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SPACE, AGENCY AND SUFFERING:

Unveiling the experiences of non-Western women in asylum reception centres in Northern Norway

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Master's thesis in Peace and Conflict Transformation SVF-3901 May 2021

Acknowledgements

I appreciate the support of several people who helped me during the research process.

The gratitude goes to the respondents because this research project would not have become a reality without them. Thank you for having found the time for me, despite your busy lives, and thank you for having shared with me your stories and reflections, which have been a great source of inspiration and motivation to complete the research project. Thank you.

I also want to thank the people who helped me to reach out to the respondents and the translators. Thank you for your support, time and fantastic effort. Thank you.

I want to express how precious has been the support and the suggestions received by my supervisor, Melina Duarte. Thank you for sharing your expertise, which helped me structuring and developing the project. Also, thank you for the constant and professional guidance and support you gave me in the past months. Thank you.

I want to thank my nearest friends for the support and constant encouragement. Thank you.

I want to thank my family, who have been very supportive. Your love and encouragement have nurtured my passion, motivation and determination. I can always count on you, thank you.

I am also grateful to my closest one for all the kindness, love and support you gave me. Thank you for all the food you prepared and cooked for me, for all the encouraging words you said, and for having listened to me talking about the project for hours and for having read my very first draft. Thank you.

Abstract

The experiences of women in asylum reception centres remain largely unheard. Few researchers have been focusing on the lived experiences of women in asylum accommodations. Even fewer have investigated the interaction between spatial conditions of asylum accommodation and women's agency in Northern Norway.

This thesis involves an interdisciplinary conceptual framework to explore the interaction between space, agency and suffering from a micro-perspective to understand how spatial conditions can affect asylum seekers' agency in asylum reception centres and interfere with their motives and interests and satisfaction of their basic needs, provoking suffering.

The thesis is a qualitative study, which applies a narrative research design. It is based on a series of interviews with asylum seekers in the region and on the analysis of relevant documents concerning the standard requirements for asylum accommodations.

In order to build the argument, I firstly investigate the respondents' perspectives on shared common spaces, such as kitchen and bathrooms, and shared private spaces, such as the bedroom. Despite the peculiarities of their stories, the analysis revealed diverse conditions for both these categories.

Particularly, common spaces are experienced in relation to accessibility and availability, showing significant differences in men's and women's experiences.

Afterwards, I move to a deeper analysis of the experiences of women because of some relevant differences with the experiences of the male participants, and unexpected findings emerged. Especially concerning 'women' and who these women are. Analysing spatial conditions from women's perspectives revealed how social norms and administrative norms organise spaces where they lived, and that particularly affected them during their stay in asylum reception centres.

Keywords: asylum accommodation, shared space, women, gender, ability to access, basic needs, suffering.

Preface

I will call her Martha. Martha was in an asylum reception centre in the region of Troms. She had been there for seven years, longer than any other of the respondents in this study. Martha got permission to stay in Norway last summer and, when I talked to her, she looked nothing but relieved. She smiled when breaking that she and her family had finally been allowed to stay in Norway. Martha and her family are now living in a private house. Many things are different from the past seven years, but this period has left deep marks in her life.

I met Martha the day of the interview at the translator's workplace. Martha and I started to talk about her religion. She told me that she became Christian when she moved to Norway. I first thought that her change of religious belief could have been caused by her experiences at the asylum reception centre in Norway. My guess was, however, not entirely correct. Indeed, she did not want to live in line with Islamic rules anymore, but her motivations were grounded in her home country, not in Norway. She shorty stated that "Islamic rules are bad for women", and I listened. Whether, however, Islamic rules are oppressing women or whether Islamic rules can be said to be more restrictive to women than, for example, Christian rules, is a discussion that falls out of the scope of this thesis. What is important here is that Martha viewed her original religion as oppressive due to her gender. While she did not have the opportunity to live according to different rules in her home country, she already sympathised with Christianity. Martha converted once she had the chance, i.e. once she arrived in Norway. Martha could follow Christian rituals only after she arrived in Norway. Being Christian in her home country was difficult and dangerous, and she took a short break before explaining to me why.

Martha was born into the Islamic religious culture inherited from her parents. When she grew older, she understood that this was not her way of living. Despite this, Martha acted in society according to the Islamic rules to avoid trouble; not following Islamic rules would have threatened her life and the lives of her family members. She said that she was following Islamic rules in public spaces while living "like a human" at home. According to her, at home, Martha could feel like living as a human because she had the liberty to do things as she pleased and be whoever she wanted to be. It means that she felt human when she was not deprived of her agency and not limited in her personhood.

Martha was, at that time, worried for her old parents, who could have gone through severe troubles because of her. Today, she is still affected by it; I saw it in her eyes. Moreover, Martha also had to protect herself from danger and stigmatisation. She said that friends and

neighbours would not have contacted her and despised her and would not have eaten together with her, if she had not acted as an adult Muslim woman does.

Martha got married early, and she did not finish high school. The marriage and her first pregnancy stopped her from attending school. Even if she wished to study, she dropped out because this is what low-class women are supposed to do in her previous culture. Martha was used to staying at home and look after her child. She would be sewing, knitting, meeting other women in her neighbourhood, doing things expected from her within this culture.

Later in the interview, when we talked about her experience in the asylum reception centre, Martha told me that her challenging experience in the asylum reception centre made her feel unhuman and unfree once again in her life. The only difference was that while at the asylum reception centre, she had not her own resort as she did when she was at her "home". There was no home, i.e. no private space where she could be human and free.

Although Martha's story is unique, some of her experiences while living in the asylum reception centre in Northern Norway are common to all the respondents in this study, particularly to women.

Even if my background was very different from Martha's I could immediately relate to many of her experiences, as someone that lives outside their home country and in collective accommodations. The motivation behind this study links to my personal experiences as a traveller. Since I moved out from my parents' house, which represented my comfort zone, I wondered how changing place contributed to transforming my life experiences and how living in one place instead of another would have cut me off from other opportunities and experiences. I wondered how space could have impacted other migrants' lives. Specifically, the ones whose choices to move and where to stay were not free. I wondered how living in asylum centres and sharing spaces with strangers add up to an already traumatic experience that brings them to asylum centres in the first place.

My ambition is that the knowledge produced in my study will help improve the living conditions in asylum centres in Northern Norway. I expect this thesis will help to increase our awareness that asylum seekers are fellow humans and that several aspects of their living conditions are unreasonably inadequate.

Sara Toffanin, Tromsø, May 2021

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Conflict and political violence have forced several million people to move from their homes to escape life-threatening events. Migrating across the borders of their country of origin is, in many cases, the only possible solution to escape violence. Nevertheless, the journeys to reach safe places are dangerous. While asylum seekers and refugees are in transit, they frequently encounter severe life-threatening risks, such as sea-crossing in overcrowded boats, desert crossing, and violence, such as psychological distress, kidnapping and trafficking, and sexual and gender-based violence.[1]

The journeys tend to be difficult for both men and women, not to mention children and minors. In many circumstances, women become especially vulnerable due to their gender, and some of the experiences can be said to be gender specific. For example, mothers may be forced to flee alone with their children, and newly married women must flee while pregnant because not only the husbands' life is at risk, but also the life of the children they are bearing.[2]

Migrating is a disorienting experience that creates an emotional and a psychological burden that asylum seekers and refugees carry during the journey. They cannot return to where their relatives still are, and they often bring their fears and traumas of persecution with them, they do not know how their lives will be and they are uncertain in relation to where they will stay and live. Also, moving within and across countries can be disorienting in their present time, because sometimes, they stay only for one day at one stage of their journey, which creates the feeling of not knowing where they are.[3]

Asylum seekers' sufferings do not stop at borders, and they suffer due to violation of their fundamental human rights in host countries where they submit their request for international protection. For instance, violation of basic rights may occur when asylum reception conditions are inadequate.[4]

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[1] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Desperate Journeys: Refugee and Migrant Children arriving in Europe and how to Strengthen their Protection - January to September 2019* (2019). Pp. 12-14

[2] Forthcoming: Sara Toffanin, "Space, Agency and Suffering - Dataset," (UiT Open Research Data, July 2020 - November 2020; summer 2021).

[3] Forthcoming: Toffanin, "Space, Agency and Suffering - Dataset."

[4] Amnesty International, *THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S HUMAN RIGHTS* (2012). Pp. 260

In this thesis, I will argue that inadequate housing and living conditions[5] in asylum reception centres expose asylum seekers to severe restrictions of their capacity to satisfy their basic needs and agency through which they express their roles as individuals and family members.

Also, in situations where housing conditions are inadequate, women are often more vulnerable to experiencing violence and suffering due to their gender. For instance, women are often more susceptible to experience psychological and physical sufferings due to crowded living spaces[6], and crowdedness can increase the burden of responsibilities felt by mothers.[7] It does not intend to argue that women necessarily become targets of direct and intended violence. However, particularly, women become more exposed to suffering when their housing and living conditions are not adequate due to the unintended violence that is inflicted on them due to social forces.

This thesis explores three main themes, which are space, agency, and suffering, by analysing the experiences of the respondents who participated in this study. In chapter 4, the definition of space is designed in connection to the idea of agency. Space is the location where one's agency becomes possible.[8] Space is the context that shapes one's capacity to act according to one's motives and interests.

It is primarily in the private space, such as one's home, where people can exercise choices to a much larger degree than in public areas or shared rooms. Ideally, in the private space as home, people should find the space to be who they wish to be and do what they desire to do.

In the context of asylum accommodations, it is comprehensible that these spaces are not there to replace asylum seekers' homes. Despite individual strategies to recreate homely feelings, it is not easy to create a sense of being at home. However, as Martha and other

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[5] Adequate housing refers to accommodations where living in peace, security and dignity is ensured as it is stated at the paragraph 7 of General Comment, "General Comment No. 4: The Right to Adequate Housing (Art. 11 (1) of the Covenant)," (UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), 1991). https://www.refworld.org/docid/47a7079a1.html.; see also UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Fact Sheet No. 21, The Human Right to Adequate Housing," (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2009). https://www.refworld.org/docid/479477400.html. Pp. 3-4; for the aspects that affect the right to adequate housing.

[6] "Women and the Right to Adequate Housing," New York and Geneva, 2012, accessed 28.01.2021, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/publications/WomenHousing_HR.PUB.11.2.pdf. Pp. 73

[7] Terry Arendell, "Conceiving and investigating motherhood: The decade's scholarship," *Journal of marriage and family* 62, no. 4 (2000). Pp. 1197

[8] Jeff Malpas, *Place and experience: A philosophical topography* (Routledge, 2018). Pp. 188-89

respondents explained, in asylum accommodations, there was no place like "home", there was no private space where they could be human and free in a similar degree than in a "home".

To investigate how space in asylum accommodations shape residents' agency, specifically women's agency, I will focus on two features of space. One aspect concerns materiality; materiality encompasses the material and physical objects that affect one's capacity to act within the inhabited space.[9] When available, they support residents' capacity to satisfy basic needs.[10] The other aspect refers to privacy, freedom from interference by others, which is regarded as a necessary aspect of adequate housing.[11] Privacy relates to its legal meaning, which refers to private property ownership[12], and privacy also regulates social interactions with others.[13] In this thesis, privacy relates to residents' perception of "owning" a space, i.e. making a space one's own, that is adapted to their interest and motives, which relates to the capacity to act significantly in the spatial setting where they stay and live.

As chapter 6 discusses, owning a space involves considering its appropriateness to residents' interests and motives, and it refers to recognise residents' claims over certain spaces. The discussion of the appropriateness of space develops from respondents' reflections on the spatial conditions offered in the asylum centres, presented in chapter 5.

In this thesis, I will argue that, in asylum accommodations in Northern Norway, under specific circumstances, the conditions of space in asylum accommodation are such that they violate individual agency and that women are particularly susceptible to suffer from these violations. They are indirectly affected by the administration's lack of recognition of their gender specific conditions and needs. The argument built in this thesis aims at showing that it is the interplay of legal and social regulatory frameworks that challenge women's satisfaction of basic needs in shared spaces.

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[9] Anne Sigfrid Grønseth et al., "Housing Qualities and Effects on Identity and Well-Being: Theoretical Perspectives for Interdisciplinary Research on Asylum Seeker Receptions Centres," (2016). Pp. 7

[10] Comment, "General Comment No. 4: The Right to Adequate Housing (Art. 11 (1) of the Covenant)."; see also Robert H Bradley and Diane L Putnick, "Housing quality and access to material and learning resources within the home environment in developing countries," *Child development* 83, no. 1 (2012).

[11] (OHCHR), "Fact Sheet No. 21, The Human Right to Adequate Housing." Pp. 3

[12] Jeremy Waldron, "Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom," *UCLA L. Rev.* 39 (1991).

[13] Irwin Altman, "The Environment and Social Behaviour: Privacy, Personal Space, Territory, Crowding, Monterey," (CA, 1975). Pp- 23

1.1 Problem statement and research question

Asylum accommodations where asylum seekers are hosted, while their claim for international protection is processed, is a temporary one based on the premise of asylum seekers' short permanence.

Asylum seekers live in shared accommodation organised by legal and administrative norms. The legal requirements set for the organisation of the spaces within the asylum centre may become an impediment to residents' capacity to realise basic needs daily. and to residents' realisation of primary agency, and this thesis aims at understanding how, which means in connection with what other conditions, the legal and administrative norms can interfere with residents' realisation of basic needs and agency.

This problem is also relevant, particularly concerning women's experiences, mostly overlooked in previous research.

The research question is: **How can space interfere with women's agency in asylum reception centres in Northern Norway?**

1.2 Relevance for peace and conflict studies

Housing is one of the basic needs, and the human right framework expresses the significant connection between the right to adequate housing and human life. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) recognises the significance of the right to adequate housing, and it suggests interpreting it as "the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity".[14]

The CESCR also indicates the criteria that define adequate housing. These criteria suggest the minimum material and living standards that must characterise any shelter and accommodation. Shelter and accommodation must ensure these criteria whether the living space is or is not of private ownership property.[15] It is fundamental to ensure adequate housing regardless of private ownership property in order to ensure residents a private space where they can be human and free, live in safety and comfort and perform agency and satisfy basic needs.

[14] (OHCHR), "Fact Sheet No. 21, The Human Right to Adequate Housing." Pp. 3
[15] (OHCHR), "Fact Sheet No. 21, The Human Right to Adequate Housing." Pp. 8

Johan Galtung refers the basic conditions, such as access to food, water, and shelter, that are necessary to express identity and freedom, defined as two of the four basic human needs. According to him, the act of neglecting basic conditions hampers individuals' ability to express identity and live in freedom, and it may threaten their survival and well-being.[16]

I refer to human needs of expression of identity and freedom as related to the concept of agency, presented in section 4.2, while what Galtung defines as basic conditions are referred as basic needs in this thesis.

Indirect violence can be manifested in the housing sector when access to adequate housing is distributed in relation to the perceived difference in the status of a group within the population.[17] Also, restriction in accessing adequate housing can affect physical safety and psychological health[18], restricting inhabitant's well-being and ability to express the self.

Veena Das indicates the complexity of the concept of violence, suggesting that its complexity manifests the challenge in defining a violent practice. Precisely, Das suggests that gender and sex are significant social factors in understanding features of a violent practice that otherwise would remain in the shadow.[19]

Interestingly, in Das' perspective, gender creates a spatial dichotomy, dividing between public and private spaces. Das suggests that this division challenges the definition of the violent practices that occur in the intimate and private space of home, while shaping subjective experiences of domestic violence and the societal and national responses to it.[20]

Arguably, the form of violence discussed by Das acquire a spatial dimension, and the space of home constructed as safe and private may disguise the visibility and hinder the awareness of violent practices and suffering that occur within it. Specifically, it may be challenging to be aware of violent practices in spaces where individuals are considered safe.

As the features of safety and privacy of a home can disguise violent practices, the spatial conditions offered in asylum accommodations can also conceal socio-spatial dynamics, which can expose residents to suffering. The spaces in the accommodation are shared and specifically

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[16] Johan Galtung, *A theory of peace: Building direct structural cultural peace* (Transcend University Press, 2013). Pp. 30
[17] Reginald Thomas Appleyard, *The human rights of migrants*, vol. 3 (International Organization for Migration, 2001). Pp. 32
[18] (OHCHR), "Fact Sheet No. 21, The Human Right to Adequate Housing." Pp. 22
[19] Veena Das, "Violence, gender, and subjectivity," *Annual review of anthropology* 37 (2008). Pp. 284
[20] Das, "Violence, gender, and subjectivity." Pp. 292-293

this feature can create circumstances that expose asylum seekers, particularly women, to suffering.

This thesis attempts to insert itself in the developing spatial perspective in the field of peace and conflict studies by particularly focusing on the interconnection between space, agency and suffering in the experiences of asylum seekers.

Eventually, it has been only in recent years that geographical concepts have become relevant for peace and conflict studies.[21] For instance, Susanne Forde investigates the concept of positive peace in shared spaces, and positive peace is framed in spatial terms as the transformation of socio-spatial practices of belonging and ownership in shared spaces of the city of Mostar in the Bosnian-Herzegovina post-conflict setting.[22]

It is significant to explore the housing experiences of asylum seekers who often suffer from inadequate conditions of their shelters. Specifically, the thesis aims to show that the legal requirement set for organising common spaces in the asylum centre lack of gender adequacy, which exposes asylum-seeking women to severe restrictions of their ability to satisfy basic needs and their agency that expresses their roles as individuals and family members.

1.3 Objectives

This thesis explores the correlation between space, agency, and suffering that emerge in the context of housing conditions at asylum reception centres in Northern Norway. The main goal of this thesis is to reflect on the role that space plays in shaping and transforming asylum seekers', particularly women, experiences by analysing their narrations. More specifically, the role of space relates to how the space is organised, and how the organisation of space shapes experiences of the spatial setting.

1.4 Chapter overview

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the problem statement and the research question (section 1.1). It has presented the relevance of the thesis in the field

[21] Roger Mac Ginty, "Complementarity and interdisciplinarity in peace and conflict studies," *Journal of Global Security Studies* 4, no. 2 (2019). Pp. 271
[22] Susan Forde, "Socio-spatial agency and positive peace in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Space and Polity* 23, no. 2 (2019).

of peace and conflict studies (section 1.2), and the objectives of this study (section 1.3) and it presents the overview of the chapters.

Chapter 2 introduces the background related to asylum reception centre in Norway and the political debates related to the standards of living provided in asylum accommodation (sections 2.1 and 2.2). It presents the literature review (2.3) and in line with the identified research gap the chapter introduces the relevance of the thesis (2.4).

Chapter 3 briefly introduces the methodological choices that define the qualitative study (section 3.1), it provides an explanation of the research design (section 3.2), it presents considerations concerning research ethics (section 3.3), and it presents the main challenges and limitation of the research (section 3.4).

Chapter 4 introduces the conceptual framework aiming at explaining the conceptual choices that construct the conceptual framework (sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3), and it aims at clarifying how the three main concepts are connected to the empirical material (section 4.4).

Chapter 5 describes the process of analysis while identifying the main findings. The chapter presents the descriptive codes and categories (section 5.1) and it proceeds with the presentation of the comparison of the main categories (section 5.2). The chapter shows the directives requiring that asylum centres must be adapted to the residents' basic needs (section 5.3), and it goes deeper in the stories of the female respondents (section 5.4.). The chapter concludes with a summary of main findings (section 5.5)

Chapter 6 discusses the relevance of the main findings concerning the literature and the conceptual framework. The chapter presents the main findings organising them in three main themes (sections 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3).

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by answering the research question and presenting the implication for peace and conflict studies. The chapter includes a brief summary of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Background and Literature

This chapter aims at introducing some key features of the Norwegian asylum system, mainly those related to asylum accommodations (section 2.1), and it presents and synthesises the current knowledge concerning the research question introduced in section 1.1 and shows how this thesis contributes to the existing literature (section 2.2). Ultimately, the chapter presents the societal and academic relevance of the thesis (section 2.3).

2.1 Background

This section is organised in two subsections, which respectively focus on (1) the temporary nature of asylum accommodations in the context of Norway and (2) the political debates and considerations about the standards of asylum accommodations in Norway.

The first subsection (2.1.1) introduces the main actors involved in the asylum system concerning the provision of asylum accommodation. The subsection shows statistics related to the permanence of asylum seekers in the asylum centre while reflecting on the reasons and implications of temporariness.

The second subsection (2.1.2) presents the political debates on the standard of asylum accommodations in Norway. This subsection explains the significant developments of the asylum policy concerning asylum accommodations in chronological order showing the issue related to the accommodation offer over the past decades.

2.1.1 Temporary asylum accommodations in Norway

In the context of Norway, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is one of the main government departments involved in the Norwegian asylum system. Specifically, the UDI processes asylum seekers' claims of international protection, and it has the responsibility to provide housing accommodations for asylum seekers.

To account for this liability, the UDI collaborates with municipalities and several private companies to run asylum reception centres. The UDI provides the guidelines to observe in the provision of and management of asylum accommodations. Periodically, the UDI carries out inspections to control that the management of asylum reception centres follows the contract,

indicating regulations concerning the collaboration between these actors and the guidelines to observe.[23]

Municipalities and private companies take charge of the duty of providing accommodation to asylum seekers.[24] Respectively, the former actor can decide the location of the asylum reception centre, define the building that will host asylum accommodation, such as lodges, military bases, hospitals, and ordinary houses, and they decide the number of asylum seekers to accommodate.[25] The later actors, such as the Norwegian People's Aid, Hero and Link, run daily routines to manage the asylum centre and offer services in the reception centres.[26]

After submitting the asylum claim at the police station, the UDI provides temporary housing accommodation to asylum seekers.[27]

Ideally, asylum seekers' permanence in the asylum reception centre is six months[28]; however, it usually is much longer than six months in practice. On average, asylum seekers stayed in asylum accommodation for eight months in 2008, twelve months in 2012[29], and eleven months in 2017[30]. Martha lived in asylum reception centres for seven years. Other respondents who participated in this study stayed for more than one and up to two years.[31]

The evaluation of cases appealed against rejection, and the lack of available accommodation to settle asylum seekers whose claim has been accepted can explain the

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[23] H Larsen, *The organisation of reception facilities for asylum seekers in Norway*, Oslo: EMN/UDI (2014), https://www.udi.no/globalassets/global/european-migration-network_i/publikasjoner/emn-reception-centre-study-2014.pdf.; see also "Contract follow-up of asylum reception," accessed 19.02.2021, https://www.udi.no/en/asylum-reception-centres/tilsyn-med-og-kontroll-av-asylmottak/#link-3871.
[24] "The division of roles between the UDI and the operating operator," accessed 19.02.2021, https://www.udi.no/asylmottak/onsker-a-drive-mottak/drift/.
[25] Larsen, *The organisation of reception facilities for asylum seekers in Norway*. Pp. 4
[26] European Migration Network, *The Organisation of Asylum and Migration Policies in Norway - Report to the European Migration Network from the Norwegian Contact Point* (2012), https://www.udi.no/globalassets/global/european-migration-network_i/studies-reports/organisation-asylum-norway.pdf.Pp. 9
[27] Snorre Sæther and Anita Vardøy, GI-10/2014 Instructions on the interpretation of the Immigration Act § 95 first paragraph - target group for accommodation in asylum reception centers, 14/4066 29.10.2014 (2014)., https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/GI-102014-Instruks-om-/id2076210/?q=GI-10/2014, accessed 19.02.2021.
[28] Ragne Øwre Thorshaug and Cathrine Brun, "Temporal injustice and re-orientations in asylum reception centres in Norway: towards critical geographies of architecture in the institution," *Fennia* 197, no. 2 (2019).
[29] Larsen, *The organisation of reception facilities for asylum seekers in Norway*.;
[30] Zubia Willmann Robleda, "Re-inventing everyday life in the asylum centre: everyday tactics among women seeking asylum in Norway," *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 10, no. 2 (2020).
[31] Toffanin, "Space, Agency and Suffering - Dataset."

prolonged permanence in asylum centre.[32] Regarding the waiting time for resettlement, between 2005 and 2010, asylum seekers lived in asylum accommodations for approximately 625 days after being granted asylum.[33]

The length of the rental contract of the asylum centres is generally short term. It manifests the temporariness of the asylum seekers' permanence, and it can also serve to contain costs.[34] The short-term contracts can be a factor that grants a flexible asylum process, which concerns adjusting the reception system conforming to the number of arrivals. It also serves to allocate asylum seekers to enhance the utilisation of space in asylum reception centres. Besides this, asylum seekers' specific conditions, such as a change in family profile and health-related conditions, are reasons for their reallocation in adapted accommodations.[35]

Short term contract and high flexibility can create feelings of instability and uncertainty. As it occurred to some respondents, they did not have the time to settle down by the time they had to move again. They had been frequently relocated, which created the feeling of uncertainty related to settlement and decreased their control over their own lives.

The organisation of the reception system to grant a flexible reception system can provoke uncertainty related to the settlement. Several scholars[36] identify the premise of short permanence in asylum accommodation and lack of control over their lives as one of the significant challenges experienced by asylum seekers.

2.1.2 Political debates and considerations on the standards of asylum accommodations: from 1980s to 2015

In Norway, the asylum system has been in place since the end of the 1980s. In 1987, the first asylum reception centre was set up in Trondheim.[37] The Norwegian asylum system started

[32] Larsen, *The organisation of reception facilities for asylum seekers in Norway*. Pp. 4, 14
[33] Thorshaug and Brun, "Temporal injustice and re-orientations in asylum reception centres in Norway: towards critical geographies of architecture in the institution." Pp. 236
[34] Åshild Lappegard Hauge, Eli Støa, and Karine Denizou, "Framing outsidedness–aspects of housing quality in decentralized reception centres for asylum seekers in Norway," *Housing, Theory and Society* 34, no. 1 (2017). Pp. 3
[35] Larsen, *The organisation of reception facilities for asylum seekers in Norway*. Pp. 12
[36] See scholars cited in subsections, 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, of the Literature review presented in section 2.2, and see also Serena Parekh, *Refugees and the Ethics of Forced Displacement* (New York: Routledge, 2017). Pp. 29-30 on the precariousness of encampment.
[37] Grønseth et al., "Housing Qualities and Effects on Identity and Well-Being: Theoretical Perspectives for Interdisciplinary Research on Asylum Seeker Receptions Centres." Pp. 38

developing between the 1980s and the 1990s in response to the increasing number of asylum seekers arriving from the Balkan region.[38]

In this period, the political debate focused on (1) the location of asylum facilities and (2) the use of former institutions no longer used for public services.

The principle of decentralisation guided the facility's location[39], and following this principle, asylum reception centres' location was in remote geographical areas distant from the city and urban centres.

Asylum reception centres' location became a discussed topic because locating asylum seekers in remote areas could have aggravated residents' mental health conditions by provoking perceptions and feelings of being isolated.[40]

It is relevant to clarify that in Norway, asylum reception centres can be located both in urban and non-urban areas concerning the type of reception centre.

Asylum reception centres are centralised, decentralised or partially decentralised. To briefly clarify, centralised centres consist of campus, including an office for the staff and several buildings that accommodate asylum seekers. A centralised asylum centre can rent additional housing units within the local community, becoming a partially decentralised asylum centre. The decentralised asylum centres include an office for the employees and diverse houses, flats, apartments in the host community that accommodate asylum seekers.[41]

The location within the local community of decentralised asylum centres arguably balances centres' location in remote areas that follows the decentralised principle.

Concerning the use of former public institutions, from a political perspective, it was economically disadvantageous to invest in building new structures to host asylum seekers because the number of arrivals was fluctuating and their permanence in the centres was ideally

[38] Jan-Paul Brekke and Vigdis Vevstad, *Reception conditions for asylum seekers in Norway and the EU* (2007). Pp. 26

[39] The principle of decentralisation can also refer to the interconnection between the district and national governments in the management of asylum centres see Jostein Askim and Anton Steen, "Trading Refugees: The Governance of Refugee Settlement in a Decentralized Welfare State," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 43, no. 1 (2020). Pp. 26

[40] Brekke and Vevstad, *Reception conditions for asylum seekers in Norway and the EU*. Pp. 26

[41] Hauge, Støa, and Denizou, "Framing outsidedness–aspects of housing quality in decentralized reception centres for asylum seekers in Norway." Pp. 2-3

temporary. In other words, based on the premise of short permanence, the accommodation offered within former facilities was considered appropriate to host asylum seekers.[42]

In addition, as shown in the previous subsection, the premise of short permanence guides the choice of short-term rental contracts, which is an economically practical solution from a political perspective. At the same time, from the residents' standpoint, it manifests into uncertain living conditions.

However, whether the premise of short permanence can or cannot balance and justify the standard of living offered to asylum seekers, what has been shown by the statistics mentioned above is that in practice, asylum seekers live in these accommodations much longer than expected. The question that arises from that is then whether these conditions are ethically justifiable concerning the premise of a short stay. Despite the intriguing debate that could arise from this question, it falls out from the objectives of this thesis.

In 2015, during the refugee crisis in Europe, Norway amended the regulations concerning the quality requirements of asylum accommodation.[43] The change in the regulation was justified by the need to promptly respond to the increase of arrivals while containing the costs.[44]

However, avoiding expensive accommodation or restricting or avoiding investing and adjusting buildings and furniture would disable the security of residents' dignity and their capacity to satisfy basic needs. These two aims can easily conflict with each other[45], and residents' fulfilment and satisfaction of basic needs are arguably not always met in practice, as is discussed in chapter 6.

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[42] Brekke and Vevstad, *Reception conditions for asylum seekers in Norway and the EU*. Pp. 26

[43] Ministry of Local Government and Modernization, "Temporary regulations on exemptions from construction case processing for asylum reception," news release, 27.11.2015, 2015, https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/midlertidig-forskrift-om-unntak-fra-byggesaksbehandling-for-asylmottak/id2464643/., accessed 29.04.2021
With reference to exceptions to the quality requirements see Ministry of Local Government and Modernization, "Temporary regulations on exemptions from the Planning and Building Act for accommodation of persons seeking protection (asylum seekers)," (FOR-2015-11-27-1360 2015). https://lovdata.no/dokument/LTI/forskrift/2015-11-27-1360.; see also § 12-7. Requirements for rooms and other living space in Ministry of Local Government and Modernization, "Regulations on technical requirements for buildings (Building Technical Regulations)," (FOR-2010-03-26-489 2010 (2017)). https://lovdata.no/dokument/SFO/forskrift/2010-03-26-489.

[44] Jan-Paul Brekke and Anne Staver, "The renationalisation of migration policies in times of crisis: the case of Norway," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 13 (2018). Pp. 2170

[45] Hauge, Støa, and Denizou, "Framing outsidedness–aspects of housing quality in decentralized reception centres for asylum seekers in Norway." Pp. 4

2.2 Literature review

This section presents and synthesises the current knowledge concerning the research question introduced in section 1.1 and shows how this thesis contributes to the existing literature.

The literature review is organised in three subsections. The first subsection (2.2.1) introduces the existing knowledge on asylum accommodations in Norway. It shows how previous scholars discussed asylum centres' spatial conditions. The second subsection (2.2.2) presents relevant literature based on studies conducted on asylum accommodation outside Norway. The third subsection (2.2.3) presents significant studies related to womanhood, housing and space.

2.2.1 Literature on asylum accommodation in Norway

Grønseth et al.'s study, conducted in 2016, investigates the impact of housing on asylum seekers' well-being, meaning, and identity. The study acknowledges the temporariness of the accommodation as a challenging factor that complicates asylum seekers' control over their lives while living in the asylum centre. Living in the centre also acquires a symbolic meaning, which implies that residents' space conveys their social status, impacting how the local community perceives asylum seekers.[46]

The quality of the house is significant to foster residents' capacity to create their identities, secure their well-being and achieve social integration. [47] While the study acknowledges that the residents' specific conditions shape perceptions of the quality of the house[48], it does not investigate women's experiences and, specifically how gender specific conditions can affect the perception of the quality of the house is not accounted.

Similarly, Hauge, Støa, and Denizou's study, conducted in 2017, focuses on the impact of housing conditions on asylum seekers' well-being in decentralised asylum centres. Living in decentralised centres can increase asylum seekers' opportunities to encounter the local community, positively impacting social equality and integration. Despite decentralised centres can have the potential to increase the opportunities for integration, in practice, the conditions

[46] Grønseth et al., "Housing Qualities and Effects on Identity and Well-Being: Theoretical Perspectives for Interdisciplinary Research on Asylum Seeker Receptions Centres." Pp. 17
[47] Grønseth et al., "Housing Qualities and Effects on Identity and Well-Being: Theoretical Perspectives for Interdisciplinary Research on Asylum Seeker Receptions Centres." Pp. 27
[48] Grønseth et al., "Housing Qualities and Effects on Identity and Well-Being: Theoretical Perspectives for Interdisciplinary Research on Asylum Seeker Receptions Centres." Pp. 45

of the living spaces can hamper the integration of asylum seekers in the local community. Substandard conditions, lack of maintenance, and crowdedness define a clear boundary between asylum seekers and locals, and it ultimately compromises integration.[49]

Arguably, inclusivity can also be analysed in connection with the socio-spatial dynamics that occur within asylum accommodations, and this is the stance adopted in this thesis.

Both these studies reveal that asylum seekers' autonomy, as control over their own lives, is considerably constrained in asylum accommodations because, independently from the types of asylum centre, asylum seekers are controlled by institutional and administrative rules and by social norms.

Concerning the control set by institutional and administrative rules, the UDI's employees have to check asylum seekers' observance of the housing rules, such as cleanness, tidiness and quietness in common areas.[50] One may argue that, whether one considers decentralised or centralised asylum centres, inspections conducted by the employees impact asylum seekers' feelings of owning a space and create feelings of not having a private space. This seems to be the case whatever one considers decentralised or centralised asylum centres. Also, asylum residents can experience these inspections as a "child-like treatment"[51], in the sense of being treated as someone who does not follow the rules and needs to be surveilled.

Concerning the impact of social norms, Hauge, Støa, and Denizou argue for the interwovenness between the built environment and the social system to discuss how buildings and spatial settings can promote or discourage social inclusion.

While Hauge, Støa, and Denizou's perspective is relevant; they do not focus on social norms as how they are lived by asylum seekers. This perspective is a micro-level perspective, which reveals asylum seekers' reflections on how social norms organise social encounters in the asylum centre's spaces.

Thorshaug and Brun's study, conducted in 2019, shows that the conditions of asylum accommodation constitute a limit to asylum seekers' control over their lives. They argue that

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[49] Hauge, Støa, and Denizou, "Framing outsidedness–aspects of housing quality in decentralized reception centres for asylum seekers in Norway."
[50] "House rules for reception centres," 2020, accessed 13.01.2021, https://www.udi.no/globalassets/global/asylmottak/husregler-i-mottak/2020_husregler_engelsk.pdf.
[51] Grønseth et al., "Housing Qualities and Effects on Identity and Well-Being: Theoretical Perspectives for Interdisciplinary Research on Asylum Seeker Receptions Centres." Pp. 24

asylum centre material circumstances and institutional conditions create a "temporal injustice" because asylum seekers' past, present and future are disconnected.[52] This focus extends understanding of how the organisation of the asylum centres creates uncertainty in the lives of asylum seekers, as stated in subsection 2.1.1.

According to Thorshaug and Brun, asylum centre's location, designated room, roommates, and mobility, aggravates the uncertainty of residents' lives. Crowded environments create stressful situations in which residents wait or are late to use services provided within the facility, and these conditions augment their preoccupations concerning their future.[53]

While Thorshaug and Brun focus on how the organisation of space affects the control of their future, they did not investigate how the organisation of space affects residents' interaction in and control over specific spaces.

In addition, the studies mentioned above did not account for women's experiences in the asylum centres. Women's experiences remain mainly at the margins in research conducted in Norway, except for the study conducted by Robleda.

In Robleda's study, women's experiences in asylum centres relate to the concept of agency. Agency is defined as the different strategies used by women to cope with temporariness, inactivity, uncertainty, and asylum seekers-label related to their economic dependency on the state.[54] Agency concerns residents' tactics deployed to cope with the mentioned challenges. This study does not account for the interconnection between women's agency and spatial conditions of materiality and privacy provided in the asylum centres.

Furthermore, none of these studies mentioned above account for how the legal and social regulatory frameworks interplay in the experiences of asylum seekers, particularly women's experiences, and this is the gap this thesis aims at addressing.

2.2.2 Literature on asylum accommodation abroad

Lietart, Verhaeghe, and Derluyn conduct a study in asylum reception centres in Belgium to show how the institutional rules and the physical environment in the asylum centre restrict the

[52] Thorshaug and Brun, "Temporal injustice and re-orientations in asylum reception centres in Norway: towards critical geographies of architecture in the institution." Pp. 233
[53] Thorshaug and Brun, "Temporal injustice and re-orientations in asylum reception centres in Norway: towards critical geographies of architecture in the institution." Pp. 239
[54] Robleda, "Re-inventing everyday life in the asylum centre: everyday tactics among women seeking asylum in Norway." Pp. 83

capacity of asylum-seeking parents to raise and protect their children. The study focuses on parental agency related to the capacity to perform parental roles. The authors of the study argue that the conditions of the space, such as shared canteens, material resources, and location of the centre can increase parents' burden in providing a safe place for the child and that living in asylum centres limit parental agency. Referring to this limitation, the study shows the constraints in the parental agency by presenting how the scarce material resources available in the asylum centre caused an unprompted response to the informant's insufficient production of breastfeeding milk. The woman's dependency on the centre that provided her with the formula increased her inability to protect her child and be dependent on the centre. Inability displays residents' lack of control over their lives, and dependency shows residents' limited ability to provide for their subsistence.[55]

While this study considers parents' experiences and reveals parents' dependency on the material resources of the asylum centre, it does not consider other dimensions of parenting that are more gender specific. For instance, they do not account for circumstances related to motherhood, such as pregnancy, giving birth, abortion, and experiences after birth, such as dealing with the change of accommodation and how mothers experience shared spaces.

Van der Horst conducts a relevant study that focuses on the connection between material resources, the meaning of home, and autonomy. Van der Horst studied asylum reception centres in the municipality of Rotterdam, in the Netherlands, and she aims at understanding residents' interpretations of asylum accommodation concerning characteristics and qualities related to home.[56]

Van der Horst argues that cultural systems shape the characteristics and qualities related to home, and she argues that in asylum centres, "the possibility to use the space in convergence with culture is very small".[57] Cultural inadequacy of asylum accommodation was one primary concern expressed by her informants. She argues that material resources, privacy and autonomy correlate in a way in which, if provided, allow asylum seekers to act following their duties and

[55] Ine Lietaert, Floor Verhaeghe, and Ilse Derluyn, "Families on hold: How the context of an asylum centre affects parenting experiences," *Child & Family Social Work* 25 (2020). Pp. 4
[56] Hilje Van der Horst, "Living in a reception centre: the search for home in an institutional setting," *Housing, Theory and Society* 21, no. 1 (2004).
[57] Van der Horst, "Living in a reception centre: the search for home in an institutional setting." Pp. 43

responsibilities that apply to their identities and perform cultural traditions connected with home.[58]

While Van der Horst recognises that space respectively for men and women was lacking, gender perspectives remain shadowed by cultural considerations. Also, the presented studies do not investigate on the interplay between legal and social regulatory frameworks in the experience of asylum centre's residents.

2.2.3 Literature on womanhood, housing, and space

The literature concerning womanhood, housing and space is abundant and different fields have contributed to the topic. For instance, Milaney et al.'s qualitative study on the role of mothering experienced by homeless mothers claims that the role of mothering may become oppressive due to housing conditions. It occurs because housing conditions can incapacitate mothers in their responsibility to provide a stable and safe house for their children.[59]

Similarly, but without a specifically targeted group of mothers, Arendell argues that mothering relates to satisfying the child's physical, emotional and moral needs and that crowded spaces increase mother's struggle to meet these needs.[60] Milaney et al. and Arendell both assess that inadequate housing conditions have a specific gendered effect when exposing mothers to further challenges. In this instance, the study of women's experience aims to show why and how gender makes a difference in their lives. It is not to say that men, comparatively, are not shaped by their gender roles, but it is to stress that there are gender specific conditions that may create more challenges for women.

There is a large amount of literature produced by feminist geographers, particularly in the field of migration, who have explored the numerous ways in which spatial conditions shape women's lives.

Hyndman argues that space is a component of social lives, and space and moving across spaces are experienced differently by men and women. She presents a study that shows the connection between physical mobility, migration and gender. The study conducted in the

[58] Van der Horst, "Living in a reception centre: the search for home in an institutional setting." Pp. 43-45
[59] Katrina Milaney et al., "The role of structural violence in family homelessness," *Canadian journal of public health* 110, no. 5 (2019). Pp. 556
[60] Arendell, "Conceiving and investigating motherhood: The decade's scholarship." Pp. 1197

Kakuma camp in Kenya and Southern Sudan illustrates how several women escaped living in the camps by getting married to Sudanese refugee men resettled in the Global North.[61]

Other feminist geographers adopt micro-lens of inquiry to study the interaction between social structure and space through individuals' stories. These studies contribute to show how (1) the subjective experiences of space, such as perception of safety or feeling to be "in place" are determined by social structures[62], (2) social orders of emplacement, which means that social structures organise individuals socially and spatially[63], (3) identity practices are "situated accomplishments" because they develop concerning the interaction of the self in a particular spatial context and a particular biographical moment[64] and (4) social structures control individual's access to material resources, creating forms of inequality[65].

While these studies focus on how social factors, i.e. gender, shape individuals' capacity to use spatial resources, the interaction between legal and social frameworks in space organisation remains in the shadow.

2.3 Relevance

This empirical research on asylum seekers' experiences of asylum accommodations is relevant at the societal and academic levels. The first subsection (2.3.1) shows the societal relevance of this thesis. The second subsection (2.3.2) shows the academic relevance manifesting how the empirical research has descriptive aims with normative relevance for how asylum accommodations should and should not be organised, and it shows how this thesis advances the state-of-the-art in the literature.

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[61] Jennifer Hyndman, "Introduction: the feminist politics of refugee migration," *Gender, Place & Culture* 17, no. 4 (2010). Pp. 456

[62] Gill Valentine, "The geography of women's fear," *Area* (1989).

[63] Rachel Silvey, "Geographies of gender and migration: Spatializing social difference," *International Migration Review* 40, no. 1 (2006).

[64] Gill Valentine and Deborah Sporton, "How other people see you, it's like nothing that's inside': The impact of processes of disidentification and disavowal on young people's subjectivities," *Sociology* 43, no. 4 (2009).; see also Gill Valentine, "Theorizing and researching intersectionality: A challenge for feminist geography," *The professional geographer* 59, no. 1 (2007).

[65] Farhana Sultana, "Spaces of Power, Places of Hardship: Rethinking Spaces and Places through a Gendered Geography of Water," in *Gendered Geographies: Interrogating Space and Place in South Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2011). Pp. 294

2.3.1 Societal relevance

This study has relevance concerning social issues because it explores how the lack of recognition of specific gender interactions within the asylum centre can hinder inclusivity. It means that when spaces, precisely common spaces, become inaccessible to women, they lack a space that includes them. For this reason, accounting for the experiences lived by asylum seekers and what is felt by asylum seekers also show the gap between the administrative instructions and the actual practice, which is assumed to be an undesirable result.

Despite the descriptive aim of this thesis, the descriptions provided enable evaluative thinking. This means that it also gives relevant information for precisely decreasing this gap with further measures that would make the centre more gender-inclusive and attentive to asylum seekers' basic needs.

2.3.2 Academic relevance

This thesis addresses the gap of previous researchers that concern understanding how the legal and social regulatory frameworks interplay in the experiences of asylum seekers, particularly women. The social regulatory framework includes gender norms that regulate social interactions.

The stories of male and female respondents are central to show the gender gap. The comparison of their stories in shared spaces shows significant differences in their experiences related to gender. Women's narratives are relevant because women's agency in asylum accommodation relates to how the legal and the social regulatory frameworks organise shared spaces, specifically shaping their ability to access different spaces according to who they are as human beings, individual persons, and family members. Women's challenges in their abilities to fulfil their roles show a gap in administrative regulations concerning the gender adequacy of the asylum centres, and this omission can provoke suffering at the individual level.

Chapter 3: Methodological framework

This chapter is structured in four sections, it presents a brief introduction to the qualitative nature of the research presented in this thesis (section 3.1), it follows a section on research design (3.2), a section on research considerations (3.3), and a section on challenges and possible limitations of this research (3.4)

Section 3.2 presents the selection of the respondents (subsection 3.2.1), the data collection techniques (subsection 3.2.2), the analytical approach and the analytical tactics (subsection 3.2.3) and the quality of the qualitative research (subsection 3.2.4).

Subsection 3.2.2 consists of three subsections, which are qualitative semi-structured interviews (3.2.2.1), processing the interview data: transcribing and adjusting (3.2.2.2), and official reports and state documents (3.2.2.3).

Section 3.3 presents the primary considerations that shaped the research process. These are safety considerations (subsection 3.3.1), ethical consideration (subsection 3.3.2), considerations on trust and collaboration (subsection 3.3.3) and positionality and reflexivity (subsection 3.3.4).

3.1 Introduction: A qualitative research

This thesis presents qualitative research embedded with an inductive, interpretivist and constructionist approach.[66] The research is descriptive and also has an evaluative character, given some implications for the organisation of the asylum centres in Northern Norway. It is because the descriptions show that some modifications seem to be required to offer an accommodation that is less harmful to the residents', especially women's, agentive capacity.

The inductive approach stemmed from the analysis of the data, and it is from the empirical material that detailed explanations of the pre-set interest in space emerged. Subsection 3.2.3 provides further explanations of the analytical approach and data analysis.

The interpretivist stance came from the need to grasp the meaning that the respondents attach to their experiences from living in asylum centres. Knowledge raises through the interpretation of the meanings they attached to their experiences conveyed in their narrations.[67]

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[66] Alan Bryman, *Social research methods* (Oxford university press, 2016). Pp. 375
[67] Bryman, *Social research methods*. Pp. 375

The constructionist approach stemmed from considering respondents' understanding of their experiences as constructed through their interaction with the spatial context in which they lived and social interactions that occurred within it.[68]

3.2 Research design

The research design guides the research process, and it has implications for the choice of research methods and the analysis of the collected data. The research design also has implications for understanding the phenomenon and the quality of the research.[69]

The design of this research is narrative due to its relevance to understanding, from a micro-perspective, experiences related to living in an asylum centre. The narrative is a textual or conversational narration of meaningful events or actions, which organised in chronological order, conveys narrators' beliefs, motivations, personal characteristics, and cultural traditions.[70]

The narrative occurs in a spatial setting, and the spatial context also influences the experiences of events and actions.[71] For this reason, it is relevant to understand and reflect on respondents' perspectives on the role of space in shaping and transforming their experiences during their permanence in asylum accommodation.

Respondents' narrations describe their experiences as residents in the asylum centres. Through the narration of events, their narratives convey personal motivations and cultural meaning imbued in their daily activities, which explain the challenges they lived through.

3.2.1 Selection of the respondents

Before presenting the procedures of the selection of the respondents, it is here significant to mention that, in contrast to the studies presented above, the respondents, at the time of data collection and writing, are no longer asylum seekers; they have settled and integrated into the local community. The relevance of exploring their past experiences concerns the significance that these experiences have for them. As Van Manen describes it, lived experiences allow

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[68] Bryman, *Social research methods*. Pp. 28-29
[69] Bryman, *Social research methods*. Pp. 40
[70] John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (Sage publications, 2016). Pp. 54; see also Heather Fraser, "Doing narrative research: Analysing personal stories line by line," *Qualitative social work* 3, no. 2 (2004). Pp. 180
[71] Suzanne Phibbs, "Four dimensions of narrativity: Towards a narrative analysis of gender identity that is simultaneously personal, local and global," *New Zealand Sociology* 23, no. 2 (2008).

exploring the "reflexing grasping of what it is that renders this or that particular experience its special significance".[72]

Concerning the type of asylum accommodation, respondents lived in centralised and decentralised centres, and some of them have had experiences in both types of asylum accommodation. The inclusion of both types of asylum centre was relevant because they were possible comparisons between the respondents' experiences.

The criteria to select the sample were: (1) having lived in an asylum reception centre in Norway and (2) being an adult at the time of the experience.

The choice of an age range served to exclude respondents who were 18 years old or younger at the time of their experience in asylum reception centres. The youngest respondent was 21 years old at the time of her experience. The respondents' actual age range was between 34 and 45 years old, which means that their age was between 21 to 38 years old at the time of their experience.

A total of thirteen people satisfied the sample selection criteria to participate in the research. Three of them did not consent to participate because narrating their experiences would have represented a heavy emotional burden. The total number of respondents who consented to participate in the study is ten.

The recruitment of the respondents occurred through a maximum variation sampling as a purposive sampling strategy.[73] The purposive sampling strategy allowed me to target the respondents because of the relevance that their stories had for answering the research question. The maximum variation sampling allowed me to select respondents to provide different perspectives and opinions on the phenomenon due to their diverse conditions and backgrounds. It ultimately explains the variegated respondent body, which is presented below in this subsection.

The first criterion of selection explains why other respondents, such as the UDI's employees, were not involved in the research. Still, official reports and state documents provided relevant details on the organisation of the spaces in the asylum centre where

[72] Max Van Manen, *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy* (Routledge, 2016). Pp. 32
[73] Ted Palys, "Purposive sampling," *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* 2, no. 1 (2008). Pp. 697; Bryman, *Social research methods*. Pp. 408

respondents' narrations are located. Subsection 3.2.2.3 presents a detailed explanation of the choice of the official reports and state documents.

To select the respondents, I initially got in touch with people, the gatekeepers, working in the organisations related to the field of interest in Tromsø. I met the gatekeepers before meeting the respondents. Because the respondents were not part of my personal network, I spent time with the gatekeepers to introduce myself, the research project, the research objectives, and the interview structure.

The gatekeepers contacted the respondents as part of their personal network. They introduced who I am, the research topic and research methods to the respondents, and afterwards, they informed me of the respondents' willingness to participate.

In two cases only, the respondent contacted to participate in the research project also contacted another person who had later participated in the research.[74]

The respondent body presents a combination of six women and four men. Four male respondents are part of this study because of the significance of a variegated respondent body, as mentioned above. The inclusion of male and female respondents was significant to discover points of comparison in the respondents' experiences.

Respondents are non-Western and the geographical area of origin of the respondents is mainly the Middle East. The exception was one respondent who came from an East African country. Also, the respondents' body included respondents (4) who spoke English, respondents (5) who spoke Norwegian, and one respondent who spoke a non-European language.

3.2.2 Data collection techniques

This subsection is organised into three subsections. The first subsection (3.2.2.1) presents data collection through semi-structured interviews, which is the primary source of data. It follows a presentation of the transcription process, and information on the anonymisation process and the

[74] These two cases may represent snowball sampling. Despite snowball sampling is in nature a purposive sampling strategy, they were not strategically planned. This is because a non-snowball sampling strategy would, in my perspective, have allowed to gather information from a variated sample (maximum variation sampling). The explanation of these two cases is to be found in the respondents' concern of not having much to narrate, and they referred to another person that could have more events to narrate due to their longer permanence in the asylum centre. The concern of the two respondents of not having much to narrate is explained in the subsection 3.3.3 as a concern related to their participation to the interview and the feeling that participating can provoke in the respondents.
In reference to the definition of snowball sampling see Bryman, *Social research methods*. Pp. 415

textual adjustment to improve the clarity of the transcriptions (3.2.2.2). The last subsection (3.2.2.3) introduces the official reports and state documents used to gain details on the spatial context of the events narrated.

3.2.2.1 Qualitative semi-structured interviews

The data collection method was semi-structured interviews. As a research method, the interview was appropriate for the research topic and objectives due to its relevance in capturing detailed descriptive materials on the respondents' understanding of their lived experiences.[75] In addition, the interview allowed respondents to narrate the events that s/he wants to share. It also means that the respondents contribute actively to the conversation by narrating what they considered relevant.[76] It enriched the conversation by opening the possibility to discover topics that I did not initially include in the interview guide. The interview also reveals the micro-perspective by discovering respondents' reflections on living in asylum accommodation.

The semi-structured nature of the interview was relevant because the fluidity of the interview could have dragged the focus away from the topic of interest, which means to gain a lot of material, whose quality may be scarce, while semi-structured interviews follow a list of issues and questions to cover in the conversation.[77] Therefore, to avoid losing control of the conversation, an interview guide was designed to help keep focus during the conversation. The interview guide is visible in Appendix 1.

I wrote the interview guide as part of the project proposal submitted and approved in the beginning of June 2020, and it was before I conducted the pilot interviews, at the end of June 2020. The pilot interviews served to adjust the interview guide. However, a few more adjustments occurred while I was conducting the official interviews. It occurred because of the relevance of some respondents' reflections and the significance of understanding and comparing the respondents' diverse perspectives.

I conducted all the interviews in Tromsø between July 2020 and November 2020. Without considering the pilot interviews, which are not included in the empirical material of

[75] Bruce Curtis and Cate Curtis, *Social research: A practical introduction* (Sage, 2011).
[76] Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, "The practice of feminist in-depth interviewing," *Feminist research practice: A primer* 111148 (2007).
[77] Bryman, *Social research methods*. pp. 468-69

this study, only one interview has been conducted in July, while most of the interviews have been conducted between September and November.

Although, in the beginning, the interview time was set for one hour, during the interview process, I realised that 1 hour was insufficient concerning the length of the initial interview guide. After adjusting the interview guide, I also informed the respondents that the interview might last longer than 1 hour. It was essential to consider that the respondents participated in their spare time, and to avoid creating a problem for the respondents, they could have stayed longer according to their plans.

I did three follow-up interviews because during the transcription process, I noticed that some aspects of their narratives were vague. One of the three follow-ups was conducted online due to Covid-19[78].

3.2.2.2 Processing the interview data: transcribing and adjusting

The audio recordings helped notice the changes in the intonation and pacing of the conversation and other sounds, such as the respondent's pounding open hand on the table. These details were noted within the transcript and were relevant to add meaning to the textual data. Further, because surrounding noises, speed of the conversation and accent of the respondents could all be challenges to the fairness of the transcription, the audio recordings of the interviews were helpful to listen again to the interviews and write them accordingly.

Also, translators applied their style, which means that some preferred to use the third person while translating, while others were translating using the first person. I adjusted this difference by using the first person in every transcript. Also, if respondents or translators did not use appropriate grammar, I adjusted it.

The process of adjusting the transcripts related to make the text clear and wholly anonymised before I used it in this thesis and publish it in UiT Open Research Data of the Arctic University of Norway.

I highlighted the adjustments in the text in consideration of the research quality and reliability. In the quotation included in chapter 5, I highlighted the adjustments using *italics* to anonymise names and locations. When I added text to the original content to contextualise the

[78] At the time of the online interview, there was much less awareness about confidentiality issues in the available platforms at UiT and that, as a result, I have followed the same conduct applied for the physical interviews. However, for future research will observe these differences more closely.

quote to clarify the content itself, I highlighted that by using squared brackets ["added text"]. It is essential to specify that the contextualisation was already evident in the interview, while in the immediate context of the extract, it was not, and hence was added within the brackets. In the quotes used in chapter 5, I added this punctuation […] to highlight those parts of the original text were excluded.

3.2.2.3 Official reports and state documents

The content of official reports and state documents serve to contextualise the interview data and represent the political considerations related to the organisation of asylum accommodation. It is crucial because political considerations related to the asylum system also shape the spatial setting where respondents' stories occurred.

The official report *NOU 2011:10 In the waiting room of the welfare state - The reception offer for asylum seekers* is a non-binding document issued by Royal Decree in 2009. NOU is the acronym for Noregs offentlege utgreiingar (Norway's public reports). The report offers an evaluation of the asylum system, and particularly of the accommodation offer. It also provides a historical reconstruction of the relevant changes related to the asylum system and the asylum policy in Norway.

State documents issued by the UDI are included because they are legally binding documents, and they reveal the obligations that must be complied with during the organisation of the asylum centres.

The UDI document titled *(UDI 2008-031) Requirements for accommodation in ordinary asylum reception centers* focuses on regulation related to the organisation of asylum accommodation, stating regulations related to living conditions provided in the centre, which provide relevant information on the legal organisation of the space in the asylum centres.

The official reports and state documents were available online on their respective official websites. The official reports and state documents were mainly in Norwegian, and I translated these documents with the help of a native speaker.

3.2.3 Analytical approach and data analysis strategy

The methodology of this thesis follows the framework of an inductive analytical approach to qualitative data. This approach is often associated with qualitative research[79], and in line with the inductive approach, the researcher reads and derives from the analysis of the empirical material new understanding concerning the topic of interest.[80]

As is revealed in the motivation paragraph in the preface and subsection 3.3.4, I had an interest in understanding how space could have influenced human lives. This interest guided the first step of the analysis, and I coded the empirical material in relation to space conditions, materiality and privacy, which were primary spatial characteristics of the accommodation described by the respondents and serve to identify differences in common spaces and private spaces of the asylum centre.

The search for instances that could illuminate the theme of space in which I was interested, and that could have also connected my personal experience to the one lived by the respondents, aimed at tackling the cultural gap between the respondents and me. Despite the significant differences concerning the extent to which my choices were considerably free in relation to respondents' choices.

The focus on materiality and privacy connected the respondents' and my experiences**.** I considered the significant possibility to connect the respondents' and my experiences as an opportunity to gain trust and build collaboration during the interview.

Regarding methodological choices, the concept of space led to the construction of the methodological framework when considering the design of the research question, the selection criteria, the interview guide and the thematic analysis of the data.

The research question has been designed to understand the connection between the spatial dimension and the individuals' lived experiences as it was the research interest. In the selection of respondents, the spatial setting was relevant, as subsection 3.2.1 reveals. The interest in space helped design the interview guide and questions. The focus was to discover respondents' experience of the spatial conditions in asylum accommodations, and mainly the focus was on the idea of materiality and privacy.

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[79] Bryman, *Social research methods*. Pp. 375

[80] David R Thomas, "A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data," *American journal of evaluation* 27, no. 2 (2006). Pp. 238

Concerning the first step of data analysis, the interest in space drove the analytical focus. The thematic analysis traced respondents' perceptions and feelings related to their experience of space and spatial conditions of the accommodations. The interest in space and understanding how it could have shaped residents' lives guided the conceptualisation of space, introduced in section 4.1 as a social construction that shapes inhabitants' experiences.

The inductive analytical approach allows grasping the nuances of respondents' reflections on material and non-material conditions of space. The inductive analysis made the conceptual framework more nuanced and precise based on the empirical material. It means that space is not exclusively conceptualised as a social construct, but it is the site where residents' agency is enacted, see section 4.1.

The method of data analysis is a thematic narrative approach. The thematic analysis is a method of analysis that identifies and organises patterns of meaning, namely the themes, that emerge from the data.[81] Narrative analysis is a method of analysis that identifies chronologically organised meaningful events of a story, which have relevance for the audience, and narrative analysis also considers the spatial setting as relevant in the narrated events. Space becomes paramount in grasping the meaning of respondents' narrative.[82]

The analysis started by coding the data and coding concerned attributing a descriptive label to significant parts of the transcribed text, which could have answered the research question.[83] The first phase of coding aimed at finding instances that could illuminate the main research interest, space. Following this, I clustered similar codes into categories, which helped identify the pattern that emerged, and which could be potential themes.

Before defining the themes, I investigated the coherency and soundness of the codes clustered in the categories through comparison. Comparison served to check similarities and differences within categories to test their consistency in terms of thematic content. The comparison also helped balance between peculiarity of narratives and the generalisability of

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[81] Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun, "Thematic analysis," in *Encyclopedia of critical psychology* (Springer, 2014). Pp. 57

[82] Jane Elliott, "Narrative and new developments in the social sciences," *Chap* 1 (2005). Pp. 4, see also Fraser, "Doing narrative research: Analysing personal stories line by line." Pp. 180, see also Phibbs, "Four dimensions of narrativity: Towards a narrative analysis of gender identity that is simultaneously personal, local and global."; see also: Christine Stephens and Mary Breheny, "Narrative analysis in psychological research: An integrated approach to interpreting stories," *Qualitative research in psychology* 10, no. 1 (2013). Pp. 17; and James Holstein and Jaber F Gubrium, *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (Sage, 2003). Pp. Pp. 331-334

[83] Graham R Gibbs, "Thematic coding and categorizing," *Analyzing qualitative data* 703 (2007).

common patterns. Also, the comparison was helpful in inductively discovering more patterns from the data.[84]

The comparison shows various sensitivities between men and women concerning issues related to materiality and privacy in shared spaces. The difference represents a gender pattern that is significant in women's narratives. Women felt that their gender played a role in their experiences in asylum centres concerning their ability to access space.

Coding, categorising, and comparison were essential steps in the finding and defining of main themes presented and discussed in chapter 6.

In analysing the gender pattern, I noticed that the women who faced more challenges concerning their capacity to access space were family members. The single woman who lived in accommodation with other single women did not present the same concerns, challenges, and issues faced by women members of their respective and different family group (cluster shaped by a family role). The inquiry on the difference of a presumed unique social category allows discovering unexpected findings and a gap in the UDI regulations, presented in chapter 5.

I analysed the stories of the five female family members through narrative analysis. The relevance of using the narrative analysis consists in gaining detailed descriptions on respondents' opinions and perspectives of their experiences in the asylum centres. It also allows to gain details on respondents' cultural and personal backgrounds.

3.2.4 Quality of qualitative research

According to Bryman, the reliability and validity of qualitative research relate to trustworthiness and authenticity. These criteria assess the quality of qualitative research, and they concern the researcher's active involvement as part of the research process; the researcher's interpretations and conclusions shall be trustworthy and authentic to ensure the reliable and valid qualities of the research.[85]

In this thesis, I have collected data from two diverse sources, interviews and official state documents, which represents two diverse stances and perspectives. It enhances the

[84] David Collier, "The comparative method," *Political Science: The State of Discipline II, Ada W. Finifter, ed., American Political Science Association* (1993).
[85] Bryman, *Social research methods*. Pp. 383-386

credibility and authenticity of the research by accounting for diverse perspectives that define the reality of the social phenomenon under investigation.

Qualitative research findings are typically context-dependent, and the context-dependent nature relates to the small sample dimension and the limited degree of variety in the investigated perspectives. These characteristics challenge the transferability of the findings.[86]

Concerning generalisability of the findings, in this thesis, although the sample is limited but adapted to the research goal and the time available to carry out the research, the sampling strategy allowed me to collect diverse perspectives by involving respondents' with diverse background and conditions. Also, in relation to the transferability of the findings to other settings, the interpretation offers a description of the context to inform on the details that characterise the empirical material.

3.3 Research considerations

This section presents the primary considerations that have shaped the research design and process. Subsection 3.3.1 presents safety considerations, specifically related to Covid-19. Subsection 3.3.2 concerns ethical considerations concerning processing sensitive personal data and researching a politically sensitive topic. Subsection 3.3.3 presents considerations related to developing trust and collaboration between the respondents and me. Subsection 3.3.4 presents reflections on positionality.

Because these considerations are part of the whole research process, the subsections above have anticipated some aspects of the research considerations presented in detail in the following subsections.

3.3.1 Safety consideration

Safety considerations concern the pandemic situation, which shaped how the project was developed and carried out. Indeed, when defining the research project (May 2020 – June 2020), the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested avoiding any unnecessary travel outside the national territory. Consequently, I decided to conduct the research in Norway, specifically in the municipality of Tromsø.

[86] Bryman, *Social research methods*. Pp. 384

Also, accessing asylum reception centres was limited to those who work in the centre. However, the experience of space in asylum accommodations was regarded as a valued topic to explore, and I decided to focus on lived experiences in the centre, which guided the definition of the first sample selection criteria. During the face-to-face interviews, the respondents and myself carefully sat at least one meter apart to respect the distancing rule and ensure a safe environment.

The environment's safety also considers the respondents' comfortability. Respondents could choose the interview location — the feeling of being in a safe location where others could not hear the personal stories related to the quality of the collected data.

3.3.2 Ethical consideration

Research can harm respondents, the scientific community and other parties involved in the research process.[87] It is crucial to consider several ethical considerations that serve to avoid conducting and producing a study that provokes harm.

The respondents were all asylum seekers, and in Norway as abroad, asylum policies are a divisive topic and highly contested political debate. Therefore, researching with asylum seekers means being aware of the potential harm that both interpreting and writing can cause them.

Research can provoke harm to individual dignity when the researcher fails to distance the study from existing stereotypes, and while failing to do it, the research can become a tool to marginalise the group of respondents further. To avoid harming respondents' dignity, it is extremely important to manage to interpret their experiences neutrally.[88]

To interpret neutrally means to humanise their experiences and understand the complexities behind their stories. For this reason, the preface presents a literary format of storytelling because the purpose is to present the respondents who participated in this study as fellow people.

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[87] Bjørn Hvinden, *Guidelines for Research Ethics in Social Science, Humanities, Law and Theology*, (Oslo: The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committes, 2019), https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/guidelines/social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/guidelines-for-research-ethics-in-the-social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology.

[88] Hvinden, *Guidelines for Research Ethics in Social Science, Humanities, Law and Theology*.

For instance, as is mentioned in chapter 5, the status of cleanness in asylum accommodations shall be read in connection to the complexity of asylum seekers' situation. The condition of sharing the living space with several other people means encountering different cleaning standards, sensibilities, and different timing. Also, trauma and depression can affect how people relate to their surroundings.

The research can harm by lacking unawareness of the researcher's responsibility when researching with vulnerable groups. It connects to the interpretation of the collected experiences. In the research process, it is essential to acknowledge and reflect on potential biases, which otherwise can become a lens of interpretation. To avoid this, it is essential "to defend their interests".[89]

In this thesis, the responsibilities towards vulnerable groups include responsibility toward asylum seekers as a group and the necessity to humanise and to understand the complexities of their stories. The researcher is responsible for respecting cultural differences, values, and traditions, which means avoiding dehumanising a group because of their traditions, values, and beliefs.[90]

In this thesis, respecting cultural differences concerns understanding, and some respondents' pedagogical approach acquires significance in this respect.

The research can harm by lacking respect for respondents' privacy. Processing personal and sensitive data requires anonymising the data to protect personal integrity and privacy. The protection of privacy is concerned with the storage of personal data and processing of personal data.

In this thesis, each audio recording of the interview was saved in a pen drive and deleted from the recorder memory to protect the respondents' privacy. The audio files saved on the UiT office 365 drive, I encrypted the audio files and transcription by using the zip app, and a password protected them. The encrypted audio recordings and transcripts were saved according to UiT guidelines concerning personal and sensitive data storage.[91]

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[89] Hvinden, *Guidelines for Research Ethics in Social Science, Humanities, Law and Theology*.
[90] Hvinden, *Guidelines for Research Ethics in Social Science, Humanities, Law and Theology*.
[91] "What services can you use for what content?," 2020, accessed 29.05.2020, https://uit.no/om/informasjonssikkerhet#innhold_675089.

Collected data were de-identified and anonymised to avoid respondents' identification.[92] For instance, references to specific locations have been substituted by referring to a broader geographic area. The quotes included in chapter 5 are de-identified; the respondents' names have been changed with a pseudonym.

Harm can arise from misinformation and deception.[93] Before starting the interview, I spent between ten and fifteen minutes introducing myself and present the information and consent sheet included in the document.

Also, I clarified the free and voluntarily nature of participation and made transparent how respondents' participation was in their hands, which means that the degree of shared information was dependent on their willingness to share. They were informed about the possibility of withdrawing from the research at any time.

Participation in the research process shall result in a choice based on free will and informed consent. The consent form is present in Appendix 2. The ten respondents were all informed on the constitutive elements of the research project, such as research topic, storage of data, use of data. Each of the respondents received a form in which information about the research project was included.

The information form and consent form were printed twice, so the respondents and I had their own signed copy. The consent form has been written in English and translated into Norwegian. Concerning the respondent who speaks the non-European language, the consent form was orally translated by the translator.

This thesis also focuses on UDI's responsibilities to provide asylum accommodation. Respect for public institutions is also essential. For this reason, it is significant to present the requirements that the UDI follows to provide asylum seekers with accommodation.

Respecting the institution shall not conflict with critical analysis[94], where it aims to propose arguments justified by empirical evidence and detailed explanation of the researcher's interpretations. Also, including the political perspective served to balance the data collected through the interviews to obtain a broader perspective of the diverse interests and needs at stake.

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[92] "Guidelines for privacy in research and student projects " Storage and deletion of personal data, 2020, accessed 29.05.2020, https://uit.no/forskning/art?dim=179056&p_document_id=604029#kap10.
[93] Bryman, *Social research methods*. Pp. 129-133
[94] Hvinden, *Guidelines for Research Ethics in Social Science, Humanities, Law and Theology*.

3.3.3 Considerations on trust and collaboration

Despite the three follow-up interviews, the chance to interview the respondents was only one. Because of this, it was necessary to establish trust and collaboration with the respondents to collect good quality material.[95]

I noticed that some respondents, four out of ten, were slightly tense at the beginning of the interview. Conversely, the more time we spent talking, the more relaxed they appeared. It might relate to respondents' perception of me as a stranger, discussed in subsection 3.3.4, and it might also depend on participating in an interview.

Two respondents expressed their concern about not having enough to say due to their perception of their short permanence in asylum accommodation, one stayed 8 months and the other one stayed one year and a half. It shows that participating in the interview can create the feeling in the respondents of having to say something or not having enough to say. It was essential to understand this concern and reassure the respondent that any result would have been enough. It also shows the humanity of the respondents who are not exclusively a group from whom relevant information can be gathered but are people with concerns and preoccupations.

The respondents were recruited with the help of private people, who, in six cases, have also helped by translating the interview. The gatekeeper's help in the interview translation was significant because trust was already established between respondent and gatekeeper/translator since they knew each other from before. The existence of a trusted connection between the respondent-translator was preferable to ensure the quality of the information.

The time spent with the gatekeeper/translator was significant during the interview because the translator knew the research objectives, and I felt comfortable conducting official interviews in collaboration with the gatekeeper.

I value the collaboration between the parties as an essential aspect of the interview process to ensure the parties' active participation. Transparency is a necessary element to ensure collaboration; respondents were informed on the research and interview processes.

Also, respondents adopted a pedagogical approach to explain specific cultural details that emerged in their stories. This approach is perceived as a form of collaboration, where the respondent engages in explaining cultural traditions that might be unknown by the researcher.

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[95] Holstein and Gubrium, *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns*. Pp. 431

According to Holstein and Gubrium, the cultural gap can represent a flaw that hampers the researcher's formulation of interview questions and the researcher's understanding of specific cultural issues.[96] However, in the interview process, the pedogeological approach was significantly relevant to partially fill the cultural gap.

In this regard, it is also important to highlight that being an outsider and conducting cross-cultural interviews can also become a strength concerning respondents' engagement in explanations of the cultural aspects of their perspectives, which serve to gain a greater understanding of the context, their claims and enhance the research quality.

3.3.4 Positionality and Reflexivity

This subsection presents my physical appearance, gender, age, and reflections on my background, values, and biases. These aspects are all part of the research process, and because of the impact that these aspects could have had during the research process, it is necessary to reflect on its degree.[97]

Physical appearance is the first seen feature when encountering respondents, and it may help them locate me geographically in a specific region. Hence, physical appearance may contribute to define me as an outsider concerning the local community where I currently live and where I carried out the research.

My identity as a migrant in Norway is important when considering the identity of the group of respondents. The fact that I recognise myself as a migrant in Norway and have faced some challenges related to being a migrant, may be akin to the experienced lived by the respondents of this study.

It is also crucial to recognise my advantageous position. Indeed, I arrived in Norway without worries because I only needed my national ID to access the country, and nothing else was asked from me. I moved to Norway to study, and this motivation was enough for me to stay here and start my new experience. It was easy, and everyone seemed open to welcome me. For example, new international students, like myself at the time of my arrival, who reside in student housing, are welcomed at the airport by senior students who give them their keys to access the accommodation and instructions on where to go and what to do. The university itself

[96] Holstein and Gubrium, *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns*. Pp. 433
[97] Bryman, *Social research methods*. Pp. 387

organises a warm welcoming for the students. It was not precisely what the respondents went through, and it made the motivation to study their experiences more relevant to me. It also made me realise that to understand their experiences fully, and I should not have taken anything for granted about their experiences.

Concerning my age, I acknowledged the age gap between the respondents, the gatekeepers, and I. Respondents' and gatekeepers' age on average was between 35-45 years old. Therefore, their age is close to the age of my parents. Looking inward, phrases like "you are very young" made me feel as if I had to prove that, despite my age, I was seriously conducting the research. It was both a source of motivation and stress.

At the same time, some have shared their empathy with me, saying that I could be one of their children because of my age, and in a way, this comforted me. Concerning this, it was important in the situation which we were experiencing. Being distant from family and acknowledging that returning was not a feasible option became a common feature of our stories, despite the fact that the reasons were different.

During the research process, I also became aware of my womanhood and the social construction of women in the society where I grew up. I have been taught that a girl shall dress, sit and talk in specific ways, which led me to wonder about '*womanly*' ways of being, and I have probably started to engage with it in different circumstances and places. The attention to womanhood shaped how I perceived the presence of affinities with female respondents' concerns. The focus on women's narrative was primarily driven by the empirical material. Indeed, while reading respondents' narratives, their gender-related concerns were significant in explaining inadequate housing conditions.

I perceived different approaches of women and men during the interview, and it is a personal reflection that may depend on my different feelings dealing with women and men. I felt that the women have been very open to narrating their stories. At the same time, three men out of four, especially at the beginning of the interview, were more concerned with answering specific questions, which from respondents' perspective can be related to participating in an interview, the meaning they attributed to the interview itself and their perception of me as researcher.

However, I acknowledge that male respondents have also engaged in a more open conversation, and I came to understand the implication that asking some questions or being interviewed might have had different impacts on respondents.

It also was important to share with them my own experience and story. It was important to engage in an equal conversation, where they were not essentialised as objects of a research project but people. The narration of my own story occupied different moments of the encounter; it generally opened and closed the meetings. It might have helped to build comfortability and mutual trust. Engaging with respondents also meant to attempting to decrease their perception of me as an outsider to make respondents feel safe to share their own stories. With some of the respondents, I developed a closer relationship. Indeed, by the time spent together, we both got the chance to share our own stories beyond the interview meeting.

My outsiderness in relation to the local community is manifested by my lack of proficiency in speaking Norwegian. I consider this aspect as a factor that manifested my outsiderness in relation to the respondents who also speak Norwegian. The help of the translators was significant to carry out five interviews.

According to Temple and Edward, in cross-cultural research, reflections on the translators' involvement in the research shall be included.[98]

Particularly, I consider the gatekeepers/translators' background and interest in the researched topic as positive aspects due to an existing awareness on the topic object of discussion.

The gatekeepers/translators' interest in the research topic varied. They had different backgrounds, and for different reasons they have developed an interest in the topic.

During the interview, the respondents provided details of perceptions and feelings that the gatekeepers/translators were not aware of. This is important in showing the significance of collecting empirical material that represent a micro-perspective on the research topic, and the unexpected stories also showed that, despite gatekeepers/translators' awareness of living conditions in the asylum centres did not hide respondents' stories during the translation.

I am from Italy, and I grew up in a small town. I moved to a bigger city to get my bachelor's degree. Being in a different city, I rented a room in a student apartment. The experience of sharing the apartment with people from different parts of the country, who were not members of my family, made me face different tensions and conflicts, which arose due to our different ways of living. Besides, sharing a house means giving up on some aspects of your personal space.

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[98] Bogusia Temple and Rosalind Edwards, "Interpreters/translators and cross-language research: Reflexivity and border crossings," *International journal of qualitative methods* 1, no. 2 (2002).

I have changed houses many times, and even if I have never chosen my flatmates, I was choosing my roommate. Living in different houses left me with an unsolved question: what do people experience when they share private spaces? During these years, space has started to become increasingly relevant for me, and it became more evident how it shapes people's lives.

3.4 Challenges and limitations of the study

The interviews were explorative, and they started with an interest, which was formulated based on my own experiences.

Also, the interviews and the seven pre-meetings were the first interactions that I had with the respondents. Nevertheless, these were also the occasions that I could use for building familiarity and confidence and to establish a relationship of trust between us.

Alongside it was required the help of translators, who voluntarily assisted me in translating six interviews. Despite the familiarity that already existed between the translator and the respondents, and the consent of the respondents to the participation of the translator, the translators can have affected the degree of confidentiality felt by the respondents, both positively or negatively.

Being familiar with the respondents also concerns being familiar with their background. During the interview, the respondents had a pedagogical approach towards their culture. They explained the peculiarities and specificities of their cultural background. This is also an aspect that can be related to collaboration, which is presented in subsection 3.3.3, where the respondent engaged in sharing more information to achieve a greater understanding of the narrated event. It was beneficial to partially cover the cultural gap. Remaining challenges were addressed with the assistance of contact people from my networks inside and outside academia that either shared a similar background of my respondents or have conducted research on this group.

Another challenge has been the dynamic nature of the interview, which has specifically characterised two out of the ten interviews. These have produced a lot of material. The conversation developed aside from what was planned in the interview guide. The challenge concerned controlling and directing the flow of the conversation without rudely interrupting the respondents.

However, alongside this challenge, I recognise a positive aspect, which is despite the length of the conversation, many interesting details were included and contributed to contextualising the core of the interview, which is the experience in the asylum centres. Indeed, this shows that

one’s experience is not independent of one’s background or from one’s future projects. These temporal dimensions are indeed interlocked in the subjective experience, and as well, the diverse spatial dimensions through which they have been living have contributed to shaping their understanding. It could, however, have been differently organised if I had more time to spend with the respondents prior to the interviews. Indeed, the possibility to spend time with them before and after the interview was limited.

This thesis presented the differences between men’s and women’s experiences. I did not pursue the experiences of men with the same depth I pursue women’s experiences. This is because gender was of visible significance in the experiences of the female respondents.

The argument proposed in this thesis is limited to considering gender as an essential factor that distinguishes women’s and men’s experiences in common spaces. Instead, the issues of privacy in connection to the realisation of and expression of sexuality cannot be regarded solely as a women’s issue. However, future research could be relevant to grasp how gender and sexuality shape men’s experiences of space.

Chapter 4: Conceptual framework

This thesis embraces an interdisciplinary conceptual framework constructed by three concepts: space, agency, and suffering. Geography, anthropology, philosophy, and sociology are the main disciplines that have debated these concepts. The interdisciplinary nature of the conceptual framework allows for organising the research data broadly in order to understand the complexities of respondents' experiences in asylum reception centres and explore the correlations between space, agency, and suffering.

The theoretical paradigm that nets these concepts and disciplines is my reading of feminism. Feminism, understood as a theoretical framework that seeks to understand the particularities of individual's experiences as they are determined by gender, are used in this thesis in order to highlight the nuances in the experiences of the women who participated in this study. This thesis adopts an interpretation of feminism that defines it, in general terms, as a set of theoretical traditions that focuses on gender as a social factor of inquiry and on the analysis of personal experiences in connection to social issues.[99]

Gender is a social factor that shows differences in the respondents' experiences.[100] Gender is here understood as a social construct that stems from the "meanings of masculinity and femininity from the biological or presumably fixed categories of male and female".[101] Gender shapes individuals' spatial locations, and their perspectives on space.[102] This thesis employs gender as a social factor connected with specific conditions, such as motherhood, which can reiterate women's gender identity, and as a social factor that shapes spatial encounters and spatial inclusivity.[103]

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[99] Sharlene Hesse-Biber, "A re-invitation to feminist research," *Feminist research practice: A primer* (2014). Pp. 3

[100] In this thesis, gender is binary because the respondents identified themselves as either men or women. I acknowledge that gender does not exclusively concern women's experiences, also men's and non-binary gender minorities' experiences are shaped by gender. In addition, gender does not exclusively and solely frame experiences, but multiple factors intersect and create complex experiences. However, with reference to the theoretical stance adopted in this thesis and in line with the empirical material, gender is considered as a relevant factor that predominantly shaped experiences of women who participated in this study.

[101] Evelyn Fox Keller, "Gender and science: Origin, history, and politics," *Osiris* 10 (1995). Pp. 29

[102] Valentine, "Theorizing and researching intersectionality: A challenge for feminist geography."

[103] Arendell, "Conceiving and investigating motherhood: The decade's scholarship." Pp. 1192

4.1 Space

> "When we evoke 'energy', we must immediately note that energy has to be deployed within a space. When we evoke 'space', we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does so: the deployment of energy in relation to 'points' and within a time frame. When we evoke 'time', we must immediately say what it is that moves or changes therein. Space considered in isolation is an empty abstraction; likewise energy and time. […] It seems to be well established that physical space has no 'reality' without the energy that is deployed within it."[104]

In 1974, Henri Lefebvre described the complexity of the concept of space. Space remains an abstract idea if what occupies space is not considered. Lefebvre makes it clear that space is not an empty and exclusively physical container. Lefebvre conceptualises space as a social product. In this sense, space is seen as a product for the biological reproduction and socio-economic production of a society and its mode of production. According to this view, space has no reality without considering social interactions that occur within it.[105]

At the beginning of the 90s, Doreen Massey seems to recount Lefebvre's idea of space constituted by social relations. Massey defines space as relational, which means that a multiplicity of social relations and interactions across diverse scales, levels and locations produce a relational space, and the interplays and connections of what exists in and occupies space are the focus.[106] The idea of relational space is, afterwards, applied by other scholars. Mainly, the focus is on the topology of space that concerns understanding how things connect and are connected in space.[107]

The philosopher Jeff Malpas contributes to constructing the concept of space by tiding human experiences to the spatial location. Malpas understands space connected with experiences rather than 'things', and more specifically, experience concerns an active engagement with space. Malpas defines space as the location where subjects have the possibility for agency.[108]

The idea of space applied in this thesis combines these three ideas. Space in the asylum centres is not an empty container, it is occupied by material objects, rooms and residents, which

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[104] Henri Lefebvre and Donald Nicholson-Smith, *The production of space*, Third (1991) ed. (Oxford Blackwell, 1974). Pp. 12-13
[105] Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith, *The production of space*. Pp. 32; see also Tim Cresswell, *Geographic thought: a critical introduction* (John Wiley & Sons, 2012). Pp. 218-219
[106] Doreen Massey, "Part III Space, Place and Gender," in *Space, place and gender* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013). Pp. 4-5
[107] Cresswell, *Geographic thought: a critical introduction*. Pp. 218
[108] Malpas, *Place and experience: A philosophical topography*. Pp. 48-50, 180-184

multiple social relations organise. In the centre, administrative and legal regulations organise space, setting housing rules and regulations concerning the living conditions.

In the case of asylum centres, the dispositions are organized by the UDI and other actors who manage the centres and offer services. As such, they have access to these spaces, and restrict access for all those who do not reside or work in the centres. Asylum centres are collective spaces, Jeremy Waldron defines collective spaces, such as military bases, as those which are controlled by appointed people who act in the name of the whole community. The appointed people then control the use and access of collective spaces and set the conditions to which they become restricted for the public.[109]

Alongside administrative and legal norms, social norms, especially concerning gender interaction, organise and regulate spatial encounters in common spaces of the asylum centre (see Figure 1: Figurative representation of the Conceptual Framework). Ultimately, residents experience the spatial setting, which is organised by an interplay of the two regulatory frameworks, when interacting with materials and social environments.

4.2 Agency

In her book *Politics of Piety*[110], Saba Mahmood offers the idea of agency adopted in this thesis. Mahmood defines agency as a "modality of action" through which interior desires, motives and emotions are determined.[111]

Mahmood's point of departure is the post-structuralist feminist theory, and in developing her conceptualisation of agency she focuses on the arguments developed by Judith Butler. According to Butler, an individual's identity and agentive capacity are not prior to the subject formation. The power relations within society construct the subject and refine its agentive capacity. The subject's actions are repetitions of social norms, which ultimately naturalise social constructions, determining the consolidation of social norms. Also, Butler adds that each repetition can potentially initiate a process of destabilisation of the social norms and structures and bring about new construction of meaning.[112]

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[109] Waldron, "Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom." Pp. 296-97
[110] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject* (Princeton University Press, 2011).
[111] Mahmood, *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Pp. 157
[112] Mahmood, *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Pp. 18-22

According to Mahmood, the capacity to act does not only correlate with the potential disruption of structured modes of actions and resistance but also with the redefinition of social norms. In this sense, agency is also an expression of how "norms are lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consummated".[113]

In the context of Arab and Muslim societies, Mahmood problematises the correlation of women's agency with resistance and subversion of patriarchy.[114] She designs this concept to question the analytical tools offered by feminist theories in the study on women's participation in Islamic movements and, generally, challenge the understanding of the capacity to act, as a capacity to resist and subvert social norms.

In contrast with Robleda's research, where agency is a strategy to resist uncertainty and inactivity (subsection 2.2.1), this thesis applies agency as the capacity to act in accordance with one's motives and interests within the spatial setting.

Mahmood's design of agency is fruitful when engaging with empirical material because it prevents from assigning "emancipatory" meaning to individuals' actions. This means that her conception of agency serves to avoid distorting women's experiences by assigning the power of subverting and resisting domination to their actions. Also, because the concept stresses that actions realise what is relevant and significant for the individual, and as this thesis applies agency is the capacity to act according to the motives and interests that are significant for the self. It is through the analysis of the empirical material that the relevance of this conceptualisation of agency, especially related to gender specific conditions, shows significant aspects of the residents' capacity to act in space.

4.3 Suffering

Mahmood explains that an individual's agentive capacity also relates to diverse social issues the agent experiences, which shapes what becomes salient for the realisation of the individual's agentive capacity.[115]

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[113] Mahmood, *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Pp. 23
[114] Mahmood, *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Pp. 6; 155-159
[115] Mahmood, *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Pp. 13

Social factors can limit or expand the poll of choices and the opportunities available for individuals. The restriction of possibilities can hamper the capacity of realising motives, interests, and it can become a hindrance to the realisation of a basic need and rights.[116]

Galtung defines the impediments in the realisation of potential realisations as violence.[117] The impediments in the realisation of basic needs can manifest a structural factor that acts as an obstacle to an individual's realisation, and their experience of the limits to their potential realisation is defined as suffering.[118]

Also, the limit of the choices available to individuals can increase the risk of being exposed to experience suffering. Paul Farmer argues that even partial loss of agency can expose individuals to suffering when social factors severely limit the choices of agents.[119]

In this thesis, the relevance of engaging with suffering concerning the empirical material concerns the significance of suffering in understanding the experiences of asylum seekers because suffering is what they felt and how the experiences connect with the organisation of asylum accommodation.

Arthur Kleinman argues that suffering relates to the welfare response of social institutions towards the category of people in need. The response can be designed to meet the needs and alleviate the suffering of one category while omitting the suffering that affects other categories due to a "bureaucratic indifference".[120]

When welfare responses neglect or fail to recognise how within a category of people, specific conditions can lead to suffering, what occurs is lack of recognition.

Lack of recognition can shape individual's experiences because it hampers the capacity to act significantly.[121] To act significantly is defined in connection with agency as acting in line with the motives and interests that represent what is significant for the self.

This thesis applies the concept of suffering as an avoidable injury inflicted on individuals due to a lack of recognition of gender specific conditions. Gender specific conditions seem to

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[116] Vittorio Bufacchi, "Two concepts of violence," *Political Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2005). Pp. 196; see also Johan Galtung, "Violence, peace, and peace research," *Journal of peace research* 6, no. 3 (1969).
[117] Galtung, "Violence, peace, and peace research." Pp. 168
[118] Paul Farmer, "On suffering and structural violence: A view from below," *Daedalus* 125, no. 1 (1996).
[119] Farmer, "On suffering and structural violence: A view from below."; see also Liz Frost and Paul Hoggett, "Human agency and social suffering," *Critical social policy* 28, no. 4 (2008).
[120] Arthur Kleinman, "" Everything that really matters": social suffering, subjectivity, and the remaking of human experience in a disordering world," *The Harvard Theological Review* 90, no. 3 (1997). Pp. 321
[121] Parekh, *Refugees and the Ethics of Forced Displacement*. Pp. 86

predominantly affect female respondents by hampering their accessibility to shared rooms and material objects, creating a practical impediment in the realisation of basic needs and hampering their ability significantly to act in the spatial setting where they live.

4.4 Connecting and contextualising the main concepts

The connection between the three main concepts forms a triangle; each vertex represents one of the three main concepts, and it is figuratively represented below in Figure 1.

The figurative representation includes the patterns raised from the thematic narrative analysis. Importantly, it is not only the outer triangle, coloured in light orange, that connects the three concepts, but they connect through the inner smaller triangle situated at the centre of the figure and coloured in light blue.

The importance of the inner triangle emerges when considering the link between two of the main concepts, namely a partial interaction. For instance, the partial interaction formed by space and agency, visible in the semi-trapezoidal form coloured in light orange on the left side of the picture, is not disentangled from the third vertex, suffering, but it is connected through it by the inner triangle. The three concepts interact fully in the inner triangle creating a whole interaction. The outer and inner triangles represent patterns deduced from the thematic narrative analysis.

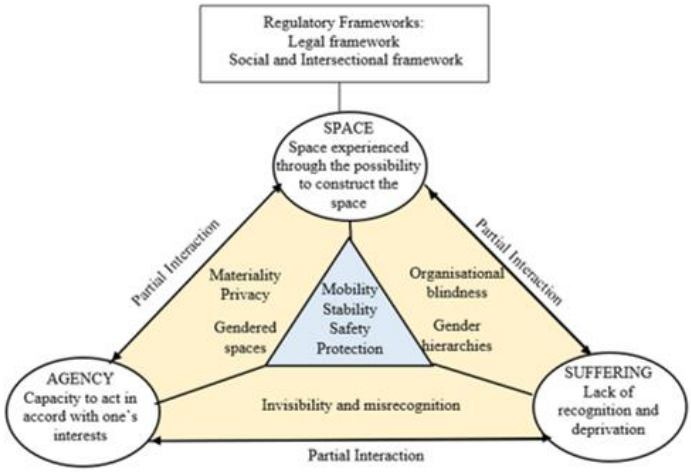

Figure 1: Figurative representation of the Conceptual Framework

As mentioned in chapter 1, materiality and privacy contribute to making the accommodation an adequate space where to live in and increase residents' capacity to satisfy their basic needs. The analysis of respondents' concern related to materiality and privacy led to a categorisation of their reflections in relation to the space of reference (see chapter 5).

Residents reflected on their experiences in asylum accommodation and what it meant to live in an asylum centre. Their narrations report the salient events and activities through which they explain their daily lives in the asylum centre, showing how they responded to specific spatial conditions (see chapter 5).

Importantly, shared common spaces show a gender pattern that explains female respondents' concerns as related to their ability to use space following their motives and interests, which are connected to their gender (see chapter 5).

Specific gender conditions can reinforce women's gender identity, and as section 5.4 shows, motherhood and religiosity represent the main specific gender conditions that shaped female respondents' experiences of space. As an example, and as is also discussed in chapter 6, Muslim women may prefer to restrict their visibility by unrelated men[122], and the necessity to have leisure rooms separated from unrelated men may serve them in this motive.

In chapter 5 and chapter 6, it is argued that the regulations related to the organisation of asylum accommodation are to a certain degree producing suffering due to the lack of recognition of women's actions as claims over certain spaces and claims of not having a space for them as indicative of a contrast between their specific gender conditions and the spatial setting. The lack of recognition provokes a constraint in the capacity to satisfy basic needs, such as cooking and preparing food or accessing the bathroom, because the ability to act significantly in the spatial setting is restricted.

[122] Judith E. Tucker, "Woman and man in gendered space: submitting," in *Women, family, and gender in Islamic law* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2008).

Chapter 5: Data analysis and presentation of the findings

During the data analysis, gender emerged in the interviews as a relevant factor that show how experiences of men and women in asylum centres are similar in some respects and different in others, and in the political considerations showing in what degree gender is accounted in the regulations for the organisation of the space in asylum centres.

Asylum reception centres are spaces where asylum seekers interact with materials and social environments. The research gap was understanding the impact of organisation of space in the asylum centres on the asylum seekers' capacity to act, focusing specifically on the women's experiences. The particular focus on women's experiences aimed at responding to an existing research gap in the field.

The research question addressed in the study was: *how space interferes with women's agency in asylum reception centres in Northern Norway?*

This chapter is organized into five sections, and each section includes extracts from the ten interviews.[123] Section 5.1 presents the process of descriptive coding and categorization of the empirical material collected through the interviews, presented in section 3.2.2.1. Section 5.2 compares the categories that resulted from coding. The comparison revealed a gender pattern. Section 5.3 presents the analysis of official reports and state documents that offer the state perspective on the organisation of space in the asylum centres. Section 5.4 goes deeper by presenting the experiences of the women who participated in this study. This section explores the peculiarities of women's experiences, and the chapter concludes with a summary of the findings in section 5.5. The following chapter describes and discusses the themes that emerged from the analysis.

5.1 First step of data analysis: coding and categorising

This section explains the process of coding and categorising by presenting respondents' quotes in three tables. Table 1 shows the everyday experiences between men and women related to the

[123] The choice of the extract to present was driven by the clarity with which the problem has been explained by the respondent, though the patterns can be found in other extracts of the transcriptions of all the interviews at Toffanin Sara, "Spatial Violation of Agency - Dataset.", at the UiT Open Research Data, available from summer 2021.

conditions of spaces. Table 2 presents the similarities between men and women by specifically focusing on the stories related to shared bedrooms. Table 3 shows that both men and women agreed concerning the positive results concerning sharing a bedroom with residents who spoke a common language, and it improved the organization of the shared bedroom. It follows a deeper explanation of the content of these three tables.

In table 1, in the extract on the left, the respondent describes how it was to share the kitchen. In the extract on the right, the respondent describes how it was to share the bathroom. Both respondents describe that common rooms as usually uncleaned, crowded or busy.

Before proceeding with the presentation of the findings, it is crucial to add few words to contextualize the cleanness of the shared living spaces because of its ethical relevance; see also section 3.3.2. It is important to keep in mind that sharing accommodation with several others means encountering different cleaning standards, sensibilities, and timing. It is also important to consider that trauma and depression can also affect how people relate to their surroundings.

Table 1: The conditions of common spaces

Shared kitchen	Descriptive coding	Shared bathroom
"sometimes I had to wait, and, for example, if you wait for one stove and the person before you has not clean after himself, you would use the other one, or then you would have to wait a little bit more. Most people who were not sleeping during the night would maybe eat at 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. and then it would be crowded, while at 3 a.m. and 4 a.m., it was empty – so you sort of knew when it was crowded and when it was not, so you could sort of adjust to when it was easier to find empty." (Dario)	Shared Use Uncleaned Busy and Crowded Adjust Time	"it is not comfortable to live with a lot of people, and they will use all this… so... but... sometimes I needed to wash everything before I used it because I like to wash every day. It was difficult for me, but I had to adapt. I was cleaning everything before using it, and I was going after ten o'clock in the night when I wanted to have a shower." (Mark)

In the extract on the left side, Dario specifies that the kitchen could be busy and crowded. For this reason, he often had to wait and adjust the time in which he was using the kitchen.

In the extract on the right side, Mark does not explicitly mention that the bathroom was often busy. However, he presents the accommodation as a crowded environment to which he was not used. Mark also explains that he showered during the night-time because, as he specified, many people were living in the family house where he lived, and he explained that he had to adapt to others. It is also possible to say that the bathroom could have frequently been busy, and he had, then, to adjust his daily plans and set another time to use the bathroom.

The descriptive codes in table 1 show that sharing space creates concerns related to the conditions of the space, which, as revealed, are dirty, busy and crowded. These conditions impact residents' capacity to use the space, and they create the necessity for adjustment in time, such as waiting or postponing, because there was no room and no other space available to them. It also shows that space and time are connected in the lived experiences in a way that time is used to explain the consequences of the conditions of space. Another example of this connection is when respondents answered the question of whether the facility was isolated from other services, such as supermarkets; the respondents stated how long it would take to reach the destination with the means of transportations available, which mainly were on foot and by bike.

Sharing a common space also concerns a reduction of the space available to the self. Specifically concerning the bedroom, which is considered the most private space of accommodation, sharing it increases one's sense of having less space for the self. Table 2 presents some of the respondents' perceptions concerning sharing the bedroom.

Having less space for the self can be related to the unfamiliarity between the people who share a bedroom, and the perceptions of sharing the bedroom change according to the familiarity between them. It is felt more intensively in relation to the bedroom, rather than other rooms, such as the kitchen or the canteen, which were recognized just as crowded environments. Therefore, the degree of familiarity changes the perception of having or not a space for the self.

Table 2: Sharing bedroom with others

Shared bedroom	Descriptive coding
"We were shocked about sharing the bedroom with strangers, [other] women and kids. It's a bedroom, so it is the most private place in your life, it's not even good to share it with your kids" (Elise)	Share bedroom with strangers One's own most private space Share the bedroom with children
"it would have been different [to have a partner], it would get a better room if you have your family. You don't get your own personal room,	Share bedroom with strangers Partner and family Small personal space

but you share it with your family, but you don't have to share it with random foreign people." (Dario)	Roommate are strangers

There is a peculiarity of the first extract, where Elise says that it is not preferable to share the bedroom with one's children.

Sleeping with children can be challenging to accept for anyone. Despite sleeping in the same bed with a young child is not forbidden by the religion for Muslim parents, it has instead been an aspect of traditional family life, which is becoming a feature of the past. Indeed, children and parents can also have separate bedrooms, and it seems to become close to the Western culture.[124]

Referring to familiarity, children are not unfamiliar to their parents, but one could argue that children are "strangers" to the dynamics of the marital couple. The marital couple has its dynamics related to organizing the family life and related to the couple itself. Indeed, Elise adds: "we [my husband and I] missed our sexual life in the asylum centre".

In addition, some dynamics of the marital couple may be inappropriate for children. It becomes important for the couple to have a separate private room to carry out these peculiar dynamics. Otherwise, they are unable to enact them when the children are present. Martha explains it in the following quote:

> "especially when we had only one sleeping room to share, and all the other rooms were to share with other families, the child was always there, and it was both difficult to live together within the man-woman, husband-wife relationship, and it was difficult to talk about grown-up things, or discussion, or querying that we didn't want to have in front of the child. And she was almost all the time there, so we didn't have space for any grown-up things, […], and there was no private space also in that."

It shows that sharing the bedroom means that the private space is restricted, which constraints the person's capacity to use space and regulate social encounters as preferred, and it shapes the perceptions of the space available for the self.

Also, the organization of the common area improves when communication is possible because roommates share the same language, traditions, and culture enhance the capacity to organize the common spaces, as table 3 shows.

[124] "The Family Bed in Islam," 2017, accessed 19.04.21, 2021, http://muslimsincalgary.ca/the-family-bed-in-islam/.

Table 3: Common language vs. not common language

Shared bedroom and common language		**Shared bedroom without common language**
Shared language and easier communication	**Descriptive coding**	Lack of common language and difficulties in communicating
"I shared the room with three other guys who were from *my same country of origin*. Also, it would have been difficult to live with people from other countries because they would not speak your same language, and communication would be difficult." (Dario)	Sharing room Origin Same language Explanations Communication Language proficiency	"In this room, there were already three women from different *African* countries who were not Arabic speakers. So, they told me that they only have bunk beds, and I should sleep in the above bed. I tried to explain to them that I'm pregnant and I cannot go up, and it would have been better for me to sleep in the bed below. But the woman told me that that was her bed. At this time, first of all, I was not very good at speaking English." (Emma)

The descriptive codes presented in table 1, table 2 and table 3 reveal that sharing space creates conditions. These conditions can be divided in relation to the space of reference, namely common spaces, such as kitchen and bathrooms, and private spaces, such as the bedroom.

Referring to the first category, conditions of common spaces, two aspects are salient: the capacity to use space and adjustment.

Concerning the second category, conditions of private spaces, two aspects are relevant: private space for the self and communication.

5.2 Second step of data analysis: comparison

To test the soundness of the categories in representing the empirical material, the process of analysis proceeds by checking on similarities and differences of the content of the primary two categories, conditions of common spaces (subsection 5.2.1) and conditions of private spaces (subsection 5.2.2). Each of these two subsections presents the sub-categories: capacity to use space (subsection 5.2.1.1), adjustment (subsection 5.2.1.2), private space for the self (subsection 5.2.2.1) and communication (subsection 5.2.2.2).

5.2.1 Conditions of common spaces

This subsection introduces the comparison, presented in table 4 and table 4.1, which shows the different levels of sensitivity between men and women regarding the conditions of common space, which refer to the business, unhygienic and crowded conditions.

Table 4 and Table 4.1 respectively present the similarities and differences in the perspectives of men and women when using the common bathrooms and common kitchens. Indeed, while they show a similar sensitivity to the unhygienic conditions of the bathroom and the kitchen, they have a different perception related to accessing and using the crowded common kitchens.

Table 4: Sensitivity level for conditions of the space

Sensitivity level for conditions of the space in using the common bathroom	
Male respondent	**Female respondent**
Extract 1: "It was a very big issue with the bathroom because I wanted to keep it clean, and this really bothers me. Hygiene was a big problem because it was dirty. It was a real big suffering because I had to clean the bathroom before using it, and I always have to have the paper with me, and I cleaned after myself. Men were very dirty, and pee was everywhere in the bathroom." (Mark)	**Extract 2:** "it was the same toilet, and it was terrible because it was so dirty, and we had to clean by ourselves, and we had to clean by ourselves, and each floor has about 20 families, each of them coming from different countries and a different mindset, and different way of living and you have to clean after them, some people didn't clean, and if you can't see the dirtiness, you have to clean. It was terrible" (Elise)

The extracts in table 4 show a similar sensibility regarding unhygienic conditions of the bathrooms, despite the difference in gender. Both the male and the female respondents must clean before using the shared bathroom, and they both felt disgusted by the conditions in which they found it.

Table 4.1: Sensitivity level for conditions of the space

Sensitivity level for conditions of the space in using the common kitchen
Male respondent - Extract 3: "I didn't want to stay there at all, I didn't want to stay in the asylum centre at all, but I didn't have any other choice. I didn't have anywhere else to go to cook, so I had to stay there. For example, one time there was

plenty of pots in the kitchen, and when we came everyone got a package with utensils for the kitchen and everything they needed to cook, but some people were not washing, they were just leaving their dirty plates and pots in the kitchen on the top of each other, and they weren't cleaning up for some weeks, and sometimes we were forced to throw them in the garbage because there was mould on them, and we were throwing them away." (John)
Female respondent - Extract 4: "it was hard to make my own food after another woman has made her own food because it wasn't that clean, and it was important for me to have everything clean and in order" (Isabel)
Female respondent - Extract 5: "in the restaurant, I was sitting alone, far away from others. And once I arrived late that there was no food left, and a man who was working there asked me why I was going that late, and I said because I don't like crowded places and I didn't like stay in the queue with men, they were coming very close to me." (Emily)

The three extracts (extract 3, extract 4, and extract 5) show the difference within the category named the conditions of space.

John, the male respondent (extract 3), shows that sharing a kitchen was a challenge because of the low hygienic conditions.

Isabel, the female respondent (extract 4), shares a similar perspective, using the kitchen was difficult and unpleasant. Using the kitchen was a challenge because of the diverse standards, timing, and sensitivities related to cleanness.

Conversely, Emily, the female respondent (extract 5), explains that the canteen was crowded and going to the canteen was not comfortable because men were going too close to her while she was in the queue waiting for her turn at the kitchen counter to get her ratio of food. Because, as chapter 4 presents, gender shapes an individual's perception of the spatial setting. Emily's story presents, conversely to the other respondents presented in this subsection, a gender dimension.

The comparison also explains something about the bathroom and the kitchen. The kitchen is a site for gatherings, where the room is not only furnished with cooking stoves to prepare and cook one's food, but it is also prepared for eating and dining in that same area. Conversely, the bathroom is not of common access despite common use, while the kitchen is both of common use and access. It means that anyone can access the kitchen, even when others are occupying it.

This comparison shows a more detailed articulation of the categories. Firstly, it shows a difference between the conditions of common spaces, specifically between dirtiness and

crowdedness. Crowdedness, compared to dirtiness, has a diverse impact on one's capacity to use common spaces, specifically concerning women, as shown in Emily's quote.

Secondly, it shows that grouping the unhygienic and crowded conditions in the same category may lead to misunderstanding and overlooking of women's experiences. The difference between the male and female respondents informs that use follows the capacity to access, and gender is relevant in shaping accessibility to shared common spaces.

5.2.1.1 Capacity to use space

This subsection goes more profound into the aspect of the use of space because, as mentioned above, the conditions of shared space impact the capacity to use space by impacting access.

This subsection presents in table 5 other examples of residents' use of the common spaces, laundry rooms and TV rooms.

Table 5: Capacity to access and capacity to use

Capacity to use space
Male respondent - Extract 1: "there was, for example, the laundry room, which was difficult to use, it was always busy and crowded, it was difficult to find the time, and also to find the free time for the drying machine." (Dario)
Female respondent -Extract 2: "there was this room where people can go and watch TV, but mostly men were going there, so it was uncomfortable to sit there. I am not interested in going inside. […] I was in a very special situation, I was pregnant, I was tired, and I lost too much water in travelling here, and for me, I only need to relax and have a little peace, but I am not understood. After giving birth, it was a pain for me to sit, I couldn't sit normally, so I had to lay on my hip. Right after giving birth, it was so much pain that I couldn't go there […], but I have to sit properly because they look for me. Maybe for Arabic people, I don't know, if we see a European woman sitting like this, on her hip, they will not be interested, but if they see an Arab woman with her scarf, and they think why they do like this, they look for you, they think why is she doing like this? talk or sit like this?" (Emma)

The two extracts show the difference in how the male and female respondents explain the challenges of using the common rooms. In the first extract, Dario shows that the unavailability of the washing machines challenges the use of the laundry room because the room was busy. In the second extract, Emma explains that accessing the room is, for her, a challenge. She explains that she was not comfortable entering the common room, and her use of the room was

constrained. The feeling of not being comfortable derives by lack of freedom, in this case, to sit as preferred and the possibility to be targeted and attract undesired attention, for that motivation, by unrelated men who were occupying the TV room — Emma's understanding of the reasons of her incapacity to access the TV room concern gender.

It also shows that the capacity to access is distinct from the capacity to use — this subsection show how gender differently impacts men's and women's capacity to access common spaces. Constraints on women's accessibility, due to the lack of a space shielded from being exposed to visibility by other men, ultimately hampers women's use of the room that in this story is connected to Emily's necessity to sit on her hip due to the wounds of C-section delivery.

5.2.1.2 Adjustment

As mentioned in section 5.1 and visible in table 3 and table 5, the conditions of common spaces lead the respondents to adjust in terms of time, and residents have to wait before using the services provided in the common rooms, and table 6 provide other two examples.

Table 6: Adjustment

Male respondent	**Female respondent**
Extract 1: "I was using the kitchen just for a while and then washing my stuff and going to bed. I was waiting to dry the dishes and go away, it was so fast, I didn't want to spend a lot of time in the kitchen, and we had a big kitchen on the third floor, and I was using the small one on the first floor, and I was sharing with other four people. so, I had to adapt myself to others, and it is different, I wasn't used to this" (Mark)	**Extract 2:** "many men were there cooking, and I have just withdrawn it, and I went back to my room. I cannot stand between many men, and it was not comfortable. There was not place. It was a very very strong smell. And every day I had to plan the time to go in the kitchen and early morning was ok and the late evening was also a good time and when they finished making food, it was very dirty." (Anna)

As other extracts show, the extract (extract 1; extract 2) of table 6 show a different way of adjusting. In extract 1, Mark says that he adjusts, and he waits, while Anna, in extract 2, withdraws from accessing the kitchen because of the presence of unrelated men. The use of diverse words to explain the problem can signify a diverse way of adjustment. A gender dimension is present in Anna's story. Because she does not simply wait; but she withdraws

from acting, and she returns to her sleeping room due to the presence of unrelated men in the common kitchen.

5.2.2 Conditions of private spaces

This subsection presents the two main aspects related to the condition of sharing the bedroom, which is considered the most private space. These two aspects are limited space available for the self (subsection 5.2.2.1) and communication (subsection 5.2.2.2).

5.2.2.1 Private space available for the self

As mentioned in section 5.1, the bedroom is the most private room, independently from the type of accommodation. Respondents shared their bedroom with other asylum seekers, and it concerns having limited space available for the self, as table 2 above shows, and table 7 provides more examples.

Table 7: Private space in a shared bedroom

private space and communication in sharing the bedroom
Male respondent - Extract 1: "like if you are sharing a room with your roommate, and you choose each other, you know that you fit, which your ways of living fit. […] It's difficult to think about that [referring to relax] because I need space, and those people have already space, so you should find your space in the apartment." (Mark)
Female respondent -Extract 2: "Nothing was private in the asylum centre, everything was together, in your room you had your bed, your bedside table and your cupboard. That is what you had for yourself. The rest is for everyone." (Isabel)

Isabel states that the only material objects that she could claim being 'hers' are the bed, bedside table and a cupboard, and everything else is in common in the shared bedroom.

Isabel, who focuses on materiality, Mark, conversely, stresses the idea of finding a space for himself in a spatial setting where residents had already occupied space and created a social environment. Mark's different perspective in describing the absence of a private space for him can be connected to his background in sociology, as he stated at the beginning of the interview.

Importantly, Isabel and Mark describe their experiences of shared spaces highlighting spatial conditions of materiality and privacy.

5.2.2.2 Communication

In contrast with stranger-ness, familiarity explains respondents' challenge of sharing the room with unknown people. Although they agreed to the lack of private space, the comfortability in sharing the bedroom changes with familiarity between the roommates and communication, as is shown in table 3 (section 5.1) and table 8 presented below.

Table 8: Communication in a shared bedroom

private space and communication in sharing the bedroom
Male respondent - Extract 1: "I was really thankful that my roommates were *from the same country* because we had a sort of understanding for each other" (Ian)
Female respondent -Extract 2: "There were few Kurdish families, and we said ok it is better to stay all together because we have the same traditions, and […] it is easy to *be in* contact. And we shared the room with a family with whom we were friends. They put a curtain in front of the beds. And it became a little bit better, and of course, when you think about privacy, you don't have any privacy. When someone breathes, you could hear it. So, no privacy, and we could manage to live there. We lived there for a month. And with this family we were friends, it was good to live together" (Elise)

These two extracts included in table 8 explain that, despite the absence of private space, sharing the bedroom with people who share the same traditions and language enhance comfortability and it may facilitate the organisation of the shared space because sharing traditions and language also means to increase the capacity to communicate between the roommates.

In conclusion, the comparison shows that respondents explain the content of the categories diversely, and women have particularly shown how their gender shapes their stories. The comparison shows that gender impacts how the respondents reflected on the conditions of common spaces. While the conditions of private space show similarities between the respondents, significant differences are revealed about the capacity to access shared rooms and modality of adjustment.

5.3 Third step of data analysis: government documents and reports

This section presents the thematic analysis of state documents, and it is organised in two sections. Subsection 5.3.1 presents the analysis of the official report is *NOU 2011:10 In the*

waiting room of the welfare state - The reception offer for asylum seekers. It offers a non-binding evaluation of the organisation of the asylum centre, and aims to propose an ideal form of how to organize the diverse phases of the asylum system.[125]

Subsection 5.3.2 presents the analysis of the document *(UDI 2008-031) Requirements for accommodation in ordinary asylum reception centers*, which focuses on the requirements to achieve the last two criteria presented in the subsection 5.3.1, concerning living conditions offered in asylum accommodation.

5.3.1 Four criteria for the asylum accommodation offer

The report identifies four political goals and considerations related to the asylum system, which are: "Facilitate rapid settlement; integration and inclusion in case the application is granted or motivate and facilitate return to and reintegration in the home country in case the application is rejected; cost efficiency; and ensure the individual's dignity and ability to function". [126] Particularly referring to asylum accommodation, the goals of cost-efficiency and residents' dignity and capacity to satisfy their basic needs are the most relevant, and concerning the achievement of these goals, four criteria have been designed concerning the accommodation offer.

The first criterion is '*soberiety'*, which indicates the simple nature and standard of living offered in asylum accommodation. The term is used consistently in various political documents, and it is connected to two primary objectives, which are reducing the attractiveness of the reception system to limit immigration and assuring the public that better conditions are not offered to asylum seekers than other disadvantaged groups in the community.

The second criterion is '*justifiable'.* It is related to the criterion of sobriety. It serves to balance the sobriety of the offer to an accommodation that is adequate to residents' basic needs.

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[125] Norway's public reports (NOU), *In the welfare state's waiting room— The reception offer for asylum seekers*, Departementenes servicesenter Informasjonsforvaltning (Oslo, 2011), https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2011-10/id645250/?ch=3 (pdf version available at: https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/78ca1005cf834de8961f06357c91aa92/no/pdfs/nou201120110010000dddpdfs.pdf).

[126] (NOU), *In the welfare state's waiting room— The reception offer for asylum seekers*. Pp. 38

The third criterion is '*differentiated'*. It concerns providing a diverse offer in terms of reception accommodation and services to people with special needs, such as mental health problems and special care needs.

The fourth criterion is *'adapted'*. It concerns the aim of facilitating diverse groups and individuals to satisfy needs, together with women's needs for security in reception centres.[127] Figure 2 - Chronology, definition and objectives of the four criteria summarises the four criteria and presents them chronologically to show the development of the accommodation offer connected to historical events and political objectives.

The first two criteria set to confront the increase in the number of asylum seekers arriving in Norway during the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, and they aimed at limiting immigration and the pull factors.[128]

Criteria	Sobriety	Justifiable	Differentiated	Adapted
Definition	The nature of the accommodation is simple	Adequate offer to meet residents' basic needs.	Provide a differentiated offer suitable to diverse special needs	Provide an offer suitable for diverse groups and individuals
Objective	Limit pull factors	Balance the criteria of sobriety	Take care of specific special needs	Facilitate satisfaction of needs

Figure 2: Chronology, definition and objectives of the four criteria

A closer look at the last two criteria (*differentiated* and *adapted*) clarifies that there has been an evolution toward adapting the accommodation to the residents to ensure dignity and satisfaction of needs. It is related to acknowledging that long permanence in asylum accommodation can have severe consequences and increase the burden and the vulnerability of specific groups, such as disabled and mentally ill people, children and women.[129]

[127] (NOU), *In the welfare state's waiting room— The reception offer for asylum seekers*. Pp. 41
[128] (NOU), *In the welfare state's waiting room— The reception offer for asylum seekers*. Pp. 42
[129] (NOU), *In the welfare state's waiting room— The reception offer for asylum seekers*. Pp. 41

5.3.2 UDI regulations to provide a differentiated and adapted accommodation

This subsection introduces the requirements the UDI sets to achieve the criteria presented in the previous subsection. The UDI aims at a "resident-oriented" approach to the centre's organisation to ensure a certain degree of normality while offering differentiated services and activities and ensuring residents' possibility to keep their language and culture.[130]

The UDI's requirements presented in the document *(UDI 2008-031) Requirements for accommodation in ordinary asylum reception centers* refer to the living conditions in the accommodation. The document reveals that living conditions are connected to the conditions of space offered in the accommodation, such as acceptable levels of hygiene, capacity to access space, free access to laundry rooms, and lockable bathrooms. The document states that common spaces shall be appropriate to age and gender, which means that bedrooms, bathrooms and common rooms shall be at disposal for both men and women.[131]

Notably, the document does not mention the kitchen as a common space that needs to be adapted to gender, and as it has been presented in the section above (see page 48), men and women showed a diverse approach concerning their access and use of common kitchens and canteens.

Another critical gender-related aspect of the organisation of space is that single women live in accommodations that are physically shielded from men to ensure their safety from potential abuses[132], which is arguably in line with the adaptability criterion.

Arguably, this last consideration reveals a significant difference in the female respondents' condition, shown by Isabel's quote in table 4.1. The relevance of gender in shaping the experience of common spaces in the asylum centre was different compared to the perspectives of the other five female respondents, whose stories are presented in the next section. The condition that differentiates these women is that the five female respondents are members of their respective and different family clusters and their experiences are shaped by their family role. In the following sections and chapters, I refer to them as women family-member.

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[130] The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, "Regulations for the operation of asylum reception centers," ed. The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI 2011-017 2011 (2019)). https://www.udiregelverk.no/rettskilder/udi-retningslinjer/udi-2011-017/#2.2.2.2._Ordin%C3%A6re_mottak.
[131] The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, "Requirements for accommodation in ordinary asylum reception centers," (UDI 2008-031 2008 (2020)). https://www.udiregelverk.no/rettskilder/udi-retningslinjer/udi-2008-031/.
[132] Immigration, "Requirements for accommodation in ordinary asylum reception centers."

Also, the report *NOU 2011:10 In the waiting room of the welfare state - The reception offer for asylum seekers* mentions that each family group shall be ensured a private accommodation that offers a sleeping room, bathroom, living room and dining rooms[133], while the UDI's document does not focus on family groups, it exclusively mentions that shared spaces shall be adapted to gender and it indicates single women's allocations in the asylum centre.

5.4. Fourth step of data analysis: a narrative analysis

This section presents the narrative analysis on the role that space played in the stories of the five respondents to test this hypothesis that the five female family-member respondents, had to confront more significant challenges during their stay in the centre.

The decision to focus on these groups of women family-member is justified because the lack of a responsive regulatory framework addressing this group in particular and of the peculiarity of their experiences compared to the story of a single woman.

Five sections present the primary findings of narrative analysis, and each section exemplifies a relevant gender aspect common to the other narratives, and it displays the commonalities of the five stories.

5.4.1 Emma's story: pregnancy and motherhood

Emma began her narration by immediately pointing out the challenges she faced during her stay in asylum accommodation, which evolved around her pregnancy and the birth of her first child. In her story, mothering experiences are significant in revealing her experiences of space.

At her arrival, the administration informed her and her husband that there were not enough rooms to host all the families and couples, and the administration proceeded by separating them and allocating men with other male residents and women with other female residents. She tried to resist this decision, insisting that she needed help from her husband because she was almost at the termination of her gestation period. However, her attempt failed, and they were accommodated in different buildings of the same centralised centre.

Her bedroom was located on the fourth floor. The location of the room was one of the challenges she faced. It was because she had a frequent need to go to the toilette because of her

[133] Norges offentlige (NOU), *In the welfare state's waiting room— The reception offer for asylum seekers*. Pp. 21

advanced pregnancy, but she had to walk down and up four floors every time she had to go to the bathroom. She described her physical tiredness and dehydration as physical factors that made the room's location inappropriate for her situation and caused her to faint.

In addition, she shared the bedroom with three other women. The room hosted two bunkbeds, and the last bed available was the one for her. Unfortunately, the other women already occupied the lower beds, and she had to take one of the upper beds. However, getting on the upper bed was another tremendous physical effort for her. She tried to communicate with other roommates to explain the difficulties in getting on the upper bed, but the lack of a common language hampered their mutual understanding, and for this reason, she decided to sleep on the floor.

Despite this, she tried to adapt because her need was to get rest. However, she could not adapt to the fact that a roommate invited a man at night. She had to sleep and cover her head while sleeping due to the presence of an unrelated man. This situation challenged her capacity to rest and sleep comfortably.

Because she felt it was her responsibility to adjust and find alternatives to resolve these challenges, she moved to another room to sleep in peace. She moved to the laundry room, where she finally got rest, although the room was cold. However, sleeping in the laundry room was not allowed. The administration advised her to return to her bedroom. She complained and insisted that she could not sleep there, and she just wanted to get a quiet space for her. She felt that the administration and the asylum seekers with whom she shared the room did not understand her needs.

> "The real problem for me was that they told me that my room was on the fourth floor. There were already three women in this room, from different countries, who were *not Arabic speakers*. So, they told me that they only have bunk beds, and I should sleep in the above bed. I tried to explain to them that I'm pregnant and I cannot go up, and it would have been better for me to sleep in the bed below. But the woman told me that that was her bed. […] So, I slept on the floor, but it wasn't there my problem, my problem was that when I moved from different places, I was pregnant, and it was difficult for me, and I lost too much [sleep and water], and only I need to rest, I needed a quiet place where to rest and have peace.
> […] I tried to sleep [on the floor], but I got another problem because one of the women in the room was having a friend overnight […] this woman was inviting this man to talk, maybe they were friends or related, it's not my problem, but my problem was that I had to have rest, and I shall wear my hijab, I was sleeping on the floor with my hijab on, and it was a problem because they were used to stay there until late, 2 a.m. – 3 a.m.. And he was a man, so I couldn't take my hijab off. […] Therefore, I took my clothes, and I went downstairs, in the laundry, and I put my clothes on the floor under the stairs, and I slept there. It was quiet, and it was good […] they [the centre's employees] came to tell me that it wasn't allowed to sleep there."

Emma's challenge concerns her possibility to rest and sleep. Resting and sleep are challenging for her because of the specific conditions related to her gender, pregnancy, and her religious belief expressed in covering her head. Rest and sleep were basic needs of significant necessity due to her physical tiredness connected to her journey to escape violence in her home country and her advanced pregnancy.

The lack of recognition of these specific conditions related to her gender led her to search for another sleeping room, where, however, she was not allowed to stay.

This shows a lack of recognition from the administration concerning the necessity for a pregnant woman to get a room that allows a quick and short way to access the bathroom and a room for a Muslim woman to rest and sleep without necessarily covering her head.

Emma's story shows that the accessibility of spaces and usability of services, such as bathroom, and materials, such as the bed, concern the suitability of the space for the self, and also being allowed to be in that space. In this case sleeping in the laundry room was not allowed following legal and administrative regulations. Arguably, sleeping in the assigned bedroom, where an unrelated man was often present, was not allowed either, and in this case, 'allow' relates to the agreeability of the respondent to sleep and cover her head, which was uncomfortable.

5.4.2 Anna's story: the dark period

Anna described her experience in asylum accommodation as the darkest period of her life due to her emotional status and the unusual absence of sunlight during the winter in Northern Norway. In this period, she felt sad and depressed, and she explained why she defined this period as the darkest one in her life. She explained that she lived in a centralised asylum centre, and the floor where her room was located was also hosting single men. She and her husband shared a bedroom and bathroom, while the kitchen was in common with other residents.

At the time of her narration, she was pregnant, and she expressed her discontent about sharing the kitchen because of the strong smell of food cooked by the other residents. She desired to move to a family apartment, where she could have the space to prepare the food of her preference, but more importantly, she wished to have her cooking area to be able to access the kitchen and cook her food at any time of the day.

Conversely, there is no other option in the building where she lived if not withdrawing from preparing and cooking her food. She waited for the kitchen to be empty because she did

not feel comfortable going there with unrelated men. Ultimately, accessing the kitchen became for her a challenge. Her feeling of being uncomfortable in the common kitchen expresses the challenge she confronted, which she experienced as a lack of space inclusive for her.

The incapacity to access the kitchen and feeling uncomfortable are expressed in withdrawing from going to the kitchen.

The incapacity to access the kitchen constrained her freedom to prepare and make her food, and she ate sandwiches and fish in cans in her bedroom. Her private bedroom became the only space for her, and this is because, differently from Emma, the bedroom is the only space that she owns.

> "I was the only woman, and the building was full of single men, and every time that I wanted to cook, many men were there cooking, and I have just withdrawn it, and I went back to my room. I cannot stand between many men, and it was not comfortable. There was not place. It was a very very strong smell. And every day I had to plan the time to go in the kitchen and early morning was ok and the late evening was also a good time and when they finished making food, it was very dirty. I couldn't wait in the kitchen. You could hear the sounds of people talking in the corridor. It was just a prison for me, and with a room with a bathroom. And if you want to make the food you have to plan it, so you don't have the freedom to make your own food. You cannot make your own food, and we were used to eating food from cans, fish and other things, sandwiches."

Anna's challenge concerns her capacity to prepare and cook her food, manifested by her choice to withdraw from going to the kitchen when unrelated men occupied the room. Anna also reflects on how the challenge she experienced in accessing the common kitchen was a limitation of her fundamental freedom and basic needs because she could not prepare food and cook.

At the beginning of the interview, Anna explains that her capacity to go to the kitchen was limited, and it was connected to her gender, mainly related to a specific aspect of her gender, religious motives. In her story, the lack of recognition concerning the necessity of a Muslim woman to have a common kitchen separated from men is constraining her capacity to cook.

Anna's story is relevant because it shows a lack of recognition of the necessity to design kitchens suitable for men and women. It is also the relevant missing aspect presented in subsection 5.3.2.

This situation constituted Anna's reality until she gave birth to her first son. Her first son was born when she was living in the asylum centre, and she moved to a new accommodation because of the change in her family condition.

In the new accommodation, she shared the kitchen with other asylum seekers that shared similar conditions. She felt that accessing the kitchen did no longer constitute a problem for her. Instead, the kitchen became a room for socialising with other mothers. The child's birth shaped her story because she moved to another accommodation and the interaction with other residents pivoted around children's care, activities and needs. Motherhood became central in her story, and the birth of her son brought the light back in her life. After the birth of her child, she claimed for appeal.

It is important to state that having a new-born or getting pregnant, while the future is still uncertain, is a great challenge for mothers in asylum centres:

> "In this time, I also get…, my [first] baby was one year, and I get pregnant again. […] So I *went to the* nurse, and I talked with her, and she told me to do the blood test, and she told me that I was pregnant, and I said, "no, no, no, we didn't get the permission to stay, and my baby is so young", and she [the nurse] said to me I could have decided to abort, and not have the child." (Emma)

5.4.3 Emily's story: a single mother

This subsection introduces Emily's story, who arrived in Norway as a single mother. She lived in a centralised asylum centre with her child. She shared the common rooms and the canteen with other families who were accommodated in the same building.

In her story, being a mother is central, but being a single mother was the condition that shaped the experience in the asylum centre. In fact, her narration began with her reflections on the challenges she faced: the need to protect her child and herself and the related importance of reporting violations or abuses to the administration.

In the description of her daily routine in the centre, she explained that the way she arranged her and her son's days in the centre was central to the need to separate herself from other residents. In particular, she wanted to avoid being crowded places.

One of the most crowded rooms was the canteen. Emily was going to the canteen at the earliest time possible in the morning and the latest at noon and in the afternoon. However, it occurred that, at times, there was no food left for her and her child.

One of the rooms that she attended frequently was the children's room. She explained that the building where her bedroom was located had four common rooms, and two of these were prepared for children's leisure activities. However, using this room was a challenge, as she explained, adults were often occupying all the common rooms, even if the rooms were prepared for children. To ensure that her child to get access to the children room, to which he

had a right to use, she started marking the room as occupied. However, protecting the children's room for her son and other children exposed her to verbal attacks by other residents.

She explained that the social pressure and verbal attacks she experienced related to her condition as a single mother. The absence of her husband, who in her culture provides protection to the family members, exposed her to the experience of disrespect by other residents and to perceive her safety as precarious.

> "I felt that other men were negative towards me and curious against people like me: alone mother with child and that they would have been curious and sometimes rude to me. In *an asylum centre in Northern Norway*, I experienced an incident with a family in the playing room that got rude against me. It was a woman […] she told me to go out from the room and that I couldn't stay there, and she took out a child tunnel from the room, which my child was used to play with. I went to the reception to talk with the employees. […] when I came back with the employers, the man of this woman was in the room, and the employers said that the room was for children and they should have respected that. This man told the employers that I always left the room and that other people have to take care of her child, and he said a lot of negative things about me, and I felt threaten, and I felt there was a sort of undoing and that it came out of hands.
> After that incident, […] I felt he was following me everywhere, and I felt threaten and not secure. […] if I was with my husband, the situation would have been totally different. If my husband was with me, no men would have said these words or approached me like that."

Emily's story explains that because of her gender, manifested by her peculiar condition of being a single mother, she was targeted because of the lack of culturally accepted protection. In her story, she attempts to ensure her need for protection. She becomes the person who protects her child.

As Emily explained at the beginning of the interview, protection was her primary concern. The need for protection led her to rearranged her timetable to avoid the crowded canteen because as she explained men were going to close to her, which made her feel uncomfortable due to the lack of a male figure, her husband, who would have ensured her safety (see subsection 5.2.1, table 4.1, extract 3). Also, the need for protection led her to report to the administration the injustice that was occurring in the children's room against her son. However, this seems to have exposed her to further challenges when she had to confront the verbal attacks. Also, the staffs and employees in the centre seem to be unable to provide her safety.

The lack of recognition of the social pressure and possible attacks that single mothers can experience while living in the asylum centre due to the absence of a male figure who can ensure their protection following their gender role, create further burdens expressed in the perception of being threatened and feeling unsafe.

5.4.4 Elise's story: hostile space

This subsection presents Elise's story, who lived in a centralised asylum centre with her husband and two children. Also, Elise stated that the safety of her children was the motivation that led her to escape from her home country and find a safe place elsewhere.

In her narration, wifehood and motherhood are significant for Elise. She explained that she felt she could not perform her sexuality as the expression of her engagement in the marital couple due to the lack of private space (see section 4.1, table 2, extract 1).

Being an asylum seeker meant to be frequently moved in diverse asylum accommodations, and it represented a significant challenge.

Elise and her family moved into four diverse accommodations, and she explained that it created instability for the family, especially for the children. Mainly, she explained that moving was not a physical challenge; they did not have many things to move with them, but for her, moving challenged a sense of security that depended on the social network that she developed in the time spent in the accommodation. When she had to leave, Elise was concerned with who she would have met in the following accommodation.

She moved to a centralised asylum centre where single men were living. At her arrival at the centre, she felt to have obtained undesired sexual attention from the residents, and in the extract presented below, she explained her feelings.

> "And they took us in the new asylum centre, and it was like going to the jungle, and it was far away into the mountains, and it was a place for the hunters because it was a beautiful place where to stay for a hunter, but not for us, not for refugees, because it was isolated. When we arrived there, it was an asylum centre for single men, so it was only men who haven't seen a woman for many months, and when we arrived there, they were like when you are thirsty, and you see water, and you just go there to have what you want. And they come to us, and they were saying "woman, woman, woman". And you can just imagine the feeling. It was terrible, and I thought that I had to save my body from the eyes, sights, touching. Many have tried to have contact even with married women in that way. […] the bathroom was outside, so just imagine if I have to bring my little one to pee outside, then I have to dress and to go outside to go to the bathroom. I told him [a centre's employee] that despite even the single people might not accept it, it might be easier for them to accept and deal with it, and because he is a guy it's easier for him to put a cloth on and go outside. And me, as a woman and with a boy, it would have been difficult."

Elise's challenge is ensuring the safety of her body. The necessity of protecting herself from other men was a feeling that she describes as terrible.

In her story, it was the first attempt to access the centre that was a challenge connected to the perception of being sexually targeted and the need to save her body. similarly to Emily's story, gender was not accounted as an aspect that could have exposed her to further

vulnerability. Lack of recognition exposed her to a not neutral space; instead for her, “it was a place for the hunters”, and it enhanced the burden related to lack of protection and feelings of unsafety.

Also, referring to accessing the bathroom located outside the main building. Her concern referred to her mothering role, and she explains that, despite the location of the bathroom may not be accepted by any of the residents, it created a burden for her in connection with her motherhood.

5.4.4 Martha’s story: it is about agency

This subsection presents Martha’s story, and she shared the bedroom with her husband and her daughter and other rooms with other residents.

Martha’s story pivoted around her motherhood and wifehood. Martha’s primary interests were to satisfy her daughter’s needs and safety and to have a healthy marital relationship. However, Martha’s interests were significantly challenged with living in shared asylum accommodation.

Concerning her marital relations, the inactivity that characterised the life in asylum accommodation provoked sadness, loss in the sense of normality and depression within the marital relation, and all the activities they were doing together stopped after the first year of permanence in the centre. Also, the lack of privacy limited their possibility to express their sexuality with the partner. Martha and her husband progressively isolated one another due to the prolonged unstable living conditions, and it created a big space between her and her husband, which caused Martha great sufferings. According to Martha, sharing living spaces was a great challenge.

Concerning her motherhood, Martha could not find a solution to her daughter’s inquiry into why her friends did not visit her at her house, which did not have enough space to host them. In addition, Martha was worried about the safety of her daughter. For this reason, Martha did not want her to be alone in the house where nobody was responsible for her daughter’s safety, where anyone could have abused her.

Martha preferred that one of the two parents be at home when the daughter returned from school. Alternatively, if that was not possible, the public library constituted a safer place for her daughter.

> "I thought that my daughter could be alone at home. It was absolutely an issue. I told my daughter to not being home alone without the parents. For example, ok, even if there were only families, it could be that only one of the other men was at home and my daughter was there, so I was afraid that something could have happened. But also, if she was alone at home, and the others were making food, and maybe there was a fire, maybe her daughter would be in the bathroom or sleeping, and nobody was responsible for warning her or taking her out. So, I always tried to be at home when my daughter was returning back from school, and if nor me neither the father were at home, I would have called her to say to her to go to the library or to a friend's place."

Also, sharing the living spaces and material objects was creating a burden in her mothering role, which is felt especially in relation to the provision of food. Accessing the kitchen was felt as a stressful aspect of her mothering role. Martha explained she must always have an alternative if she could not use the kitchen because the other residents occupied it.

According to Martha, sharing living spaces was very challenging for the Muslim woman who was living in the same accommodation.

> "They [the other family who reside in the accommodation] were Muslims, and the woman was wearing hijab, and if you had to go to the toilet at night, you had to wake up a little bit and wear all your clothes and hijab, because that was their way of living. Also she had to wear the hijab all the time in the living room because they were living with this other family, she had to wear hijab, and if my husband was in the living room to get to the bathroom, and she didn't want to go there because it was sort of embarrassing to go there and show that a woman was going to the toilet, so she could have avoid to go to the bathroom for 10 hours, while my husband was sitting in the living room."

This story shows that the accessibility of spaces and usability of services, such as bathroom, relates to the suitability of the space, which is mainly connected with gender, as Emma's, Anna's and Emily's stories have shown.

The five stories manifest challenges related to pregnancy, motherhood, protection and safety and sexuality, which are connected to the condition of womanhood, motherhood and wifehood. Martha's stories are significantly overlapping with the stories of the other four women, and therefore she occupies a central place in this thesis.

Martha explained the challenge of accessing the accommodation spaces (kitchen and bathroom), and the challenge relates to their gender specific conditions. Martha expressed her concern for her daughter's safety in shared environment, which is a concern shared by Emily and Elise.

5.5 Summary of the findings

This section summarises the main findings, which show that the respondents' experiences changed regarding common spaces and private spaces. The difference between the experiences

of men and women in asylum accommodations become significant mainly in relation to common spaces.

(1) Common spaces are characterised by common access and common use. The common areas that present both these two characteristics cause a more significant challenge to women's possibility to access the space. Use and access have a different meaning as the comparison between the experiences of men and women shows.

(2) Women family-member can be exposed to more significant challenges due to the lack of a responsive legal and administrative framework that recognises their gender. The conditions that depend on it, as a challenge to their satisfaction of basic needs and safety.

(3) Women's experiences show the interconnectedness between administrative and legal regulatory framework and the social regulatory framework. The lack of recognition of the role gender plays in shaping their experiences, led them to experience constraints to their agency as possibility to act in space to satisfy their basic needs according to their motives and interests, which refers to their ability to act significantly in the spatial setting.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter presents the main themes and discusses them in connection with the literature review and the conceptual framework, and it aims at showing how gender inadequacy marks limitations in the ability to access shared common spaces, and despite individual strategies to adjust, the lack of recognition provokes a restriction in the capacity to act significantly in these spatial setting, hampering the satisfaction of basic needs.

The discussion aims at addressing the research gap, which is understanding how the legal and social regulatory frameworks interplay in the experiences of asylum seekers, specifically concerning women, whose experiences have been mostly overlooked. The main findings are organised into three themes, ability to access common spaces, lack of recognition and agency and satisfaction of need, are respectively presented in section 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3.

The discussion presented in these sections construct the answer to the research question included in the following chapter.

In relation to the findings, I argue that gender inadequacy marks the inappropriateness of asylum accommodation. The common areas are accessible for both men and women indistinctively, and the gender norms play a role in shaping the experience of accessibility and inclusivity in common spaces, and usually women are left without room for them. The constraints to women's accessibility to space daily impact their ability to satisfy their basic needs.

Common accessibility can become an obstacle for women because the lack of recognition of the gender specific conditions that shapes their experiences of space. The lack of recognition mainly concerns a specific group of women, namely women family-member. The female family-member respondents did not live in private accommodation as the report *NOU 2011:10 In the waiting room of the welfare state - The reception offer for asylum seekers* suggested, and in practice, common areas were barely adapted to gender.

6.1 Ability to access common spaces

Jeremy Waldron defines common spaces as characterised by common use, and no permission is required to allow anyone access or use of common spaces.[134] The findings suggest that common spaces are characterised by common accessibility.

In line with the findings, it is possible to identify common spaces that differ due to the different degree of accessibility and availability. For instance, common bathrooms are characterised by exclusive use, and the availability of the room restricts accessibility. Conversely, the kitchen is designed to be a room where accessibility and availability are simultaneously possible.

Importantly, as the stories of female family-member respondents showed in section 5.4, in their perspective accessing to common rooms acquired a meaning for which their experiences differ from men's experiences, and it relates to their gender.

This articulation related to a gendered accessibility to common spaces is relevant because it reveals that there is a lack of recognition of gender as a factor that plays a role in women family-member's accessibility. Despite the fact that the organisation of the common spaces in the centre shall be adapted to gender and age as indicated in the document presented in subsection 5.3.2, it seems that the organisation of common spaces largely gender blind concerning the needs of women who perform a family role.

Accessing common spaces is connected to gender specific conditions that reiterate women's gender identity, such as mothering and religious virtues[135], and women family-member's ability to access common spaces is shaped by their agency, which means acting in the spatial context in line with motives and interests that are significant for the self.

Concerning gender as a factor that shapes accessibility to common spaces, it is important to mention some words on the organisation of common areas by Islamic law. Judith Tucker explains that Islamic law regulates social interaction between men and women by organising space. Physical proximity, the dress requirement, and norms concerning gaze regulate how Muslim men and women occupy common spaces.[136]

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[134] Waldron, "Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom." Pp. 297
[135] Mahmood, *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Pp. 156
[136] Tucker, "Woman and man in gendered space: submitting."

The discomfort experienced by Muslim women in accessing common spaces manifests a conflict with the religious norm they inhabit, which express their motives and beliefs. The lack of common spaces that are adapted to specific gender conditions manifests a gender inadequacy of the accommodation to women's gender identity, reiterated in this case by religious norms. The lack of recognition shows that these specific gender conditions are invisible to the organisation of the centre, and challenge Muslim women's accessibility to common spaces.

Women's accessibility to common spaces is also connected with their mothering role. Arguably, all the women family-member agreed on their concern related to ensuring their child's safety. Safety and protection is related to the role of mothering, and it is connected to gender and sexuality in need of protecting one's body.

Mothers play an essential role in the provision of care and education of their children. Concerning Islam, mothering is a virtuous role[137], and it also manifests women's roles in the family and the community.[138] Without referring specifically to some religious norms and virtues, in their care-provider role, women family-member were concerned with offering the child a safe and stable environment where to grow. As it appears in the stories, women family-member do not perceive asylum accommodation as a safe and stable environment for their children. The unsafety and instability concern the common nature of the living spaces, mothers' concern is the possibility of their children suffering physical abuses, harm and psychological stress. The lack of private spaces increases the burden in mothers' provision of secure living space and provision of material resources as explained by Martha.

In Emma's story, mothering relates to her pregnancy. Her scarce physical mobility due to her advanced pregnancy shows that the location of sleeping room was not suitable for her gender specific condition and challenged her accessibility to the bed and the bathroom.

Concerning the protection of the body, the feeling of unsafety limited women's ability to access common spaces and to move freely. According to Gill Valentine, women's incapacity to move freely in space manifests the spatial constraints, reinforcing the idea that public spaces are male dominated.[139]

The presence of men in all the stories presented above shows that common spaces can become exclusive in their capacity to welcome women. The lack of culturally accepted

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[137] "The Woman as Mother," 2016, accessed 08.05.21, http://muslimsincalgary.ca/the-woman-as-mother/.
[138] "Not Just a Mother," 2016, accessed 08.05.21, http://muslimsincalgary.ca/not-just-a-mother/.
[139] Valentine, "The geography of women's fear."

protection and undesired visibility serve to understand women family-member's claim of not having an adequate space.

6.2 Lack of recognition

This theme explains that the lack of recognition from administrative and legal regulation of gender as a factor that regulates accessibility of common spaces hampers women's ability to use common spaces and satisfy their basic needs, increasing their vulnerability in experience suffering. Lack of recognition also manifests how dignity and capacity to satisfy needs are arguably not met in practice in the experiences of women family-member.

As the recommendations presented in subsection 5.3.1 and subsection 2.1.2, the goal of containing costs by avoiding expensive accommodations, or restricting or avoiding investing and adjust buildings and furniture while also aiming to ensure residents' dignity and capacity to satisfy basic needs can easily conflict.[140] It is because setting a too low bar for cost-efficiency, can disable the security of residents' dignity and their ability to do basic activities that make up the daily living.

The necessary conditions that would ensure women family-member's dignity, peace and security while staying in asylum accommodation are not recognised, which challenges their capacity to act significantly in space and ability to satisfy their needs.

The requirements related to the organisation of spaces recognise that, as subsection 5.3.1 presents, gender and age are factors connected with residents' vulnerable status and offering an adapted accommodation is required.

The regulation arguably accounts for gender as a factor related to single women's vulnerability and applied to the provision of accommodation for single women, who must be hosted in accommodation that secure their protection from men.

Women family-member's claims and actions do represent a signal of an environment that exposes them to feeling unsafe, discomforted, threatened, fearful, distressed and discredited, but the gender is not recognised as factor behind these claims.

[140] Hauge, Støa, and Denizou, "Framing outsidedness–aspects of housing quality in decentralized reception centres for asylum seekers in Norway." Pp. 3

The capacity to access common spaces, such as kitchen, canteens, and bathrooms, paramount in satisfying basic needs, and the lack of recognition of a gender factor limit accessibility to common spaces can have practical effects on the ability of women to satisfy their basic needs.

Women's incapacity to access common spaces shows a challenge in having a space that is adapted to their conditions.

6.3 Agency and Satisfaction of needs

As defined in section 4.2, agency is the capacity to act according to motives and interests significant for the self, which express how individual inhabits social norms. Ultimately, the respect of personal motives and interests through the construction of a space that is gender inclusive and adapted can enhance women's ability to satisfy basic needs.

The understanding of agency as the realisation of lived norms in line with the concerns that are significant for the individual serve to understand the discomfort felt by Muslim women related to their unwillingness to access spaces where unrelated men were present, and the challenges and burdens of motherhood in the asylum centres related to the unsuitability of space in upholding their responsibility in providing a safe environment for their children.

Also, the findings show that when women family-member act in a spatial setting, their actions are connected with their personal motives and interests related to the use of space. The use is informed by how the individual inhabits social norms that regulate spatial interaction.

The unsuitability and inappropriateness of the spatial setting to motives, such as religious beliefs, and interest, such as responsibility toward the dependent child, leave women family-member without a space that they perceive as theirs. They do not have other choice than adapt to the environment, while still respecting their motives and interests. Often, the only space they may feel is designed for them is their bedroom.

The lack of adequate spaces also represents a limit in the spatial mobility of women and their capacity to validate their claims over certain spaces.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In the context of asylum centres, privacy and materiality are fundamental conditions of the spatial setting that enhance residents' ability to satisfy their needs. These spatial conditions intersect with people's way of expressing who they are as human beings, individuals, family members and social members, and one can argue that inadequate material and spatial conditions challenge one's expression of the self in accordance with motives and interests.

In this thesis, I suggest that because personal motives and interests are significant elements of agency that express how the individual inhabits social norms, when acting in a spatial setting, an individual's actions are connected with personal motives and interests related to the use of space. In this sense, specific spatial conditions, as common accessibility, can interfere with the individual's preferred way of using the spatial setting according to the personal motives and interests that particularly reinforces women's gender identity through their family role.

For this reason, this thesis suggests that in the case in which spaces are not adapted to the personal motives and interests correlated to individual's gender identity, several challenges in the ability to use and access space emerge, constraining the access, which is a basic element, to ensure the use of services within the facility.

The lack of recognition of gender specific conditions is an omission that is experienced by women family-member as a restriction in the capacity to act with significance.

Referring to section 1.2, this thesis aims at inserting itself in the developing spatial turn in peace and conflict studies. In relation to this, starting from considering spatial conditions as fundamental elements in supporting inhabitants' ability to satisfy basic needs, it is the organisation of asylum accommodation due to the unawareness of how gender specific conditions organise socio-spatial encounters that challenge women's ability to satisfy basic need and create a challenge in their expression of how they are as human being, individuals, family members and social members.

The premise of temporariness and the standardised accommodation disguise the social organisation of spatial encounters. The suffering that emerge from the lack of recognition is manifested in the claims of not having a space that is adapted to women who perform a family role.

The thesis investigated asylum centres residents' past experiences in asylum accommodation. The main objective of this study was to understand the role of space in transforming lived experiences within asylum centres, specifically focusing on the organisation of the space and the conditions offered in shared asylum accommodation. The focus was particularly on women's experiences, justified by the fact that their experiences have been largely unheard and because a gender pattern resulted from the data analysis.

The aspect of temporariness of asylum accommodation is one of the main challenges experienced by asylum seekers while they live in the centre. Although the temporariness of accommodation can be politically justified by the premise of short permanence, short permanence is often not the case, as the statistics presented in subsection 2.1.1 shows. The temporary accommodation creates uncertainty, anxiety and stress for asylum seekers. Alongside this, the conditions offered in asylum accommodation are often degrading.

Lack of maintenance, lack of adjustments and crowdedness expose residents to further challenges, and they can affect the inclusion of asylum seekers in the local community because they often become a boundary-making factor. The organisation of the centre hampers residents' control over their lives and performance of cultural traditions.

Importantly, both the legal and social regulatory frameworks shape the experiences of asylum seekers, particularly women's experiences. Legal norms define the requirements of the asylum accommodation offer. Social norms organise socio-spatial encounters, especially in relation the interaction between men and women.

Space is regulated by the interaction of multiple norms, and the women's possibility to act in spatial setting in line with agent's motives and interests is connected to the gender adequacy of the spatial context.

Notably, a gender pattern became visible concerning the condition of common accessibility. It also served to define the idea of common accessibility as the aspect that challenged women's ability to access common spaces, and ultimately to use the services in the facility.

The capacity to access common spaces is challenged by the lack of recognition of gender conditions, which hampers women's ability to claim certain spaces, hence to use these spaces as they were their one's own, meaning allowing them to act and express themselves in accordance to their motives and interests to realise their basic needs.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Opening questions and background information:

Where are you from?

When did you arrive in Norway?

When did you submit your claim for protection?

When did you get the permission to stay?

How old are you?

Which is your education?

Do you practice any religion?

Are you single or do you have a family?

Questions on respondents' background:

Before coming to Norway, which activities were you doing during the day in your home country?

How was your daily life in your home country?

Did you have any job when you were living in your home country?

Were you married?

Did you have a family?

Questions on asylum process and accommodation:

How does the asylum process function?

How do you describe your experience in the asylum centre?

Can you describe the physical structure of the building where you lived?

In which kind of building did you live?

Was the accommodation located near other facilities and structures, such as supermarkets?

How were you moving from the asylum accommodation to other facilities located outside the campus?

Can you describe how the bedroom was?

Did you share the bedroom?

From your perspective, how was sharing the bedroom?

Was there any bathroom inside the bedroom?

Did you share the bathroom?

How was for you to share the bathroom?

How was to share the kitchen?

Which are the challenges you faced due to the shared character of the accommodation?

Did any issue raise in the common rooms? Do you have any example?

Questions on daily life in the asylum centre:

How was your daily life in the asylum centre?

Which kind of activities were you used to do during the day?

Were you allow to go to school?

Were there leisure activities to do during the day?

Question on being an asylum seeker:

What did it mean for you to be an asylum seeker?

Conclusive question:

What do you think about the place where you are currently living?

Topic: Mothering role

Appendix 2: Consent form (English and Norwegian version)

English version:

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project *Refugee camps: the intersection of place and gender in refugees' lived experience* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- ☐ to participate in face-to-face semi-structured recorded interview
- ☐ to participate in online recorded interview
- ☐ to the presence of a third party in the interview (the interpret)
- ☐ for my personal data and sensitive personal anonymised data to be stored by the researcher
- ☐ for my personal data and sensitive personal anonymised data to be processed by the researcher until the end date of the project
- ☐ for my personal data and sensitive personal anonymised data to be shared with the supervisor during the research process
- ☐ for my personal data and sensitive personal anonymised data to be stored after the end of the project for future research

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(Signed by participant, date)

Norwegian version:

Samtykke skjema

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om forskningsprosjekt *Asylmottak: sammenheng mellom sted og identitet i asylsoker levde erfaring* og har fått muligheten til å stille spørsmål.

Jeg gir samtykke:

- ☐ å delta i semi-strukturert innspilt intervju ansikt til ansikt
- ☐ å delta i online innspilt intervju
- ☐ til tilstedeværelse av en tredjepart i intervjuet (tolken)
- ☐ for at mine personlige data og sensitive personlige anonymiserte data skal lagres av forskeren
- ☐ at personopplysningene mine og sensitive personlige anonymiserte data skal behandles av forskeren frem til sluttdatoen for prosjektet
- ☐ at mine personlige data og sensitive personlige anonymiserte data skal deles med veilederen under forskningsprosessen
- ☐ for at mine personlige data og sensitive personlige anonymiserte data skal lagres etter prosjektets slutt for fremtidig forskning

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(Signatur og dato)