledge do not reach the young women who need inspiration from someone who have made a journey into Swedish society who knows the obstacles and possibilities. For example, she claimed, in Sweden you can ask anybody to become your mentor, whilst in her home country the family is the network, both socially but also regarding your carrier.

At a the welcome refugees conference in January 2017 I listened to Mahoba Madadi who is the president at the unaccompanied minors association. She was saying that role models are important for changing the image of refugee girls. Both for the girls themselves to have people in society that you can look up to and identify with, but also to raise the awareness in society around the capability of girls with refugee background.

“Next time a woman, black or Jewish person runs for president they will be taken seriously from the start. I ran because somebody had to do it first.”

Shirley Chisholm, Presidential candidate 1972

Lina Thomsgåd released her book, En annan historia (2017) during the time of my project. I bought it. It is a book about 51 successful women not written into the history books. I was almost choked when I read about fighting Shirley Chisholm, who ran for president in 1973. This awaken my curiosity. Who else in the history have I missed, or maybe not been told about?
”Det är väldigt svårt när det förväntas olika saker av en från två olika kulturer. Därför bryter många tjejer som försöker komma in i den ”Svenska kulturen” med sin kultur.”

Tjej som kommit ensam till Sverige tidigt 2000

”To be expected to behave in certain ways from two different cultures is tough. That is why many girls who tries to adapt to the ”Swedish culture” break with their culture of origin.”

Girl who came alone to Sweden around the year 2000
Design Process

I started to create wristbands of different types, in different scales, with an ambition to flip, to find the opposite expression and meaning of the blue wristband. I created something you would wear at a fun-fair to something you would get at a prison, from delicate to steady. I showed my work at a mid-review at Konstfack, getting a varied response, and a lively discussion.

I continued by exploring the expressions myself, trying to find the keys of what to aim for. I showed a new refined set to people at Förnyelselabbet. They thought that the approach was fascinating – and it created a discussion in the direction of what are we “the system” doing to youths on a personal level, making me decide on continuing on the track of materialisation. I continued by going up in scale, trying different materials. But I felt a need to involve youths to be able to move forward.

Participatory wristbands

I consulted Miro Sazdic, working with participatory jewelry, on methods participation and what materials to bring to the workshops that I planned to arrange for the unaccompanied girls. We discussed whether the material itself could be the messenger between the individual and the welfare system around the individuals.

She was also stressing the importance of a freedom of choice regarding the material. An including way to use material could be to open up to all options and try to bring as many different materials as possible. Also here referring to the importance of my position, who am I to choose and limit what others should work with?

“Doing creative, non verbal, work is used within psychological therapy to express your self, for strengthening the individual. Especially with people that for some reason do not have a perfect spoken language to express themselves with.”

Maria Kalingas Ruin, Uppdrag Psykisk Halsa, SKL

Wearing the wristband

I did a test on myself. I wore my wristband at Konstfack for a day to see what happened. First, in my studio, I got a question from a classmate on what I was wearing. Even though it was a test, I was so glad it was noticed. The conversations at school were mostly about what the material the wristband was made of, and then a comments on that it was nice.

When going shopping for groceries, I felt pride wearing it, the wristband also made a little sound when I move, that was comfortable to hear, I got one or two looks, but nothing more than that.

But coming to my crowded bus stop in the dark evening, I felt naked, suddenly feeling that my wristband was too personal, too much me. I really wanted to put it away as a drunk, loud man enters the glass-cube, not wanting him to notice, to HAVE something to comment on, he did not. Whilst on the bus starting to feel the nice companionship again from my wristband. Reading a book (a thesis about norm critics), and showing off my wrist at the same time.

Coming home to my family, I almost immediately put it on the kitchen table. Not because it was uncomfortable, but because it was not a show any more.
"Vill du bli lyssnad på måste du ha fina kläder. I Iran är dina betyg det viktigaste, har du bra betyg så öppnar det alla dörrar. I Sverige måste man ha koll."

_Tjej som kom ensam till Sverige tidigt 2000-tal_

"If you want people to listen you need to have nice clothes. In Iran the most important is your grades, good grades gives you access to everything. In Sweden you need to be on top of things."

_Girl who came alone to Sweden around the year 2000_
Could you strengthen your self, your identity through creating something to wear on your body, and thus be allowed to claim your space? I wanted to explore what role a wristband could have and how the role models matter from an unaccompanied girl’s perspective. But for me, at this point, the role model was intended more as an inspiration for the creation of an empowering wristband.

In this workshop at TRIS group consisted of 19 girls originating from Eritrea, Somalia and Syria in the age between 15 to 22. I did not have the possibility to talk to all the girls about what role model they had chosen, but one girl mentioned Ronaldo, because she also wanted to become a great soccer player. And I got a bit surprised when one girl from Eritrea mentioned Dag Hammarsköld, with the motivation of his humane politics and values. I did not see all the role models at once, I was focusing more on the girls creating their wristbands, making tangible the abilities they looked up to. (I also need to consider that it is me who is asking the girls to tell me about their role models, and they might adapt their answers so that I would understand.) But still, the significant amount of men mentioned by these young girls came as a big surprise to me. All the women mentioned, except for the afghan singer Aryana Sayeed, where people who you had a close relation with, like a mother or a sister.

The girls are creating wristbands with inspiration from their role model, with the material provided in the workshop. The role models stated in the exercise was: My mother, my sister, my friend, my self, Zlatan Ibrahimovic – soccer player, Cristiano Ronaldo – soccer player, Paul Pogba – soccer player, Stefan Löfven – politician, Dag Hammarsköld – diplomat, Akmal Omid – model, Justin Bieber – singer and Aryana Sayeed – singer.
The wristbands created by the girls at TRIS during a workshop.

The wristbands created by me throughout the project.
Design Process – Role Models and norms

“Norms are invisible rules created based on ideas of what is normal and what is not. Norms are everywhere, and they direct us in how we think, look and behave in different contexts. Failing to live up to norms can lead to various types of discrimination, harassment and degrading treatment.”

Friends (2017)

I went back to Förnyelselabbet where I showed the result from the workshop with the girls.

One reason for creating the wristbands was to use them as vessels for connecting individuals in different positions in society. I wanted people working in the municipalities and authorities to empathize with the individual girls I met, assuming that the material, the wristbands, that was created would have an impact. I also tried to make a connection by asking the participants at SKL to choose a role model and connect it to a material that I could bring with me to the next workshop with the girls, this seemed like a god exercise itself for the individuals at Förnyelselabbet, but did not seem to bring the two groups closer.

But what had an impact on the participants at Förnyelselabbet was to see the role models chosen by the girls. The role models also made the girls visible as individuals, making it clear that they all have different opinions, values and dreams, when mentioning Zlatan Ibrahimovic or Dag Hammarsköld.

This instantly created an opening for talking about norms, why does 19 girls, from 15 to 22, choose publicly famous role models that are foremost men? Who do we really look up to, and why?

Design Process – Norms and Effects

A norm critical pedagogical aim to make visible and question norms and their consequences. To not see the “other” but instead to try to see how the norm and how “the others” are created, and what roles we our selves have in these processes. Kumashiro started working with anti-oppressive pedagogy because he saw that many of the most common methods to prevent discrimination is oppressive in itself and recreates the inequalities that they where meant to prevent. A norm critical approach does not only see the intention with an action, but aims to see the effect of the action (Kumashiro, 2008).

Norm critical pedagogic claims that an action in combination with a reflection of your own and others behavior and is central to oppose discrimination, harassment and degrading treatment. (Skolverket, 2017)

Maybe to state your role model could be an action that can be combined with a reflection for creating knowledge around norms?

Ethical reflections – Making visible or making use

The design researcher Mahmoud Keshavarz claims in his thesis that you can’t add ethics to design or make design ethical. Without recognition of those situations, of what is produced, framed, shared or represented one runs the risk of stigmatization, misrepresentation, generalization, and homogenising of people involved in research. “It is about recognizing how design already embeds ethical implications and being able to act on that recognition.” (Keshavarz p. 364, 2016)

Keshavarz is pointing to the issues I fear that I as a designer am reproducing, being a white euro-centered designer. During his talk he stated the need for designers to recognize their position and practice the sensitivity they are lacking in their lived experiences when designing for and/or with people of other experiences.

When listening to Mahmoud I felt that I gave up, that issues regarding migration and integration are to big to do something about, and that I was in the wrong body of experiences to have any say. But I was at the same time provoked into taking a stand for my design practices. And felt a responsibility in my position to try to design for change, how ever small it might be. Using co-design as an approach for letting the “users” affect the exploration and outcome hoping to catch and acknowledge maybe one embedded ethical issue.

Whether I should make the unjust situation for the unaccompanied girls visible, or try to make a design proposal that could be of use to someone, anyone. I have been debating this thoroughly and loudly in my head, and I hope I can do the latter.

“Those who have not experienced sexism, homo- and transphobia, do not know how it feels. But if the question is not how it feels, but what the causes of oppression are, is the personal experience no longer a unique source of knowledge. Nor do you have to have the personal experience of oppression in order to fight this. The day we think that, there are so many things we have stopped believing in; empathy, ability to think, to analyse, identification, solidarity and an anger that extends beyond your own existence.”

Nina Björk (2016)
”Vi ska inte ens fråga var de kommer ifrån. Vi respekterar dem så mycket att vi gör dem osynliga.”

Lärare på högstadiet

“We should not even ask where they are from. We respect them so much that we make them invisible”

Teacher at high school
“We should not even ask where they are from. We respect them so much that we make them invisible”

This was stated by a teacher, when we talked about the unaccompanied girls situation in school. She claimed that as soon as there is a break the girls are going back to their safe zone, the language introductions class, which often is in an other part of the school. They have their safe space, and their friends in their language class, that they have attended in-between six months up to two years. This makes it harder for the girls to get into the class and for the teacher to get to know them.

Several teachers have talked about the school as a “free zone” for the unaccompanied youth. Meaning not talk about previous experiences, of the journey to Sweden for example. This includes avoiding the question ‘where are you from?’ since it can be a reminder that you “don’t really belong”. This policy also makes it difficult to approach a person. The aim is to show respect to a person by not stirring up emotions, or enhancing the feeling of outlandishness. The teacher want to invite the youths coming from the language introductions class into the regular class, but finding it hard due to preconceived ideas about these youths previous experiences and vulnerability. This type of respect is rather creating a distance.

In school all youth have a big part of their social life. This exercise would be beneficial for the girls with refugee backgrounds, but also other students with preconceived ideas projected on them would benefit from this exercise.

Struggles

In the project I found different struggles in the different areas of the exploration.

Girl: Preconceived ideas
The unaccompanied girls are struggling with a preconception projected on to them as a homogenous group.

Teacher: A respect creating a distance
The teachers are struggling with “a policy” of respect built on preconceived ideas of unaccompanied youth that is creating a distance.

Me: How not to recreate the group?
How can I let the individual unaccompanied girl talk about her self through her role model in a situation that would be beneficial for her?

Conclusions of exploration with the girls and the system

Talking about your role model to others could show a side of you that is not categorized, showing both a part of your identity, your aspirations and thus also the expectations on you from others at the same time. The classroom seemed like a place where the girls could benefit from showing a piece of who they want to become so the teacher also can give guidance in the studies, or even helping the students finding a mentor. The classroom is also a room where it would be possible and beneficial to talk about norms, who we look up to, and why.

In the proposal there will be no information on that the material is created with a focus on the situation of unaccompanied girls, to not construct that group again. But rather stress the fact that all students with preconceived ideas projected on them would benefit from this.

My aims for creating:
I want to open up for a discussion around norms that hinders future trajectory for groups exposed to preconceptions.

Use participation because you need to create knowledge about one another together (Lena Tagouchi, 2006).

Use materials because of its capability to aid communication and that it is strengthening in it self to claim the right to your own interpretation through creating.

Use a feministic perspective of everybody’s equal value.

I want to create for change.
The design proposal is an exercise for students in high school where you through your role model is given an opportunity to talk about yourself at any depth of choice. To empower the individual, finding new role models or mentors and open up to other possible futures. The exercise also gives a possibility to engage in a discussion around norms and representation.

Primary target groups:
- Students in high school and upper secondary school starting a new class.
- Teachers when meeting a new class or a new student.

When:
- In the beginning of a semester or when a new pupil starts in the class.

The exercise:
1. Choose your role model
2. Create a wearable piece representing your role model
3. Reflect and discuss

Suggested topics of discussion:

Open up to conversation:
- What role models have you chosen? Why?
- Where/how did you learn about this person?

Empower:
- What qualities and values has your role model?
- What qualities do you recognize in yourself?
- Are there other people with these qualities or properties you can look up to?

Norms:
- Can we see some patterns in the role models we have chosen?
- Why do we look up to these individuals?

Representation:
- Who is represented in the media? Who is not?
- Who is telling the story?
Possible outcomes of the exercise

The short tests performed in the development of the exercise have shown several positive outcomes. In the exercise you gain inspiration by choosing a role model and reflect on why you look up to this person. You can touch upon your dreams, and in what direction do you wish to develop. This can also open up for help from others in finding other role models, or possibly mentors in your surrounding.

The created material provides a non-verbal support for presentation of your role model, aiming at including the ones who are not comfortable presenting with words. By creating you also claim your right to your own interpretation.

In doing the exercise and reflecting with others the main focus is to open up and create knowledge together, in your own level of detail. And possibly learn something about yourself.

Design Proposal – Role models and material

The visual expression

I am aiming at a recognition from several visual traditions, without pointing at a particular group to clearly. The graphics are also intended to enhance the intersectional and feminist approach in the exercise.

The typeface of the headline is chosen by the girls at TRIS from a selection of different typefaces, including one traditional and one modern Arabic typeface. The toned multi-colored backdrop and the different choice of outlines of the squares is flirting with the common visual communication of feminist and intersectional printed material.

The diamonds around some of the squares are inspired from a classic Arabic typeface, hoping for a small recognition from the group of girls this exercise is inspired by. The dotted shape of the “person” is inspired from the outlines of the emoji of a woman wearing a hijab.

I do not have a graphic design competence so these are directions of the visuals for the exercise. For further development of the exercise I would like to work together with a graphic designer.

Design Proposal – Making a calendar

Possible outcomes of the exercise

The short tests performed in the development of the exercise have shown several positive outcomes. In the exercise you gain inspiration by choosing a role model and reflect on why you look up to this person. You can touch upon your dreams, and in what direction do you wish to develop. This can also open up for help from others in finding other role models, or possibly mentors in your surrounding.

The created material provides a non-verbal support for presentation of your role model, aiming at including the ones who are not comfortable presenting with words. By creating you also claim your right to your own interpretation.

In doing the exercise and reflecting with others the main focus is to open up and create knowledge together, in your own level of detail. And possibly learn something about yourself.

Alternative format – a Calendar

The exercise is the same as the one previously described, but in the format of a calendar. The calendar is intended to inspire to do this exercise in a new group in the beginning of the school year.

It also provides the possibility for communication to a larger group, to challenge the preconceived ideas of who the youths are.

A test of the calendar as an exercise in a language introduction class.
En av mina förebilder är ____________________________

_____________________________

Jag väljer materialet _________________________________________

______________________________________________________

_______________________________________

Objekt som representerar min förebild:

Namn: ____________________________

Klass: ____________________________

Bild som representerar min förebild:

Förebilder och material - För lärare

Suggestion of support for a conversation and a template for the exercise. This is a suggestion of the design, I would like to work with a graphic designer for the visuals and need further testing with the target group of teachers who would use this exercise.

Suggestion of a template for the exercise in the format of a calendar.
Workshop
An exercise for the classroom to open up for a conversation not dependent on preconceived ideas on an individual. And an exercise to discuss norms and representation, who do we look up to and why?

Calender
The exercise in the format of a calendar give inspiration of role models, and possible futures. Both for the individual creating the content of the calendar, but also for others, the classmates, the teachers in the teachers office or decision makers at the municipalities to see.

Exhibition
The exhibition was used to evoke a discussion at a policy level. With the aid of materialized objects create a discussion the notion of respect in the society and in the profession around the children. A respect of assumed fragility that creates a distance, or a respect by giving everybody their personal space, challenge the preconceptions and see the individual.
The exhibition

The materialisation

Together with unaccompanied girls the project have looked into the effect of preconceived ideas and norms.
With the blue wristband as a starting point we created wearable objects (p. 28) to explore individuality, personal space and respect.

My aim with the exhibition is to discuss the notion of respect in relation to individuality and an assumed fragility. An attitude of respect is found in the profession around the unaccompanied girls, a “respect” that is telling you not to ask the children with the experience of being a refugee about his or her background because it may stir up emotions or a sense of not belonging. But this respect is rather creating a distance.

In the conversations with the unaccompanied refugee girls the topic of respect was reoccurring. How one is disrespected due to non-perfect Swedish or wearing the wrong clothes. How one is assumed to belong to a group that you do not identify with.

I created objects that would to evoke a discussion on individuality, personal space and respect. The quotes are reactions from the girls at TRIS, Tjejer Rätt i Samhället when trying on the different objects.

The big: “Still a person who wants to be seen.”
The in-between: “Everyone needs a place.”
The small: “I see myself as worthy.”
Day 10 of the exhibition, last day.

The space

I intended for the visitors to get a feeling of wearing the objects through looking in the mirrors, or actually trying them on. This was inspired by Karin Roy Andersson and Sanna Svedstedt exhibition Mirage/You've got the look (2015) where they used mirrors for people to look like they wore their jewels. In my exhibition I placed the mirrors so that you would not see the face, but your body emphasizing what you wear, also with the height in mind of a 15 year old girl. This seemed to work well, and was a bit annoying as planned.

The chalk on the wall is intended to push towards a school context. The chalk is also intended to be inviting in it’s properties in not being permanent.

The blue color on the wall is referring to the blue color of the wristband. Since I wanted to flip the meaning of the blue wristband I created white pieces that would represent respect. The contrast between the white against the blue wall is intended to enhance that.

According to Miro Saditch, participatory jewelry artist, you need to let your things go to make it truly participatory on the terms of the participator. The audience were willing to contribute to my project in a very direct manner with out me being present.

I think the chalk contributes to the exhibition space, and a few comments are written so that makes me suspect that they grasped the topic, and I am impressed by the high amount of drawings made on my wall.
The blue wristband

For the spring exhibition at Konstfack I decided to show my starting points for the materializations in the project, the blue wristband. The wooden archive box is representing that the wristband is a part of our current history. A few visitors asked if the blue wristband was something I made up. I am creating a historic reference with my archive box. Maybe I was exaggerating and giving a historic reference too far back, when the event with the wristband took place in 2015. This might enhance the feeling of a created story. But at the same time a reference to the thirties is not irrelevant based on the many comments on the similarities between the wristband and the star of David forced on the jews to ware.

But what I realized myself in the exhibition of what is important with the presentation of the blue wristband is that they are shown together, several exactly alike, taking away the individuality. I changed the placement of the wristbands the last day of the exhibition into hanging them in a thread in a cluster, which I felt told a more clear story.

The white objects

The most important feature I wanted to show with my white objects was the individuality between the three different objects, the objects themselves that are also built up from different shaped parts. The objects are derived from the body, as it is the body that is identified and labeled.

I have doubted the choice of the white color for my gestalts. But many seem to recognize and identify with the bone-like structure, and that we are all humans.

The comments from the audience when trying on the objects have ranged from the feeling powerful trying the big one to feeling like a puppet on a string when trying on the small one. I did not reflect on before hand that it would make a difference in the experience of the objects that they were hanging in strings from the ceiling.

The most common comment was the fragile look of the object. In the exhibition I wanted the audience to touch or try on the objects but many did not dare because of the fragile look of them. The thing I want to put focus on, was that the girls are assumed to be so fragile that you do not dare to come close to them.
Discussion

How to make visible a group without mentioning it?

I have constantly debated with myself how to make visible a “group” without recreating the “group”? Lenz Taguchi is claiming that despite a feminist non-relative positioning it is still necessary to make the dichotomies visible in order to dissolve power relations (s.110 Lenz Taguchi).

For my design process, the choice to work with unaccompanied refugee girls has been the driving force through both the methodology and theoretical framework. But in the design proposal I am not to stress that it is only this “group” but all youth who have the experience of preconceived ideas that would benefit.

I also believe that making visible a skewed power relation can create change, but I need to do that in a manner that is relevant and feels double from a norm critical perspective.

Participation or decoration?

What are we exposing our participants to when inviting them to co-create, participation or decoration? Since I work with a sensitive group, aiming at social change, I feel that it is highly relevant for me to become more confident in this aspect.

As I approached my project it developed into exploring the space between the welfare system and the youth, not becoming too close to the girls that I am working with.

For my exploration with the unaccompanied girls I feel that I so far have managed to be as transparent as possible. I felt slightly nervous as the exhibition approached, how can I present my work so that it also is fair to my participants?

But this question is also a topic for the near future, in Förnyelselabbet, where the relation to the unaccompanied boys has been much closer, to ask the youth when the project is over, how they experienced their participation.

Unintended consequences

When I was showing my proposal of the exercise to a group of experts, partners in Förnyelselabbet, the material triggered discussions about norms, who do we look up to, who is represented in media and the danger of the single story.

I took the opportunity to ask Marie Angsell, expert in the right of a child at BRIS, about the risk of bullying when opening up a personal side of you. She said that if you are exposed, you know by heart that you should keep a low profile, the exercise makes that possible. But she also said if you were lucky, this type of exercise could open up for a possibility for others to see another side of you, that could position you in another context.

Nadine Dawod from RFSL-youth was also present. She wanted to take this exercise to her support group with newly arrived HBTQ-youth, to use as an opportunity for the group to get to know each other. The exercise still needs to be tested and refined for its specific contexts, but for me, both the comments from BRIS and RFSL feels like one of the best approvals of my intentions of inclusion in my result.

I also got in contact with Marcel Rådström, educator at the Living history forum, who claimed that there is a need for a discussion like this in the class rooms, that the teachers are desperate for material that can support a discussion that touch upon equality, inclusion and norms. He said that this exercise fitted their program for the schools.

The exhibition – Materialisation in a systems design project

My intention was to have a workshop in my exhibition showing my exercise intended for the classroom through getting people to participate in the exercise I created. But when I got a good response on the wristbands I created during the project, I felt that it was more of a challenge for me to create an exhibition with my own physical objects.

Another plan was to show the wristbands; the girls created in pipe cleaners and glitter fabric, but it did not have the effect that I thought. I showed it both to Förnyelselabbet and at Konstfack during the project with the reaction that it was only “pyssel” (craft). I assumed that the fact that the girls actually held the material and created something would have a bigger impact. I could have taken a path into enhancing the craft the girls made in the exhibition, but I put a product-picture on the front of my folder describing the project in the exhibition to still have the creations the girls made visible.

The exhibition was an important part of my exploration in how I as a designer can translate a strategic concept into something more communicative. Can a systems/service design project also contain a significant part of materializations?

How could I have done it differently?

I started this project with an idea of “helping” a target group defined by being a refugee and a girl. I would re-do my project if I would have wanted to start with a specific thing or situation, not a group of homogenized people in relation to a system of power. I struggled to find another way to make the project more specific in the beginning, but did not know at that time what could be relevant. I think that the approach, or mission of Förnyelselabbet: To improve the everyday for the unaccompanied youth, affected this. We have debated this standpoint in Förnyelselabbet to some extent. I think that the risk of recreating a group is smaller if you can find a specific situation to improve. Maybe you need to start big to see the systematic problems, but when you find that point to reformulate your aims, or “user” to involve all individuals affected by that specific situation.

To define a target group through gender and ethnicity is not what I want to do, it’s rather that type of categorization I want to challenge.
Acknowledgements

TRIS, Tjejers Rätt i Samhället, My Hellberg and Kim Lindström, thank you for an amazing social contribution, your work is truly needed. And thank you for letting me meet with all the fantastic girls!

A huge thanks to Förnyelselabbet who have hosted this project:
Pia McAleenan, thank you for the trust you have in me and for pushing me in all areas.

Hanna Andersson, for following me in to all my strange entangled threads of thoughts, and for being THE designer when I am stuck at school, thank you.

Fredrik Olausson, for your never ending curiosity and energy.

And thanks to all the engaged experts who I have meet through Förnyelselabbet.

My supervisors:
Therese Björkqvist, without our long discussions about identity and the world, and your knowledge of how to actually create with youths, this project would not have been the same.

Erik Widmark, thank you for making me see what is important regarding systems and ethics.

Jenny Althoff, your well-willing understanding of my project when I hardly understood it myself have really boosted my confidence.

Katja Pettersson, thank you for pushing me into develop and exhibiting my own objects. You know how much it means to me.

Sara Teleman, my inspiring writing, project and design coach, with constantly new relevant and interesting things that I know I should look at. Thank you.

Bo Westerlund, thank you for letting me explore the boundaries of the design education and for being interested in the result.

The master class of 2017, thank you for all the talks, comments and inspiration from all over. I am so happy I go to do this project alongside with you, I am deeply impressed by all of you!

Annika Stockström, thank you for your support, especially in the exhibition, that was a major well needed contribution in energy, it really meant a lot to me.

Markus, thank you for putting up with our never ending conversations during the project, you have helped me sort out my thoughts and emotions. And thank you for taking care of all the other stuff that needs to happen at home throughout an intense project. Thank you for letting me be messy.

Judit och Ruben, tack for att ni vill följa med mig på mitt ”jobb” står ut med alla möjliga typer av föreläsningar och tester, för att ni alltid säger vad ni tycker och tåm för alla kramar. Ni vet inte hur mycket jag behöver dem. Tack!

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