

## **Fieldtrip Lebanon**

A study of community-based psychosocial support in Beirut and Saidon, August 2017

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# Fieldtrip Lebanon

A study of community-based psychosocial support, in Beirut and Saidon, August 2017

Michelle Pace  
Bent S.E. Hansen  
Brian Kjøller Olsen



# Information & readers guide

This handbook is the sum of the experiences of 20 social workers and a researcher on a fieldtrip to Lebanon during August 2017. The handbook was created from the participants' notes, collected and interpreted and put together by Michelle Pace, Bent SE Hansen and Brian Kjeller Olsen.

The first part is an introduction to the context of the project itself and the participants.

The second part is empirical material collected during the trip, as well as participants' observations, reflections and input from our Lebanese partners. The empirical material was gathered in collaboration with staff and beneficiaries of NGO facilities in Lebanon.

The third part consists of reflections from field findings and suggestions on how to build on the knowledge created during this trip.

Finally, there is a supplementary section on about Shatila, which left a special mark on all participants' thoughts and hearts.

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All photos are provided by cphsoclub, and were taken during March and August 2017, in Byblos, Beirut and Saidon. Photo page 14, courtesy Reuters. All video material is provided by DPNA in Saidon



Streetsign, The Corniche, Beirut, 2017, photo; cphsoclub

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## Further readings are available here::

[COMMUNITY PSYKOLOGI – SOCIAL ANSVARLIGHED OG FORANDRING, Julia Arenas](#)

[Fællesskaber, en intro af Peter Berliner](#)

[AN INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY](#)

[Psychosocial interventions A handbook](#)

[Community-based psychosocial support](#)

[Psychosocial Support for Youth in Post-Conflict Situations](#)

[ADVANCING ADOLESCENTS Evidence on the Impact of Psychosocial Support](#)

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# DEL 1

Context



# Introduction

Michelle Pace, 7. September 2017

On the 11th August 2017, together with Bent S E Hansen, I embarked on a preparatory fieldtrip to Beirut. Two days later, we received 19 social/case workers, psychologists and pedagogues from across 5 different Danish municipalities as well as the Red



Byblos 2017, photo: cphsoclub.

Cross National office to prepare them for a three day intensive encounter with their counterparts from three Lebanese NGOs: the Development for People and Nature Association (DPNA), Amel which supports the most underprivileged populations in Lebanon and Himaya, dedicated to making child protection a right everywhere.

With the assistance of our coordinators in Beirut: Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss of the Lebanese American University, Michel Maragel of himaya, Rami Shamma and Aya Nasser of DPNA, Ghinwa Samhat and Virginie Lefevre of Amel, Wafa El Yassir (Palestinian Students Fund) and Ahed Bhar we experienced intensive observations and discussions about the challenges of working with young new arrivals in host societies. This fieldtrip included a visit to Shatila camp where we were exposed to what life is like inside an overcrowded Palestinian and now Syrian camp in Beirut.

All involved were highly impressed by the

young, energetic and positive leanings of the staff and volunteers across the Lebanese civil society community. From their part, our Lebanese friends highly benefited from the long standing experience of their Danish colleagues. The Ain El Remeneh and Hareit Hriek centers of Amel, the trip to Saidon and the nuanced workshops with DPNA youth volunteers and staff, the discussions with himaya staff and Zara and Maha from the Danish Red Cross program in Lebanon, as well as the Shatila experience, left a huge mark on us all.

This manual is the outcome of these deep experiences which we document to enable us to create a platform of shared experiences with all front liners who work with young arrivals in host communities.

Special thanks to everyone involved for your time, positive energy, and dedication to this project and to the Danish Arab Partnership Programme – Fund for Academic Cooperation and Exchange between Denmark and the Arab world for funding and making this experience possible.



Souk in Saidon 2017, photo: cphsoclub.

## Why this study ?

Having worked very closely with Roskilde municipality's Bent S E Hansen and Ungdomscenteret Allegaarden's Brian Kjøller Olsen on my FACE project Change in Exile – RE-invigorating Principles of Reform and Social Stability amongst Syrian refugees in Denmark and Lebanon for over a year and a half, we decided to build on the important work we had carried out so far in the area of supporting young refugees and their futures in Denmark and Lebanon.

An underlying conception that drives this manual is that refugee minors are not merely a vulnerable contingent of the displaced Syrian population: rather, each individual possesses a certain agency for change and progress. These young people are keen to learn about their host communities and to contribute in productive ways to their new homelands.

This manual is important as it offers a platform through which good practices of all those working with young arrivals in host communities can be shared with their counterparts not just across Denmark and Lebanon, but hopefully across other European and MENA host societies.

We hope our shared findings here will inspire all those who are dedicated to supporting positive relations between host communities and new arrivals seeking refuge.

Michelle Pace, 7. September 2017

# Extracts from the program

## Monday, August 14th

- 09:00 Lebanese American University - Lecture: Dr Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss, a view of the back ground of Lebanon, the refugee camps for Palestinian refugees in post-war 1948, and current situation in Lebanon.
- 11:00 Departure from LAU to Amel organisation, to Ain El Remeneh Center and meeting with the members Q&A session with beneficiaries and members.
- 12:45 Departure from Ain el Remeneh arrival at Hareit Hreik Meeting and Lunch break with staff members Q&A session with beneficiaries and members
- 18:15 Debriefing, group work and tomorrow's program

## Tuesday, August 15th

- 09:45 Arrival to Saidon and today's host, DPNA - Presentation of the organisation and the activities of DPNA
- 10:00 Roundtrip In Saidon - Sea Chastel and visit to the souk 11:00 Intro for all participants ( the Danish side and youth from Saidon)
- 12:00 Group work - mix all participants, staff and youth, and the Danish participants facilitates the group work.
- 13:00 Lunch for all
- 14:00 Group work - Groups report short back in plenum.
- 15:30 Departure from Saidon
- 18:15 Debriefing, group work and tomorrow's program

## Wednesday, August 16th

- 09:15 Lebanese American University: Workshop, host Michel Maragel, Himaya, Clinical psychologist and his staff, Nour Beydoun, Protection Program Manager and Nibal Al Alo, clinical social worker from Basmeh & Zeitooneh. Zara and Maha from the Danish Red Cross program in Lebanon.
- 14:00 Departure to Shatila refugee Camp, round trip and meeting with NGOs working inside Shatila Camp.
- 18:15 Debriefing, group work and evaluation.



# Partners and hostes

Development for People and Nature Association (DPNA) is a Lebanese non-governmental organization that works through a network of civil society organizations to promote sustainable development of people and place. DPNA's vision is a non-violent democratic society where individuals enjoy all their rights and freedoms without discrimination. DPNA works on socio-economic development, governance, and providing services for human dignity. For more info, please visit our website on [www.dpna-lb.org](http://www.dpna-lb.org)

himaya, from the Arabic word "protection" is a Lebanese NGO founded in 2009 with the vision of making child protection a right, everywhere. Its mission is to promote an environment suitable for the development of children and ensure their global protection via fighting and preventing abuse. himaya has become a key actor in child protection in Lebanon, and strives for a radical change on a national level in order to improve the lives of children.

The Lebanese American University is a leading, nonsectarian, private higher education institution in Lebanon. It operates under a charter from the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York and is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In the fall 2016 semester, LAU enrolled approximately 8,500 students.

Amel is a non-governmental organization, recognized as a public utility by presidential decree 5832 in 1994. Amel is a non-profit, non sectarian organization that supports the most underprivileged populations in Lebanon. Amel has currently 24 centers in the most underprivileged zones in Lebanon (Southern Suburbs of Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Bekaa Valley and South Lebanon).



## Development for People and Nature Association

Salim Saati	Volunteer	Slayman Fawwaz	Staff
Bilal Kassem	Volunteer	Zakaria El-Baba	Staff
Hassan Ibrahim	Volunteer	Aya Nasser	Staff
Mohamed Saleh	Volunteer	Ali Sandid	Staff
Adham Hammoud	Volunteer	Yara Hijazi	Staff
Jana Ramlawi	Volunteer	Anthony Abi Rached	Volunteer
Hadi Sadieddine	Volunteer	Rami Shamma	Staff
Aya Shanaa	Volunteer	Fadlallah Hassouna	Staff
Ahmad Masri	Volunteer	Aya Hijazi	Staff
Rana Hassouna	Staff		

## Amel Association International

<b>Staff:</b>	<b>Volunteer:</b>
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Nada Chibli	Ghalia Batouss
Fatima Zeiour	Hamsa Hanna
Ghinwa Samhat	Rita Kerkmez

**Lebanes American University**  
**Dr. Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss,**  
**Political Science and International Affairs**

## Himaya

Michel Maragel	Psychologist
Nathalie Berbery	Social Worker
Nour Ben Aicha	Social Worker
Mia Chalhoub	Social Worker

Danish Side	Representing	Workplace	Function
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Kaj Jørgen Bærenholdt,	Hedensted Municipality	Integration department	Family consultant
Martin Esbjerg,	Hedensted Municipality	Youth Integration	Head of department - Torvet - housing project for UASC
Carsten Alsted Larsen,	Aalborg Municipality	Child and Family	Caseworker , social service.
Bente Frank Nielsen,	Aalborg Municipality	Child and Family	Caseworker, social service.
Jasper Voigt Møllebro,	Red Cross	Red Cross National office	National coordinator - project lead "+18 youth, leaving care".
Nana Folke, Red Cross	Red Cross	Red Cross National office	National coordinator -Development voluntary/civil actions
Thorkil Vad Jessen,	CPHSOCLAB	Lyngby Taarbæk Municipality	Caseworker - Child and youth department
Anja Brandstrup	Gentofte Municipality	Dohns Minde	Social advisor - housing institution for UASC
Mette Bønneland Hingebjerg	Frederiksberg Municipality	Frederiksberg Municipality	Coordinating caseworker
Kate Nissen	Frederiksberg Municipality	Allegaarden	Social advisor - Allegaarden - housing institution for UASC
Bettina Larsen	Frederiksberg Municipality	Allegaarden	Head of department - Allegaarden - housing institution for UASC
Hanne Gøth	Frederiksberg Municipality	Allegaarden	Allegaarden - housing institution for UASC
Brian Kjøller Olsen	Frederiksberg Municipality	Allegaarden	Psychologist - Allegaarden - housing institution for UASC
Liselotte Norman	Roskilde Municipality	VIA / Integration	Head of department - VIA project
Kassem MJ Ibrahim	Roskilde Municipality	VIA	Family consultant -Refugee youth - VIA project
Morten Juul Olsen	CPHSOCLAB	Roskilde Municipality	Head of department - Roskilde Youth Center- institution f- UASC
Hans H Andersen	Roskilde Municipality	Roskilde Youth Center	Center Director - Roskilde Youth Center

UASC = Unaccompanied and separated children

# Lebanon and it's refugees

*Dr. Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss, Beirut, 2017*

The territory that is now Lebanon has always hosted a diverse society and been a 'refuge for minorities'. Lebanon has also long experienced chronic instability. Since the start of the Syrian War in 2011, Lebanon has experienced the influx of over 1 million Syrians, in addition to the existence of long-term Syrian laborers.

With an economy that does not provide for its own citizens, Syrians without significant personal resources have found themselves in an increasingly insecure position. Thus, much like the Palestinians who once streamed into the country, the Syrians have been welcomed at best, tolerated in general, and, at worst, blamed for a variety of ills.

The country's political dynamics and weak state as well as international intervention has left significant room for IO's and NGOs (funded by the international community) to try to address the massive Syrian refugee challenges in the country, as the weak Lebanese state leaves daily life to be structured by individuals, their families, and their larger "group". While largely away from direct violence, Syrians in Lebanon are suffering (as are too many vulnerable Lebanese) and



*Ibrahim Khalil, 16 y.o. Syrian, working as shoeshine boy Hamra Street, Beirut, 2017. photo: cphsoclub.*

much human potential is wasted.

Still, due to these internal dynamics, Lebanon has also been an "innovation lab" for addressing the challenges of refugees and might later be a "launching pad" for Syria reconstruction.

## Lebanon facts

*Republic of Lebanon, independent state since 1943, French occupation ended.*

*Capital: Beirut (1.9 mill) Area: 10.452 km²*

*There are 4.5 Million Lebanese in Lebanon, estimate - no survey since 1932*

*There are 12 - 20 Million Lebanese outside Lebanon*

*There are 1,3 Million Syrian refugees in Lebanon*

*And another 450.000 registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon*

*40% of the Lebanese in Lebanon are Christians*

*Lebanon has been occupied by over 15 countries, nations and empires. Latest Syria; left in 2005.*

*Jesus (Christ) made his 1st miracle in Lebanon, in Qana*

*Lebanese are trilingual (Arabic, English and French)*

*Lebanon has 18 religious communities 70% of the students are in private schools*

*The name LEBANON appears 75 times in the Old Testament*

*Beirut was destroyed and rebuilt 7 times*



# Methodology

Working with vulnerable groups requires a certain dedication and character that can persevere against all odds. When Bent, Brian and I set out to organize this fieldtrip to Beirut we agreed to focus on three core challenges that people who work with young arrivals face on their jobs on a day to day basis. These 3 themes were: 1) youth culture / abuse issues; 2) mental health issues and 3) the deconstruction of the family unit.

In order to address these challenges the Beirut fieldtrip was planned through the careful selection of Danish pedagogues and psychologists with many years of experience in working with such youth. Likewise, our partners in Lebanon were ones we had previously worked with and who we know are extremely dedicated humans.

Upon arrival in Beirut, we had a group formation exercise where we split the Danish group into 4 groups. The idea was that after visiting our partners in and around Beirut we would all meet up again and take stock of what we learned throughout the day and how we can ensure to pass on our lessons learnt to others in future. Members of each group were split across professional positions.

Once we met up with our partners in DPNA,



*Intense group work, Seidon 2017, photo: cphsoclub*

Amel and himaya, we ensured enough time for extended group work to incorporate a mix of Danes and Lebanese case workers and psychologists. Getting to know each other through informal ways – for example, sitting together during lunch – helped in establishing a sound rapport between all involved from the very beginning.

Each group session used our three core themes as guiding principles for discussions and reflections. After each group workshop, a representative from each group made a short presentation of the key discussion points and findings of his or her respective group. Brian, Bent and I collated all this information into word files.





# DEL 2

Project findings





# Working in a family-sensitive manner

The field work revolved around the deconstructed family and its significance on the young people's ability to cope with their own circumstances. It quickly became clear to all participants that the significance of the family, while known, was being underestimated in their daily work. By focusing on the absence of the head of the family, the participants were given insight into the significance of growing up in a "weak state" where one's needs were met by the family, the network and through relationships in the local community - and not by the public sector.



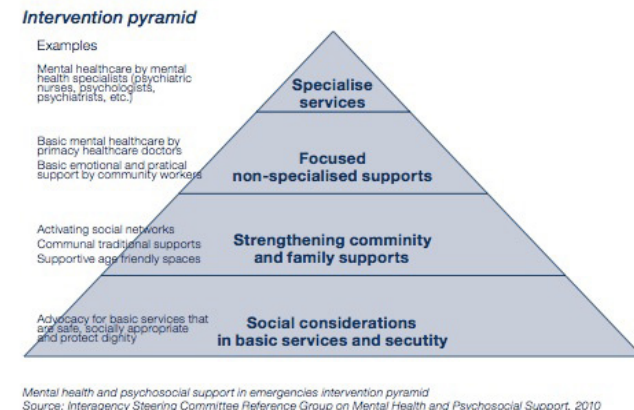
Family unity, The Corniche- Beirut, 2017, photo: cphsoclub.

# Working in a community-based manner

As a social worker in a Western context, social and psychological intervention at the individual level is the natural approach, but during the Lebanon field trip, it could almost seem as an unnatural approach. During the field work, it became clear that the selection of community-based psychosocial interventions could not solely be explained by the desire to make effective use of limited resources. Rather, it was a form of intervention that had a value and effect that we could not achieve at the individual intervention level.

# Working "by proxy" with taboos

A question that the participants had raised before arriving in Lebanon was how one could work with subjects that were so taboo that they were often impossible to approach in the daily work. Once again, the Eurocentric norm - in this case, the direct and confrontational approach - was challenged by the findings from the field work, which quite unequivocally pointed towards working "by proxy" and indirectly with the sensitive subjects and also that intervention requires an established relationship.



# Working in a family-sensitive manner

The findings from Lebanon indicate how important the family is, often mentioned with the distinction “strong family-dependency versus weak state.” The family makes up the social safety net as we know it from our own welfare state. Belonging to the family is extremely important for young people. Young people first and foremost define themselves on the bases of their family connections.

The distinction between “externally controlled” or “internally controlled” can be perceived as a traditional and somewhat simplified cultural distinction between, respectively, a Middle-Eastern and Western culture’s approach to raising children. Nevertheless, it points to some overall societal discourses that reflect the norms and values of how one is positioned as a child in a Lebanese or Danish context.

The distinction can capture something of what many state that they generally encounter in their daily work. For example, a youth from the Middle-East will often expect that the family keeps him/her on the right track (externally controlled), whereas in a Danish context, one (as a case worker) would be focusing on being someone that the young people can talk to. i.e, creating a space for reflecting on their own actions and choices aimed at training them at developing the ability to internally control themselves. Even though most would say that it is common knowledge in terms of what kind

of societal and cultural conditions our young refugees are coming from, many of the participants’ reflections illustrate that we may have a tendency to underestimate the cultural aspect.

In order to work sensitively with the special importance of the family, it is necessary to recognise, understand and respect the family’s importance in a specific cultural context. There are a number of conditions that one must, by necessity, incorporate into our interventions.

Many of the participants’ reflections relate to how we can increase the involvement of families in our work with the youth and use family members as an active part of our intervention. Often, our youths are referred to as youths that are “free-floating” due to the loss of their families, the break-up of norms/values and their missing affiliation and sense of belonging in Denmark. Their social position in the family has often been clearer than what we see in Danish circumstances.

The pedagogue’s contact with the family can be seen as a way of specifically “grounding” the youth in his or her original affiliation, sense of belonging and values.

The contact also provides us with the opportunity to become aware of how we can place

**THAT’S MY PARENTS, THAT MAKES ME WHO I AM, IT’S NOT MY RELIGION, NOT THAT I’M A PALESTINIAN OR FROM DAMASCUS.. IT’S THEIR VALUES I’VE LEARNED AND THAT MAKES ME - ME.**

**MOHAMED, SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN, 18 YO**

ourselves as an extension of the “authorities” as our youth know them, even though it must, by necessity, be in a Danish context. How do we manage to keep them in some of their positions within their family so that there is something recognisable and understandable for them in our interventions?

When the participants recognised the role of the family as a paradigm in their work, they also understood that the distinction between “weak state and strong family dependency” can be important in other ways in their work.

For example, as when the social worker, as a representative of the state, claims to be there in a helping and care-giving capacity, etc. then this puts the young person, the child / minor, and the family in an unfamiliar situation.



# Working in a community-based manner

The community approach is based on mobilising resources in civil society. In a societal and cultural context where the family stands as a strong unit and the state is weak, adopting the community approach makes good sense.

In the Lebanese community work, it became very clear that the young people are being positioned differently than most of us in Denmark are probably used to. Their empowerment-thinking was very explicit. The youths are seen and positioned as subjects that can take responsibility for their own lives by being partners in their own life projects.

Most of us know of the appreciative approach and getting people involved in social work. But the Lebanese community work was distinguished by having a great focus on activities and specific actions. It may, of course, be seen in the context of the necessity of surviving in a Lebanese society where the public sector's financial support is low and often very arbitrary - without, however, using this as a reason to conclude that if the resources were adequate, then the Lebanese would copy the Nordic welfare model and take up the individualized intervention approach.

The Lebanese starting point and primary focus was to build on the skills that the young people already had, and teach them new ones. Several of the participants expressed the opin-

ion that they might become disoriented in a Danish context with lengthy decision-making processes, a lot of bureaucracy, many actors, many meetings, etc. In relation to this, the investigation into the Lebanese conditions leaves a pragmatic impression of "making things happen, since they are not in the same manner limited by conditions above them and the system's structures, despite having fewer resources." Their remarkable focus on basic competences and the specific nature of the intervention created a lot of reflections and statements to the effect that we - in a Danish context - can sometimes lose focus and should perhaps navigate more towards basic competences.

The preparation for a future job was used as an example on several occasions. The process can become too abstract and hard to grasp. The young person may have difficulties in understanding the process, and one runs the risk of losing them in the, at times, lengthy preparation that is required to become a well-educated and "adult" individual in a Danish societal context.

The field work revealed that the young people were not merely seen as young people in need of assistance, but also as young people who were capable of contributing something

"WE DEFINE A COMMUNITY AS A SOCIAL ORGANIZATION THAT HAS A CERTAIN DEGREE OF COHERENCE MOTIVATED BY POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND RELIGIOUS GOALS AND PARTICULAR VALUES. THIS CAN TAKE THE FORM OF COMMUNITY, COMMUNITIES, IN AN ECOLOGICAL SENSE THAT INCLUDES LANGUAGE, SOCIAL AND MATERIAL PROCESSES. THUS, THE COMMUNITY IS THE PRACTICE OF ORGANIZING A CONTEXT".

PETER BERLINER, 2004.

to the community by acting as helpers to other youths. In other words, a form of help for self-help, where one helps oneself by helping others.

The community approach also underlined that the intervention contains an inclusive approach. It is an intervention in itself to become part of a community and have a meaningful function in the community. This contrasts sharply to exclusion and marginalisation, which can take place by being pulled out of one's usual context. Several young people could experience themselves as activists in a movement that also had a higher purpose - a common third goal - of changing the condition for refugees and to create peaceful coexistence between different population groups.

It was also clear to many that there is a very strong democratic ideal in the Lebanese work - namely, to give each individual a voice. It was also, however, closely connected with being made responsible for one's actions; it was not just about having a voice. It comes with a responsibility.

# Working "by proxy" with taboos

It was clear that, in the Lebanese context, there is no trust towards the state since it is not seen as a supporting entity. It is with the family/network that the affiliation and the trust lies.

This leads to a big dilemma, since the taboos concerning substance abuse, mental challenges, sexuality, etc. are attached to the norms in society and thereby infiltrate the family, which at the same time, is seen as the primary source of support.

The taboo surrounding substance abuse was pronounced in the group's reflections. The recognition of a potential substance abuse problem was not just something that affected the youth in question, but was also spoken of as a stigma for the entire family. It was also addressed as one of the largest problems, alongside trauma.

The taboos contribute to the phenomenon of the "double bookkeeping" as it relates to having one narrative/truth internally and another externally. The field work indicates that it should be handled through a "careful" and "indirect" approach, where building trusting relationships are initially more important than taking action.

Dignity is a central value of great importance, and creates a cultural discourse that is crucial in working with young people. It is often men-



*Groupwork, Seidon 2017, photo: cphsoclub.*

tioned that Danish, at times, great eagerness to appear transparent and interested in an open dialogue collides with that value. We can end up being far too direct and confrontational.

It was also confirmed that therapeutic intervention is often difficult to get established since the "psychological" aspect in a cultural context is a very personal issue that one does not simply let outsiders get involved in. We are back to dignity as a value. Therefore, it is not something one just does, seeing a psychologist - and least not a psychiatrist - even if the opportunity presented itself.

The findings from the Lebanese practices point towards the necessity of working indirectly through the ones that the young people have the most trusting relationship with (family/network).

The educative approach towards interven-

tion, which was used in the community approach, also contains an element of indirectness. It helps to preserve the dignity of the young people since they can still maintain a distance from the issue, insofar as the education does not become personal. In group contexts, certain problems can be a source of common reflections as a "common third issue" that still maintains the indirect manner and the opportunity to talk about oneself in the third person.

The findings of the participants raise key questions concerning the treatment of trauma and substance abuse.

How does one work with a stand-in on such tasks? In other words, how does one create a method that operates under the circumstances that the subject is taboo?

Creating activities that shift the focus away from a substance abuse problem is important as a way through which one could create a "free space" and replace the need for abuse substances (rather than addressing the substance abuse directly). By this, one would point towards the substance abuse problem becoming secondary, and meaningful activities in the daily life becoming primary - as opposed to the direct approach, which is often used in cases of substance abuse where the focus is on addiction.

Another type of "indirectness" that the participants paid attention to was the importance of looking good and respectable. The hairdressing salon was almost mandatory.



# Bussma Youth Center

The Bussma Youth Center in Saida is a specific example of how DPNA uses its knowledge on psychosocial intervention.

Based on the taboo theory, it is the employees with established relationships that speak to the young people, supervised by the psychologist.

The centre has been constructed around a number of learning rooms where instructors teach subjects such as English, photography, body care, mobile apps, etc. Beyond this, there are table tennis and football tables, dancing rooms and other leisure activities on offer in the house.

The house is maintained by a permanent staff consisting of a centre coordinator and his/her assistant, an assistant teacher, a permanent project evaluator and two psychologists, in addition to two technical and administrative staff that handle the bookkeeping and secretariat functions. The psychologists are clinically trained and work with the young people either directly or indirectly.



Volunteer youth, Bussma Y.C., Seidon 2017, photo: cphsoclub.

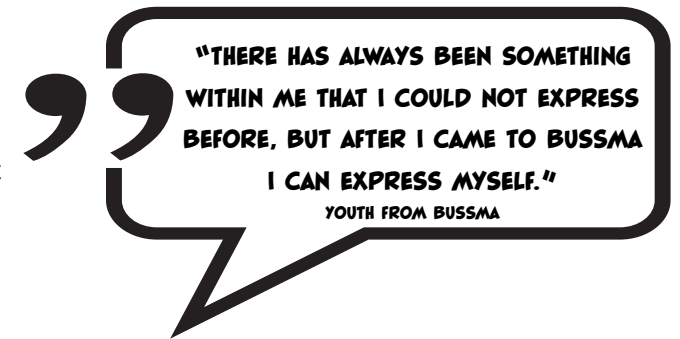
ly. It is often the indirect work that succeeds. The centre has a clear treatment strategy that is based on a framework and method developed by Mercy Corps.

“Profound Stress and Attunement” (PSA) is a neurologically-based programme that addresses the effect of long-term stress among young people between the ages of 12-19. Through its holistic community-based approach, work is done on dissociation, strengthening the re-

silience of the young people and empathy as special focus areas.

The activities are managed by 15 “trainers” who are all young and users of the centre themselves. The 15 trainers all have a Lebanese, Syrian or Palestinian background and are between the ages of 15 and 30. The trainers have specific skills with in various areas of interest - for example, Bilal (17) who is an excellent dancer and performer. He teaches break dancing and traditional dance.

The Bussma Center operates under an open-



door policy, which is to say that everyone in the right age group (10-20 years old) can make use of the centre. Family members, friends, school teachers, doctors and social workers from other NGOs refer to the centre.

The centre offers 10 learning modules per year, and every module has a capacity for 200 students. Therefore, 2,000 potential users are in contact with the centre each year. The young people are also offered leisure activities and special events such as theatrical plays, flash mobs, sports and community work that addresses environmental and peace-making work.

Bussma is also available to kids and young people from the Ain al-Hilweh camp, which is frequently subject to regular battles between warring Palestinian fractions - often with fatal outcomes.



Ain al-Hilweh, Reuters 2016.





DEL 3

Perspective-  
taking



# Perspective-taking

Even though Denmark has seen a significant decrease in the number of refugees arriving to the country as asylum seekers, there is still a significant influx of kids and young people coming to the country as unaccompanied minors and through family reunification programmes.

The discourse in Denmark is a tough and populist style one, concerning Islamisation, poor integration and a fragile society that does not have the resources to absorb refugees in the numbers that the country experienced in 2014 and 2015.

Regardless of where in the political landscape we position ourselves, as social workers we have a responsibility to work towards populist paradigm's prophecies not coming true. We can do this by continually training ourselves and ensuring that our efforts are the best they can possibly be with the resources at hand.

We also need to constantly look out for and take into account what is best for our new citizens.

The findings that were made during the field work in Lebanon will be able to contribute with nuanced knowledge about the approaches and methods used in the local areas. By being “on site”, one gets access to empirical data that is free of missing cultural insights,

Eurocentric thinking, the Danish refugee discourse and euro-political agendas. Taking into account that Lebanon has its own history, political agenda and welfare models, the project's empirical data will help indicate which approaches can and should be considered when it comes to initiatives targeting children and young people in exile with a refugee background. The project will not attempt to sell itself off as developing new evidence for the work with children and young people from a refugee background. Instead, this project seeks to place the findings and the reflections of the participants into a more innovative framework, so that in the Danish context, it can open new avenues and possibilities for the actions undertaken when working with children and young people from a refugee background.

## Institutional Logics

One of the experiences that the participants were faced with in their field work was the energy involved in the initiatives that our partner NGOs presented. The air quivered and was electrified by the commitment, energy and



Volunteer youth from DPNA and the Danish group, Saidon 2017. Foto: cphsoclabb.

feelings.

There was a pronounced desire to bring that energy home in one's own work and the institutional frameworks surrounding it.

The field work did not provide the opportunity for a deeper investigation into where this energy came from, but there was no doubt among the participants that a crucial element was that the target group was on-board as partners in the projects that were up and running. By positioning the “users” among the group of employees, one could ensure that there were other factors at work than salaries and professional subjects in the employee group. Having non-professionals in the employee group offers an opportunity To having

a more “natural” showdown with the institutional logics that develop in subject-object focused institutions. For example, when the pedagogue defends a rule or method by saying: “This is an important pedagogical space for me.” Then it might be good that a user is present in order to ask who the institution is built for - the pedagogue, or the young person?

## Psychosocial actions

The term “psychosocial” refers to the dynamic relationship between a person’s psychological and social dimension, with one impacting the other. The psychological dimension encompasses internal, emotional and thought related processes, feelings and reactions. The social dimension encompasses relationships, the family and the shared network, social values and cultural practices.

Psychosocial support refers to the actions that treat both the psychological and social needs of individuals, families and societies. In practice, there are a wide range of approaches and activities that are described as “psychosocial support”. This can lead to confusion and frustration, in particular when the use of the term and its definition can vary both between and within organizations and across disciplines.

The Inter-Agency Stranding Committee’s (IASC) guidelines have helped bridge this divide and construct a common understanding between mental health and psychosocial approaches.

IASC describes mental health and psychoso-

cial support as “any kind of local or external support aimed at protecting or furthering psychosocial well-being and / or preventing or treating psychological disorders.”

[\(PS Centeret – Participants Book, 2010.\)](#)

Psychosocial support can be both preventive and curative. It is preventive when it reduces the risk of developing psychological problems. It is curative when it helps individuals and local communities deal with and occupy themselves with psychosocial problems that might have arisen due to trauma and stress. These two aspects of psychosocial support contribute to increasing resilience in relation to being affected by new crises or other challenging circumstances.

[\(PS Centeret - Handbook, 2009.\)](#)

During the field work, the participants were repeatedly presented with psychosocial initiatives in the form of carefully planned and targeted activities. Activities that, from the outside, could appear to be leisure activities but which were all expected to lead to changes in the participant’s life situation. The psychosocial initiatives were all very much inside the framework of working in a family-sensitive manner, working in a community-based manner and working with particularly challenging areas that were considered to be cultural taboos.

One could say that working within the framework of the themes the field work pointed towards will always require that one plans and structures it as a psychosocial effort – whether it be preventive or curative.

## The family perspective

Young people as “free floating” due to the loss of their families, trauma and a lack of affiliation and sense of belonging in Denmark is a “good” representation of what we are often faced with. When it comes to integrating young people, we are focused on thinking “ahead”, teaching them Danish, creating Danish relationships, etc.

It is a new approach to get to know their families in a more direct form of contact in order to ensure the best intervention. Contact with the family can, from this perspective, be regarded as a specific way of connecting them to their cultural “compass” (norms and values).



*Family life, The Corniche, Beirut 2017, photo: cphsoclub*

It is their compass, not ours, which must by necessity show the way from the very start if one is to ensure that the intervention is based on something which is already present; something which is almost always a requirement for a successful intervention. In other words, avoid creating too large a gap between their position at home and the position that we assign them to. One example of how such a



gap can occur is in the expectation that they should be able to talk about their feelings and participate in a “traditional” form of trauma therapy. It is too far removed from what they know at home and how they perceive themselves, as it puts them, crudely put, in a position as a Danish young person.

Even though we can be translators of our own culture and practices, this does not necessarily create the opportunity for them to step into any given intervention. The norms and values that one has are based on an experience of life, not a translation. However, by attaching ourselves to their cultural norms and values and building from there - their nearest zone of development - there is the possibility to bridge the gap, step by step.

The contact with the family gives us the opportunity to qualify our intervention, since our knowledge of the norms and values in the family increases.

## The community perspective

The community approach is not an unknown phenomenon in Denmark. Community-psychological methods are a recognised perspective within the field of psychology and Danish psychologists use community-based interventions.

The community approach is a counter to when young people are deprived of the opportunity to respond to interventions, become co-decision makers and end up marginalised/excluded which can, for example, occur in the event

of a psychiatric hospitalisation where one is diagnosed (stigmatised) or in connection with other practices where young people are objectified and taken out of their familiar contexts.

The community approach is more “organic”, since here the intervention is undertaken in familiar contexts. It is also taking a stance against the “component error model” - there is a problem to be fixed, and then it’s back into the community again - and is instead taking a stance for relationship-based thinking. Work is being done concerning inclusion. Through the act of getting to know one another, norms and values are expanded in the community in an attempt to create meaningful positions for everyone.

Instead of positioning them as “traumatised”, “refugees”, etc. such categories are avoided



Bussma Youth Center, Saidon, 2017. photo: cphsoclub.

in the intervention in order to meet the young people where they are and to position them as “Mohammed”, “Abdulrahman” and “Ramy”.

However, a key point here is that it is not just about giving the young people a voice - for example, “what do you feel like doing?” - because with a voice comes responsibility. In other words, it is important that one helps the young people speak with a qualified voice (realistic) or that the dialogue positions the young person with a responsibility. In particular, we saw this in Lebanon. One uses the experiences one has and works from there. Most of us are familiar with giving young people a voice, but often no real responsibility is taken from their side.

A community-psychological model, in a Danish context, is very much about how one can (from the system’s side) be a part of mobilising resources in civil society and using them in combination with the system’s resources.

Beyond what was previously described, one will also tend to think in terms of faster reaction times when it comes to taking action. This is because one doesn’t first have to make an appointment with the psychologist,



*The Corniche, Beirut 2017, photo: cphsoclub.*

set up meetings with the social worker, etc. In particular, this applies to cases where there is a need for “damage control.”

The perspective also points towards the family-oriented approach, since the community can be understood as the establishment of a “family” consisting of the young person’s network and private actors.

### **The “by proxy” perspective**

As shown by the reflections from Lebanon, the

approach most suitable towards this group of young people is often not therapeutic intervention in the traditional sense; not when it relates to, for example, taboo subjects such as trauma and substance abuse.

One risks stigmatizing the young people as “victims” by only perceiving them as traumatised and insisting on trauma treatment in the traditional sense. One can also place too much responsibility on the young people by not insisting (“when the time is right, they’ll come to us by themselves”). In a traditional substance

abuse situation, one often hears this: “They need to hit rock bottom before they admit their substance abuse problem.” But what if they never hit rock bottom? A stroll down Istedgade will confirm that some people never get there.

There is an in-between position, where one insists on dialogue. The reflections from Lebanon indicate that something of a more indirect nature is needed. This, of course, means that some other things will be required from the professionals, including the psychologists. This could be a repositioning of the psychologist towards working more indirectly and carrying out therapeutic interventions through others, for example, through the people that the young person has the most trusting relationships with (“the family”).

Another approach is to return to an “advisory position”, meaning, for example, using the educative approach to create common frames of reference for groups of young people. It will then be possible for them to discuss the issue together and use each other actively in the discussions. It could also be the case that for such sessions there is a common third factor, an externalising one. For example, talking about an acquaintance who is traumatised.

It is therefore not only about breaking the taboo - even though that, over time, will presumably be an objective in itself - but rather about finding ways around having to constantly collide with the taboo and thereby creating the room and possibility for intervention rather than waiting.



# The project's proposals for action

## Design

In the project's description of actions, the design concept will be ongoing. Social design is, among other things, characterised by being driven by the experiences of the users. The social designer will often go into the field work from an anthropological perspective and go where the users are, make observations, interact, and “go native” in order to understand the users' experiences, their challenges and their problems in their daily life or a specific context. Precisely as the participants did during the field work in Lebanon.

Social design is a design-driven innovation that describes a dynamic process where in new solutions/initiatives are constructed for the user, together with the user and for the benefit of the user in his/her environment

## Actions based on the family perspective

An important prerequisite for the qualified involvement of the family is that one has, beforehand, gained a thorough understanding of the family and each individual family's unique culture and structure.

The only way to acquire such knowledge is by asking. This can be done through interviews with the young person and his/her family. Since there will be different employee competences at play, the systematic nature of the approach and the professionalism must

be ensured by the preparation of an interview guide / a dialogue tool that takes into account the intercultural aspect of such an investigation.

Such a mapping of the individual's unique family culture will, regardless of whether the family can be reached or not, be able to act as an important source of knowledge when solutions are being designed for an individual young people.

*The project group, for its part, recommends that a group of actors join together to develop a tool that systematically uses an intercultural approach to ensure the involvement of the family and make it possible to involve the family aspect in the work with the young person.*

## Actions based on the community perspective

In the short term, it is about designing a series of offers for the young people that get them involved and provide them with another role than simply being a refugee child.

Similar to what the Bussma Youth Center has done, it should be ensured that all activities are comprised of children/young people both with and without a refugee background.

A common theme was to make use of educational initiatives, and here one should once

*The project seeks to encourage actors and participants in their respective organisations to create pilot projects where young people acquire competences that can help other children/young people with the same background as their own. This could be through training them to carry out psychosocial initiatives*

*It is recommended that these initiatives are planned in such a way that they can take place in cooperation with local communities, so that the social capital in those communities can be utilised.*

again involve the child/the young person and his/her community. This could take place through the creation of special teams that would comprise of children/young people with and without a refugee background. Even though it might seem obvious, easier and also more practical to add some of this to existing solutions, one must be careful of the pitfalls that may occur by doing so. Experience has shown that it is easy to adapt existing solutions, and therefore, the format of intervention removes itself from the user and it loses the effect and energy that the initiative was initially intended to achieve.

*It is recommended that, as was the case at Bussma, there are social activities associated with the educational initiatives so that networks can be formed that go beyond the educational initiatives and activities.*

*The project believes that municipalities must build/operate centres similar to the Bussma Youth Center in cooperation with NGOs, local associations and volunteers (read: co-creation). Solutions should be available for any young person whomight profit from the opportunities provided by a centre: Where there is a quick, easy and unbureaucratic approach to activities.*

### **Actions based on the “by proxy” perspective**

Besides the indirect approach inherent in the community-based idea, any measure/ institution working with young people from this target group must develop a policy and strategy for how to support children, young people and families who will not / cannot accept direct treatment.

As mentioned previously under the perspective-taking approach, educative methods can also be adapted to initiatives dealing with various problem issues. Here there are significant experiences from the treatment areas that should be gathered and used in a design process.

There is a lack of knowledge in this area. It

may be presumed that there is such knowledge at the social-psychiatrical area which could reinforce it as a method. If there is such knowledge in the area, then work needs to be undertaken to draw it out and use it in the design of “by proxy” models

*The project recommends that all initiatives, institutions, etc. working with the target group develop an action-guide for how they want to work with young people who that cannot be reached through direct treatments and/or who refuse treatment due to it being a taboo issue.*

*At the same time, a code of ethics should be developed that makes it possible to involve people who have close relationships to the young people.*

### **Other recommendations**

Among the participants, there was a pronounced desire and need for creating networks across municipalities, organisations and institutions.

The network idea also covers the opportunity to exchange knowledge and competences in relation to partners outside of Denmark such as, DPNA in Lebanon.

*The project recommends that work be done towards achieving a shared forum (for example, online) that would ensure easy access to the fruitful exchange of knowledge. Work should also be done towards gathering knowledge that can be shared and initiating joint projects.*

There is a desire for work being undertaken to exchange staff and young people between institutions and countries.

*The project encourages actors to investigate and (possibly) work towards the opportunity for more exchanges between the young people’s “homeland” and Danish institutions.*



Lecture at LAU. Beirut 2017, photo: cphsoclub.



## Appendix

# Shatila Camp - permanently temporary

*“You can’t kill us / We are a part of yourselves.” Tom Lunden’s chorus in Freetown Christania’s anthem would have been an appropriate tune when the project group completed its visit to Shatila Camp and was sent home with the words:*

***“Our continuing existence is a protest against the conditions we face here in the camp, and the neglect of the Palestinian people.”***

Ahed Bhar, our guide and representative of the mini-NGO we visited in Shatila had, in a monotonous and lifeless tone of voice and between countless cigarettes that were lit in quick succession over the course of 90 minutes, delivered one heartbreaking and gut-wrenching fact after another about life in Shatila. But as we got closer to the political and fundamental aspects of Shatila, a spark was ignited and his gaze came to life. This left a bit of hope that there were still forces in Shatila that work to counteract the hopelessness that was otherwise characteristic of the camp.

The tour in Shatila started on a dirt covered parking space surrounded by remnants of house walls and burnt out cars and houses. We were quickly led past an attempt at in-



frastructure in the shape of a series of waste containers, surrounded by large piles of garbage - this seemed like a bit of a shame, since the containers themselves were largely empty.

The problems with infrastructure are both on Ahed’s agenda and highly visible when you move around Shatila. Power is taken from masts, the neighbour and family members several blocks away. This leads to a web of hanging wires that create an endless pergola effect over the narrow alleys. Water is another necessity, and it is in short supply. Ahed tells us that Shatila has the world’s most expensive taps. 17 million Danish kroner have been channelled into an UNRWA project that has resulted in one tap in Shatila

and another in the Burj al-Barajneh camp. Both places are, however, still waiting for water to come out of these taps of the ambitious, but corrupt seawater project.

While one waits for the taps to start running, one has to find one’s own solutions. Water hoses are tied up to the electric pergola and the death count currently stands at 7, counted for the most recent period. After that bit of information, you tend to view the puddles that come from the electric pergola with some concern, and then you must try to convince yourself that the rubber sole on the shoes will surely stop you from becoming number 8 on that list.

Inside the camp, we were greeted with surprise and happy smiles in the narrow alleys. We constantly heard “Welcome to Shatila”,

and even the old man with his kalashnikov in his lap nodded in a friendly manner to the somewhat pale group of Danes in the

“Beirut-is-way-too-warm-out-fits.”



The first stop was at Shatila's only mosque. During the Shatila-Sabra massacre of 1982, it was an emergency hospital for the wounded and dead. Ahed tells the group that the vast majority of the victims of the massacre are buried under the mosque, and even if the information concerning the death counts varies greatly, Ahed informs us that there



Shatila Camp. Beirut 2017. : cphsocioLab.

are thousands buried under the floor of the mosque, among them, his own father.

After this, the trip moves on to the dark part of Shatila, the part where the residents never see daylight. The Shatila Camp is an area

of approximately 1 square kilometre where new arrivals are constantly building homes. Since expanding the camp is not possible, there is only one solution: build upwards. This has created a labyrinth of small narrow alleys; often the “street” is less than 75 cm wide. As soon as they ally get wider than 2 metres, one must expect to encounter scooters and be prepared to melt into the house walls when the 8-10 year old kids race by on the far-too-large scooter and most of all resemble something straight out of Oliver Twist (were it not for the contemporary scooter), probably on the way to work.

The tour ends at the same place as where the group started, and after a solidarity-hug with Ahed, the bus is filled up and a somewhat silent group returns back to base. This will take some time to digest. Ahed's questions of “What will you then say to your government when you get home?” and “Why have you forgotten us?” will remain unanswered in the minds of the participants for the next couple of days.



Shatila Camp. Beirut 2017. : cphsocioLab.

**Shatila holds somewhere between 20,000 and 40,000 Palestinians and Syrian refugees. No one knows exactly how many, but the war in Syria has caused a radical influx.**

During the field work, the participants were given the opportunity to visit the Shatila Camp, a residential area located centrally in Beirut and which came into being in 1949 as a refugee camp for Palestinian refugees.

The field work was not aimed at carrying out “misery research” on the conditions that the refugees live in in Syria, but was rather aimed at resilience research. When one took the time to visit, it was more to get a proper feel for the “local area”. To see and feel what kind of a task it is that we as Europeans expect to find that the local areas are taking care of and also feeling what impermanence can do to people. Therefore, we visited this camp of permanent impermanence as a litmus test for the solution that several sides point towards as the model for how Europe should resolve the refugee crisis. Camps where refugees are waiting for peace and the ability to return home. In Shatila, they have been waiting since 1949.

The visit to Shatila gets a special entry in this handbook because it left a very strong impression amongst the participants when they experienced what the living conditions are like in Shatila, and thereby any refugee camp, where a lot of people are housed temporarily. Impermanence is a constant theme for the new citizens that everyone in the project works with on a daily basis. Impermanence can be necessary and logical without becoming a problem. But when it doesn't make sense and is, for example, seemingly indefinite then people's habitus becomes critical for social mobility. It is exactly the lack of perspective and opportunities to act that hit most of the participants, and it is hopefully something that the participants will reflect upon when they contribute towards “parking” people in impermanence back home in their own practice.