

An asylumseeker – what has Jobcenter got to do with it?

If one asks about the situation an asylum seeker is in, then roughly speaking you might say that he is suspended for some indefinite time in the vacuum of legalities and illegalities due to his trespassing offense. He is trapped between pale philanthropic concerns on one side and an overblown concern for the sovereignty, or rather the illusion of the same on the other. He is placed somewhere out of sight, preferably in a remote part of the country, usually in a room too small and too crowded for all those moments of intimacy he may so desperately need. There he waits for his “not yet decided upon” future, trying to believe in other people’s benevolence and generosity more than ever before.

Somewhat paradoxically, these “no yet benevolent and generous people” punish him for trespassing by denying him that very same human right that is at the core of their (our) concept of humanity; the right to work, freedom to dispose of his resources and his life in a way he chooses.

However, some years ago it has been decided, that

in Denmark the denied humanity should be restored by providing the opportunity to every asylum seeker to spend his waiting time in a manner worth humans.

All asylum seekers, at least those that qualify for the term, can now do some work, and more importantly acquire new skills whether it is language skills or some of a more practical kind. To be sure, these are surrogates, but sadly the surrogate life is often the best an asylum seeker can get.

Jobcenter is entrusted with the task of coordinating all these activities taking place in and outside the camp. Employees in Jobcenter distribute man power to different resident-run facilities in the camp, and help residents start in the school. Jobcenter is also free to take an initiative in starting new activities, whether it is educative, cultural, practical or simply fun-like activities.

For most asylum seekers the school has been the greatest gift, but working outside the refugee camp has also been quite popular arrangement. Unfortunately, a month ago it has been decided that residents in phase one are not entitled to do practice outside the camp.

It has understandably brought lots of disappointment to some residents, but the rules stand clear on this point. Only residents in phase two and three, who do not have deportation date, can be aided by Red Cross (read Jobcenter) in finding and arranging practice in the society.

Hence, Jobcenter isn’t just the place where a bunch of papers called contracts are signed, nor is it merely the place where most questions regarding pocket money can be answered.

Despite sincere doubts I still like to believe that Jobcenter is an instance of Humanity at work. It is an attempt to give back to people part of what has been taken away from them.

This restoration project, the humanity at work, is far from the best, but it appears to be the best we can do until we become better than our present best.

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