

Doing your Home.Work - changing lives by turning Greek 'accommodation' into Greek homes

With well over 100,000 people likely to remain in refugee accommodation in Greece until at least 2022, a project is setting out to help these men, women and children create homes, places where they can feel comfortable, secure, and from which they can begin to build new lives.

But the scheme needs your help. Your donation will be one part of creating 'the smallest workshops on Earth', which will deliver a big impact.



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MORE than 120,000 men, women and children remain in refugee accommodation in Greece - and are likely to have to spend at least two more years in temporary shelter.

With this in mind, a new initiative Home.Work, set up by German design student Thomas Jaeger, is setting out to help people perform a life-improving - and in some cases maybe even life-saving - task: making a home of the place where they live.

Home.Work will see Jaeger provide tools and work-space to refugees living in Western Greece and, depending on funding, also the rest of the state.

He explains: 'There are thousands of people here who have arrived as refugees since March 2016. Some are still in detention centres on the islands, and others are in apartments. But the rest, who have been here almost three years, are living in prefabricated containers in refugee camps.

'I figured that the borders are getting tighter, being closed. People will be staying here even longer than they have already, and much longer than they expected. It could easily be two-three years. This has to be a place where people can make a home. If they don't feel at home, how can they face the world, or integrate into their community?

'So this is to help them to make their accommodation into homes. People are people, they are not just numbers and helping them make things and do things for themselves really makes a difference to their lives. With that in mind, I have created Home.Work.'

Jaeger, a student of Product Design at the University of Frankfurt, took time off from his studies to come to Greece in March 2018. He volunteered at Habibi.Works, a fab lab and maker-space, which includes woodwork, metalwork



and art and crafts studios, a 3d printer, laser cutter and fabric workspace, close to Katsikas refugee camp, Ioannina, Western Greece.

Thomas says: 'Habibi.Works certainly inspired and inspires me. It's one



reason why this new project is called Home.Work. It provides a space and the tools for people to come and learn, and use their talents to create things, from clothing and paintings to gym equipment and furniture.

'But there are several refugee camps in the region, and I began to think about mobility - because in order to use

Habibi.Works you have to be able to get here. I wanted to do something to help people be able to work if for some reason they cannot come to the fablab.'

Thomas has designed and is building mobile workbenches - a 'space' in which handymen and women can work - and the tools they need to make repairs, build and create, to make homes out of the places in which they live.

The initiative is designed to enable people not only to *have* places in which to live which feel like 'homes', but to create these homes themselves, using their ideas, their skills and their effort.

Thomas explains: 'When people feel powerless, they can fall into depression, and with that depression can also come anger. This is a real downward spiral: if people feel they have no control, and depressed, this can become worse if others - who also feel like they have no control over their lives - are angry, because this makes everyone feel even less safe. Making homes helps prevent the negatives which make people feel like they have no real home. A community is its people, but in these ways a community can be created as well. Not from outside, but by its people.

'This activity can impact on every part of their lives - it makes people feel happier, reducing bad impacts on others.'

Thomas built the Home.Work prototype at Habibi.Works, where he will build the final benches and toolkits, too. But he has not worked alone. The people who will be using the kits have played an important part in their creation, as he explains: 'In the process it's been really important to find out what the people who the scheme is for, actually want. I can design and



build things but it is no good to just decide what people want or need without asking them.

'With this in mind, I ran sessions in which I asked people at Habibi.Works to draw what they thought they would like their places of accommodation to look like, under the idea of 'design your container' - effectively asking what would you need to make your container a home?.'

As he admits, the process changed his original idea considerably: 'It was very interesting,' he said. 'I had anticipated people wanting to build and create things - and they did. But almost everyone we spoke to also drew plants and flowers, which was something I had not anticipated. It's clear that this is something that makes people feel their place is better.'



As a result, the Home.Work kits now include, alongside hammers, screwdrivers, saws, shovels, chisels and pliers, garden tools like picks.

'It's the smallest workshop on Earth,' Thomas explains. 'People will be able to use the kits to make furniture, to fix things which are broken, to make improvements to their living space,

and this will include plants. People will be able to grow flowers to look nice, and grow their own food, which can save money and make sure people have ingredients they want. So there's a real need for that. It fits perfectly with the whole idea, which is that people can produce their own things.'

But Home.Work requires investment to take off.

Each kit - including the workbench and all tools - costs €250. In the opening stage, the programme requires €5,000, to reach up to 1,800 people in the Epirus region of Greece.

Thomas explains: 'People can use the kits to build things for the community, for themselves, or for sale. So even one box can reach many people. If people build community items, they reach every person in a camp. Just a screwdriver to fix something can make a difference to a lot of people.'

'This is an initiative which enables people to make a home a home, to set up small businesses using craft, and by helping people to do things by themselves, and create themselves a real home, there's an important mental impact. It fulfils urgent needs.'

To donate to help Home.Work, visit: <https://startsomegood.com/home-work>

