Temporal injustice and re-orientations in asylum reception centres in Norway: towards critical geographies of architecture in the institution

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A temporal injustice is inherently built into the asylum-seeking system. Asylum seekers lack control over their biographical and their everyday time. In Norway, most asylum seekers live in reception centres while their applications are processed. This article develops a conceptual framework for understanding the asylum centre by drawing on geographical literature on architecture and contributions from migration studies on temporality. It analyses the ways in which the reception centre becomes a focal point in the asylum seekers' lives and how people's lived experiences, the asylum institution and the materiality of the buildings housing the centres come together in the particular temporalities produced by the asylum-seeking process. People's agentic capacities within institutional and material structures are conceptualised as 'orientations'. The paper analyses the lived experience of residents in three different reception centres in Norway. The temporal frames operating in the reception centres are expressions of power that produce blurred, uncertain and clashing temporalities. In this context, the reception centre operates as a material disorientation device where institutional durability, temporary dwelling and decaying as well as sub-standard materialities are significant aspects of the asylum seekers' experience. However, some residents are able to re-orient their perspective and find ways of coping with the uncertainty and waiting. These strategies are identified as 'reorientations' to show how the governance and the inhabitation in the centres come together and how people engage with the reception centre through stubborn everyday strategies of inhabiting the centre. In conclusion, the paper reflects on the limited possibility that improving the material conditions may have for a better experience of the asylum-seeking process: it is the interaction between the material, the institution and the lived experience that creates the temporal injustice.

Keywords: asylum seekers, temporal, material, institutional, orientations, Norway

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Introduction

Asylum seekers' experiences are distinguished by uncertainty and lack of control over own time. Their lives are largely put on hold while the asylum application is processed. In Norway, while waiting for the outcome of the application, people are housed in reception centres, buildings generally not built for long-term living, often overcrowded and substandard and where people mostly share bedrooms and facilities with other residents. The centres range from former institutional buildings such as hospitals or educational institutions, hotels, apartment buildings or bedsits and an extensive use of residential buildings termed 'decentralized accommodation' (Strumse *et al*. 2016).

Inspired by work within the geographies of architecture we seek to conceptualise and develop a framework for how to understand the role of the reception centres by exploring how people's lived experiences, the institution and the materiality of the buildings come together in the particular temporalities that are produced by the asylum-seeking process.

Time and temporality have received increased attention in social sciences and geography. Migration studies, especially focusing on asylum seekers, advanced this academic discussion considerably (Cwerner 2001, 2004; Griffiths 2014; Fontanari 2017; Bas & Yeoh 2019; Khosravi 2019). The article brings together the critical geographies of architecture and studies on temporality in the asylum-seeking process through an exploration of the different and largely clashing temporalities that the asylum seekers' experience and that the institution as well as the physical structures of that institution represent. Our work is positioned within the field of geographical research on architecture and contributes to expand the field in a number of ways (Lees 2001; Kraftl & Adey 2008; Kraftl 2010; Rose *et al*. 2010; Lees & Baxter 2011; Moran *et al*. 2016). First, the geographies of architecture have only to a limited extent addressed the institutionalised and politicised dimensions of buildings such as reception centres. By bringing in the asylum-seeking experience as an interaction between the nature of the institution and the buildings housing it, the article contributes to a discussion of the critical and political potential in geographical research on architecture as called for by Kraftl (2010). We do this by providing a more explicit understanding of the power, control and justice embedded in the types of buildings and the accompanying institution.

Our second contribution is to introduce a nuanced notion of temporality into the geographies of architecture by unpacking "the active and embodied engagement with the lived experience" of the reception centres (Lees & Baxter 2011, 108). Existing debates on theorising the role of the subject in experiencing architecture has focused on the role of emotion and affect (Kraftl & Adey 2008) and on the capacity of the subject to contextualise their experiences (Rose *et al*. 2010). These insights help to explore how asylum seekers' lived experiences in buildings are shaped by the precarious temporalities produced in the interaction between the material and social spaces in the reception centre. People's active engagements are conceptualised as 'orientations' (Ahmed 2006, 2010) that people make in order to navigate the spatial, temporal, material and institutional dimensions of the reception centres. Inspired by Fontanari's (2017) notion of 'temporal injustice' we consider how the times experienced in the material, institutional and lived architecture of the reception centres disrupt people's temporal perspectives in both everyday and biographical time. At the same time, asylum-seekers resist and negotiate these forms of governance by employing material and temporal strategies in their efforts to re-orient within the centre.

The article analyses ethnographic material gathered by the lead author through case studies in three different asylum centres from May 2014 to August 2015. Fieldwork was conducted over three to four weeks in each centre and focused on the residents' experiences of living in a reception centre using participatory observation, auto-photography and qualitative in-depth interviews with asylum seekers and staff. The ethnographically inspired approach involved daily visits to the centres, and in one of them, living in a decentralised apartment next to two asylum-seeking families. Visiting people where they lived, being invited into their rooms, drinking coffee, cooking, eating and chatting were important engagements which helped to get a sense of everyday life in the reception centres. The project was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). Careful considerations were made regarding how to relate to the asylum seekers in order to negotiate practical ethical concerns such as power imbalances, the role of the researcher and the purpose of the research, making sure

that people were comfortable participating, and that people did not feel abandoned when the researcher left. Observations were documented in extensive field notes. Some interviews were recorded and transcribed but most were conducted without a recorder, with notes from the interviews written out at full length shortly after they took place.

The next sections first set out how to integrate a temporal frame with the critical geographies of architecture to conceptualise the asylum seekers' experiences with and orientations from the material environment and asylum institution. 'Orientations' is conceptualised as the analytical device to understand the agentic capacities that may develop in the centres. The asylum centres where we worked and the Norwegian context are then described before we analyse the various ways in which residents experience and negotiate institutional, material and temporal dimensions through disorientations and reorientations. In conclusion, we reflect on the consequences of integrating a time dimension into the geographies of architecture for a more just asylum system.

Orientations in the reception centre: conceptualising the critical geographies of architecture in the institution

This section develops an analytical framework by conceptualising the institution, the material buildings and its temporality within a wider discussion of the geographies of architecture. We suggest adopting 'orientations' as our main analytical device to place the agentive capacities of the individuals at the centre of our approach. The asylum reception centres are both an institution and a material space performing the country's asylum policy (Szczepanikova 2012): they are socio-spatial formations enabling processes of governance and bordering through the everyday lives they engender (Fontanari 2015; Nettelbladt & Boano 2019). The centres constitute an internal national border (Fassin 2011) and the experience of the centres becomes an 'arrival in-between' (Thorshaug 2018) where people are prevented from entering the Norwegian society fully before their asylum application has been processed and a decision made.

Academic literature captures the nature of institutions for asylum seekers in a variety of contexts (Solheim 1990; Seeberg *et al*. 2009; Conlon 2010; Valenta & Berg 2010; Mountz 2011; Bosworth 2014; Griffiths 2014; Fontanari 2015). Reception centres for asylum seekers represents a diverse category owing to their spatial, material and institutional differences (Zill *et al*. 2019). Common sources of inspiration, however, contribute to analyse the centres as states of exception (Agamben 1998), detention-like camps and liminal places (Vitus 2011; Bosworth 2014). Countering this is an increasing academic body of work that shows the importance of the particularities of national and local asylum policies for the ways that asylum accommodation materialises on the ground across Europe (Hinger *et al*. 2016). Similarly, work on carceral geography has emphasised the potential for agency within constraining environments (Mountz 2011; Gill *et al*. 2013) and emerging scholarship within critical migration studies reflects the regulation of migration as a constellation by both state and non-state actors and how migration is not just a dependent variable but a social force in itself (Tsianos & Karakayali 2010). Hence, the Norwegian asylum centres may be better understood as accomplishments rather than pre-given entities (Philo & Parr 2000) in which there is a focus on migrant agency in constituting the asylum regime: seeing the asylum-seeking process as co-produced in the relations between various actors and processes without letting go of the power asymmetries involved.

With this 'constellar' approach and the emphasis on the migrants and asylum seekers role in co-producing the experience of reception centre, we turn to a critical geography of architecture. This strand of work emphasises how buildings and human experiences of them are produced through a coming together or 'assemblage' of several forces such as political institutions, materiality, discourses and lived experiences (Rose *et al*. 2010). Rather than taking 'assemblage' as our ontological starting point (Brenner *et al*. 2011), we position our work in the humanistic tradition of understanding the reception centres as "meeting points, moments or conjunctures, where social practices and trajectories, spatial narratives and moving or fixed materialities meet up and form configurations that are continuously under transformation and negotiation" (Simonsen 2008, 22).

We suggest that the 'throwntogetherness' of the reception centre is represented through the interactions of materiality, the institution and people's lived experiences, and the particular temporalities

produced in this meeting point (Massey 2005; Kraftl & Adey 2008). The reception centre is then a relational space in which its materiality is porous (Kaika 2004), where different temporalities meet and people negotiate and contribute to constitute the asylum institute and border practices through the multiple and diverse ways in which they experience, negotiate and inhabit the conditions of the centres.

Temporality emerges as a fundamental dimension through which the power of the centre acts and imposes itself on subjects (Sharma 2014; Fontanari 2015). Temporal forms present in the centres may be conceptualised as 'durational time' (measured by clocks and calendars) that affect people's everyday time and practices; 'biographical time' connecting an individual's past, present and possible futures; and, 'institutional time' focusing on the particular enduring and changing practices of governance and the durability and intentions embedded in the material building (Browne 2014; Brun 2015). The ways in which these different temporalities come together may be understood as a clashing of temporalities due to the incommensurability of the different temporal forms which often lead to an experience of 'suspended temporality' reproduced in two registers (Ramadan 2013): external processes related to the juridical-political order of the state, and internal cultural, social and political orders formed in the centre. The suspended temporality is a consequence of a particular way of governing and a particular way of negotiating the experience of the asylum institute which leads to an unequal temporal access to resources and power (Khosravi 2019) resulting in asylum seekers living in a situation characterized by uncertainty and waiting where several, often contradictory experiences of time come together (Cwerner 2001, 2004; Brekke 2004; Conlon 2011; Mountz 2011; Vitus 2011; Griffiths 2014; Brun 2015; Fontanari 2017).

Ways of forcing people into prolonged waiting is eloquently described by Khosravi (2019) as 'stolen time' and by Fontanari (2017) as 'temporal injustice'. We define this temporal injustice as an injustice that deprives individuals of control over and access to decisions that influence their everyday time and their future lives and at the same time render their biographies invisible (Fontanari 2017). We consider the temporal injustice of everyday time, biographical time and institutional time central to the spatio-temporal experience and practice of being an asylum seeker in relation to the physical structures of the asylum reception centres in Norway.

The everyday experiences of asylum seekers are embodied encounters with the migration regime. In sketching out a research agenda for a critical geography of architecture, Lees (2001, 56) calls for geographers to explore how the built environment is both shaped and given meaning through active, embodied and socially negotiated "practices through which architecture is actually used, appropriated and inhabited". This involves addressing how people think about and interpret buildings as well as exploring the practices that people perform within and around buildings as part of their everyday life and as political-economic imperatives (Kraftl 2010; Lees & Baxter 2011; Moran *et al*. 2016). Recent approaches to theorising the relation between people and the built environment through actor-network approaches and affect have been criticised for expressing an uninterest in the human and to have largely omitted the agentive capacities and reflexivity that people can bring to bear on buildings (Rose *et al*. 2010). With a human-centred approach to our understanding of materiality "the experiential dimensions of social life" becomes "a precondition for critical analysis" (Simonsen 2013, 23), emphasising how affects and emotions are expressed and performed and actively mobilised in people's orientations in relation to the buildings and the institutions they house (Simonsen 2008; Ahmed 2010; Rose *et al*. 2010; Lees & Baxter 2011). Bringing in a broader temporal perspective helps us see the institutional temporalities in the asylum context as mentioned above and how people's orientations is about creating pasts and futures through inhabiting the grounds of the present (Ahmed *et al*. 2003). The active envisioning involved in the subjects' projective agency may be termed 'agency-in-waiting' (Brun 2015) to denote the capacity to act in the present – in everyday-time: an indication of how people live and manage to orient themselves when the past and the future are hard to reach.

People are actively and intentionally oriented towards certain objects – physical objects, "but also objects of thought, feeling, and judgment, or objects in the sense of aims, aspirations and objectives" (Ahmed 2010, 246). These orientations shape people's experiences: 'orientations' is our analytical device in this endeavour to allow for further theorisation of the role of the subject in experiences of buildings (Ahmed 2006). Orientations represent a wider appreciation of agentic capacities by emphasising the experiences people have *in*, *of* and *about* buildings (Rose *et al*. 2010). It is a way of

showing how people actively engage with feelings and ideas while at the same time maintaining materiality within the explanatory frame (Lees & Baxter 2011).

By analysing the interactions between the 'structuring forces' that govern asylum seekers and how people navigate the institution and materiality through their orientations, we can then "give agency a fuller place alongside structure in the analysis of state effects" (Gill 2010, 638). 'Orientations' is a tool for analysing how subjects interact with objects, spaces and temporalities that direct subject's orientations in particular ways. To a certain extent we can choose what we orient ourselves towards. However, we are all differently positioned in "the political economy of attention" and not all orientations are available to everyone (Ahmed 2006, 547). There are institutional rules, social norms and expectations connected to where people may place their orientations and there are material and physical constraints that channel the possibilities of making orientations. It is by analysing how asylum seekers in the centres navigate the institution, the material space and the temporal frame through their stubborn everyday strategies that we can make sense of the asylum centre in Norway.

The temporality and materiality of the institution: the Norwegian asylum reception centres

The governance of the reception centre is an entangled and diffuse process of overlapping commercial interests and a national border regime (Darling 2016) where the asylum seekers' spatial location and social position as not quite yet in Norway and therefore not quite included are closely linked (Seeberg *et al*. 2009). Conflicting temporal logics also come together in how the asylum institute materialises on the ground at different locations. The asylum centres have become a rather permanent institution in the Norwegian society since it was established in 1987 with the aim to provide "plain but adequate temporary accommodation securing the residents' basic needs and the individual's need for safety" (UDI 2008, our translation). Multiple and precarious temporalities meet in the buildings and materialise as experiences of clashing time in the asylum seekers' lives. These clashes can be identified by juxtaposing the durability of the institution and the aim of temporariness that it operates. The temporariness of the housing offered is premised on a short stay of ideally six months as set out in the asylum procedure. However, while the waiting times varies substantially between different groups, between 2005 and 2010 the average time of residing in asylum centres for people who were granted asylum and who were later settled in Norway was 625 days (Weiss *et al*. 2017).

The conflicting temporal logics and its temporariness is also reflected in the reception centres' material structures since centres are opened and closed based on the demand for places, and residents are moved if the centre closes. At the time of fieldwork in 2014 and 2015 there were around 100 centres spread out across the country, altogether housing around 15,000 asylum seekers (Strumse *et al*. 2016). The number increased to around 30,000 over the winter of 2015, before decreasing over the next year returning to around 15,000 at the end of 2016. By mid-2019, further decreases resulted in around 3,000 people living in asylum reception centres in Norway (UDI 2019).

In 2001, a public tendering regime was introduced and the operation of the centres has become a fully commercial activity (Karlsen *et al*. 2014). Contracts are given by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration to private, humanitarian or local government actors for a period of three years with the possibility to operate for another three years. All contracts may, however, be terminated at any time with a three months' notice. The individual reception centre is run on the premise that it may be short lived which is reflected in the materiality of the building. In contrast, the centres under consideration here had been in operation for between 15 to 25 years with the continuous renegotiation of their contracts, indicating a permanent temporary solution. Most buildings used as reception centres are rented and the private owners are not directly involved in the operation of the centre. Responsibilities for maintenance and upgrading is very unclear and buildings are operated at minimum standards with no incentives to make any long-term investments in the buildings (Hauge *et al*. 2017). Within the institutional frames of short-term contracts and the unclear division of responsibility for maintenance of the buildings, a rather distinctive type of 'building event' (Jacobs 2006; Moran *et al*. 2016) emerges where asylum seekers continue to live in crowded and substandard surplus buildings generally not built for inhabitation or used by more people than they were originally built for and where upkeep of

the buildings are continuously put off. In the remainder of this section, we turn to describe the three reception centres analysed.

The reception centres with the fictious names, *Vestfjord*, *Elvestad* and *Solheim*, are situated in different parts of Norway in or close to medium-sized towns. The centres varied in size from accommodating around 120 people, a standard size for an ordinary reception centre, to approximately 300 people in one of the largest centres in the country. They were all structured around one centralised location with staff offices as well as accommodation for up to 100 residents, and a variety of decentralised accommodations at different locations in town (Fig. 1). Decentralised accommodations included residential houses with apartments and bedsits and relatively large buildings such as apartment blocks or smaller institutional buildings that could house up to 40 people. While buildings varied in standard, all living spaces were experienced as cramped.

Fig. 1. Centralised centre Elvestad (left) and decentralised accommodation (right). (Photos by Thorshaug)

Elvestad and Vestfjord were former hospital buildings from the 1940s and 1950s: neglected and worn buildings with a general lack of upkeep. The managers referred to the maintenance of buildings as a constant battle. The long straight corridors indicated a strong institutional character with their bare walls and floors in concrete. Few adaptations had been made, apart from installing sprinkler systems for fire safety, painting the walls and rearranging some rooms into communal kitchens and bathrooms (Fig. 2). The residents' rooms were simply furnished with beds, lockers and perhaps some chairs and tables, and mostly shared among two to four people (Fig 3). In Elvestad, up to 15 people could be sharing the same kitchen and one of the shower rooms was used by 25 people. A few rooms had been fitted with a private kitchenette and a shower. Some rooms in Vestfjord had a private kitchen, although most of the residents were sharing these facilities with residents in other rooms. Shared spaces such as these mostly seemed rather neglected with random furniture scattered around and dirt from years of poor cleaning on the surfaces and walls. In both Vestfjord and Elvestad one of the shared shower rooms was covered with black mould on walls and ceiling. In both centres separate housing for single women was provided in a 'women's corridor' created by a partition wall dividing part of the corridor from the rest of the building, although the doors remained unlocked. In the rest of the building, men and families lived in separate but adjoining rooms.

Solheim asylum reception centre consisted of five two-floor high barracks set up in the 1990's to accommodate asylum seekers. Quite the exception in Norway, it offered single rooms for its residents. Each room was approximately seven square metres and furnished with a bed, table and chair. At the

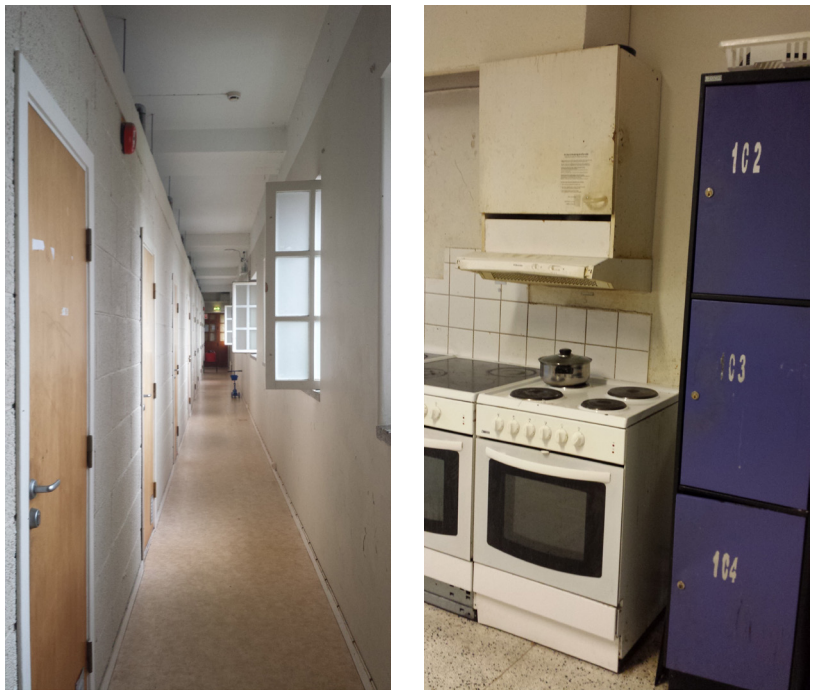

Fig. 2. Corridor Elvestad (left), shared kitchen Vestfjord (right). (Photos by Thorshaug)

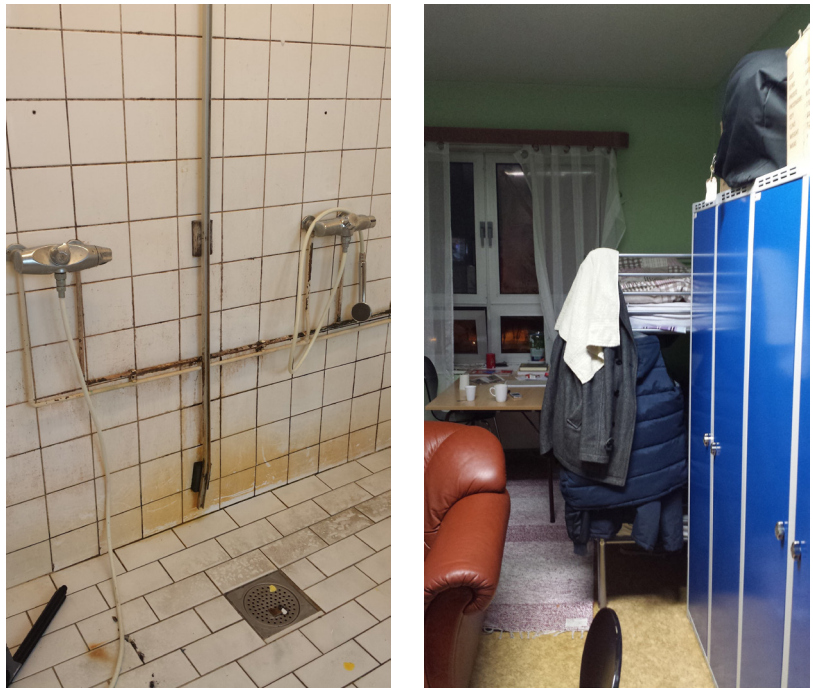

Fig. 3. Shared shower room Vestfjord (left), shared bedroom Vestfjord (right). (Photos by Thorshaug)

end of each floor was a communal kitchen and living room as well as bathrooms to be shared by seven residents. Each floor included a small family apartment with a separate kitchen and bathroom for four people. One building was for single women and families only. Although the walls had been painted and a sprinkler system installed, both the interior and exterior of the building looked rather old and unkempt. These buildings were not designed to last, instead the temporary structures constantly kept undergoing small scale repairs whenever budgets allowed.

Clashing temporalities: the centre as a disorientation device

At some points in time while staying in the asylum centre, the centre is the horizon, and the possibilities, hope and plans come in the background when the centre takes the foreground and creates a sense of disorientation. Contributing to the disorientation is the materiality of the centres and the asylum process, both distinguished by unclear time perspective beyond asylum seekers' control. The process of 'temporal bordering' (Khosravi 2019) does not provide any information on how their case is progressing until the day a letter arrives from the directorate with a decision: 'positive' or 'negative'. The meaninglessness of waiting in the reception centre was described by Farideh in Elvestad as a tunnel-like feeling where there are no distractions, no detours, no possibilities of controlling when to leave the current path. Similar to Griffith's (2014) 'sticky time', Farideh's metaphor of "living in a tunnel" illustrates how materiality, the institution and the lived experiences come together in the feeling of waiting and uncertainty: where the unknown temporal frame of the future is only a question between negative or positive expressed through lack of control over the future and biographical time. Making the asylum seekers wait becomes a technique of power that frames the experience of living in the reception centre, particularly related to the inability to control one's own temporal orientation (Sharma 2011; Griffiths 2014). This temporal injustice creates a feeling of uncertainty that is further emphasised by the materiality of the reception centres as temporary and substandard structures which interacts strongly with their everyday time.

Everyday time in the centre is controlled by the institutions' set of general rules and regulations. Living in the reception centres is voluntary but a requirement for receiving allowances, so most people have little choice but to stay. Asylum seekers have no control over which centre they will be allocated or who to share rooms with and must move whenever they are given a new place. To the same extent that waiting becomes an expression of power, the possibility of controlling one's own everyday time is subject to the 'power chronography' (Sharma 2011) that comes out of the particular temporalities produced in the reception centres. Institutional time materialises in how residents are governed in particular ways through regulations and control: the centres are open, people can come and go but must report to the office with regular intervals. More importantly, their time is regulated by the general 'politics of discomfort' (Darling 2011) induced by the embodied experiences of the buildings' materiality. Residents frequently described the queueing in the mornings, waiting for the bathroom and the kitchen, being late for the bus to the Norwegian course when several people were leaving at the same time as stressful and tiring, adding to the frustrations of not knowing what will happen to their lives next. As such there are emotional and affectual experiences of the built environment but also of the institutional structures operating in the centres.

Research on social interaction in reception centres shows that there are few arenas for identity work within the centre (Valenta 2012). Withdrawal and selection of frames of interaction in this constrained environment is amplified by the materiality: the old hospital buildings, for example, are designed for surveillance to enable monitoring of all parts of the building. There is a constant exposure to other people with whom residents may not be familiar. Shewit a single female in her early 20s explained: "I feel so much stress from this...feeling that you have to put on a mask, pretend that you smile, but on the inside you are not happy. I am so tired!" Food and all needed kitchen utensils are carried back and forth between the kitchen and the residents' room each time food is being prepared. Clothes, soap and towels similarly have to be carried to the shower room or for laundry. Everyday time is biopolitical in the sense that the temporal is a form of social power, a relation of difference and a material struggle, as argued by Sharma (2011, 441): "Sleep, rest, bathroom breaks, rushing, staying awake, waiting and waiting on are differentially experienced depending on where one fits within the

biopolitical economy of time". The friction between the built environment and the everyday life becomes evident in the exhausting labour that enters into existing and not being able to organise day to day activities in a meaningful way (Thorshaug 2018).

Adding to the stress and constant pressure is the ways in which the residents' status and temporal frames differ: some residents are waiting for the decision on their asylum application to be recognised as refugees in Norway; some have had their application rejected (negative) and they are waiting for the decision of their appeal; while some have had their appeal rejected and are facing imminent removal. Finally, some have had their application approved (positive) and are waiting to be settled. Several people mentioned that having to relate to other people's constant arrival and departure from the centre added to the stress of living there, whether it was experienced through the sudden loud bangs on the doors for a deportation in the early morning or through the passing down of furniture and other personal items before a planned departure.

The state governs through the different time frames that shape the experience of residing in the reception centre. Hence, the reception centre may be described as a 'myopticon': a device with blurred vision that governs through uncertainty and short-sightedness instead of the clear-sighted and deliberate governing of the panopticon (Whyte 2011). This mode of governance influences agency and produces a temporal injustice expressed through the material practices and institutional structures where people are kept on the move: "We stand by to move again", explains Samir (Vestfjord). People were initially quite reluctant to complain about the conditions in the centres due to their precarious status, media attention on the deserving asylum seeker, a general feeling of not being entitled an opinion, but also because the institution was presented as a temporary solution that people just have to cope with.

Aron lived with his wife and two children in a room on the former hospital corridor in Vestfjord asylum centre with a separate bedroom and kitchen facilities, but a shared bathroom on the corridor. He stated: "Well, I am happy for everything the Norwegian state is providing me." However, later in the conversation he elaborated on how the conditions in the reception centre affected their everyday life while waiting: his children were kept awake at night by noise from other residents. The family felt uncomfortable when using the shared bathroom on the corridor at night, and, as a family they had little privacy among themselves because they all shared one bedroom with bunk beds. Living on a long corridor with several other residents who all knew who they were, their application status and had opinions on the likely outcome of the application, added to the feeling of vulnerability and created tension and uncertainty. These multiple experiences of temporal injustice affect people's capacity to act, reduces their agentive register as their biographies and potential futures are harder to reach, and more of their lives and practices take place in the present tense, in their everyday time. Aron and his family had been in Norway for six months and had so far heard nothing about their prospects of staying. Having arrived in Norway, was like "looking at the hamburger you cannot eat", he said, and continued: "We are moving up and down in hope (miming with his hands, like waves) … always up… and then down … just waiting waiting waiting … The hardest thing about living here is that you don't know when you will be getting an answer."

Aron's experience of the centre is shaped by the conflicting temporal frames that his family encounters. People actively relate to the housing conditions by strategizing in everyday time, but as a consequence, the different temporal perspectives clashes and become incompatible. An orientation requires a background and a forward-looking side: orientations are about how we begin, how we proceed from here (Ahmed 2006, 2010). In these cases, we can understand the centre as a *disorientation device*, following Ahmed (2010), which produces the temporal injustices through its material and institutional structures. 'Moments of disorientation' constitute substantial changes in a person's life world, moments where the world is turned upside down and where we once again try to regain the ground beneath our feet through re-orientations (Ahmed 2006, 2010; Simonsen 2012).

Re-orientations: negotiating temporariness and materialities

Differing positions and changing statuses modify people's orientation in time. From disorientations which can be destabilising, debilitating and undermining, residents reach out for support, search for a place to reground and re-orientate their relation to the world. Reorientations are productive moments

leading to new hopes and directions and with the potential to reorganise horizons and perspectives where certain things and not others may be put within reach (Ahmed 2006; Simonsen 2012). 'Reorientation' is an active and situated process in which people engage with the material structures and institutional features in specific ways to cope with the conditions and temporal injustice in the centre.

In this section, we analyse how the material and institutional conditions in the centre are encountered through affect and emotions mobilised in this process of reorientations. People are differently positioned to negotiate understandings of temporariness, uncertainty, the materiality, relations and routines, but are in various ways actively engaging in temporal and spatial strategies of their own (Allsopp *et al*. 2014). Reorientations represent these stubborn everyday acts where political subjectivities arise in everyday experience through employing agentic capacities (Häkli & Kallio 2018). We emphasise four strategies: accommodating; timepass; escape; and reorienting through the future. The reorientation strategies are not mutually exclusive. People may adopt several strategies at the same time or go through stages where those strategies are being adopted at different times to navigate the changing spatial, temporal, material and institutional dimensions in the centres. As we now move on to show, people's reorientation strategies take place through different temporal orientations by making use of the material surroundings and institutional features in varying ways.

Accommodating

Aron's expression, above, of gratitude with what the Norwegian state provides, illustrates the tension many people experience in the centres. The control and constraint produced in the asylum institution rely on the co-performance of the institution by its residents (Gill 2009, 2010). 'Waiting meekly' (Griffiths 2014) is a strategy that indicates how institutional structures influence people's experiences and practices in the centre and gives an idea of the power of the institution in keeping people in place: being told to cope with poor conditions because it is only temporary. One centre-director stated that the management benefitted from residents' belief that their behaviour could influence the outcome of their application and hence reluctant to be critical of the conditions. In Brekke's (2004) typology of waiting, 'the ideal asylum seeker' stays oriented towards both integration and return, and seeks to prepare for both outcomes while waiting. Similarly, the ideal resident in the reception centre would be the one who just lives in the present, accepts the situation and the conditions in which they live. They wait and subsume to the institutional demands, ready to move on at any point.

While this may initially seem to be a passive acceptance of the conditions, we also find traces of how people are actively negotiating their experiences. People adapt in multiple ways by organising their everyday lives. A common example in crowded locations is to avoid encounters with other residents by strategically using the material environment: doing most of the food preparation inside their rooms before cooking in the shared kitchen, waiting to use the kitchen or other shared spaces until they are vacant, or staying awake at night to get some time to themselves. Hazim (Vestfjord) states that:

> The privacy thing is a big issue, and I am really suffering from it now… And that is why most times I sleep during the day and work during the night when it is not so noisy… well most of the others are also awake in the night, but it is more comfortable. So, I stay up in the night and sleep in the morning instead.

Residents inhabit the centres by accommodating and working around the materiality of the centres in their everyday time rather than resisting it. Tolerating the poor conditions due to its temporariness helps to survive in the institution but is a demanding re-orientation to keep over time. Living in and accepting the present tense is a very precarious temporality when you cannot envision a future or connect the present with the past.

Timepass

> The first month or two months you don't care what it looks like, but after that you start thinking like it looks like you are here for a long duration, maybe I should do something. And then little by little you prepare the things to be more comfortable around you to feel it like normal. You start to manage and you start to organise the things around you the way you like thinking like 'maybe you

> will be here for a long time'. Maybe the thought about 'Am I here temporary or am I here for long time' that is the difference between normal life and un-normal life. (Hazim, Vestfjord)

Everyday activities in the reception centres revolve mainly around waiting that materialises in the passing of time. 'Timepass' (Jeffrey 2010) is an everyday practice closely associated with living in the present tense, and affected by the dual temporal uncertainty produced in the reception centre: not knowing how long you have to wait and what will happen with your life afterwards (Griffiths 2014). While people are generally reluctant to appropriate their surroundings and do not want to become too attached to the living space, as time goes by, the need to make it more comfortable triggers some modifications of the room in which they live. People may engage in small scale adjustments to their living space as a form of timepass – or active waiting – where the effort is to 'waste' time by creating temporal markers. It is a strategy in reach when more meaningful ways of engagement were unavailable (Jeffrey 2010). Similar to the 'accommodating' strategy discussed above, the timepass represents an orientation towards everyday time while broader temporal perspectives (such as biographical time) are inhibited.

Dabir received 'positive' after six years in the country. He has moved through four different reception centres and lived the past eight months in a room he shares with one other person. There is a sofa and a table standing between the two beds on each side of the room. He has decorated his room with plants that he propagated himself and gives plants to other residents as gifts: "It is a kind of hobby that I have" he says first, but then later comments it is only a timepass: "it's just to kill time, you know" he answers. Most people consider their appropriations temporary because they know they will move on. The investments people do are constrained by the limited benefits for the future: they will lose them. Timepass is a way of orienting towards and engaging with the physical surroundings to make the days pass, to make everyday life somewhat coherent. It is a reorientation directed towards the material structures, but can also be a way of building relations with other residents as we see in the case of Dabir, reaching out to his neighbours with plants as a way of sustaining the here and now.

Escape

People negotiate ideas of homeliness, belonging and recognition in relation to the material conditions. Some residents stated that they felt more at ease with having made the surroundings more home-like by decorating the walls or acquiring pieces of furniture from other residents or with the help of staff. There is also a gender dimension to this. In all three cases studied, women are more concerned with their own spaces while the men often used common areas at the centre such as TV-rooms. The bigger adaptations and appropriations are made by parents with children, trying to make everyday life as 'ordinary' as possible. Similarly, people in slightly better and more private conditions felt more ownership to their spaces and worked more on making improvements.

Samir (Vestfjord) asked to have a desk installed in the room he shares with three others (Fig. 4). He wanted to continue everyday practices resembling his former work. He imagined sitting there and being able to work like he used to do, as a way of forgetting and escaping the current conditions by imagining being elsewhere:

> When I sit by this desk I remember when I worked... I make a big pot of tea, maybe I can drink one or two big pots, like 15 cups of tea... and cigarettes. If I want to work, in Syria, maybe I burn like ten cigarettes, sitting for two or three hours, just to see 'how will I solve this?' So when I sit here I (think)...okay.. 'you are out of Norway... you are in a new place in this world' ...and you can enjoy in this corner.

However, efforts to create places for themselves are often constrained in the cramped spaces and with the limited material resources at hand. Samir did not use the desk as he got into a conflict with the others in the room, the attempt to re-orient away from the current uncertain situation and back to normality, to the life he had been forced to leave behind, became a moment of disorientation where the orientations did not extend its reach.

Most residents stressed the highly ambiguous nature of engaging in these practices and most would contest any reference to the asylum centres as home due to the interaction of the material and

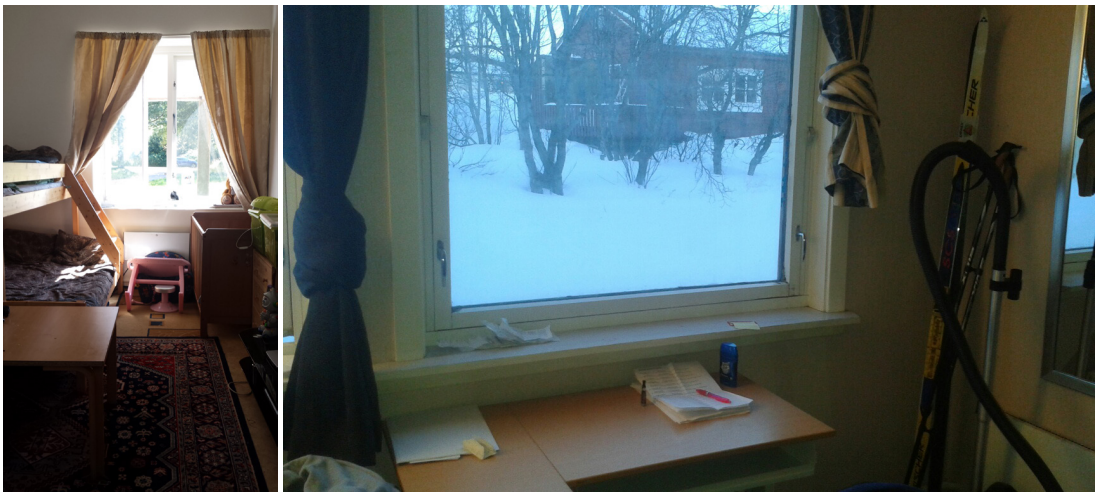

Fig. 4. Family room, Elvestad (left, photo by Thorshaug), Samir's desk (right, photo by Samir).

institutional conditions that caused so much friction between biographical and everyday time. However, we find that the ambivalence surrounding people's engagement with the physical structures is also a political resource that people negotiate with in reconstituting themselves as subjects (Kallio *et al*. 2019).

Sara, whose application was rejected, has lived in a single room in the same asylum centre for four years. She has made the room a personal space by decorating the walls with pictures of her friends and several self-made drawings. She is careful not to get too comfortable and emphasises the temporariness to the appropriations by holding on to her restlessness and refusing to make larger investments. She has bought a laptop and a mobile phone, but not much else because she hopes her status will change and that she can move out of the reception centre. Investing in more material things now, would be "the same as giving up the hope for settlement and a future in Norway". She is creating a temporary space for herself within her private room where she can find a limited sense of support from the surroundings, but she is also careful to emphasise that she does not see the centre as a space of identification. She refuses to settle in temporariness and her engagements with the physical surroundings does not mean surrendering to the situation or simply accepting it: "It is not because I am happy (...). All I do, I do it for now" she states. Her strategy engages with small-scale personal items that help her to imagine herself outside the centre and keeps within reach biographical temporalities. In Sara's story we find seeds of political life in her actively choosing to live in the present but maintaining her orientation towards the future. By unpacking the affectual and emotional experiences mobilised through her reorientation strategies, we come to see her ambivalence as a political resource (Kallio *et al*. 2019) in which her determination to live in the present is a relief from the spatial and temporal conditions in the centre.[2] It allows her to escape the conditions by maintaining a self that is continued in a future that lies outside the asylum institution.

When visiting the same centre for follow-up interviews a few months later, she had left the centre and gone underground, taking with her only clothes and a few belongings, leaving most things behind. Facing forced return at any moment and with no future to be found in the centre, she decided to escape when the living conditions were unbearable.

Reorienting towards the future

> I like the house but, like I told you, it is just a station, it is not a home... Home is when you live in peace. When you are in your place to be with yourself. You can get a place to yourself, one room. Not argue about anything. You focus on your future. You make a future. Return to make a future. That is why I

say that this is just a station. ...it is a station to bring our pain to a next level! (Samir, Vestfjord)

Samir has been granted asylum and knows that he will leave the centre but does not know when. He relates to the reception centre as a station. The housing situation along with the context makes people feel like they are still on the move, not allowed to settle. This situation creates a constant restlessness and one strategy is to plan for the future they know, which might be the near future, or to continue to think of an imagined future outside the centre.

Jumana, in her late 20s, had lived in Elvestad reception centre for around nine months. Her asylum status was positive and she was waiting to be settled in a municipality. She had not made any substantial adaptations to her room in which she currently stayed alone. The decorative items on her shelves were just things from a former resident. She stated "you know, it is only a temporary situation... So it's okay, really, to live like this." Instead, as she was preparing dinner with a crooked knife and with the food crammed together on a wobbly shelf next to the cooker, she was dreaming about the kitchen equipment she would buy once she had been settled. "Oh, when I get 'kommune' (settlement in a municipality) ... All the things I want to buy! Proper things. Like a better knife. All things my own. Like I want it." Her strategy is one of putting the reception centre's physical surroundings in the background and focusing on the future place of residence. While clearly stating that she copes well with the housing conditions as "only a temporary situation", her strategy differs from those whose strategy is to accommodate the conditions: it is not one of living in the present only. Rather it is dependent on the way she can relate to the future as something tangible, she has concrete plans for that future away from the centre. The orientation is available to her because she has received positive asylum status and a timeframe: her settlement would take place within the next two months. People who perceived the conditions in the centre in a more positive manner were often able to simultaneously re-orient in the sense of using a more extensive horizon away from the centre and imagine a future somewhere else.

People's orientations may change over time as their context or future prospects change. Nasrin lived in a small and cramped room at the centralised part of Elvestad reception centre with her two children. Their asylum claim was rejected and she was angry and frustrated the first time we met her. The centre became for her a disorientation device and she criticised the old and worn building for being both cramped and unhealthy. When we met her a year later, however, she was more optimistic because the government had just signed a new agreement concerning children asylum seekers. The institutional time was suddenly available to her to navigate and re-orient with. She was still critical towards the conditions in the centre and considered them prisonlike, but she could cope with the present because she could imagine a way out.

People's asylum status influences their ability to reorient: it is about how residents may imagine a life outside the centre and how their lives are governed in the institution. Knowing that you will leave, and that you will be granted asylum may make it easier to cope with the current situation. However, it does not take away the immediate frustrations that arise from the lack of privacy and the substandard conditions.

Conclusion: understanding re-orientations in the critical geographies of architecture in the institution

For its inhabitants, the modes of relating to the centre are tied to their experiences of the inherent temporal injustice of the asylum institution. This article has shown how this injustice is expressed in the 'throwntogetherness' of the material conditions, institutional governance and the experiences and practices of inhabiting the centres. We have suggested a conceptual framework for understanding the experience of the asylum centre that contributes to the geographies of architecture by engaging more actively with temporality, power, politics and institutional dimensions.

'Orientations' is applied as the analytical device to recognize the agentic capacities of residents in their experience and engagement with the centre's temporariness, the level of uncertainty and lack of control that the institution brings. Sometimes, disorientation dominates the residents' experiences. However, at other times and for other people, there are potentials to re-orient. Reorientations can change and overlap but are shaped within the institutional and material structures that operate in the asylum

reception centres. The reorientations depend on how the asylum seekers can imagine and reconnect their everyday and biographical time thereby making this both a temporal and a material struggle. The uncertainty mobilised through the tensions of clashing time-perspectives becomes the hidden temporal realities that asylum seekers have to navigate when the centre is experienced as a disorientation device. By engaging in reorientation strategies, however, people challenge the temporal injustices. Our analysis points to how asylum seekers' stubborn everyday practices of inhabiting the reception centres help to make "spaces of struggle, action and political possibility" (Conlon 2011). Asylum seekers express ambivalent emotions towards the way they are reorienting within the material and institutional environment they inhabit. They place limits on how much they want to invest and their ambivalence foregrounds a political subjectivity where we can find the potential for change (Kallio *et al*. 2019).

The asylum seekers actively pursue more control over their everyday time and their biographical time. By adding a temporal dimension to the critical geographies of architecture in the institution, we have shown that we may find responses to improving asylum seekers' lives in their reorientation strategies. It is not just about improving material conditions. The border politics and the temporal injustices that are acted out in the institutions must also be taken into consideration. There is thus a limited potential in architecture alone because the temporal injustice is not resolved with better and more comfortable housing. It is the intersections enabled by the thrown*together*ness of the material, the institutional and temporal that must be taken into account.

Our contribution is to show that the affectual and emotional experiences of the reception centre are actively mobilised in people's reorientation strategies in order to re-appropriate time. People seek to reconnect their everyday and biographical time, and to find ways to take back control of these times and make them compatible in a way that sustains a sense of self. Re-appropriation of time may increase resilience (Griffiths 2014). Thus, we suggest that bringing in a better understanding of the interaction between temporality and materiality is a first step forward.

Notes

[1] Equal authorship
[2] We are grateful to Isabel Meier for pointing this out.

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