IN A SPACE OF EVERYDAY EXCEPTION

DAY-TO-DAY LIFE AND ILLegalITY AMONG
REJECTED ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN NORWAY

Masterthesis in Social Anthropology
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‘All power in this hall’, Johan Sverdrup said in the Norwegian parliament in 1872. The picture on the front cover shows the Norwegian parliament, and two rejected asylum-seekers during a demonstration in 2009. The demonstration was attended by around 100 people, but heavy rain made many leave. One of my informants told me to take the picture. He found the incident symbolic of their situation.
Abstract

Since the 1970s, researchers have been concerned with unauthorized migration as a field of study in both Europe and the USA. In the south of Europe this research expanded during the 1990s, but in the Scandinavian countries there have been only sporadic inquiries. This thesis is part of a changing trend whereby unauthorized migration has begun to enter the Scandinavian research agenda. Previously it had been assumed that unauthorized migrants would not remain in Norway, since they were left with few opportunities for making a livelihood. More recently, however, structural changes in European border regimes and the European asylum system, *inter alia*, have led to an increased presence of this heterogeneous category of people, also in Norway. Their presence has become gradually more visible in the public debate.

Based on fieldwork from 2009 and 2010, this thesis explores the day-to-day lives of rejected asylum-seekers in Norway. Inspiration for the theoretical underpinnings has come from the work of Giorgio Agamben and his understanding of the state of exception, as well as James Scott’s concept of everyday resistance. I establish the migrants’ space of action as a *space of everyday exception* to explore how migrants’ lives and migrant illegality unfold within it. I also conceive this as a temporal space in relation to citizenship and state sovereignty.

At the time I conducted my fieldwork, rejected asylum-seekers in Norway were allowed to stay in regular asylum centres. Some also lived in the waiting reception centres that feature in this thesis. These were difficult places to stay, and many sought to remain outside these camps, also for fear of being deported. Since they were deprived of central rights like formal wage labour, and had severely limited access to healthcare and other provisions, this created further challenges in their lives as they became dependent on others. I ask: how does illegalization shape the opportunities to create a livelihood, find accommodation or shelter, and maintain family life in the Norwegian context? The thesis concludes with a discussion of whether the exceptional space of these illegalized migrants is a space of opportunities – or rather one that captures or entraps vulnerable individuals in a difficult situation.
Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (UN 1948 Universal Human Rights Declaration)

The natural inclination of modern practice, construction of order, sets the limits to incorporation and admission. It calls for the denial of right, and of the grounds, of everything that cannot be assimilated – for de-legitimation of the other. As long as the urge to put paid to ambivalence guides collective and individual action, intolerance will follow – even if, ashamedly, it hides under the mask of toleration (Which often means: you are abominable, but I, being generous, shall let you live) (Baumann 2007:8)

The waiting reception centres represent Norway’s goodwill towards those whose applications for asylum have been rejected, but who choose to not receive the offer and the help to travel back with assistance from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and 10 000 NOK. (Storberget 2010: my traslation)
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1. Opening the case

With the vast scope of movement and migration across the globe, the phenomenon of unauthorized migration has become increasingly debated in recent decades. This has also been the case in Norway, although the issue did not gain political prominence until towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s. Despite several restrictive measures deployed, concerns have related to a rising number of rejected asylum-seekers – often called ‘illegal’ or ‘paperless’ (im)migrants. For various reasons they have overstayed the authorities’ deadlines for leaving the country. Like unauthorized migrants elsewhere, they must live according to an illegalized existence where the possibilities of participating in society are severely limited. Being defined as unwanted – politically and legally – they are relegated to living in what could be seen as ‘exceptional spaces’ where people are stripped of the essential rights and duties of regular citizens. When I started this project, rejected asylum-seekers were housed in asylum centres as well as in special waiting reception centres. The latter were semi-open camps created to facilitate return migration, and to provide ‘temporary’ and ‘voluntary accommodation services’ to fulfil the most basic needs of the migrants. What was available within these camps was, however, reduced to a minimum and they were regarded as difficult places to stay. Together with the risk of deportation that many experienced, this led a great many to search for a livelihood outside the camps. Deprived of the right to take up formalized wage labour and with only limited access to basic healthcare and other provisions, they tried to rely on various kinds of acquaintances and networks. This made them dependent on others, which in turn created other challenges in their lives.

How are human practices, ways of survival and resistance shaped in spaces that are normatively not supposed to exist, and how can we understand these spaces? These are among the questions that have guided this project. The research is based upon multi-sited fieldwork carried out among rejected asylum-seekers in Norway between 2009 and 2010, both within and outside asylum camps. Building upon Agamben’s (1998, 2005) understanding of the ‘state of exception’ and Scott’s (1985) concept ‘everyday resistance’, I will establish the migrants’ space of action as a ‘space of everyday exception’ and use this concept to explore how processes of illegalization and legalization in Norway. How is migrant illegality made relevant and produced in everyday life and social interaction? What possibilities do migrants have to create a livelihood, get shelter, and maintain social and family relations? How do people resist and cope with the situation?
The thesis is divided into five chapters that explore different aspects of what I will call ‘migrant illegality’. This chapter looks into the relevant theoretical, ethical and methodological perspectives and the context of the research. The next chapter explores the waiting reception centres. Chapters three and four go on to analyse how migrants manage to create a livelihood and access shelter outside these camps, and chapter five looks into how legalization affects family life. Considering the ways different policies affect migrants’ lives, a question that has emerged during the research process relates to how many of the difficulties of return migration can be seen as originating in various institutional arrangements and the uncertain situation itself. Hence the proclaimed ‘unwillingness to return’ so often attached to migrant agency should be seen in a broader perspective.

To understand some of the complexities of the situation, I begin by discussing some of the legal, social and analytical categories that are used to describe and define the migrants. This includes the question of how anthropologists should represent their interlocutors. To create a multifaceted ethnography I will privilege the migrants’ voices through illustrations and quotations.

The problem of representation and the complexities of migrant illegality

All categories concerned with a person’s legal status are political (Coutin 2006). How we represent them has political, ethical and epistemological implications (Said 1989; De Genova 2005; Khosrawi 2006, 2010). The categories we use are not merely descriptive but speak to underlying perceptions that are intrinsically linked with power and knowledge and define the field we study (Foucault 1980). Rejected asylum-seekers are often defined as a part of the larger category I call ‘unauthorized’ or ‘illegalized’ migrants. Other researchers use categories such as ‘paperless’, ‘undocumented’, ‘clandestine asylum-seekers’, ‘irregular’ or ‘illegal’ (im)migrants. These are not formal categories but analytical concepts with strengths and weaknesses. By migration we understand a dynamic process where people move from one area to another, often with the purpose of settling down. Illegalization of migration is a consequence of states (Düvell 2010). Contrasted to immigrants, they have not been entitled to settle.

The Norwegian Directorate of Migration (UDI) distinguishes four formal categories of people staying in the country ‘without legal residence’ (Nordby 2006): 1)
victims of human trafficking, 2) tourists or workers who overstay their visas, 3) people who have not made themselves known to the authorities and 4) rejected asylum-seekers who have not left ‘voluntarily’ or been deported. Although they may see themselves as refugees they are not legally recognized as refugees and have not granted residence on protection or humanitarian grounds.

These formal categories are overlapping and dynamic, and people may move from one category to another. A person may enter the country legally and become illegalized, or the other way around. I use the terms ‘illegalization’ and ‘legalization’ to refer to these processes. Moreover, rejected asylum-seekers are more precisely defined as being ‘without legal residence’ if they have received the second negative decision on their asylum application to the migration appeals board (UNE), or if they have not appealed within five months after receiving the first negative decision by the UDI (Valenta et al. 2010). They then receive a letter telling them to leave the country within a specific date. If they stay, they are ‘illegalized’. It is still possible to appeal or take the case to court, and thus possibilities to become legalized. This is, however, hard to achieve. Many exhaust these opportunities, and going to court often depends on economic resources not available to them. On the other hand, illegalization may include expulsion from Norway and the larger European Schengen area if the migrant is deemed to have violated the law. This means they are not allowed to come back for a certain period after they have left the country or been deported. This may be for life, if the violation is regarded serious (UDI 2011).

The legal and formal taxonomies that define the position of rejected asylum-seekers are furthermore interconnected with a rich informal language that is used to define them socio-politically. It reveals underlying perceptions and various kinds of positioned moral values that often conflate with essentialist understandings of the migrant’s character. Terms like ‘asylum-abusers’, ‘criminals’, ‘liars’, ‘illegal asylum-seekers’, ‘fake/unreal asylum-seekers’ ‘asylum-shoppers’ ‘professional asylum-seekers’ or ‘fortune hunters’ are common. These modes of categorization create specific perceptions

1 The decisions on asylum cases are broadly based upon the 1951 Refugee Convention that is embedded in the Norwegian Immigration laws. While many asylum-seekers flee from a general difficult situation or war, only a few are recognized as refugees since the main criterion for recognition is personal persecution and not a generally insecure situation (cf. Fuglerud 1997). Strict interpretation of the refugee conventions emphasizing personal persecution often rule out asylum-seekers coming from a general difficult situation characterized by conflict, insecurity and economic problems.
of the self among rejected asylum-seekers and must be related to different kinds of stigmatizing attributes that profoundly affect migrant and immigrant experiences of otherness (Goffman 1968). Few terms with positive connotations are used to describe these migrants, or indeed asylum-seekers in general. Nevertheless, the category ‘illegal immigrants’ is a debated concern.

Norwegian media and NGOs have increasingly used the term ‘paperless’ to avoid stigma and find a more ‘neutral’ category (VG 2011; Samuelsen, Stokke, and Aale 2008). The term comes from the French *sans papier* and is connected to larger movements that support migrants worldwide. This is a better term in France, as *papier* also include identity performances (Khosrawi 2010). In Norway the term has become linked to migrants concealing their identity papers so as to get asylum dishonestly or to avoid deportation, even though this is not always the case.

Terms used by researchers also have implications for how the phenomenon is understood. The term ‘undocumented migrants’ is similar to the term ‘paperless’. It pays attention to the importance of valid documents as the standard of normality in modern society. It does to a lesser degree reduce the lack of papers to a natural attribute of a person, but it captures aspects related to legibility and illegibility (Scott 1998). It also shows how the ‘bureaucratic gaze’ often limits what is constituted as ‘real’ to that which can be documented. Not having documents in the application process can in this context have massive consequences for asylum-seekers as the burden of proving credibility and the need for asylum is placed on them. In some cases migrants are caught in a ‘Catch 22’ situation resulting from this basic principle of bureaucratic organization. As David remarked:

To prove my case I need documents from the Iranian embassy or other people in Iran, but nobody in Iran helps me… they are afraid. It is strange that UDI say I have to go to this regime to get papers. It is these people I am running away from. If I don’t get papers I cannot prove my case. If I get them, they will send me back. This is why I live like this… for 6 years now. (David-25-Iran)

In some cases then, because they have no documents they cannot be trusted, and because they cannot be trusted they cannot have documents. This dilemma became evident among some of the migrants who spent vast amounts of time on getting or confirming documents to prove their existence. Some of them wanted to return, but were not able to because the Norwegian police required documents or identity papers in order to deport them. The police and the UDI did not believe that they were telling the
truth because they did not have documents. Furthermore, the police would not allow some of them to return because they had violated Norwegian law, even though it might be only a minor offence like travelling without a valid train tickets. The head of one of the waiting reception centres explained that one out of five of those who actually wanted to return were stuck in this limbo (cf. VG 2010). The term ‘unreturnable’ is used in Norway to describe migrants without residence permit who cannot be deported, either because they have concealed their documents, do not have or cannot access them, because their home countries will not accept them, or because the Norwegian police will not let them leave (cf. 2009; Valenta et al. 2010). Again, the authorities distinguish between ‘real unreturnables’ who cooperate, and others who are seen as not cooperating.

The ways that migrants conceive of documents provide some interesting perspectives in this contested field. Their statements reveal some of the paradoxes of the situation:

Tariq: - If you want to go to Europe you have to buy a real passport, if not you have to travel illegal. Me: -Buy a real passport? Tariq: - If you have money you can buy a passport… in Iran there are many places. But if you don’t have money you have to travel as illegal. These are the options. Me: - Did you buy a passport? Tariq: - If you are a refugee, you don’t have a passport. When you live for a long time in a refugee camp like me you cannot have documents (Tariq-43-Afghanistan)

The majority of the asylum-seekers are dependent upon fake documents or the assistance of an expensive human smuggler to get into Europe. With increasingly restrictive visa and border policies, there has been an expanding industry for human smuggling and fake documents (PU 2009). The authorities view these smugglers are viewed as ruthless criminals. For asylum-seekers they are a necessity:

Smugglers are bad people, but if you are refugee they are also good… they are the only people that help you. With money you can get a passport and a good case. Me: – What do you mean? Ali: - Many people can help to make a good case for you. If you do this you don’t get the negative’ like me.(Ali-24-Somalia)

These structural premises may have major consequences for asylum-seekers who are rejected, and may possibly also be a reason for getting ‘the negative’.

If you don’t have papers they take your finger [prints]. When I travelled through Europe, all I said was lies because this is not the country you want to go to [smugglers told him to], but when you come here. Actually I did not want to come here, but to Sweden…
Now they don’t believe me because I only told lies and nonsense other places. I did not know this was registered… I end up in this bad situation. (Hakim-22-Afghanistan)

Some of the people I met also experienced other unintended consequences. One of the migrants I interviewed was accordingly deported to Uganda. He had never been in Uganda, but because he had used fake documents from that country in order to enter Norway, he was sent there. Another went into hiding for similar reasons. The term ‘clandestine migration’ refers to hidden aspects of illegalized migration, with regard to both disclosure of documents and migrants hiding from deportation. Not all rejected asylum-seekers are in hiding, however. To capture the complexities of these migratory phenomena, researchers often use the term ‘irregular migration’ to encompass the dynamic and semi-legal areas (Lund Thomsen 2010). This is also done to avoid the term ‘illegal’, which is also a debated term among anthropologists.

Chavez (1998) remarks how judgements as to a person’s legal status should be a matter of decisions in a court, and not of anthropologists. Khosrawi (2010, 2006) pays attention to the dehumanizing and objectifying character of the terminology, and points out how the discursive power of the terminology may have implications for how people, bureaucrats and politicians perceive the credibility of asylum-seekers and foreigners in general. Others find reasons for not rejecting the term ‘illegal’ outright (Willen 2007).

Migrants experience and negotiate illegalized status. Illegality is, however, not criminality. It is a concept used to point out how illegalization also has material consequences, for real people. Denying it easily misses out on the existence of states in the analysis. As John (29) said when we passed by a large sign saying ‘nobody is illegal’: ‘It does not help to change the word, that is not what is hurting’ (See Appendix-2 picture-1). Nation-states depend upon creating differences between ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’, insiders and outsiders, deserving and not deserving, even though the differences between these categories are not necessarily significant. In the context of state sovereignty, it is the bodies of the migrants that are illegalized and where state power is inscribed. The following section locates migrant illegality within the context of sovereign power, in order to establish the space of everyday exception as a concept to capture the relation between sovereign power and the migrants’ agency.

Agency within a space of everyday exception

In the works of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2005), the ‘state of exception’ describes the augmentation of sovereign power at times when state borders
and boundaries are perceived to be under threat. Under certain conditions, governments suspend elements of the normal legal order and strip individuals of their rights by reducing them to what Agamben call ‘bare lives’, a depoliticized and naked human stripped of the civil, political, social and human rights of the citizen. Within this perspective, states of exception are created by categorization and other practices that deprive individuals of their legal identity, in order to sustain the power of the state and its institutions. Sovereign power as embedded in laws, state institutions and bureaucracy is the capacity to decide upon the state of exception and define and ‘structure the possible field of action of others’ (Foucault 1982:138) to quote Foucault.

Agamben builds upon the work of Foucault, but for Agamben it is the camp – ranging between concentration camps and refugee detention centres - that serves as the bio-political paradigm of power relations rather than the spaces or enclosures of the disciplines – schools, factories, hospitals – as they are captured in Foucault’s paradigm of the ‘panoptic prison’ (Foucault 1995). Agamben (1998) sees sovereign power as based on an inclusive exclusion that includes these bare lives under the law by excluding them from the political, rather than disciplining them within it. This is for Agamben its fundamental character:

At once excluding bare life from, and capturing it within the political order, the state of exception actually constituted, in its very separateness, the hidden foundation on which the entire political system rested. When its borders begin to be blurred, the bare life that dwelt there frees itself in the city and becomes both the subject and the object of the conflicts of the political order, the one place for both the organization of state power and emancipation from it.(Agamben 1998:9)

Considering the increasing political significance of the illegalized migrant in contemporary society, this could also be said about them. Applied to the field of migration management, the state of exception is thus, most visible where it materializes in state institutions as detention centres, refugee camps or waiting reception centres, but also other situations where illegalization make migrant illegality relevant in everyday life. Transcending the legal aspects, ‘migrant illegality’ can thus be defined as a socio-political relationship between the migrant and a state (De Genova 2005) as practised in legislation, policies, administrative practices and deportation orders, as well as in daily encounters where illegalized status is made relevant: in institutions, at work, in meetings with landlords, people providing assistance, family, and other experiences (Stenum 2010;
Willen 2007). Within this broad definition I understand migrant illegality to be produced in encounters between various people and institutions.

Agamben (1998) theorizes the ‘state of exception’ through his protagonist of bare life – *Homo Sacer*, a figure derived from archaic Roman law. Like rejected asylum-seekers, *Homo Sacer* is banished from the political order and stripped of the rights of the citizen, but captured as ‘the other within’. He cannot be sacrificed by the sovereign, but may be killed or used by anyone. He is furthermore the antipode of the citizen that defines citizenship through negation, both legally and morally. It could be said that he is not only socially marginalized: but also symbolically central and decisive of the production of citizenship and sovereign power. In this context, previous research has theorized the illegalized migrants as ‘anti-citizens’ (Khosrawi 2006; Inda 2006).

The boundaries between citizenship and illegality must, however, not be understood as clear-cut. For Agamben (1998) sovereign power also cuts through the social body of the citizen. Khosravi (2006) uses the term ‘quasi citizens’ to refer to people who are included as citizens but who do not experience being treated as so because various attributes – religion, culture, name, gender or skin colour – limit their space of action. I will illustrate this argument through a statement made by Ajwan (26), a Kurdish-Norwegian girl who has lived in Norway for most of her life:

> I think all foreigners feel that they are illegal sometimes, many came here illegally… but not everyone is given a passport and citizenship. Although I have acquired full citizenship now, I sometimes feel that I am illegal because we look different. […] A year ago I went to renew my passport to tour with the theatre. The policewoman took my passport and said I was not allowed to stay here. I had to wait for three hours. Luckily they had just made a mistake… I have never felt that illegal before. You often think about those who have been living here all of their life. They are suddenly sent back because it is discovered that their parents have made some mistake. (Ajwan-26-Kurdish-Norwegian)

Illegality as citizenship is thus configured according to symbolic codes that are deeply rooted in the aesthetics of the political order (Willen 2007). Different attributes – racial, ethnic, religious or national – are given different values according to what Mallki (1995) has called a ‘national order of things’ – the idea that the world naturally is, and should be, divided into sovereign geographical units containing groups of people with separate cultures and histories; similar to what Anderson (2006) has called ‘imagined communities’. This order of sovereign states is often expressed in terms of botanical
metaphors, seeing people as ‘rooted’ in different places and territories. Asylum-seekers in Norway are described in terms of the opposite, through metaphors like ‘waves’, ‘flows’ and ‘streams’, indicating flood and even invasion upon the political order. But although they are categorized as outsiders to this order, they are also dependent on it to access their rights, which is often what gives meaning to their projects. This indicates that the state of exception should also be investigated as a space of agency. I will refer to this space of action as a space of everyday exception.

For Agamben, the agency of Homo Sacer is in ‘bare life’ rendered politically insignificant, leaving little room for agency. As I use the concept ‘everyday exception’, the reduction to bare (biological) life is only an extremity. Migrants have agency: they act, resist and move, and tell their narratives within what I call spaces of everyday exception. They try to cope with the everyday irregularities within this exceptional space. Still, as with Agamben (1998), the space of exception is a space where power is inscribed. Illegalization becomes embodied and internalized in people’s practices, shaping people’s habitus, to use Bourdieu’s term (1977). Willen (2007) depicts this clearly when she shows how illegalized migrants in Israel embody and internalize the power of the law through the ways they move in public spaces to avoid deportation. Illegalization becomes a part of the embodied consciousness. Ali’s (24) statement illustrates this, and furthermore indicates how we can anchor this space of everyday exception also in a grounded theory derived from the migrant’s experiences:

It is like not being here and not being there, between the devil and the deep blue sea. When you walk down the streets you are always conscious about what is going on. If there are many people on one side of the street you automatically cross over to the other side to avoid problems [...] It is just what makes you feel not welcome, and you really are not [...] you get really stressed, and it hurts in all of your body because you think, think, think. [...] …but when I say they took my life, it does not mean that I am dead. It means that they took my mind. (Ali-24-Somalia)

Spaces of everyday exception must in this context be conceived as temporal spaces. As Coutin (2006) has noted, illegality is confined by an illegal time, where actions taking place within it – family relations, work experiences, etc. – are not recognized as valid. Furthermore, as earlier research on asylum-seekers in Norway has pointed out, to be an asylum-seeker in general means to inhabit a temporal space with an unidentified future that does not point in any specific direction, and a past where the mystical place called ‘home’ has been left behind, often in a situation where it can be difficult to think about
events from the past (Kjærre 2010; Brekke 2004; Varvin 2003). As I will show, illegalized time is also characterized by irregularities and sometimes endless waiting that has immense consequences, also cognitively. A way to think of this temporal space is to conceive it as existing outside the institutionalized regularity of modern society.

Meyer emphasizes how the life course in modern society is largely dependent upon institutions: ‘In the modern systems, people work out selves with a great deal of institutional support. [...] As actors form their own subjective personhood, they are perhaps as much affected by the institutionalized recipes as by any untutored “experiences”.’ (Meyer 1986:199). Meyer notes how people’s freedom and well-being are organized according to these normative requirements and central to the individual self, which leave those who are excluded with great challenges, both psychologically and practically.

Coutin’s (2006) concept ‘spaces of legal non-existence’ captures this existential space as created from the disjunction between physical presence and legal absence. It is located between existence and non-existence, and is rather a legal than physical or territorial barrier. It appears as a legal shadow fence ‘indicating that the illegality of the undocumented materialize around them wherever they go, like a force field that sets them apart from the legally and privileged’ (Coutin 2006:39). David (25) said: ‘it is like a shadow that follows me around’ (See Appendix-2 picture-2). This space is, however, not only a legal barrier but conflates with various kinds of social and economic non-existence. Ali (24) said his illegalized life was like living in a bubble. A bubble is transparent to the gaze of state power, but it is also a boundary and a time-capsule. It bounces back or pops in efforts to establish stable social relations. Still, it can also be understood as a space of agency and resistance, and possibly a space of day-to-day opportunities.

Much research, as it is embedded in the state’s need for surveillance and control, has focused on revealing migrant ‘opportunity structures’ (cf. De Genova 2005). In Norway, Brekke (2008; cf. Brekke and Søholdt 2005) has emphasized the importance of informal support from NGOs. Brunowskis & Bjerkan (2008) have emphasized that the possibilities unauthorized migrants in Norway often relate to barter exchange within their ethnic communities. They draw upon Engbersen et al. (2006), who have elaborated on

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2 Studies of transnational migration have often emphasized the concept of ethnicity as important part of migrants’ security network and their wider experience of belonging. Barth (1982) understands ‘ethnicity’ as categories of identification that are used and maintained by different
the various networks available to unauthorized migrants within their ethnic communities in Hague. These patterns are related to closeness in association and relatedness, ranging from *communal sharing*, found in families, clan systems and ethnic groups where duties are based upon ethnic solidarity, to *market relations* that are based on economic and impersonal ties. In-between the two patterns they find *bounded solidarity*, where help is limited but still based on certain forms of duty as religious values. Valenta et al. (2010) suggest that it can be fruitful to distinguish between *personal networks* that are created by the migrants and *contextual networks* such as ethnic or religious communities that are already there to access. Like Engbersen et al. (2006), they also distinguish between strong ties and weak social ties, and how these may open up for a range of possibilities. In daily life, these types of networks may be difficult to distinguish, however, and both limited and unstable. Migrants also relate to several types of networks due to lack of choice, or to maximize possibilities. As we shall see, different acquaintances become important for solving different problems.

The emphasis on ‘opportunity structures’ and ‘solidarity’ has, however, been criticized for neglecting migrant vulnerability. Mahler (1995) points out that we cannot readily assume that solidarity exists without asking how and why people help migrants. She notes that ethnic solidarity is often taken for granted as a precondition for the analysis. However, people who help may have their own agenda, and relationships can often be ambivalent. Occasionally, migrants avoid engagement in available social networks, because they feel humiliated (cf. Bækkeland-Ellingsen 2010). The giving, sharing and informal assistance that takes place in these networks can also be questioned. Giving a gift entails debt and the obligation to reciprocate (Mauss 1990). For Bourdieu (1977), gifts and debts are a form of symbolic violence that create moral and affective obligations and dependency. Bourdieu describes this as an ‘invisible form of violence, which is never recognized as such’ (Bourdieu 1977:191-192). From the giver’s position it may also be an attempt at controlling the recipient, especially in asymmetrical relations. The understanding of ‘opportunity structures’ thus becomes challenged. Help is also a form of power relation, and networks must be continuously negotiated and maintained. The boundaries between opportunities and abuse may furthermore be difficult to draw. Following Agamben (1998), bare life also means the opportunity to be used by anyone.

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*actors through processes of social interaction. Like illegality, ethnicity is produced and reproduced in social processes where it is made relevant.*
Foucault has asserted ‘there are no relations of power without resistance’ (1980:142). The question of the forms that resistance might take has, however, been discussed in anthropological theory. Khosravi (2006) notes how ‘illegals’ are paradoxically compliant or ‘perfect citizens’ as they are constrained by sovereign power and deportability. Compliance could also be said to occur because of the possibility to obtain a residence permit. Most rejected asylum-seekers seemed to be searching for a form of moral citizenship, and try to comply. Another perspective could claim that rejected asylum-seekers resist by their mere presence. Resistance in the exceptional space furthermore entails a paradox. In its symbolic form, resistance is constitutive of the sovereign power. As expressed by one official: ‘when the NGOs and the asylum-seekers make the situation worse than it actually is… they actually help us’. Both migrants’ pain and representations of it are thus symbolic in the sense of being intended to discourage more migrants from coming. Among rejected asylum-seekers, resistance may range from extreme cases like suicide attempts or hunger strikes to more or less coordinated demonstrations. All these practices must all be understood within this paradox of sovereignty and resistance. Anthropologists have, however, often studied resistance in its more mundane forms.

Scott (1985) talks about ‘everyday resistance’ to capture modes of resistance under circumstances of domination. Everyday resistance is the ‘weapons of the weak’ and includes acts such as passive non-compliance, sabotage, subtle evasion and deception; other examples are harassment, irony, disobedience, foot-dragging and not trusting the elites. For Scott, everyday resistance takes place outside the gaze of power. It can be both symbolic and material. It builds upon an attitude where one can escape the worst with a hope for the better, and it draws attention to the most immediate. Scott is of the opinion that we need to investigate intention and meaning, as well as consequences, in studying resistance. He criticizes those who draw a distinction between selfish, individual actions and collective, unselfish and coordinated action by saying that the former is not a real form of resistance. Everyday resistance is connected to self-interest and survival. Ellermann (2009) describes the practice of self-chosen unreturnability as an act of resistance. To resist being deported indicates what he calls a ‘reverse state of exception’: ‘instances where migrants under extreme circumstances strip themselves of their legal identity in order to evade state control’ (Ellermann 2009:1) However, not all instances of unreturnability are self-chosen. In some cases it was paradoxically the everyday resistance that captured migrants within the ‘exceptional space’ – for instance, because of fines,
unpaid train tickets, etc.

Scott applies a broad definition of resistance, which can be useful because it offers the opportunity to study how power and resistance also take place in other relations with NGOs, missionaries, family, helpers, other migrants as well as people who may take advantage of migrants' vulnerable position. Engaging in these networks could be understood as a form of resistance itself. Resistance can furthermore be related to acts of preserving dignity, for example as responses to forms of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1977). Let me illustrate this with a case from a church, where I often met some migrants in the beginning of my fieldwork. The church offered spiritual assistance as well as food to the migrants. Attending the meeting after the services I discovered that few of the migrants ate the food and were often sitting by themselves. When I asked why, they answered: ‘they think we are here only for the food… they treat us like children. That is why I don’t eat’ (Tariq 43). This could be understood as a form of symbolic resistance characterized by a form of self-exclusion to preserve dignity and independence, and to avoid being treated as victims. The next section situates the space of exception in the Norwegian context.

The production of illegalized space in Norway

Unauthorized migration has many faces and varies between persons, societies and different moments in history. In the USA and the south of Europe the phenomenon became increasingly debated during the 1970s. Significant parts of these economies are today dependent on migrants as a flexible and inexpensive work force (Chavez 1998; De Genova 2005). In Norway, the circumstances have been somewhat different. Before the end of the 1990s there was only sporadic concern with the phenomenon. Only towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s – the time that this research was underway – did the phenomenon receive increased attention.

Previously, it had been believed that unauthorized migrants would not stay in Norway (Düvell 2010). The many large cities that offered opportunities elsewhere did not exist; the comparatively small scale and transparent character of Norwegian society were seen as providing few opportunities in a legal culture that did not tolerate major deviations. A highly developed state system controls access to work, together with the labour unions. The relationship between the welfare state and the citizen is further characterized by a collective individualism where the citizen is largely dependent on the
state in times of crisis. Family and ethnic networks are of less importance, as assistance has become largely formalized.

Located on the periphery of the colonial powers that have often established fundamental links for non-Western immigration, Norway has been a county of emigration (Fuglerud 2001). Not until the 1960, when labour was needed in the service sector, migration to Norway from non-Western countries increased. Then, following the oil crisis in the 1970s, these workers were no longer needed. A migration stop was enforced in 1975. Bo (2002) remarks how the ensuing restrictive visa policies took on a racialized aspect as migration became more selective. Well-educated white Westerners were privileged and still allowed to come. Non-Westerners did however settle. Migration was directed towards family reunion, which is today the main way for non-Westerners to enter Norway besides the asylum system (Brochmann 2003a).

In this context, Norway has generally portrayed itself as a liberal country (Düvell 2010). Still, increasingly restrictive policies were deployed during the 1980s and 1990s (Fuglerud 2001). Requirements of entry visas and carrier sanctions limited the possibilities for migrants and refugees. At the same time, it became harder to distinguish between migrant and refugee populations, often described in terms of ‘mixed flows’.

Until recently, rejected asylum-seekers were expected to return to their home countries or to go elsewhere in Europe where living conditions were easier (Düvell 2010), for instance, because of larger ethnic networks. The opening of the borders towards the European Union and increased cooperation on asylum issues has, however, changed these complex migratory environments (Brochmann 2003b). The 1999 Schengen Agreement shifted Norwegian territorial borders towards the outer borders of Europe (Brochmann 2003b). For citizens this meant expanded freedom of movement. For asylum-seekers it meant increased militarization in surveillance technologies and border controls that were also externalized beyond European territory.

Furthermore, the mobility and space of action within the Schengen area were reduced through the Dublin Convention that Norway signed in 2001. The purpose was to keep out so-called ‘third-country citizens’, who were seen as exploiting the sovereignty of the asylum system by applying for asylum in several countries (EU 2010a). Today the related EURODAC regulation has established a Europe-wide fingerprint database for unauthorized entrants to ‘determine rapidly the member state responsible’ (EU 2010c), to enable rejected asylum-seekers to be transferred rapidly to the ‘right’ country. The Schengen Information System (SIS) transfers personal data on migrants (EU 2010b).
an era of enhanced globalization it is thus difficult to say where the territorial borders of the sovereign state are drawn. They sometimes reach far into the countries migrants come from, in the form of externalized border controls, participation in conflicts and militarized peacekeeping (cf. Fuglerud 2005).

Asylum-seekers usually reach Norway after crossing these barriers clandestinely with the help of human-smugglers. On arrival, they are registered with fingerprints, pictures, and travel information at the immigration police (PU) before they are ‘legalized’ and sent to asylum centres, where they wait for their applications to be processed. In this context, earlier studies have mostly focused on the asylum reception system and the application process. The conclusions have broadly held the asylum process to be characterized by uncertainty, cientification, pacification, isolation, humiliation and lack of activity (Valenta et al. 2010). This has created challenges to the health and socio-psychological situation, especially among children. It has been pointed out that the waiting time exacerbates these difficulties, which has often been connected to re-traumatization related to the uncertain outcome of the asylum-seeking process (Varvin 2003). Research has thus emphasized the importance and effects of empowerment-related activities, such as work, language courses and schooling, also in order to promote return migration (Valenta et al. 2010). However, the Norwegian authorities have been reluctant to offer too many opportunities, not wishing to make the application period attractive in itself. To facilitate integration for those who are recognized authorities have rather differentiated entitlements according to different statuses in the application process. Those who have received the first negative, for instance, lose the possibility to take up informal wage labour and attend language courses. Rejected asylum-seekers with a final decision are entitled to only a subsistence minimum, and have restricted rights to access to healthcare. Children, however, are both entitled and obliged to attend school.(Valenta et al. 2010; Øien and Sonsterudbråten 2011).

Despite the limited opportunities, statistics confirm a rise in numbers of rejected asylum-seekers over the time the Schengen institutions have developed. Statistics Norway (SSB) estimated that between 10,460 and 31,917 unauthorized migrants (average: 18,196) of non-European background (0.2 to 0.66% of the total population) were living unauthorized in Norway in 2006 (Zhang 2008). The majority 12325 people

\[3\] Other Scandinavian ‘comparable counties’: Denmark is guesstimated to have 0.06-0.14% or 1000 to 5000 unauthorized migrants; Sweden, 0.09–0.13% or 8–12,000 (Vogel 2009). Earlier in the 2000s it was estimated that between 4.7 and 8 million people were living without legal permission in Europe. Recent estimates indicate 1.8 to 3.9 million because of regularization
were estimated to be rejected asylum-seekers. Although these figures are uncertain because of the clandestine character of the phenomenon, estimates of rejected asylum-seekers living ‘inside the system’ point in the same direction. Although many of these may well be in the process of repatriation, some 68 rejected asylum-seekers were living in asylum camps in 2003 – compared to 4000 people in 2010 (Valenta et al. 2010; Thommessen et al. 2003).

The first debates about rejected asylum-seekers in Norway also correlate in time with the invention of the Schengen institutions. In the late 1990s, the first debates related to church asylum, whereby rejected asylum-seekers sought protection from deportation (Norges Kristne Råd 1998). In the 2000s, controversies became more extreme, and several hunger strikes, asylum marches and demonstrations made the phenomenon increasingly visible. NGOs and faith-based organizations criticizing the authorities’ efforts to deport rejected asylum-seekers also started to take shape. Establishing the camps at Lier and Fagerli in 2006 and 2007 must be understood in this context. They were created after the authorities decided to put 600 so-called ‘unreturnable’ asylum-seekers on the streets in 2004 (Brekke and Søholdt 2005). The ensuing dispute between NGOs, the municipalities and the central state regarding who was to take responsibility for them led to the opening of the camps.

A series of articles published by the newspaper Aftenposten in 2007 created greater awareness of ‘paperless’ migrants in the public debate (Samuelsen, Stokke, and Aale 2008). Later, the opening of a clandestine healthcare clinic by the Church City Mission and the Red Cross in Oslo in 2009. The organizations emphasized the right to give humanitarian assistance to people who had limited access to healthcare in the official healthcare system (Ottesen 2008). The debate around these events has been highly polarized at times, with rejected asylum-seekers often seen as either enemies of the state and offenders in both legal and moral terms, or as victims of the state and extremely vulnerable (Øien and Sønsterudbråten 2011; Kjærre 2010).

While the migrants have received some support, the authorities have also introduced a range of restrictive measures: deportation campaigns, internal controls and further regulation of the possibilities to take up formal wage labour. Legislation also sets the limits to family life; and since 2010 it has been illegal to provide assistance that facilitate migrants stay (LOV-2008-05-15-35). In other countries, amnesties have been programmes and the expansion of the EU which incorporated migrants from new member states (Düvell 2010).
granted, but not in Norway. Bureaucrats, officials often stated that they think the numbers are rising, even though the government claimed success in deportation in 2010 (Rejeringen 2011).

It is often said that it is the opening of the borders towards Europe through the Schengen agreement that has led to the increase in unauthorized migration to Norway. Another perspective sees the Schengen institutions as a barrier to leaving. From this perspective it is possible to talk of the production of illegalized space. Rejected asylum-seekers in Norway increasingly find the rest of Europe closed to them because of these new sovereignties. They are illegalized not only in Norway, but over the whole Schengen area. They are sent back to Norway if they are found elsewhere, and Norway is also the only European country where they can seek to re-open their cases if they had first applied for asylum there. Instead of arguing that migratory trends found in other European countries have also entered Norway, I find it more fruitful to understand this illegalized space as a consequence of the changes in these institutional powers.

Research on unauthorized migration has often been interconnected with the state’s need for surveillance and control (De Genova 2005). In Norway research has mostly focused upon the effects of various programmes and actions to promote return migration, return programmes, information campaigns and ‘voluntary return assistance’ (Brekke 2008; Valenta et al. 2010; Brekke and Søholdt 2005). Such studies have often noted the limits of such programmes and institutions to achieve their goals, and have pointed out the difficult living conditions of migrants. Brekke and Søholdt (2005) evaluated the extreme case of such restrictive action where ‘unreturnables’ were put on the street in 2004. The desired effects of return migration were limited, but the incident created an extremely difficult situation for the migrants.

Hjelde’s (2009, 2010) has furthermore pointed out the difficult health situation for unauthorized migrants. While the right to emergency healthcare is granted, financial constraints often keep people from buying medicines, which reduce their actual access to healthcare. Fear of deportation deters migrants from actively seeking the healthcare to which they are entitled, and irregularities in the healthcare system prevent them from access in case of urgent need. Healthcare is not my focus in this study, but it could be added that not having documents as such is involved as a stigma. Many migrants experience mistrust from healthcare personnel. Healthcare institutions also hand out bills. Although the migrants are not necessarily obliged to pay, this may prevent them from seeking healthcare later, as they are afraid of trouble in connection with unpaid
bills. Many seek solutions like self-medication or assistance elsewhere. This must be seen as a background for the lives presented here. The situation where migrants were put on the street in 2004 still showed that migrants were not entirely alone, but could also gain some support from NGOs and other networks. The following pages glimpses into these networks. After a brief discussion of ethics and methodology, I will start out in the waiting reception centres.

Ethical considerations

I have presented the problem of representing unauthorized migrants as an ethical and epistemological problem with political implications. There are multiple ethical dilemmas connected to research on this complex category of people. Vulnerable migrants may feel forced to participate in studies like this one. It may also be re-traumatizing or humiliating to talk about their lives. People may be in desperate need of help. Some clearly hoped that I could help them, and I found it important to not give false promises, although I tried to assist with practical or health-related problems. Others found it humiliating to receive help.

Brunowskis & Bjerk (2008) ask if we should do research on this topic at all, and if so, from whose perspective? Research could potentially harm individuals or certain groups among the people we study. To be sure, I have repeatedly reminded the people I followed about my role as a researcher to secure informed consent. I have protected the anonymity of migrants through pseudonyms and distortions of personal information where I found it necessary. Participants were allowed to retreat from participating if they wished, and three of the migrants wanted to do so. They related this to their psychological condition and fear. Two of them came back later and found it important to create awareness about people in their situation. Throughout my work on this thesis and other related projects, these ethical questions have been important. They were also important for my interlocutors who asked, ‘how are you going to use it?’ There may be difficulties in bringing some of these topics into the open. Brunowskis & Bjerk remark:

There can simultaneously be strong reasons both for and against entering into research on a controversial topic; information can be both harmful and helpful to marginalized populations. How far should a researcher’s responsibility go in terms of how the information is used? (Brunowskis and Bjerk 2008:49)
An answer could be found in Johansen (2003), who has suggested that the subjective reality of our worlds is ‘hanging by the thin tread of conversation’. Critical voices have also to be asked, do we really want to know? This view has also been promoted in recent articles that queried whether it is ethical not to ask questions on the issue (Brunovskis 2010). My motivation started with the conviction that there is a need to know, combined with curiosity about what happened to people who disappeared from the asylum centres at a time where this topic had scarcely entered the public debate.

Methodological considerations

Representation relates not only to ethical and political challenges with regard to how anthropologists represent their interlocutors, but also to epistemological challenges concerning how migrants represent themselves. Although ‘illegal immigrants’ generally live clandestinely, some rejected asylum-seekers may receive extensive public attention by telling their stories. Brunowskis & Bjerkan (2008) claim that their stories and suffering are a form of capital. They could also be seen as a form of resistance. Unlike the case of people who are clandestinely in a country only in order to work, rejected asylum-seekers may believe that telling their stories can support their cases (Khosrawi 2010). On the other hand, structural circumstances often deny them a public voice of their own. A part of the illegalized space is also an illegalization of narrative consequence (see Appendix-2 picture-3). Illegalization is as a form of structural violence where migrants’ voices are often muted and silenced (Chavez 2007) The migrants I followed seemed to carry a lot of silenced knowledge. Many explained that their difficult past was something they wanted to avoid talking about, or they were afraid it would affect their cases. The approach chosen here privileges their voices in relation to how people appeared to me during participant observation and interviews.

Recruiting informants and conducting fieldwork among a stigmatized group where many also lived clandestinely has been time-consuming. It has not been easy to establish access and the trust required to gain a deeper understanding. Despite challenges, I have met with nearly 60 individuals of various backgrounds, whom I have interviewed and followed around. I have also met an unknown number of more or less peripheral persons who are not a formalized part of this study. Most of my informants were single men in their twenties and thirties. Nine were women and four were children. The variation in age among the participants ranged from 18 to 67, with the exception of the four children. At the time of my first interview, the participants had been in Norway
without authorization from 1 to 16 years, with an average of 3.5 years, and had been in
Norway on average for 2.5 years before receiving the ‘final negative’ (6 years all
together). Therefore, most spoke Norwegian or English. I used an interpreter only a few
times, and without any success, as most migrants seemed to have difficulties talking
about what many saw as a shameful situation in the presence of other people from their
own ethnic group. When allowed, I recorded the interviews. Some of the migrants I met
were travelling in and out of Norway and in and out of situations connected to varying
legal statuses also after their second ‘negative’. They generally came from the countries
Norway receives most asylum-seekers from: mostly from refugee-producing countries
like Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Ethiopia (see Table 1 Appendix-1), all of which
are known for human rights violations, war, conflict and poverty. I have tried to follow
12 of the migrants fairly closely in everyday life over a longer period, a task that has been
difficult due to the fugitive character of their lives. The persons I have met are not
representative of any larger group, but concerned with their illegalized situation.

Fear, shame, social inequality, mistrust, lack of motivation, lack of well-being,
moving frequently and long working hours are all central features of their lives which
affected my research. After a while I was able to establish contact through entry points
such as organizations, churches, institutions and various kinds of shops, clubs and
restaurants. Whereas other researchers have established access through entry points like
clandestine healthcare clinics and places well known for recruiting migrants to informal
labour, there were no such places in Oslo when I started. Establishing access thus
became a multi-sited project, as did the fieldwork itself. Churches, mosques, fishing trips,
cabins in the mountains, demonstrations, political meetings, workplaces, conferences,
cafés and bars, shopping centres, their ‘homes’, various organizations, band practice, law
offices – these were some of places where the trail of migrants led me. I have also tried
to stay updated on documents, asylum cases, e-mails, newspapers, various organizations
and other information, as well as speaking with immigration officials and people who
helped the migrants. The main part of my research was conducted in the Oslo region
between January and September 2009, supplemented by several post-fieldwork inquiries
and follow-up interviews in 2010. The research also builds upon interviews I conducted
for an evaluation of the waiting reception centres (Valenta et al. 2010). A few of the
interviews were conducted by other researchers on that project. During spring and
summer 2010 I also conducted interviews for the project EUMARGINS where I used
photography as an inquiry for understanding the experiences of some of the migrants.
Following a method used by Brekke (2004) I asked the migrants living at the waiting reception centres to take photos of things that they found significant in everyday life (Appendix-2). In this way I wanted to involve the migrants in shaping the research process and the stories about their lives.

In the beginning of my fieldwork, people who were in contact with the migrants acted as gatekeepers who controlled my possibilities to establish access, and in this way also the information about the migrants. It became paramount to build relations of trust with many of these actors. Some of these gatekeepers thought that it could be a good thing to give a voice to people who usually did not have one. Some of them were ‘para-legals’ or people who helped the migrants. Through this method I was also able to understand more about the context that the migrants were a part of. To some extent it became possible to recruit informants through people I already knew using the ‘snowballing’ method. Some migrants were eager to share their experiences, whereas others found it difficult. Many had a clear story to tell. Others said it was good to have somebody to talk to and encouraged me in my studies. Some people were alone and in desperate need of social networks. Others again were active in various kinds of networks, and had contact with other people in similar situations.

Not all gatekeepers and migrants I met were receptive to my project. Comments like ‘I don’t think it is going to help them’ and questions like ‘why do you want to write about this?’ were common. Some migrants also turned toward me with their experienced otherness when I explained my project. These voices told me a lot about how the world can look like from their point of view. ‘This study is not for us’, ‘why should I talk to you, nobody believes anything we say anyway’, ‘Norwegians don’t want to help us, they want to be entertained by our misery’. And when I approached them with my embodied anticipations, I also had to go through a whole range of reflections, feelings and emotions connected to the very same suspicions, feelings of otherness, as well as sympathy. Politics shape the embodied ways in which people perceive, sense and turn towards each other in everyday life. When I introduced myself as a student, Ali (24) provocatively explained to me how I would become the next person to reject their asylum applications:

I sometimes get angry when people say that [that they are studying]. I wanted to go to school you see, but I can’t. I never got any education. All I know I have learned by myself. I guess you have to write about yourself as well, so you can write that. Why I feel anger when you come here as a Norwegian student. (Ali-24-Somalia)
My role as a Norwegian and a student influenced the study. This did not mean that Ali did not want to participate. Like others, he also said it was a good thing: ‘If you are going to work in the UDI… at least you know how we live.'
2. The camps

After approximately an hour’s drive from Oslo, I reach Lier Waiting Reception Centre, at that time one of the two semi-open camps for rejected asylum-seekers in Norway. I drive up in front of the broad metal gate. The staff see me in the surveillance camera, and the gate opens slowly. I drive past the smaller gate where the residents go in and out using a special ID-key card. The camp is quiet in the morning fog. A few of the people staying there are sitting at a table in front of the main building, talking and sharing a cigarette. A man is sitting alone at another table with his face in his hands. I meet Jengar and ask if he has the time to see me. He laughs, ‘of course I have the time, I am only here and there is nothing else’.

When I arrive at Fagerli, the other camp, I drive past residents who are often walking lonely along the road. At the gate I am met by the staff, who lock me inside. In the hall I meet Mohammad, a young Somali. He shows me around the camp, and explains, ‘I think that nobody see us here. I think they have forgotten us, and when we cannot go back… this is not a good place… always fighting’. Pacing up and down the hall, another man tries to catch my attention: ‘waiting in the waiting reception centres… waiting in waiting reception centres…’. Mohammad had been waiting for my arrival for over a week. He did not think I could help him, but said that when he heard I would come it was something to look forward to. It was an event that gave some direction to the time he was spending in the centre.

In this chapter I write about how the environment at Lier and Fagerli shaped everyday life and social relations among the people there. For Agamben’s (2005), camps are the paradigmatic symbols of state sovereignty as it materialize in various forms; from Guantanamo, Nazi death camps and refugee detention centres. The two camps could be seen in this way, but were marketed as ‘a voluntary accommodation service’ and run by private companies on behalf of the UDI. Jengar (25) referred to them as ‘empty places’. Among the residents, the camps had many names that echoed their controversial genealogies and the experiences of living there: ‘zoo’, ‘madhouse’ ‘concentration camp’ etc. According to the Norwegian Minister of Justice and Police, however: ‘The waiting reception centres represent Norway’s goodwill towards those whose applications for asylum have been rejected’ (Storberget 2010: my traslation). These camps were still the only offer that Norwegian authorities had for single, rejected asylum-seekers. Since migrants were to be entitled to a minimum standard of accommodation, food and healthcare, the camps were opened as places for those put on the street in 2004 (Brekke and Soholdt 2005). Criticism from politicians and organizations, mostly on the political
left, and conflict between the municipalities and the central authorities over who should take care of the migrants led to the creation of the centres. This meant that central authorities relieved the municipalities of this responsibility.

I use the term ‘camps’ to point out the difference from regular asylum centres and the role that these camps played in migration control. Their underlying idea was to motivate for repatriation. They were also meant to have a ‘signal effect’ to deter other asylum-seekers from coming to Norway and make migrants leave by having a limited standard. The camps were thus symbols of the political order.

While I conducted my fieldwork, families with children were allowed to stay in regular asylum centres. There was also a special centre for unaccompanied minors who were to be deported as soon as they became 18. Some waited for documents required for repatriation. Some thought that remaining visible to the bureaucratic gaze, ‘inside the system’, would increase their chances of getting legalized. In contrast to regular reception centres, there were no families and children at Lier and Fagerli, which had room for about 100 persons each, mostly men. While people at the ordinary reception centres received healthcare services through the municipal system and could prepare their own food Lier and Fagerli had a special healthcare centre and migrants received food in the canteen. Another difference was that the camps were staffed 24 hours a day.

The gates

High fences and electronic gates surrounded both camps; still, they were semi-open, as residents were able to go in and out, passing through electronic gates where they had to register with an ID key card. The gate at the Lier was a contested symbol and landmark for those who lived and worked there. Politicians, and NGOs that supported the migrants, also used the gate as a symbol of what was seen as dehumanizing conditions. For the staff and the police, it was important to know who was inside the area at any given time, for instance to facilitate deportation. First I was told that the fence were there to protect the residents from criminals and traffickers. However, the women at Lier (approximately seven persons) were placed outside the fence in a woman’s house.

The gate was also used to stop unwanted migrants who did not behave from entering the camp, and keep critics and the media away, as their presence was sometimes seen to exacerbate conflicts. In cases where residents had initiated resistant behaviour, as was the case with several hunger strikes, it was important to not give them attention and encouragement. Clergy, missionaries, politicians and other well-meaning helpers were
sometimes denied access. The gates were also used to control the routines of those who lived there. Residents wanting to leave the camps could not be away for more than three days if they wanted to keep their place. If they were away longer, they would have to re-apply. Some of my informants referred to the gate as ‘the boundary between Norway and Nowhere’. Mohammed explained how walking through the gate embodied an illegalized identity: ‘This gate really makes you feel like you are criminal… they say it is to protect us. What do they mean by that? The problems are already inside this camp, it is here the problems are’. Khalim (23) explained, ‘If I go in and out a certain time each day, they will write it down and tell the police. If I work, they will tell the police. That is what the gate is for.’

In this perspective, the camps was a variant of Foucault’s (1995) notion of Bentham’s panoptic prison, and the transformative capacity of total institutions to discipline and shape their subject by giving them the feeling of always being under surveillance (Goffman 1967). In both camps, most of the areas were monitored by video surveillance, so the staff could sit in their offices inside the camp, watching. Unlike Bentham’s panoptic prison that divides people into separate cells with the paradoxical function of making them equal, the people in Lier and Fagerli lived together, four to a room. This gave them scant room for private life. Only a few activities were offered: a gym, some ping-pong tables, a children’s pool table, one TV, limited access to the Internet and some other games. The camps were clearly experienced as places of misrecognition, as exemplified by their location. To facilitate deportation and repatriation, they were intentionally sited near central areas, but in rural places with scattered population.

In the camp

Staff at the camps tried to facilitate returns, through obligatory motivating talks and a project at Lier called ‘return in dignity’ that offered some basic training like mechanic courses, computer training and English lessons to those who signed a return agreement. Otherwise, there were few efforts to shape the migrants’ subjectivity in any empowering direction that could strengthen their possibilities for repatriation. The staff often classified the residents into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ or ‘serious’ and ‘not serious’ migrants. They often found their job difficult. Many reported that they had been hit, kicked, threatened or insulted by residents. A previous leader had resigned because working there was like ‘fuelling the fires of hell’. Another explained how he had been threatened and involved in
serious fights several times. He seemed to have ambivalent relations to the residents. Like several others, he would warn me that it was not possible to believe the migrants. Although he tried to express empathy, he did not sympathize with their cases. He said: ‘you can’t hire a doll to work here, this place is too hard […] I tell people who do wrong things here, and people I met who work on the outside, that they should not break the law if they are good Muslims’. Migrants, who experienced their encounters with staff as racist often commented upon this kind of lack of cultural sensitivity. Still, the personnel generally did empathize with the migrants and there were many friendly relations between them. Staff members doubted the camps potential to promote repatriation. They indicated that the camps did not create a good environment for talking about these things. They could refer to some successes, but these were limited. As one staff member said, ‘These people have been through a lot… I don’t think the living conditions here will make them leave.’ Many staffers pointed out that the waiting time limited the migrants’ ability to think about returning but created a difficult health situation that overshadowed everything. Many conflicts and the ensuing investments in security served to reinforce the distance between residents and staff, commented upon by both parties (cf. Valenta et al. 2010).

Some residents were regarded as criminals with a long record. Originally the camps were meant only for healthy persons not connected to criminality, substance abuse or psychological problems. However, internal evaluations indicated that many of the residents were struggling with these problems (Næsset 2007). According to the residents, the frustrations of life in the camps were also producing problems. According to the police it was a challenge that some could neither be deported nor legally sent to prison for more than a short time because their crimes were not serious enough (PU 2009). Both residents and staff, as well as migrants outside the camps, associated these places with conflicts, isolation, substance abuse and criminality. On the other hand, many of the residents tried to avoid this stigma. To be compliant was important for their chances of gaining legal status. Many experienced being labelled as criminals without having done anything wrong. Although some took up informal work, many found few opportunities outside. Most had small networks. Although staying in the camps was said to be ‘voluntary’, the residents often experienced them as a concentration of problems and an enforced ‘community’. Fears of being deported shaped some migrants’ lives – but many also categorized themselves as ‘unreturnable’, which indicates that they experienced
some sense of respite from these fears. This also gave an opportunity to negotiate illegalized status: ‘I am not illegal, I am unreturnable and inside the system’.

In both camps, the residents were a mix of several ethnic and national groups. These differences were often mentioned as a source of conflicts related to misunderstandings and language problems, which contributed to the experience of otherness. Many were also critical to the ‘voluntary return programmes’ offered by IOM. They said that finances were not their main problem, and sometimes interpreted return assistance as a racialized price put upon their lives. For instance, returning Iraqis were given 35 000 NOK, whereas Somalis got only 10 000 NOK. Earlier studies of asylum centres have pointed out that meeting points between staff and residents are often experienced as racialized encounters because they are structured as relations between an empowered Norwegian staff and disempowered foreigners (Valenta et al. 2010). At both Lier and Fagerli, the staff members were mostly Norwegians, but also former migrants. Residents still held that staff members were racist.

**Conflict and humiliation**

A clear characteristic of the camps was the limited possibilities to take part in meaningful activities. This created an imbalance in the reciprocity of social exchange between migrants and personnel, turning the residents into clients. It strengthened hierarchical relations and enabled the personnel to use their position to give as a mechanism for control. Not long before I started my fieldwork the camps introduced an allowance of 100 NOK a week called ‘pocket money’ (AID 2007). This was barely enough for a packet of 20 cigarettes and not enough to cover transport into the nearest cities of Oslo and Drammen. On the other hand, and like the other things that were handed out – soap, toilet paper, clothes and so on – the money was used and experienced to control the residents. Those who did not ‘behave’ might get their allowance reduced. Several residents said it was humiliating to have to ask for things. As one pointed out at a meeting arranged by the municipalities where he was invited to speak:

We have to ask for everything that we need, since we are not allowed to work by law, and only get 100 NOK per week; it is very humiliating for an adult, without disability, to have to ask for toilet paper, toothpaste, soap, clothes etc. all the time. Furthermore, the staff (baby sitters) working in the reception, who are supposed to help us with sympathy, are instead aggressive and unfriendly, and sometimes they insult and humiliate us even
more. If we insult them back, they call the police and the police will take such a person
into custody for at least 24 hours. (Okeny 2010)

Goffman (1967) notes how total institutions are often characterized by conflict spaces in
the areas where the staff meet personnel. The photos I asked the migrants to prepare for
the interviews clearly supported this statement (See Appendix-2). A major part of the
pictures indicated various conflicts in the spaces where migrants encountered the staff.
Main conflict zones were the kitchen, the reception desk and the Internet room. ‘We
have to ask for hot water if we want to have a cup of tea’, Hamid (25) explained. Other
migrants had broken the electric kettle, so they were not allowed to use it any more.

For all the migrants in this study, access to Internet was central. Important daily
tasks related to gathering information about what happened in the UDI, deportation
plans, changes laws, and in places where they could be deported. Internet was also
important to gather evidence for their asylum cases and to keep in contact with friends
and family. Not having access to this information reinforced the experience of
uncertainty and isolation and contributed to various kinds of rumours and speculations.
The computer room at Lier had four computers shared by 100 persons. Internet access
was better at Fagerli, but the computers were old and slow. Furthermore, the computer
room was often closed because staff members said that the residents were sabotaging it.
Earlier there had been a wireless connection for those who had laptops, but the
password had now been changed as a punishment. This kind of collective punishment
could be seen as a source of conflict, which accelerated a scismogenetic process between
residents and the staff (Baetson 2000).

Similar kinds of conflict related to the canteen. Pictures from this area were
related to conflicts over food. Although the lack of activity led to an unstructured
rhythm of sleep and everyday life, residents had to queue up to get food every day, at
specific hours, which created a forced rhythm of time. Conflicts related to how residents
were not able to decide what to eat or when. The canteen was associated with noise and
sabotage. Several complained that they sometimes were given food that was past the
expiry date, or that they wanted food that was familiar to them. Some said that they
were hungry or did not get the food they needed because they had diabetes or other problems.
The quality of the menu was however not necessarily the problem itself.

Anthropological studies of social exchange identify food as especially important
for social organization and symbolic interaction. Whom you can eat together with and
whom you cannot with says something about belonging and identity (Atkins and Bowler
To be able to decide what you eat is a main marker of being independent. In the camps, food became a symbol and a medium of everyday resistance (Scott 1985). Disempowerment and the unknown future drew attention to things that were close and near. Many migrants wanted to get food that was familiar to them, food from their own country or halal food. This could be interpreted as an expression of the experience of being alienated and far away from what is familiar. This estrangement and lack of ability to decide over one’s own life and nurture led to violent reactions. Kahrim at Fagerli said:

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You have to stand in line to get food. It is difficult because people here have different cultures. There is always fighting. They broke the windows. Last time… Different people… Bathrooms are dirty. We cannot tell anybody… […] Something is making me confused. They spend a lot of money to keep us here. All of this money for nothing… We could pay taxes. In five months people have broken five televisions. They are wasting money if they don’t give us work… half a million on windows lately. People who work here are also tired.(Kharim-29-Iraq)
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Often relations among the residents were the most complicated. Kharim was afraid that the Muslims, which were in the majority, should find out that he was not religious, and I had to promise not to tell anyone. Many noted how small problems became big. Jengar at Lier explained about the TV room:

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It is a small TV. Today everybody wants to watch football. Maybe 30 persons… It is a small TV and it might be difficult. Especially if you sit in the back… It is better with a big TV. There are many problems in the TV room. Fighting among the people who sit in the back and the people in the front. When someone stands up they fight. It feels like being in the waiting room of an office. Small problems become big problems here.(Jengar-26-Iraq)
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Some experienced other residents as a threat, and the staff was not in a position to protect them. When I entered the camp together with the larger research team, one resident took out a 20 cm long knife he claimed to carry to protect himself from other residents and showed it to one of the researchers. He had been in a fight with another residents who had tried to rip out his eyeball. A picture he had of himself on his cell phone showed the violent consequences. And so, he carried the knife for protection.(cf. Valenta et al. 2010:88)

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While relationships among migrants were often characterized by conflict, they also featured some degree of control. The choice to return was not only an individual
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matter, but also a choice that were influenced by others. At Fagerli, Kurds – the largest single group (50%) – were referred to as a national association by some staff members. A young Kurdish boy who was one of the few who had decided to return had first wanted to be interviewed, but was pressured to not talk to me about this by others. The decision to return must similarly be understood as collective decision.

**Everyday life at Lier**

Conflicts were major events that shaped the motions of time in the camps. However, everyday life was generally characterized by passivity and waiting. Jengar, in Lier camp, said, like many others, that the time there was characterized by few meaningful activities and that he had wasted much of his life. This empty time provided room for unpleasant thoughts. His experiences tell us much about the frustration in the camps:

> If you just sit, eat and sleep. You get tired mentally. If you think much…aagh… If I sit alone, I think much. I will think that it is eight years… and I have three times a day to eat. … We have to eat at these times… If we want to or not… If we do not we have to wait until the next day. …You cannot have control. […] It is difficult to go out. When you sit in this room, you think about the prison. Everything that was difficult. My stomach starts to hurt, and I become sick. It hurts here [showing me his back where he claimed to have been hit by police in his home country]. This is how I remember everything. (Jengar-26-Lier)

The few activities left Jengar with an embodied reflection upon his past. Like the others, he was concerned about his family in the home country, his inability to send remittances, the possibility of deportation, but also traumatic memories of war, imprisonment, starving and flight in Iraq. Earlier research has indicated how the experience of uncertainty may recall unpleasant events in the past (Varvin 2003). This was clearly a part of Jengar’s concerns.

Jengar (26) was born in the Iraqi part of Kurdistan in 1984. He came to Norway in 2002 but received ‘the negative’ in 2006. He found the journey to Norway extremely difficult; it is not something he wants to talk about. As with many other things he has experienced, he tried to forget, but the waiting time brought these troublesome memories back. Jengar contrasted his story to his first period in Norway. He describes it as a good period; he had two jobs, and he felt included and he tried to send remittances to his family. He emphasized that it was meaningful to contribute. At this time he sometimes lived with his father, who had a flat in Oslo. Jengar was afraid of returning
because of his political background. He decided to stay, and tried to cope. He said, ‘when you live in a place like this, you forget who you are, and you lose your self-confidence.’ Jengar had been living in the deportation camp for four years and found few other opportunities outside. He was among the persons a staff member described as having ‘grown stuck in the centre’. Still, he tried to cope, by a smile, or by giving the impression that he was doing well.

**The rooms**

The first pictures Jengar showed me were of the room he shared with three others. In the room he had a shelf with some CDs and movies. On the wall some clothes were hanging beside some pictures of his family. In addition to his laptop, these things were pretty much all that he owned. He also had a Norwegian flag on the top of the cupboard. It symbolized his hopes. After eight years in Norway, he wanted to consider himself as a Norwegian but said: ‘Inside this camp we are only foreigners, they say I am Kurdish, because the Kurdish people never get work permits.’ Like many others, he understood ‘the negative’ as collective decision, not one based on the facts of his individual case.

Jengar’s room stood out from many of the other rooms. The other rooms bore witness to the experience of temporariness, with few things on the walls and few efforts at making them seem like a home. Jengar had tried to make himself comfortable. On the table by the window he had put a fan to improve the air in the crowded room where it was sometimes difficult to sleep because of the other people snoring or making sounds. Unlike other residents, Jengar said that he was quite satisfied. The people he lived with respected each other, although they did not talk much together as they quickly ran out of things to talk about. Instead, Jengar watched movies on his all-important laptop. One of the other men, also from Kurdistan, read books. He explained: ‘when you are not allowed to be a part of this world you have to do something else.’ Quite normal activities often interpreted as a way of handling a difficult situation. Another roommate spent little time in the camp; Jengar thought he had a job or a girlfriend outside, but he hadn’t asked. He was more concerned about the mental condition of the third roommate, who seemed to be descending into passivity.

**Other people**

According to Jengar, other frustrated people in the camp were the main problem. In relation to them he asked himself why he had to live here since he had not been doing
anything wrong. In many of the rooms there was fighting. To cope with time some would get drunk or use drugs as self-medication. People would often insult each other. Jengar could understand why, with so few recognized ways to participate in society, some of them would opt for criminal or illegalized livelihoods. But he himself did not want to sell drugs or steal from drunken people: ‘I mostly stay here, but I understand the people who collect bottles, or fix and sell computers that others have thrown away. I understand why people work at black-market jobs’. The conflicts made an impression on Jengar:

I have been here since they opened, so I know all the things that are going on here... They break a lot of stuff. Only four months ago someone I know broke all the windows in the restaurant and the TV room. All the windows... (Jengar-26-Iraq)

The only thing Jengar pointed out as a good thing was the gym. ‘The gym is good. I use the room once in a while; they want us to use it so that we don’t think so much.’ However he believed that other activities were not very popular because of people’s difficult situation. Like the others, he complained that they were children’s activities.

The metaphor of being a child was used by many of the migrants to voice their disempowerment; some called the staff ‘baby sitters’. One staff member said it was like working in a ‘kindergarten’. Kharim noted, ‘like children, they break a lot of stuff’. Children are controlled: they cannot contribute and are shaped by others. This is how many expressed clientification and marginalization.

**Activity as a tactic to avoid thinking**

Being included as an adult means to participate. Jengar’s strategy for experiencing recognition was to help the staff and bridge the hierarchical gap between them. To help the people in the office with painting or interpretation was a good way to avoid thinking about difficulties. But he added that it was important to not be too good buddies with the staff, as that could get him in trouble with other residents. Whereas others resisted and saw the staff as crazy or racist, Jengar’s strategy was to contribute. He wanted to avoid the drug abuse that several people explained as an outcome of so many single men living together in one place without family and children, and a strategy to forget. Jengar’s strategy for forgetting was to do something.

If I have something to do it is not a problem. Sometimes the people in the office ask if I can help... I say yes. It is good to do something. No matter what... I just like to do something to avoid thinking. Not just sit and sleep. One day they asked me to help, and
I spent the whole day. I could have done the job in two hours, but I did not want it to end. (Jengar-26-Fagerli)

Jengar had a generally good relationship to the staff. However, there were some people he did not approve of.

Some of them are without empathy. Some speak to everyone, but others are not quite... not good [...] For instance if we say the food is outdated and not good, they say: This is what we have for you. Go back to your country. This is not racist, but it is racist. (Jengar-26-Fagerli)

Jengar’s strategy was to behave according to given norms. In this way he tried to fight the stigma attached to people in his position. Although he had some friends outside the camp, it was difficult to stay in touch with them. He was afraid that he was no good for them. Experiencing his situation as related to shame, he tried to avoid dependency on and contact with friends outside. He connected this experience to honour and his cultural background as well as his difficulties in participating in social exchange relations.

In my culture, if I have food and a place to sleep, I cannot ask. I have 100 NOK a week to buy cigarettes, and I have some food. If I want to see my friends in town I walk for three hours to get there, and three hours back again. I do not tell my friends. I tell them that I come by bus. If my friends know that I am walking they want to give me money. But I don’t want to receive money.... If my friend gives me money I cannot be my friend anymore... I have to give him something in return. (Jengar-26-Iraq)

Jengar still had a small network of friends and distant relatives outside. His strategy of staying in the camp and not receiving gifts was clearly related to dignity. What could have been an option for Jengar would have been to stay with his father. However, his father had been rejected asylum both in Norway and Sweden. After many years of drifting in and out of illegality, he fell ill and finally died from a heart attack in Sweden. Jengar related this to how his father suffered from the distress created by the situation.

He was in Norway for around 8 or 9 years before he went to Sweden. He got rejected there as well. He had a Norwegian passport for one year. But they took it away from him... He was part of a group [MUF] who first got permission to stay, but then they later got rejected. He got sick and died in Sweden. (Jengar-26-Iraq)
When I asked Jengar about his future he said that he often thought about how his father ended his life. Still he was mostly concerned with the small immediate things in the camp and he hoped that I could spread information about the need to improve some of the facilities. Disempowerment drew attention to ameliorating the most immediate problems. By focusing on these things Jengar avoided the larger problems.

Jengar’s story highlights the intricate connections between the past, present and future. Stability and activities that offer a direction to temporal space are crucial for people’s well-being, and the possibility to form coherent narratives with an ending is fundamental for maintaining a meaningful existence (Desjarlais, 2005; Good, 1994). ‘Thinking’ was for Jengar a collapse of temporal space. The only way to avoid it was through activity, of which he was deprived. I take the experience of this illegalized time to be what many in the camps talked about as ‘mental torture’.

**Becoming crazy**

When I came to meet Mohammad (31) he emphasized the importance of being able to talk to somebody ‘normal’. He said it was difficult to have meaningful conversations with the other people at Fagerli. Among the residents, stories flourished about how roommates changed character and went crazy. There were stories of people running out into the woods praying to God, people who had been running naked around the camp and people who retreated into their own life hiding away in places in the camp. Two of my informants were transferred to psychiatric institutions. Another, who was diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by at least two psychologists, was dumped on the street by the police after an aggressive reaction. The name ‘mental torture facilities’ which was given to the camps echoed the actual experiences and fears of becoming ‘crazy’:

There are two Africans here who have become completely sick. They see things that are not there. They talk with themselves. Another eats and go to the gym every day. He has done this every day for several months. He eats and goes to the gym. There he just sits. Another talks to himself. Others have other problems. For instance there is one who has started to ask about everything. ‘why are you doing this… why are you writing… why are you reading this… why are you watching TV?’. It is hard to live here. (Jengar-26-Iraq)

The manner in which the residents experienced time was decisive for their mental health and social abilities. The experience of one’s relative waiting time, compared to others as degenerating, led Asis to seek the return programme, so that he could go back to his
children in Ethiopia who were getting older and had started to ask for him. He still feared being imprisoned because of his political activities, but he said that being in prison there was better than the open-ended time he experienced in Norway. In prison, he would know when he would get out, although this could take eight years. If he should die there, he would see it as dying for his children, his political cause and at least for something:

People become crazy when they live here… People become crazy living in waiting reception centres… I am afraid of being crazy and useless. Many people are dependent on me and it is better for me to take the risk […] I look at the people who live here. They have lived here for a long time… They become useless and mentally sick. Although it is dangerous for me to go back I don’t want to be here. I would rather die in my home country than be useless. Then I can die for something, it is better than to wait here and suffer.(Asis-41-Ethiopia)

Narratives describing the camps as worse than a prison were common. At one level these stories related to how many thought that Norwegian prisons were better. First, they were places of security. Secondly they had better living standards: swimming pools, good food and you were allowed to work and do something. This shows how migrants construct themselves in relation to other people in Norway – not how the situation is seen by the authorities, that there are many people in the world (often where the migrants come from) who are far worse off. The ‘prison narratives’ that many people told also said something about the need to see an ending to a difficult temporality that was experienced as open-ended (cf. Brekke 2004).

We cannot live for a long time here, because many become crazy from being here. To be in prison is better, because in a prison you become free, you have a sentence and know how long you are going to sit there. At Fagerli you don’t know what the next day in your life will bring. Staying here kill you psychologically.(Hamid-25-Iran)

The pictures Hamid took were mostly about things that had been broken or destroyed in the camp. He also felt that he had to control his anger, but tried not to break things. Hamid told me it was difficult for him, because they made him reflect on his own existence. He said it was frustrating how things were destroyed and changing all the time. ‘When I took these pictures, I started to think that I was no one here, I got very frustrated, and I realized who I was.’ Hamid looked tired and very confused, but he wanted to talk about his situation:
I came from Iran... I was 22 years old, and I was young and active...now I have changed [...] we have a lot of problems here. [...] The others are like me. They have problems. The people at the reception desk are nice to me. But people who live here, they think about nothing...Take a shower, boil water. To do something, but if you ask them, they say they cannot think about anything. They are tired. So and so... If you ask them, they say: ‘We cannot think about things.’ They just think about papers. Positive, negative, Why are they here. Why they are lying here. Why we are here and the other people are in town where there is life and so on [...] I had been here for almost three years... It was not good. When I came here. Now, every day... In the reception. They are good people. Those of us who come from India, Arabia, from elsewhere... We are the problems...We are problems. (Hamid-25-Iran)

Hamid pointed out at length how the staff members were the only good and normal people in the camp. He was afraid of the others, who were not normal and were a problem, and yet he saw himself as one of them. Varvin (2003) notes how it is a common defence mechanism to create sharp distinctions of other people, into good and evil representations, if one experiences dehumanizing violence or lack of integration.4 Hamid, who appeared to be one of the most frustrated, expressed this clearly. Others created friends and enemies the other way around, categorizing Norwegians and the staff as the ‘bad guys’. Others blamed themselves.

**Production of self-blame**

Hamid’s narrative above expressed self-blame. This shame and self-blame should be seen in relation many factors, but I argue that it was reinforced by the open architectural construction and the constitution of the camps as ‘voluntary accommodation services’ to make asylum-seekers responsible for their existence/non-existence. The camp as a semi-open environment made this rhetoric possible and embodied experiences of blame. This was further made clear by constructing those who returned as people who ‘return in dignity’, while seeing those who chose to stay as unworthy. This also relates to the discourses pointed out in the introduction where asylum-seekers were constructed as ‘exploiters’ and ‘asylum-abusers’. Behrouz’ (31) narrative shows how he internalize this stigma:

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4 Theories have emphasized that ethnic categories of belonging may be seen as a product of this kind of process and a survival strategy among people in a tense situation.
It hurts to sit here with a feeling of being an abuser of the asylum system. Those who sit in Fagerli are not regular asylum-seekers. We are seen as people who try to exploit the system, and they are put here at Fagerli. For us, Fagerli becomes the end station. We are not asylum-abusers but we start to think about ourselves as asylum-abuser. These thoughts terrorize our brains every day. (Behrouz-31-Iran)

**Final thoughts**

The human subject is performed and constructed in daily interaction with others and the environment around them. Total institutions change people – indeed, they are meant to do so (Goffman 1967). Still they do not necessarily achieve the desired outcome. In exceptional spaces as Lier and Fagerli, the hierarchical control mechanisms of everyday routines made up a large part of this environment together with conflicts and the experience of endless waiting in an illegalized time. The camps produced some kind of control through embodying stigmatized experiences and self-blame. But mostly they embodied and internalized clientification, insecurity, passivity and feelings of mental degeneration, which seldom contributed to empowerment or return migration, but to destruction as the main form of everyday resistance. Despite being marketed as ‘Norwegian goodwill’, the camps fulfilled the symbolic function of creating an unpleasant picture of living on the margins of the welfare state, intended to deter others from coming to Norway. Their bad reputation led many to avoid them. The next chapters explore how unauthorized migrants have sought to maintain livelihood, shelter and security outside the camps.
3. Illegalization at work

Zoraw (29) is an Iraqi Kurd who came to Norway in 2002, fleeing the war in Iraq in 2001. While living in the asylum camps he found himself a job as a mechanic’s assistant near the asylum centre. In 2004 he received the ‘final negative’. By then he had moved out of the asylum centre and was renting a flat. Still he continued to receive the official tax-deduction cards required to take up formal employment in Norway. He continued to work, and hoped for the better. Disappointment came in 2007, when he stopped receiving tax cards and his boss would no longer take the risk of employing him. At this time Zoraw had been living in Norway for six years and had made himself a home. When I met him in 2009 he spoke fluent Norwegian with a charming mix of a foreign accent and the accent of a local. Since he had been in Norway for almost one third of his life, most local people found his situation unjust. However, they could see few possibilities for helping him. Zoraw explained ‘I was suddenly alone down there; nobody I knew could help me.’ He went into the nearest town to ask officials what to do: ‘I go around to ask for work. I go to social offices… organizations and different companies. They say I cannot work… Then they ask me what I have done… I am not a criminal. They say I am criminal. I have paid taxes here for many years’.

One of the ways Norwegian authorities force migrants out of the country is by denying them the opportunity to take up formal wage labour. This chapter explores how illegalization shapes the position of rejected asylum-seekers in the labour market and some of the opportunities that are open to them. I will use the term ‘livelihood’ to describe a range of different tactics and not only informal wage labour. A livelihood can thus be defined as comprising ‘The capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living’ (Rakodi and Lloyd-Jones 2002:3).

Having his asylum application rejected, Zoraw (29) was offended at being labelled a criminal, as he had always fulfilled what he saw as his obligations to pay taxes. Like others, he understood working with a Norwegian tax card as a morally acceptable way of contributing in society. Coutin (2006) notes how formalized wage labour is in any state a key marker of personhood and citizenship. As a non-citizen without permission to stay, Zoraw was deprived of the right to formal work, but he still interpreted paying taxes as a part of a moral citizenship; paying taxes was a way of fulfilling his moral dues toward Norwegian society. Having a tax card opened up a space for negotiation of his stigmatized identity as an ‘illegal immigrant’. Just as it was possible to say that you were
not illegal because you were ‘unreturnable’ or ‘inside the system’, having a tax card made it possible to say ‘I am not illegal because I pay taxes’.

When Zoraw lost his illegalized albeit formal employment, he found few other possibilities than to move to Oslo to seek informal employment. His experiences show the necessity of differentiating between legalization of both formal and informal wage labour and the legalization of migration. Also Norwegian citizens take up informal employment, and for Zoraw it was possible to take up formal employment although he was not allowed to stay in the country. On the other hand, although informal employment is not only a migrant issue, the authorities’ efforts to limit informal employment has become increasingly paralleled to ‘fighting illegal immigration’. Policies that define wage labour serve as important instruments for forcing migrants out of the country (Arbeidsdepartementet 2008). Greater efforts to make a more rigid and coherent system of bureaucratic control have limited the possibilities that rejected asylum-seeker have to formalized work. Other restrictive measures, like the introduction of special requirements of ID-cards for construction workers, and control routines of migrant workplaces, have also limited their possibilities. These efforts have been reinforced by labour unions that ambivalently claim to be working to protect migrants from social dumping and exploitation. The result, however, is to limit the possibilities of informal employment by strengthening the formal order.

Many people like Zoraw, who had been living unauthorized in Norway for years and had entered the formalized labour market, lost these opportunities during my fieldwork period (SEIF 2009). While the authorities used to hand out work permits automatically to many unauthorized migrants due to an error in the taxation registers, these were now increasingly withdrawn. Also employers were affected. Some had great difficulties replacing their workers, as the formalized labour market was already short of workers (cf. Reinholdtsen, Ekroll, and Nilsen 2011).

Amirtha (43) was an Ethiopian woman who used to have a tax card and had worked in a cleaning company, paying taxes for over 16 years. She had managed to establish a life in Norway, and had bought her own flat with a bank loan in the late 1990s. Like Zoraw, she told me that she had been allowed to stay since she had been allowed to work. By 2010, however, she was left with no benefits, and was now trying to make a living in the informal economy. Also three other migrants I followed who were in this situation opted for informal employment. We could thus ask: were the authorities constructing an informal labour market through these policies? It may still be too early to
answer this question, but the combination of the need for labour and more migrants with no possibility to take up formal employment could indicate this.

The interconnections between the formal and the informal labour market are complicated. The European Commission has pointed out how it is a challenge for Norway that bureaucracy and strict regulations may create an informal economy also among settled immigrants who find these regulations hard to understand (Council of Europe and European Commission 2008). In Oslo, immigrants have tended to move into the neighbourhoods where the working class used to live and suburbs on the east side of the city (Brochmann 2003a). Many immigrants with an entrepreneurial flair have started smaller businesses, such as small kiosks, call centres, cafés, hair salons, ethnic clubs and restaurants, teahouses, food and vegetable shops, etc. These ‘immigrant shops’ are enterprises that ethnic Norwegians seem to appreciate as interesting and colourful. Not surprisingly, however, a concern for the authorities has been the co-existence of an official, Norwegian business economy and a ‘criminalized’ informal immigrant society (Council of Europe and European Commission 2008). The remainder of this chapter explores the position of rejected asylum seekers in the labour market and their efforts at creating livelihoods for themselves.

**Subcontractors and immigrant entrepreneurs**

Those whose asylum applications had recently been declined but who had worked during the interim period often had some savings to sustain them for a while. Some also had tax cards that could be used before expiry at the end of the year.\(^5\) Having a regular job made it easier to hide one’s stigmatized identity and one was less dependent on others. On the other hand, some of those who found themselves ‘deportable’ would not risk using the tax card because this would render them visible to the bureaucratic gaze and thus deportation.

Hakim (22), an Afghan, received a negative decision on his application in 2007 and then went into hiding. He was living on money he had earned during the last year when he still utilized his tax papers. When his asylum application was turned down, he quit the job he had in a kiosk, fearing deportation. However, he took the risk of using the tax card to find another job in a restaurant. Knowing that it could cause problems for his employer, he found it difficult to lie about his non-legal status: “The most difficult thing

\(^5\) The authorities also try to limit this possibility by linking the asylum ID to work permits and tax cards.
is to lie to people that are nice to me and help me, I can also put them in trouble, and this is not a good thing.’ However, he explained, ‘I have to live from something.’ Early in 2010 Hakim lost his tax card and opted for a job in the informal sector. Since nobody could help him, he was told to just do what other people in his situation did. He described his encounter with the informal job market:

We survive. It is possible to survive, but it is only for a period; maybe a long period or a short period. All humans are different. Somebody can stand this kind of situation for a long time. I start to think… maybe I cannot manage to work in black jobs for more than 6 months or a year. It is different between black and white jobs. When you work legally, you have all rights. If you work black you don’t get money if you get sick. If somebody wants to fire you from the job you cannot say anything. When your boss is an idiot, you can’t say anything. […] When they shout [if you work black], then you can’t say anything… This is what is important. If you have a black job you feel unsafe, 100%.…(Hakim-22-Afghanistan)

Like most unauthorized migrants, Hakim was extremely concerned about the importance of having a stable job, not only to survive, but also for reasons of mental and physical health and independence.

I often heard: ‘You have to know someone if you want to get a job’. As noted in the introduction, acquaintances and social networks are paramount for creating a livelihood outside the regulated market. Networks, ethnic groups, well-meaning helpers, and people they meet in the asylum centres play significant roles to find jobs. For instance you might ‘inherit’ a job from a friend who gained legal status or returned, or friends could arrange a job for you. Still, finding a job was often something you had to do on your own. As pointed out by Bemal, a Kurdish Iraqi, the strategy was often to go around asking for jobs:

I don’t have work right now. Not the last months. I only get petty jobs here and there. Last month I earned about 5000 NOK. I did cleaning and washing jobs and so on. I could earn 10 NOK an hour. I can get jobs in cleaning transport and carrying/moving. The people who employ us are mostly foreigners, but the first month I worked for a Swedish person as a swimming teacher. You get jobs by going around and asking, in restaurants and so on.(Bemal-28-Iraq)

For Hakim it was the rumours about where it was possible to find work that were important. He managed to get himself a job as a waiter through a subcontracting
company. Hence, the possibilities that unauthorized migrants have in the informal economy do not relate only to ethnic communities. Mahler (1995) points out, models focusing on *ethnic solidarity* often fail to see migrants in relation to the larger economy. Through subcontractors, unauthorized migrants become incorporated into the Norwegian economy as a flexible and non-demanding workforce that must be seen in relation to the liberal sides of the welfare state. Subcontracting companies earn their profits selling cheap unauthorized labour to other companies or state institutions.

Ahmid was a 23-year-old Ethiopian who had been hiding for three years. I met him in an organization in Oslo where he was looking for a Norwegian man named Roald. A friend had told him that Roald had connections and that it was possible to get some help from him. When Ahmid called Roald he had promised to set him up with Grethe, the manager of a cleaning company. While waiting for Roald, Ahmid seemed to be stressed, walking back and forth on the floor between a small office and the main room. The situation was characterized by the nervousness and desperation not unknown in situations where much is at stake. When Roald and Grethe finally arrived, they decided that Ahmid could start to work right away. Grethe was interested in Ahmid as a person with low demands who could work when he was needed. Wages were never a part of the discussion, but Ahmid later told me that he got 50 NOK an hour. ‘I get fifty… but I think they are making a lot of money on us… the funny thing is that we sometimes work for those who do not want us here [state institutions]’. Ahmid said that being hired by Grethe was good, because it created a predictable rhythm in his everyday life. Other jobs he had earlier had been less predictable. He was a part of a flexible workforce and often worked additional hours, but he had a fixed work schedule. That was not always the case in other employment relations, which could be highly temporary and unstable.

A Pakistani employer whose customers were mostly young ethnic Norwegians ran a franchise that was part of a larger nationwide enterprise. He was the archetype of what I call an immigrant entrepreneur. He would often employ unauthorized migrants. I followed his shop during a period of three months. During this time there was first an Afghan working there, and after a short time, the Afghan was replaced by two Nepali workers. Having spent around 50 000 NOK each to get to Norway, they were struggling to repay loans they had in Nepal, working every day from early morning until late evening. They wanted to return to Nepal, but found themselves stuck in Norway because of the debt. Later, an unauthorized relative of this Pakistani who had decided to quit his studies in Sweden worked there. He came to Norway to earn some money before he
travelled back to Pakistan. Recently this employer had started to formalize his enterprise. He was now employing Swedish staff with permission to work in Norway. Over a longer period this Pakistani started several shops. Hiring informal labour was, for him, a tactic for becoming economically integrated and successful in Norwegian society. He found informal labour cheaper, and also claimed that the workers were better. When I asked him about their wages he only laughed and said ‘they always have a better offer’. Whereas the authorities present the employment of informal labour as bad for integration and criminal, this Pakistani described it as more or less a necessity for economic integration.

In a somewhat different context, Cohen (2004) has written of bio-availability as an articulation of how bodies become available in different markets and relations of affection and disaffection in the context of state sovereignty. First, migrants seem to be available as a flexible workforce on the margins of the liberal economy. It could be said that the liberal policies that try to save resources and make state institutions economically efficient by using subcontractors in fact create a need for flexible migrant workers. Secondly, unauthorized migrants are available as labour for legalized immigrants who are trying to integrate. In the intersection between the formal and the informal economy they are important in fulfilling the settled immigrants’ goals of success and integration.

The case above shows some of the vulnerability of unauthorized workers and how quickly they may be replaced. Many worked on an hourly or daily basis or had short-term contracts. Table-2 (Appendix-1) shows wages mentioned by 25 informants the period between March and May 2010. It gives an idea of an average hourly wage of around 50 NOK, but is also misleading due to highly irregular working conditions. Table-3 (Appendix-1) shows related types of employment mentioned in the same interviews. Additionally, three male informants received monthly salaries, earning 8 000, 10 000 and 15 000 NOK a month.

The statistics shows how being an unauthorized migrant in Norway means low wages. It means hard work, often losing the job, working under dismal conditions, to not getting paid or being moved around between several different jobs. Few said that ethnic solidarity characterized these employment relations. As we shall see in the next section, many had employers from other ethnic groups where social ties seemed to be weaker and more exploitative.
Hierarchical relations and the limits of solidarity

The people I followed were hired according to different constellations of ethnicity, race, age, gender and religion that influenced the relationship between migrant and employer. As Chavez (2007) and De Genoa (2005) have pointed out, unauthorized migrants in the USA are often incorporated according to different racialized or ethnic hierarchies of status and prestige. These hierarchies can be understood as power relations among different groups of migrants. Solidarity between worker and employer may be weaker. Members of ethnic groups that control a larger resource base may, for instance, employ unauthorized migrants from groups that are less privileged or established. In Norway, Afghans, who have arrived mostly in the 2000s, may for instance work for Pakistanis, who have established themselves since the 1970s. On the other hand, ‘a Pakistani never hires Africans’, as many explained to me. De Genoa (2005) furthermore notes how the condition of deportability makes migrants vulnerable to exploitation, as this can be used to force them to do things they do not want to. However, it is also their position outside the security of the regulated labour market that renders people vulnerable to exploitation.

The racialized character of the ‘opportunity structures’ may explain why young black males like those studied by Sandberg & Pedersen (2006) selling hashish along banks of the Aker River in Oslo could be understood as the least likely to find informal jobs. Migrants from African countries seemed the most vulnerable among the people I met. In a multi-ethnic society like that of Norway or Oslo, these racialized hierarchies also become important for the migrants’ understanding of themselves. Jawed (29) remarked how few Pakistani Muslims would hire non-Muslim Iranians. Iranians had better opportunities among their own groups and the Turks, whereas Pakistanis were said to be more likely to hire Afghans. ‘You never see a Pakistani without a job’, Aref (25) told me. Reconstructing an episode when many Afghans had been deported, he continued:

Afghans are willing to work for less than us. That has made it difficult, but when many of them were deported it was easier for us to get work again. In Iran the Afghani refugees take our jobs, the same is happening here … I think these people will do any job.(Aref-25-Iran)

He later asked why Norway wanted Somalis who could not work instead of people like him. Somalis seemed to have greater difficulties in getting jobs outside their own community. Ethnic groups normally seen as better integrated through longer periods of establishment, like Pakistanis, Turks or Iranians, were deemed more likely to hire people.
Although this might not always be the case, it was how many articulated it. That also says something about how people positioned themselves in the larger order of persons and things. Zachariah, a 31-year-old Iranian, felt that his new Pakistani boss did not see him as a human. By giving wages on a day-to-day basis, he was able to push Zachariah into working overtime, and as many as 12 hours each day:

Sometimes he [the boss] tells me to work other places. I get moved around. Paint here, work in the kitchen there. 300 NOK a day. They send us to do other jobs. No breaks. Sometimes we move things. There is always somebody else who wants to work. They do not see us as humans. When I started to work there was another man (Iranian) who owned the shop. He was a good man and he gave us 500 NOK a day. He was a nice guy, a little bit chubby. Then another guy (Pakistani) bought the shop. He started to put down the wages from 400 NOK to 250 NOK. He gave me a little room to rent. It was without shower or anything. Then he started to take 2000 NOK of my money each month. You can survive on this if you work 10 hours each day, but it is not a life.(Zachariah-31-Iran)

Zachariah was a friend of Jawed (29). Zachariah pointed out how the possibilities for negotiating wages were limited. Jawed added that his Turkish employer told him to charge the drunken customers a little extra if he wanted a higher wage, a suggestion he disliked. A few days before the national celebrations of Norway’s Constitution Day, 17th of May, I asked Jawed what he would be doing that day. He said that the day was not for him, but that it was a good time to work since his boss needed many people. Seasonal celebrations like 17 May or the pre-Christmas period, when Norwegian consumption peaks, can open up for short-term job opportunities. Hakim had two and sometimes three jobs as a waiter in different restaurants before Christmas in 2010. He used this period to earn money to save for difficult times ahead and to hire a lawyer. Similarly, Constitution Day gave Jawed an opportunity to negotiate the wages in the restaurant where he often worked 11 hours a day. But, like many others, he could find work only a few days each week, and those days were randomly distributed. Still he always had to go to work when his boss called, if he wanted to keep the job. Therefore he always carried his mobile phone close:

They call me when they need me… My boss knows many paperless people. When he needs somebody to work for him he starts at 20 NOK an hour, but there aren’t many people willing to work for that amount. Maybe the Afghan people, they work for nothing. But we Iranians will never work for that amount of money. If nobody will work
for 20 NOK he calls people again. 30 NOK, then 40 NOK and so on…It is difficult if you get sick, then they don’t call you anymore, other people get your job… I had to start at 20 NOK but now they need more people, and so I get 50.(Jawed-29-Iran)

When I met Jawed again two months later, he had lost the job due to a police investigation. However, he had found work a few days a week at another place, where he got 60 NOK an hour. Zachariah (31), who had lost his job in the restaurant, was now working in a warehouse. He expressed his ambivalent feelings and fears concerning health and life that can be the result of insecure jobs:

I used to think that the doctor would report us to the police, but now I believe that it is safe to see the doctor… but one man on my job, something heavy fell on his head. He was told that if he wanted to keep his job his should just tell the doctor that he was trying to fix his dish antenna and that it fell down […] I am afraid, because sometimes people just disappear from work. I am afraid… what has happened to them. Sometimes I am afraid that something is going to happen to me, because no one will notice, because people like me… you know nobody, and nobody will look for you.(Zachariah-31-Iran)

Imran (31), who went into hiding in 2006, worked for an Iranian employer:

Many of the people we work for are rich, but they are rich because they use people. […] I worked for a long time in a garage where I lived… Another man, from Afghanistan, lost all his teeth [because a metal pole fell on him]. He went to the hospital later, but he did not say what had happened. He did not know the rules. He was so afraid because of the job, and he could not afford to fix everything.(Imran-31-Iran)

Staff at the clandestine healthcare centre for unauthorized migrants that was opened in 2009 also report that work-related injuries are common. The biggest problem for the migrants is, however, to keep their jobs. Aref (26) said:

It is possible to get a job, but difficult to keep it. You often get fired. I could get a job now in a small restaurant [an Irani]. The owner also said I could live there, and that if I did a good job I would also get paid. But I would have to work 14 hours a day, and there was no shower there. He said I could go and take a shower in the gym […] You have to understand this, when people think in this way, you are not likely to keep that job for a long time.(Aref-26-Iran)

Aref found this suggestion humiliating. He was angry and explained: ‘Perhaps he was just kidding with me and tried to make things as bad as possible, just to laugh at us. Maybe he
did not want me to get the job.’ He said: ‘It really hurts. I hate this country’, and went on: ‘I just want to leave and find another place, but it is not possible because of this fucking Dublin agreement. If I get permission to stay here I will leave straight away, I don’t want to be unwanted.’ Repetitive comments like this showed how Aref had internalized the situation. ‘The Norwegians don’t believe that we work under these circumstance, and the foreigners cheat us’, Aref told me later. ‘This is how it is, they treat us like animals’. Like others, Aref often described his abject status in terms of being treated like an animal.

In the course of the first eight months I followed Aref in 2009, he changed jobs five times. Sometimes he also had problems getting paid, as he did not have a bank account and employers often cheated him. When I met him, Aref had recently worked over 170 hours on a van helping to move furniture. The deal with the owner was to get paid 13 000 NOK, but he received only 6000 NOK since the employer said he had to pay tax. Aref was angry because he knew that no employers paid tax for hiring informal labour, and he was sure that his boss would just pocket the money. Before this job he had worked in the construction business, carrying heavy sacks of concrete. However he had to quit because of back problems caused by the hard work. Then he tried to get a job in a small restaurant, but would not accept the conditions there. He found another job moving furniture, together with two Polish workers. This time he was arrested by the police and had to spend one day in prison before the police realized that deportation would be difficult. The two others were deported, whereas Aref was given a fine of 9000 NOK – which he was not able to pay, as he already owed 30 000 NOK to people who had helped him. He needed to find another informal job, to pay the fine and avoid prison⁶. In all this mess, Aref was unable to pay the rent where he lived and was forced to move around between friends and acquaintances. Once when I came to help him move, he had tried to work in a bakery. Being desperate, he had said he had papers. Then, when he could not show any valid papers, the owner of the bakery (a Norwegian) refused to pay him. He borrowed money again, which led him into further problems. As we can see, the situation is often extremely difficult and vulnerable migrants are often severely exploited.

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⁶ It is not common that people get prison for working without permission, but Aref thought so.
It’s the bad guys who really help us

Koshravi (2006) remarks that employment relations among illegalized migrants can be seen as form of modern slavery, as the bodies of illegalized migrants are objectified and commodified in the market. Jamal (36), a Palestinian from Kuwait, found himself stuck in Norway although he had wanted to return for two years. He worked in a car-wash centre where he got 20 NOK per car, whereas his boss pocketed 100 NOK. He said he was treated like a slave. It is especially difficult to adjust for people who once had good jobs as teachers or engineers and now experience acute downward mobility in Europe. Still slavery takes many forms, and a patron/client relationship would often be more descriptive. For many migrants, having work could also provide some measure of dignity.

Employment relations often involved a mix of assistance, barter exchange and underpaid jobs. John (29), an African worked in a farm, then in a small enterprise - as long as they needed him there. The Norwegian owner always spoke of this as doing John a favour by giving him work and helping him with his asylum application. While working there John saw the employer as a good man. However, he later experienced it as exploitation, because there was no more help for him when there was no more work to do. Later John worked for free in a small shop for a long time. The owner rationalized not paying him as follows: ‘It is very important that these people have something to do, or else they go crazy.’ He helped John with his asylum case and found him a place to live. In this way John worked for only food and accommodation in a small apartment, which he shared with his employer’s family. Like many of the people I talked to, John accepted this situation as he saw few other possibilities, but he always felt some ambivalence. The boundaries between helping and exploitation are blurred.

Ali, a 24-year-old Somali, explained the logic characterizing all these relations:

The people you call good people (law-abiding Norwegians) will never give us a job, we have to stay in contact with the bad guys. It is they who really help us. Maybe they could pay a little bit better, but it is OK. (Ali-24-Somalia)

Ali pointed out the importance of the Somali clan system that opened up certain possibilities for him to earn money. As Ali explained, his clan constituted a transnational migratory network where he could access help in many locations: ‘As a Somali … if you are from the right place, you are always secured by your clan … If you can count your generations you can always get help, no matter where you are.’ Through these relations
Ali had found a minor job as an assistant in a small shop. As he explained it, he helped people who were helping him. Ali earned money, but he saw his job as an exchange relation and not as illegalized work.

I am not illegal because it should not be illegal to help people...where I come from we are helping each other all the time, it’s not like that in Norway. Illegal should be used about things that are wrong, not about people. Where I come from it was never like that. That is why I call this a biting community. People don’t talk to each other here. They don’t say hi when they meet each other in the stairway. We Africans are different; we care about each other.(Ali-24-Somalia)

Like many others, Ali saw Norway as a highly individualized society, and felt that people were more helpful elsewhere. Since his income was insecure, Ali felt like a burden to others when he had to ask for help. Therefore, he had already tried to go to England twice, but had been sent back because of the Dublin Agreement. He said: ‘They tell me to leave the country, but when I do they send me back again, this is just stupid, and they spend a lot of money doing it instead of just letting me work.’ One good thing about his trips to England was however that he had been able to lessen the pressure he felt that he imposed on the people he lived with in Norway. But the journeys had been difficult, and twice he had been imprisoned for three months in a British detention centre before being sent back. Still he wanted to go to England again: he felt that the opportunities for young Somalis without documents were better there, because of the larger ethnic network. Like many others, he did not want to stay in Norway since possibilities in the informal market were few, but he was forced to do so because of the Dublin system. He tried to rely on various resources to create a livelihood. He said ‘If you need help, just call and we come and work for you, illegal people help with everything.’

Gowsigan, a 63-year-old man from Sri Lanka who had lived clandestinely for 11 years, also relied on several resources:

I make food for people who are giving small parties. I get some money in this way. I use the money for food to myself. I live in this way. [...] Many times I do not have a job, but I help, maybe to paint a house. Then I eat with the people I work for. Sometimes I get paid...When I work with others I can eat. I do not get enough money. If I get paid I get around 50 NOK. Then I pay them [the people he lives with].(Gowsigan-63-Sri Lanka)

When I met him, Gowsigan was helping to teach mathematics and language to Tamil children. Gowsigan did not define this as work. When my informants said, ‘I do not
work’, that did not necessarily mean that they were not doing anything; it meant that they did not have a proper job where they paid taxes or earned a stable income. Gowsigan relied on a mix of assistance, exchange relations and wage labour. The word ‘livelihood’ captures how many migrants in Gowsigan’s situation must employ a range of tactics in order to survive. Das & Poole (2004) note how activities on the margins are often characterized by considerable creativity. Some of my informants found things in dumpsters to fix and sell. Others re-assembled discarded old computers and made computers that could be sold; they might help friends and fix cars. ‘Borrowing’ someone else’s job was not uncommon, and it also enabled the registered employee to profit by not handing out the full wage. Living in asylum centres was a possibility for those who were not deportable. However, this remained mostly an emergency solution, as it was difficult to sustain a livelihood there. Yona (29), a Nigerian who had been in Norway since 2004, tried to support his two-year-old daughter and sometimes took care of her while the mother, his Norwegian former girlfriend, was at work. He was granted a place in a regular asylum centre, but money was still short:

When I got rejected they reduced my pocket money. Now I get 1860 NOK a month, but I use 500 NOK to pay for my child here in Norway. It is difficult to make do with this money... This is why I sometimes work black, I look in the trash for things I can sell to other people or collect bottles. I know I can’t stand this situation for a long time, I’ve had enough already… but what can I do?(Yona-29-Nigeria)

Being forced into undignified ways of survival in the meeting with policies that would not recognise his relationship to his daughter severely affected Yona’s experience of fatherhood. Here the opportunities were structured according to both race and gender.

**Gendered opportunities**

Unauthorized women working in service occupations are often considered to be more vulnerable than men (Khosrawi 2010). Only one of the women I met who would talk about work took up labour in the service sector. She was employed by a subcontracting cleaning company, but would not talk much about her job. Whereas most of my male contacts worked in service occupations, the women often searched for, and found, work in domestic service. Chavez (1998) has pointed out how working in domestic service may give advantages, especially to women. The men I met were extremely vulnerable to exploitation and deportation or apprehension if they made themselves visible to the bureaucratic gaze in the service sector (cf. Brunowskis & Bjørkan 2008). Still, some
groups, especially Nigerian women, are in Norway often forced into trafficking and prostitution (Skilbrei, Tveit, and Brunowskis 2006). Comparing Jawed’s livelihood to the domestic job of Mia, a 36-year-old mother from Russia, shows how some women have several gendered advantages. Mia worked as a housekeeper, mostly for Norwegian families. She charged 110 NOK an hour for cleaning houses, the double of what Jawed received. Among my informants, women were the only ones who received wages above 100 NOK an hour. Mia thought this was the normal wage for her job. She received the payment in cash, so she had no problems of not having a bank account or a credit card, and did not need to borrow the bank account of a friend. Furthermore she always received her wages on the same day she worked. Her job was more flexible: Jawed was required to show up at work whenever he was needed, but Mia enjoyed a higher degree of freedom. She could also leave her employers if she did not like them, because she worked for several households. By contrast, Jawed was struggling to keep his job. Through work she also became connected to some of the women she worked for and thus found a social network and learned Norwegian. Jawed worked together with many people who often spoke in Arabic, a language he did not understand. It could be said that the differences also related to racialized attributes or ethnicity as Jawed came from Iran and Mia came from Russia. Still Mia also earned more than her husband who had great concerns about not being able to be a good father and breadwinner for their family. Opportunities are gendered, and although women are vulnerable they also have opportunities to a stable income that most of my male respondents did not have.7

The meanings of work on the margins

Doing something meaningful and working for something are imperative for maintaining your personhood or answering questions about who you are and where you come from (Brekke 2004). My respondents often contrasted hard work to a passive life, especially that of the asylum camps where many complained about too much time to think. As Hakim put it, ‘The best thing is to work all the time, because then you forget that you don’t have a life here’. However, illegalized work is unpredictable. According to Hart (2008:8), ‘formality’ can be understood as regularity, a predictable rhythm that we often take for granted. It enables us to have control in our lives. The lives of rejected asylum-

7 The gender perspective should be elaborated upon further. It is not possible to do this here although I will return to some aspects in the following chapters. Also men are vulnerable to sexual abuse, and they may also exchange sex for pressing needs, a topic rarely mentioned in public or academic discourse.
seekers in Oslo are far from predictable, and their opportunities for a stable income are limited. Having even a small job can ease some of the existential pressure of stillness and create some form of structure in everyday life. Dabir (28) from Ethiopia explained:

I work in a shop two hours a day. Every morning I get up to work. I get paid 70 NOK [35 an hour]. This is enough to live off, because I can live with my friends without paying them. I only pay if I get something extra, and I try to help out as much as I can. The good thing about my job is that it is in the morning. Before I used to lie in bed all the time and think. When I get something to do I get up. It makes me feel less depressed. It is difficult in the weekends when I don’t work. (Dabir-28-Ethiopia)

Many of my informants, like Dabir and those in the waiting reception centre, recognized the importance of doing something to maintain a structure in everyday life, so as to remain sane and ‘avoid thinking’. For them, work meant more than just money to survive. However, earning money was important to avoid being dependent on others. Namwar (36) from Afghanistan often worked 10 hours a day and was paid 40 NOK an hour. He said: ‘We need to live from something, and you need something to do. For a person in my situation it is a good job, there are people who get less paid than me, and they don’t complain’.

Although employment relations would seem exploitive, many claimed that this was better than nothing. Namwar emphasized the importance of not complaining. Complaints were often frowned upon, by both legal and illegal compatriots. Chavez (1998) points out how unauthorized migrants in the USA produced a similar ethic to the protestant ethic described by Weber (2005). Working hard, not complaining, relying on own resources, saving and supporting the family – these were important values. Many of the migrants I met considered it important to show me how they did not cost anything and were not dependent upon governmental assistance or other people. Most of them refuted the widely held view that they were here for economic reasons or governmental assistance: no, they wanted to manage on their own. As Hakim noted, ‘You have to believe in yourself if you are going to do this.’ David said: ‘You have to have self-confidence… self-confidence, because you have nobody else.’ Further, he said: ‘We are workers. None of the Norwegians I know of are able to work as hard as some of the foreigners I know’.

Khosravi (2010) notes that it was a general belief among rejected asylum-seekers in Sweden that working hard would lead to permission to stay. One of my informants forwarded several newspaper articles showing that he was taking up illegalized
employment as evidence for his asylum case to the appeals board. Unsurprisingly, the appeals board did not approve. Migrants act in line with their anticipations of what they think is desired. This is at the heart of what I have termed a ‘moral citizenship’. In Norway, to work is inseparable from what is seen as morally dignified. Many of the migrants tried to convince me that they should be granted asylum because they were good workers, but unlike Khosravi’s informants in Sweden, most of them realized that they were not allowed to take up informal employment. As shown, they continuously negotiated their stigmatized experience of illegality into something more licit. They were indeed working the boundaries (De Genova 2005), and struggling for dignity, recognition and personal honour.

**Final Thoughts**

The illegalized economy in Norway is an emerging but highly competitive labour market with limited opportunities, as work possibilities are continuously restricted by the authorities. When illegalization is at work, migrants are forced into an exceptional space where exploitation may be severe. Many take up employment in service occupations where they act as a flexible labour force for subcontracting companies or cheap labour for immigrants seeking to achieve their own goals of economic integration. The concept of *ethnic solidarity* has limited value in explaining these relations. Nevertheless, the most exploitative relations proved to be in racialized hierarchies where other ethnic groups employed migrants. Here social ties seemed weaker and thus less solidary. Although they are characterized by ambivalence I argue that these relations were still paramount for economic and social incorporation in Norway. Unauthorized women are often seen as especially vulnerable, yet they had a gendered opportunity to create a livelihood by working in domestic occupations that men did not have. Moreover, few thought of their livelihoods as sustainable, but rather as something they did to cope while hoping for legalization and sometimes even repatriation. Working was important to keep them away from endless waiting and the problems of ‘not being somebody’. Many also put dignity into working. A main goal was to be independent of others, although this was often hard to achieve. In the next chapter, I discuss the possibilities for migrants to find housing and establish social relations, which in turn are related to their limited opportunities to find employment.
At 5 o’clock one morning, John ran away from the asylum centre. He went to stay overnight with the teacher who had given him Norwegian classes and received help to get to Oslo. When I met him, he was living at the central railway station. Here he tried to sleep during the day, although security guards often woke him up. At night, when the guards closed the place, John would go out for a walk and come back in the morning when they opened at 4 o’clock. Security guards sometimes found it difficult to turn people away. They explained that some migrants had been staying there for over a year. Sometimes families, also people recently arrived in Norway, would stay together with those who were supposed to leave – at peak times as many as 30 persons. Sometimes the police took them away, and sometimes they came back as the police could not deport them. John was also worried about problems in the surrounding area, which was one of the largest open-drug-scenes in Northern Europe. That social problems also occurred among Norwegians forced him to rethink his ideas about his promised land. Still, missionaries and various persons doing outreach to people in his situation also frequented the area. The first time I met John he came together with Jonas, a missionary who often helped people. At this point neither of us knew that John was living on the street. He had lived there for over four weeks, but seemed reluctant to talk about this. He soon left us, arguing that he had to get some sleep before they closed the station. The following day, I met Jonas again; he said that he wanted to find a place where John could stay.

This chapter is concerned with how illegalization shapes the migrants’ social lives and their possibilities to establish security and housing. Except for the provisions offered through the reception system, unauthorized migrants are not entitled to governmental housing programmes. As we have seen some of those who had tax cards had however bought their own apartments when the rules were less strict. Amirtha (36), who had been in Norway for 16 years were among those who lost the tax card. She experienced difficulties in paying the expenses and was now forced to sell. The limited access to wage labour, combined with high rents, limits the possibilities for decent housing. These factors forces unauthorized migrants without valid documents to the bottom of the letting market. There are no NGOs providing shelter, and it is difficult to rent a flat without documents. According to §108 of the Norwegian Immigration Act that took effect in 2010, providing accommodation to unauthorized migrants or helping them to stay in the country is furthermore punishable by fines or until three years in prison (LOV-2008-05-15-35).
The house is normally associated with privacy, safety, stability and protection from weather and the outside world. Living in houses shapes our sense of time by making everyday life predictable and giving us a secure place to return to. Carsten and Hugh-Jones remarks: ‘The house is an extension of the person; like an extra skin, carapace or second layer of clothes, it serves as much to reveal and display as it does to hide and protect’ (1995:2). It is clearly linked to the notion of home which De Certau (1998) understands as a form of model for all other places and territories. Being able to access housing has profound effects on our social lives, sense of security, experience of belonging and well-being. In Norway’s, the home is an important social arena that unauthorized migrants are often deprived of.

It is difficult to account for what constitutes an illegalized household. Migrants contribute to households of global scope. In anthropology, the term ‘domestic groups’ is often used to define groups of people who share the same shelter or house. Among the people I studied, domestic groups also took on highly irregular shapes, and the possibility of staying in the same place for a long time was often limited. As pointed out, earlier research has focused on various patterns of incorporation based on barter exchange or informal support that are open to unauthorized migrants. It could be argued that strong ties and the forms of social incorporation like communal sharing or bounded solidarity pointed out by Enbersen et al. (2006) are more important when it came to solving the housing problems, contra finding jobs. But as Mahler (1995) points out, we cannot readily assume that solidarity exists without questioning why people help? To what degree do migrants feel they are able to draw on ethnic networks and create strong social ties and what does it mean for them to receive assistance?

Outside the system

Research on unauthorized migration has often pointed out how migrants tend to live in so-called ‘immigrant areas’ (Khosrawi 2010). This makes it easier to hide, find friends and get help from other people of the same ethnic group. Many of my informants lived in such areas on the east side of Oslo. However, urban areas are expensive and apartments are often small. For various reasons, many migrants also moved out of these areas. Immigrants today live scattered over large parts of Norway, making it easier to hide elsewhere as well. Contrary to the challenges in the labour market, housing problems were however often been solved through friends, well-meaning helpers or other members of the same ethnic group who had a spare room, a sofa or a free space on the
floor. Still these solutions were frequently temporary, and for many the choice between living ‘inside or outside the system’ seemed to be a choice between moving and waiting. Many found it impossible to live in asylum centres because of the risk of being deported: ‘Living in asylum centres is like giving your hand to the authorities’, Jawat (43) said. Still, most mentioned the difficult circumstances in the camps as the major reasons for not living there. Zachariah’s (31) statement resembles many of these narratives:

Without this job I don’t know what I would do. To just sit and wait is difficult. Now I can do something. My friend can stay at Lier, but I can’t. I have too many problems [psychological] and I get crazier if I stay there. He [the friend] can stay there because he has a closer relationship to God. I stayed there one week. People were fighting all the time, and I could not sleep there… A good thing was, however, that I got the ID card. Now I can show it to the police if I get arrested. Then they know I am unreturnable, and I do not have to go to the police station, and they do not have waste their time […] If the camp was like normal camp I could live there… now it is not possible for me, because I will start to think about death. I become angry, I cannot sleep. (Zachariah-31-Iran)

Still, as Zachariah noted, staying outside the centres was not always possible. The absence of support networks made some people move in and out, using the camps as a last resort. Zachariah solved his housing problems temporarily through job acquaintances. While others were living in a garage or with the employers, he stayed in the restaurant where he worked.

Sharam (58), an Iranian who had lived in Norway for six years, had previously lived as a refugee in Iraq since 1980 when he left after opposing the regime following the revolution in 1979. After thirty years and several experiences of uprooting conflicts, he came to Norway after the US invasion in 2003. His application for asylum was rejected in 2005. Previously he had worked for an unauthorized Afghan who had two houses and ran his own business. He offered a small room for his employees where nine people lived together. Although Sharam only earned 50 NOK an hour, he still paid extra for the room. His story shows the large differences in migrant successes and how unauthorized migrants also exploit each other in order to survive.

Sharam was getting older and could not work so hard anymore. He lost the job, and thus the room. He left for Sweden but was sent back to Norway, and was at the time I interviewed him confronted with the choice between a life in the waiting reception.
centres or the streets. Most avoided the streets, although several mentioned periods of sleeping rough or in sub-standard housing.

**Sleeping rough**

Mike (28), a Nigerian found shelter in a cargo container that had been abandoned by some construction workers, approximately a mile from the railway station where John lived. He lived there while he was trying to find a way to support his family at home. In an ironic way he said ‘welcome to my home’ introducing me to the place. To make the place look more homelike he had invested in some candles and put up a picture of his wife and daughter. On the wall there was a poster of Jesus. He kept his things in a bag, and had a mattress with a couple of blankets where he slept.

Homes may take many forms. Humans everywhere tend to establish some form of shelter and conduct some kind of homemaking to create a feeling of belonging and a sense of stability, stability that rejected asylum-seekers must struggle to achieve. A woman working with the outreach service in Oslo told a creative example of such homemaking. In a room under a bridge, a family had sought relief from deportation and managed to connect to the electric system to get heat, and had even connected a TV.

Neither Mike nor John had a large network, and said that people would not give jobs to black people. Living on the streets they were vulnerable. Furthermore strangers who claim to help may sometimes have their own agendas:

> I thought I was lucky… when I lived on the streets one man came up to me and said he could help me. When we came to his place he made me some food, we ate and made up a bed to me. Then he started to hit on me. I realized he wanted to have sex with me… So I got very angry and I went back to the railway station […] It was very cold [- 10 C] and I did not have many clothes. I had to go and eat food with the people who take drugs. One time a man came to me and told me that there was a sale on jeans. You could get three pairs of jeans for 200 and two pairs of shoes for 200 NOK… I thanked God for sending this man to me because now I can change […] Sometimes people tried to force me to sell drugs, but I don’t want to do this, because then I could not have peace. For God it is wrong. I cannot destroy other people like that. (John-29-Nigeria)

John reported that it was common for drug-pushers in the area to recruit people in his situation into illicit activities; others were recruited abroad. He explained how people threatened to report them to the police if they did not do as they wanted. De Genova (2005) mentions deportability as a main reason for why people may easily take advantage
of unauthorized migrants. John was also afraid that people would force him into illicit deals that would affect his chances of re-opening his asylum case.

**The time-limit of solidarity**

Whereas several migrants had lived temporarily on the streets, most found help through various networks. Some seemed to fulfil a socio-economic gap for the people they stayed with. Engbersen et al. (2006) note how the asylum system has an individualizing effect. It is often single men who have arrived and received a residence permit. This effect creates a socio-economic need that rejected asylum-seekers are able to fill. Having to pay rents or loans house owners living alone need a flatmate. Many of the migrants I was following lived with older single immigrants from the same country who had arrived earlier. They rented or shared their flat with one or several rejected asylum-seekers who contributed to the domestic economy as best they could. Some found solidarity in sharing the same political or religious view. Others had been in a similar situation and found it meaningful to help. The Norwegian helpers were often unemployed, retired, religious or politically engaged or in general people who had the time. Sometimes assistance was provided through more or less organized collective networks of helpers, for example by communicating migrant needs through the Internet. Moreover, acquaintances established in the asylum centres constituted important personal networks. By drawing on these, many migrants were able to live for free and maintain a livelihood based on informal assistance.

Still, people put considerable effort into showing how they managed on their own and were not victims. I have pointed out the humiliating aspects of receiving, and the symbolic violence of giving (Bourdieu 1977). This shaped the situation to the extent that one of the migrants, a 46-year-old African man, had decided to live on the street. He did not seek help more than absolutely necessary, even though it was winter. This seemed clearly related to preserving dignity. Without the possibility of reciprocating, migrants have two possibilities: to withdraw from social relations, or become dependent on others. There is furthermore always a limit to how long people are willing to help. At times the migrants became subject to domestic conflicts where one of the parties in the family they lived with wanted to help, while the other wanted them to leave. Their lives as strangers in other people’s homes were full of incidents of rejection and dismissal. Many claimed to have lost friends, and said people would not talk to them if they knew they their applications for asylum had been rejected.
One helper who had, paradoxically, received a job in the UDI noted how this led him to tell the man he was helping to find another place to live. ‘With this job, it is not good if anyone finds out that I help ‘illegal immigrants’. He also thought that helping could be damaging for the integration of his whole ethnic group. A woman said that she found it shameful to help. She said ‘I want to help, but if anybody finds out it becomes a problem for us who have been allowed to stay here. It will ruin our reputation.’ In light of the strong requirements for integration towards those who are legalized and recognized, ethnic solidarity and the production and reproduction of ethnic boundaries pointed out by Barth (1982) also depend upon a legal framework. In this context, ethnic solidarity may just as well mean not helping people who under normal circumstances would be seen as belonging to the same ethnic groups, in order to be loyal towards those who are recognized.

David (25) said that people helped him, but only to the extent that it did not become a problem for them. Multiple rejections made him internalize the experience of being refused. To preserve some sense of dignity, he often avoided humiliating situations by breaking off relations before people rejected him. He shifted his social environment frequently and always seemed to relate to others with a sense of mistrust and scepticism. ‘You experience many bad things… you don’t want to be unwanted; this is why I don’t like to have contact with other people. I have cut the contact with many of my friends’, David told me after an episode where a man who had earlier tried to help him got into a quarrel with his wife over giving David 100 NOK. The woman went to sit in the car while the man tried to apologize. Afterwards David commented ‘My only friend is my I-pod.’ David often wanted me to go with him to various organizations and encounters with the authorities. He said it made him less nervous and that people would treat him better if he came with a Norwegian. The expectation of being refused is based on earlier experiences and shapes migrants relations. David often saw minor problems as personal rejections. For similar reasons, many seemed to avoid developing strong social ties. They spent much time alone.

**Strangers in the house**

Living with other people deprives rejected asylum-seekers of the possibility to use the places they inhabit as social spaces. Jawed (29) wanted to take me to the place where he lived, but the owner did not allow him to bring people. David explained that I could not come with him because he felt that he was intruding enough as it was. Illegalization leads
to situations where migrants become ‘intruders’, not only on Norwegian territory but also in other people’s homes. Because of this, many develop a range of tactics, like staying outside as much as possible or pretending that they are doing something meaningful during the day. They may kill time in cafés, walk around or go out when the owners are at home, and rest in the daytime while they are at work. While expressing great gratitude to helpers, many also indicated that the relationship to their helpers became challenging. Worried about exhausting their networks without the possibility to reciprocate, some ‘unreturnables’ could also take a detour through the Dublin system to ease some of the pressure on their networks by staying in asylum centres in other countries for a period. The unbalanced exchange relations put migrants in great debt impossible to live with in the long run. Aref (25) had travelled nine times to Sweden, to ease the pressure on networks, to solve dental and medical problems, and to receive psychological assistance he could not get in Norway. He received help there, but was also sent back each time.

With help from Jonas, John (29) found a place to stay in a flat apartment together with a Norwegian family. They offered him a room with a bed. Still, John explained to me that he was constantly concerned about how long he could stay there. Receiving informal support made John put considerable effort into pleasing his helpers, so as to reinstate a balanced reciprocity and, he hoped, avoid ending up on the streets again. He was constantly helping out. Observing John’s relations to his helpers showed me how dependency often shaped the lives of the migrants. John worked for free in the family shop several hours a day. He offered to do the shopping, look after the children. He was reluctant to ask for things but often offered to make dinner. To get into town, he would walk for over an hour and a half rather than ask for money for a bus ticket. One day when I came to pick him up in my car, he asked if I could help him by offering my driving services to the family. We then went to pick up the mother in the family, who was on her way home from work.

To hide also means that the people hiding you gain control over you. As John noted, ‘when you live with other people, they own you… there are a lot of cultural problems. But you need this help, so you help them.’ Gifts are powerful, and many found that the people they lived with gave them little room for privacy. David explained, ‘When you live like this they always ask… all the private things in your life, the difficult situation, all the time they want to know.’ For John, staying with this family was also difficult because they did not live in a central area. Furthermore, with no money for
transport, he often became isolated, with few possibilities to establish meaningful relations. The exception was the days he received money from Jonas, who found it important for John to participate in church activities, the only socio-cultural arena he attended regularly.

Receiving things in general was difficult for most of the people I met. I was seldom allowed to buy them coffee, or food if we went out. Few asked for anything more than the absolutely necessary. Many went to great lengths to preserve their dignity and independence and to avoid the humiliation of getting ‘no’ for an answer:

When you are going to ask for help, it is shame, and you become nervous, because you never know how this person will answer you. For instance when I hear from a friend that somebody can help. I call them, but don’t know how they will answer.(Jawed-29-Iran)

Questions of help were wrapped up in outstanding procedures of ceremonial behaviour and negotiations of dignity. Often people would try to buy me things like a cup of coffee or prepare food for me, in order to ask for help with understanding letters from the UNE, to call the UDI or to move from one place to the other. These were of course efforts at being friendly, but they also involved negotiations of stigma, illegality and dignity. So as not to exploit their relations, unauthorized migrants are extremely cautious about acts of giving and receiving. However, in situations where migrants cannot work, dependency shapes all aspects of day-to-day life.

Khosrawi (2006) notes how the migrants he studied in Sweden often had to pay higher rents than others because they were not able to complain. Deportability enables a landlord to raise the rent at random, and migrants are not entitled to valid contracts. Tariq (43) experienced this problem. His inability to pay the rent also led his landlord to demand extra services like housecleaning and dishwashing. Tariq said he was humiliated at being kept as a housemaid, but he was also afraid of being thrown out.

He charges rent as he wants. One month 4000 NOK, another 4500 NOK. I cannot always pay ... I have to wash the dishes and the apartment. When I became Christian my Afghan friends kicked me out. You always think about where you are going... On the streets... many fall into a non-accepted situation. Then they [the police] send them back.(Tariq-43-Afghanistan)

Tariq told how his living situation was characterized by the landlord’s control over him, but also how his Afghan group rejected him when he converted. The worst thing was,
however, not the living conditions, but his worries about what would turn out to be the next phase in his life.

**The everyday exceptions**

When I asked Tariq about what he thought about my project he answered, ‘It is a lifestyle, it is good that somebody writes about it.’ By ‘lifestyle’ he meant the inability to settle. Many migrants are pressed into a fugitive lifestyle that could take a nationwide scope. Not having a stable place to stay influenced their chance of holding down a stable job. David had lost his job several times because he had to move. He also had to move because he had lost his job. This vicious circle was evident from the places where my informants stayed. Like David, many had their things in bags and suitcases, and had few possibilities to create a homely atmosphere. Many had a small sleeping mat on the floor that they rolled away during the day to make room for the people they were staying with. Well aware that they would soon have to move somewhere else, they lived in rooms that bore witness to their experience of the environment as a temporal space. This is reminiscent of what Brekke (2004) in a similar context refers to as a *directionless time*, a subjective experience of temporal space that characterizes a person situated between the past and a future where the present does not point in any specific direction.

The reasons for moving were multiple: fears of being apprehended and thus reluctance to stay for a long time in one place, the possibility and indignity of receiving help, or difficult relations with the landlord. David took me to the front of an apartment building and explained that the owner used to specialize in renting out accommodation to unauthorized migrants. Since David did not have anywhere to stay at the moment, he was now considering the opportunities to get hold of a camping trailer and asked me if I could help him to move it around. He had earlier stayed in a place where one of the helpers offered a small room in a basement as an emergency shelter. The room was without windows; along the two walls was a double set of bunk beds for migrants in desperate need of shelter. David did not stay there for long because it was damp and the air was unhealthy. He moved on to stay for a while with a friend, before he was told to leave. Later he slept on the floor with another friend who lived in an asylum camp; then with the mother of his former girlfriend who helped him out for some time. Since he could not get any work he moved on, and stayed with some other unauthorized Iranians. Their drug abuse made David uncomfortable, so when he found a job he moved on to
rent a room from an Arab. When he lost his job again he could not pay the rent, and the man threatened to report him to the police.

Conflicts over house rent or loans could shape migrants sense of security profoundly. Brunowskis & Bjerkan (2008) point out the difficulties some irregular migrants may have when it comes to paying their loans to people-smugglers. Only one of my informants claimed to have this problem. Others were struggling to pay debts to people in the home country. David estimated that he owed people in Norway around 40,000 NOK. He was forever struggling to re-pay, but found himself forced to take up new loans to do so. ‘If you borrow money it is important to borrow from the right people’, he explained – meaning people who would not threaten him to get their money back.

John had now found a safe place to stay, but was still pressured for money. While applying for asylum, he had worked in the Oslo area. He had rented a flat together with other asylum-seekers who had also received ‘the negative’. To maintain a place to stay they refused to move out of the flat, which was registered in John’s name. John was worried that this would affect his efforts to get his case re-opened. He tried to avoid contact with them, as they were also engaged in activities that John did not want to be associated with. He was worried about being labelled a criminal if the landlord reported his name. John was pressured for house rent for several months, until a church member who was working on John’s asylum case helped him to solve the problem.

When it came to finding a place to stay, the people who had lived together in asylum centres seemed to share a certain form of solidarity that sometimes became important in solving temporary accommodation problems. Since the authorities enforces rules on where in the country recognized asylum-seekers are allowed to settle, efforts to deploy these networks became a matter of distance. Saeed’s efforts to maintain shelter related to these acquaintances. He stayed for two weeks with a friend in Oslo, two weeks in a town 100 kilometres south of Oslo, some weeks with another friend who lived 200 kilometres north of Oslo, then another friend in the city of Bergen. He said that this was the exhausting pattern he had maintained for almost a year. When last I spoke with him he was staying with a friend outside the city of Drammen, southwest of Oslo. His strategy for creating a limited form of predictability was always to arrange for the next place he would stay. These arrangements became milestones that paradoxically created some sense of control. Moving around, he said, was better than not having anything to do.
The irregularities of everyday life were not restricted to finding a place to stay. Many commented upon the importance and difficulties of finding a regular rhythm for the day as they were outside a governed structure of time:

It is all these things that I have problems in doing, the situations. It is not me who decides. I was up at half past eight [in the morning]. Then I slept until two or three. I ate breakfast. Then I went to exercise between five and seven. This is important to be calm. I watched TV until twelve. Then I went to bed again. I could not sleep [because he was thinking]… This is how the days are. (Hakim-22-Afghanistan)

Being deprived of routine activities and daily structure, in turn affected their social life. Additionally, living with many people in a small room created sleep disturbances. Thomas and Elijah, two friends from Iran, often talked about how they looked exhausted: ‘Where we live now, four people on the same floor in a small room, we never sleep, we just talk and try to find solutions, and when he wakes up, I wake up. We become angry and often argue’, Elijah said. Thomas noted the degrading effect upon his body and showed me a picture of himself. He remarked how he used to be strong and healthy compared to now when he was thin and looked exhausted. Like Tariq, he said that his sleep problems also involved nightmares.

I dream about what I fear, if I can get any sleep at all. I sometimes use some medicine so I can sleep. I often wake up in the middle of the night with nightmares… Like one dream where I went to the shop, and I was suddenly surrounded by people who did not like me. Then the police came and I started running around between the shelves. When I woke up I was completely confused. (Tariq-43-Afghanistan)

Tariq explained how even the slightest noise could wake him up because of his fear. It became harder to deal with the normal tasks of everyday life because he was always tired. When Tariq were forced to move around, he wanted to retreat and hide. Jawed explained this difficult challenge, a fugitive paradox. As other, he related this to his inability to concentrate, learn things, and be socially active:

I do not feel control. I try to find a solution… [Laughs insecurely], but this time it is seems to be hopeless. I just like to stay in the apartment… I don’t go out because I often think… because I am tired… when you go out with friends I have to be in a good mood. You have to be happy… It is like… when you don’t have a place to stay, when you are nowhere… you cannot be at home in your own mind either. (Jawed-29-Iran)
Jawed explicitly related his mental condition to his lack of a home. It was about not being able to stay at home in ‘your own mind’, a homeless mind. Many of the people I was studying would retreat into their own worlds, spending much time alone. As in the waiting reception centres it was also at these times of stillness that many said that they experienced what they called ‘psychological torture’. As Asis said, it was important for him to have a job in the morning to avoid thinking, although that was only for a couple of hours and the payment was low. Staying in asylum centres was difficult precisely because it could make them recall a traumatic past or because they would think too much about a goal that was too far away. Spending so much time in uncertainty and inactivity, it seemed that many had too much time for thinking about existential questions, worrying and anticipating fears, anxieties and unknown futures.

Fear also shaped the possibility to create stable social relations. Fear is a response to danger, ‘Fear destabilizes social relations by driving a wedge of distrust […] Fear divides communities through suspicion […] not only of strangers but of each other. Fear thrives on ambiguities, denunciations, gossip, innuendos, and rumours’ (Green 1994:227). Rumours were frequent among these rejected asylum-seekers. Outside the institutionalised order rumours seemed to be the first principle of social navigation, also as regards where one might get help (Vigh 2009). There were stories of violent deportations, about people who were tricked into deportation while picking up letters at government institutions, rumours about bureaucrats who would turn up at demonstrations to report them or gather information about their cases. In some cases, these rumours also related to other migrants, and even activists. Fears also related to circumstances in the home country. There were pictures and stories about other people who had been deported and later subjected to violent torture. Rumours and accusations about people working for the regime in Iran or Ethiopia who misused the right of asylum to spy on them8 at demonstrations or in churches. Spies would take photographs of Christian converts who were baptized and then report it to the Iranian Islamic regime. Twice an Iranian group of unauthorized migrants I visited aborted their efforts to start an organization because members were accused of being spies. Their stories also related to how the Norwegian police would hand over their cases to places they were supposed to be returned to if they were deported. For this reason many would not tell their real

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8 The existence of spies been confirmed by many actors, including the Norwegian Police Security Service, NGOs, church societies as well as the European Parliament.
stories to the UDI and continued to live without papers while trying out other strategies for getting permission to stay.

In John’s church, people stopped calling each other on the telephone because they suspected other members of being engaged in dubious criminal activities they did not want to be associated with. A few of the helpers constantly feared that the police or others were tapping their telephones or keeping an eye on the things they did to help migrants. It could seem like some of them were even more afraid than many of the migrants.

**Permeable houses**

While the house is normally associated with privacy, safety, stability and protection from the outside world, illegalization makes the boundaries of the house permeable, and sometimes associated with a frightening sense of danger and vulnerability (Willen 2007). Several informants carefully explained me that I should not tell anyone where they lived because they were afraid that the police would enter their homes. They tried to receive mail at addresses where they were not living. One mentioned how they always kept the curtains closed or looked outside before leaving the house. Another did not dare to live with his girlfriend; he was afraid the police would come to look for him there first. Jawed said:

> In this situation you become quite nervous. When people ring the bell or knock on the door. Especially one time… If somebody calls me from a number I don’t know, I don’t answer. Like when you called me yesterday, I had not saved the number. That’s why I did not answer until you sent a text message… One time the police were outside, they called at my door. I was afraid, should they come here to get me. At first I did not answer, but I know that they cannot deport me. But you become nervous like this. I answered and they were going to another place… I learned that if they wanted to get me, then they would not call at my door first… then you become afraid in a different way…(Javed-29-Iran)

Most of the migrants did not talk about fear as such. They rather talked about how they became nervous, how it was important to ‘control the soul’, ‘remain self-confident’. This kind of anxiety, reported by several informants, became evident in how some handled social relations with a general mistrust and scepticism.
The criminalization of illegalized migrants generates fear that controls how people move and navigate in the public space (Willen 2007). While some found it dangerous to be at home, others found it dangerous to go out. From the viewpoint of the illegalized migrant, it is not only them who are made illegal: also the environment is illegalized to them. Walking in the cityscape with some of my informants made me pay attention to how their experienced environment of the city was formed by criminalization. One expressed the need to cover up in scarf and hat when he went into the central parts of town, because he did not want to meet people who knew him. Iranians going to demonstrations covered up in hoods and wore large sunglasses. Ali explained how he avoided trouble by not going to areas where there were many people. Furthermore he usually avoided places where he knew the police might check on him because of increasing efforts to ‘clean up’ areas where other illegalized migrants sell drugs. Sollund (2007) notes how also legalised ethnic minorities avoid many of the same areas because of the stigmatizing aspects of being questioned by the police. Norwegians may also avoid certain areas. However, making distinctions between ‘safe’ and ‘dangerous’ places or planning escape routes were central activities for some migrants. Tariq explained how he avoided the central areas where he was afraid of meeting people who knew him. Once he had ended up in a violent confrontation where someone had knocked out his front tooth, and since he was deportable he could not go to the police. After that, he said, he could not feel comfortable anywhere. He was clearly anxious, talking very fast and gesticulating as I interviewed him:

I have lost my peace inside. I get confused. Everything is closed to me. Everywhere they need ID, before I used to go in the weekends to drink beer, listen to music. But when I go now I am afraid that some bad situation will make it worse. I have no peace; I feel no peace I have no peace inside. I cannot make myself comfortable anywhere, nowhere. Even at my house. The times I am eating, sleeping I feel very bad. I feel absolutely disturbed. To many places I would like to go I have to register. For example swimming. Now I have no identity card… no valid ID card to show. For me all the things are closed. When I come into to pubs I am afraid that something will happen. With you at this time it is OK, but maybe something will happen by accident. Maybe somebody will come in and check, who are you. I have no identity. So I don't want to fall into a not-accepted situation. (Tariq-43-Afghanistan)

These fears and anxieties were often subjective, and did not always seem rooted in any evident threat. For those living outside the law, threats become diffuse and may be
everywhere. Varvin (2003) notes how fears may be real and subjective, they may expand or vanish. Most of those I interviewed noted how their fears disappeared over time and how they learned to live with them. Others who were not afraid of deportation could display a kind of dignity or control by showing me how they were not afraid to approach places normally perceived as dangerous to them. For men, it seemed shameful to talk about fear, and many used other words like ‘jumpy’ or ‘nervous’. Perhaps they related the word ‘fear’ to experiences that were more difficult. John expressed his nervousness in this way:

Some weeks ago I was walking down the street, a police officer walked towards me. I managed to walk past him. I know that he didn’t know me, usually they don’t know who is illegal or not. Anyway I just froze once he had passed me. I could not move. I was just standing there. It took a long time before I could move again. (John-29-Nigeria)

Csordas (2002) describes what he terms ‘somatic modes of attention’ as culturally elaborated ways of attending to, and attending with one’s body towards the world that emerges from the dialectic relationship between perceptual consciousness and collective practice (cf. Willen 2007). Among some of my informants, these bodily attentions were not only visible when walking in the cityscape: they became memories in the body’s history. As described by Amin (25), who had now gained legal status: ‘I was paperless for some time, but now I have permission to stay. I used to hide, and I was really afraid. Even when I see the police today I react as if I were illegal.’

Final remarks

Illegalization creates a highly fugitive day-to-day life and dependency in social relations. Although migrants may manage to access some degree of informal assistance and get accommodation through various kinds of networks, this help is often characterized by a limited solidarity, which in turn gives rise to ambivalences, uncertainties and humiliating experiences. They do not always have the opportunity to give something in return, which creates dependency but also social patterns where people are forced to be constantly on the move. The uncertainties experienced in these relations become embodied and internalized in the ways migrants relate to other people and the environment around them. For these reasons, many lived secluded lives. Jackson (2008) suggests that uncertainty may exaggerate the experiences of fear and nervousness and even paranoia (cf. Varvin 2003). Although most of the migrants I studied experienced that their fears disappeared over time, uncertainty also reinforced fears that thrived on rumours and
stories, making return unfeasible and social relations highly uncertain. These factors seemed to reinforce each other. The next chapter explores how illegalization affects family relations.
5. The illegalization of family life

I am sitting in the stairway outside the Foreign Police Unit (PU) waiting for Amin, a 14-year-old unaccompanied Afghan minor who has just arrived in Norway to apply for asylum. A little girl comes towards me and shows me two fingers, ‘Two Negative’, she says in Norwegian ‘Two negative’. She starts to sing Norwegian children’s songs she has learned in kindergarten, ‘atte katte noa…’. She sits down beside me. Her 13-year-old brother Amadou comes over and tells her not to bother me. I say it is ok, and that I used to sing the same songs when I was a kid. I sing along and the girl soon climbs up to sit on my lap. I start talking with Amadou. Their eleven-year-old sister, Nora sits down to listen. Their family has been in Norway for two years. In 2003 the family left Libya. Their journey through Italy and Europe was complicated and it took about one year before they reached Sweden, where their asylum case was refused in 2007. The little girl was born there in 2004. Although they knew about the Dublin system, whereby Sweden was made responsible for their case, they left the Swedish asylum centre in the middle of the night, fearing deportation. Early the next morning they took the train to Norway, where they received a second negative after two years. Now they were there to be sent back to Sweden. Amadou tells me in a mix of Swedish and Norwegian: ‘I think they will kill my father… he was an activist’. His father is sitting beside us but does not say much. He doesn’t know the language very well, although he can follow the conversation. He is also busy with the youngest of the children, who must be around three years old; ‘Difficult, five children’. He moves his fingers slowly across his throat, ‘kill’, he says. The little girl cries and runs to her mother. When I ask about the fifth child, Amadou answers ‘another country’. Their older sister disappeared during the journey through Europe and they have not been in contact with her for a while, but hope that she would get asylum in another country. In the corner, the mother is crying. Nora tries to comfort her. Amadou says, ‘They don’t know what to do… She (his mother) wants to know what we can do…’ His father says, and Amadou translates: ‘Perhaps we can hide in Oslo; perhaps in Sweden. It is easier in Sweden because it is bigger, but we don’t know anyone’. After a while a civil-clad officer comes out. ‘Let’s go’, he says, gesturing to the parents. I look at him: ‘What a drama… Swedish responsibility’, the policeman says. They disappear in a white van.

In the following I will look at how illegalization can affect family life, parenthood and childhood, and how it may challenge expected patterns of relatedness and social exchange in these relations. The introductory story highlights some of the challenges that asylum seeking and illegalization enforce on families: difficult journeys, leaving family
members behind in other countries, the long time people spend in applying for asylum, and the effect of illegalization upon the relationship between parents and children.

Lives apart, family at home

Despite their low wages, many of the rejected asylum-seekers reported that they tried to send remittances to family members at home. Sending remittances was an important part of keeping in touch with family, not only to help them, but also to maintain relations and their own experience of belonging. As seen in the last chapter, unauthorized migrants experience major difficulties in creating a sustainable livelihood and stable social relations. The ensuing marginalization often makes it difficult to participate in the expected patterns of social exchange required to maintain meaningful relations. Coutin (2006) notes how illegalization often makes migrants inert for kin ties. Long periods of seeking asylum in Norway mean immense difficulties in fulfilling obligations towards family in the home country. It is not only that they are separated geographically. The marginalized situation reinforces the difficulties of fulfilling obligations and keeping in touch with family at home. In turn this may lead them to lose contact with each other. Moreover, family members may also move out of the country, leaving the migrants with few people to return to.

Mohammed (34) came from Somalia in 2005 in order to support his family at home. After he had spent three years being moved around between different asylum camps he gradually lost contact with his wife and his two children at home. While he was an asylum-seeker Mohammad had a work permit, but he had not been able to find a job, and therefore could not support them. Mohammad had heard that his wife had not managed to maintain a livelihood in Somalia on her own. Therefore, she had married an older man and moved to Yemen. Mohammad often blamed himself for the situation:

I travelled to Europe to support them, but I did not know it was going to be this difficult... I could not get a job and support them and my wife had to find another husband. This is wrong, for Allah, this is wrong, but I understand that she had no other choice...[Pause: thinking] She could not make it there without a man, because women need a man. This is why I cannot travel back... because people talk... it is my fault... it is shameful not to support the family.(Mohammed-34-Somalia)

The prolonged time in the asylum camps and the inability to send remittances to his family destroyed the relationship. Therefore, Mohammed found it shameful to return. He related his inability to contribute to his experience of manhood and parenthood. It
was not only about failed migration, but also a personal failure. Mohammed’s story shows how important participation in social exchange is for maintaining relations, also within families.

Yusuf (35) had accepted that he was not allowed to stay in Norway and was thinking about returning. He said, ‘People can’t take it here, they become like crazy people’. Yusuf had remained in Norway because he no longer knew where his family and relatives were. He thought that they were now refugees in another place. So he tried to ‘borrow’ someone else’s family. ‘In Somalia… you cannot live there without family’, he explained. He talked to friends who could connect him with their families and clans to secure him when he returned. His friend Abdi (29) said: ‘Yusuf is desperate, he wants my family to adopt him if he is sent back.’ While Abdi was allowed to stay, Yusuf’s application was turned down, even though they saw themselves as having similar cases. Like so many, they experienced the workings of the asylum system as highly random.

Although most of the rejected asylum-seekers saw the general security situation in their home country as the main reasons for not returning, success in migration is also important for them. Migration narratives create a specific form of power, which shapes the migrants’ lives according to certain expectations (Pease Chock 1995). Migration narratives are often about people leaving home to become successful, and many experienced it as a personal failure to not have fulfilled the obligations toward their families. This was evident in how migrants often said that they would be willing to return if they were able to take with them certain visible symbols or gifts indicating that they had achieved at least some degree of success in Norway. It was important to return in nice clothes or a business suit, to bring toys to the children, some money, or gifts like perfumes or a scarf for their wife or mother. Such gifts show how some migrants sought to compensate for their ‘failure’. One man wanted to travel back with a proper suit and suitcase to indicate that he had been a businessman. In Norway IOM facilitates return migration, and their return programmes can contribute with some economic support. Still, many have spent more money to travel to Norway than they receive in return assistance, so they come back empty-handed. Some migrants may have sold their belongings to go to Europe; others may have put the family in debt to pay for the journey. A rejected asylum-seeker’s decision to stay or leave often relates to family relations or their absence.

Gowsigan (63) came to Norway in 1998 and had been hiding for 10 years. During this period, he had lost contact with his wife and three children because of the
conflict in Sri Lanka. His dream was to find them. At the time I interviewed Gowsigan, conflict had erupted in Sri Lanka again. He had contacted the Red Cross and the UNHCR and found out that the place where he used to live had become a war zone. ‘This is where they want me to return’, he said. Pictures of Tamils interned in camps, dead bodies, and mass flight were rolling over the TV screen. Not knowing where his family was, made Gowsigan anxious; he only hoped that they were safe. He found it difficult not to be able to be the father he had wanted to be, and felt bad about teaching other people’s children when he could not take care of his own family. As most of my informants without family in Norway, Gowsigan expressed feelings of loneliness.

I don’t have contact with close family any more. It was not possible. And it is difficult to have contact with other people. I have some relatives in other countries, but I seldom speak to them. I meet people in Norway. They are my friends now, but I can’t tell them about my situation, because I know they will talk. Then I can get into trouble… Many times you are depressed because of family… I can get friends, but I can never tell this… often you don’t feel like meeting people… because of money, because you cannot do things… you feel alone. (Gowsigan 63 Sri Lanka)

John experienced a similar dilemma: except for going to church, he seemed to avoid participation in social activities because he was seldom in the mood, and because it was difficult to do the same things as other people without money. Whenever he had some money, John tried to support his family at home. John was not a father himself but still experienced large obligations towards his family. As the oldest man in the family, he felt responsible for his mother and brother. In John’s family, the father had been the problem, which had led the rest of his family seek refuge in a church before John fled to Europe. His mother was still living in the church with his younger brother. Not long after John went into hiding, his mother fell ill. He was often contacted by people who helped her and requested money. Since John had gone into hiding and did not earn money, but only worked for accommodation and pocket money, he tried to collect money from friends and compatriots in his church. Although many people helped him, he was only able to send 1000 NOK.

Jackson (2008) suggests that the difficulties undocumented migrants have in keeping in touch with their families create what he calls ‘everyday madness’. Not a pathological madness, but a kind of madness that controls people’s lives but which will usually not break them. According to Jackson, the situation may serve to over-dimension migrant’s fears and anxieties as they clash with other difficulties in their lives. John would
sometimes call me in the middle of the night because of nightmares and worries about his family. Later, when John’s mother died, it was a man from the church helping with the asylum case who first received the news. They did not tell John immediately, because they felt that he had enough problems. When they told John several weeks afterwards, he reacted with silence. Sometimes he would ask me whether I thought he had done enough for his family. Later, when his brother was involved in a traffic accident and needed an operation, John tried to raise money again but was able to collect only 500 NOK. John was not the only person in a difficult situation in the church, and people seemed to become suspicious, since many things seemed to be happening to him. John thought God was punishing him for leaving his family behind, and stressed the importance of giving.

Many travel, but not everybody send money. When I travelled to Europe… I was in danger and I wanted to help the family… In my country people are much nicer to each other and help each other. Here people are different. When people cannot send money they [people at home] just say we have become European [meaning stingy]. They don’t see the problems here. This is why I need to send money. Because then they know I care, and I can know them […] If you give you know you have a family… Maybe if you can’t give, you can’t have a family. (John-29-Nigeria).

Family is not something that is given: it needs to be maintained. John’s concern about sending remittances was related to his experiences of belonging and relatedness in a situation where many seemed to feel that they were on their own. For John, to give was to feel that he belonged somewhere and had a family.

Family members put considerable pressure on migrants. Jengar (25), who had lost his father in Sweden and lived four years in the waiting reception centre, had gradually lost contact with his family in Iraq. They often wanted him to send money. After his father died, Jengar was the oldest man in a large family, which entailed obligations. Living in the camps with little money complicated his family relations. Jengar said, ‘The first question is always about whether I am working or not. If I say yes they ask about money. Then they ask me about how it is going for me.’ Jengar found it difficult not knowing about their situation, although he thought that they were moving around in Iraq. He felt that they were in a more difficult situation than himself, even though he had been living in the deportation camp for four years. Like most of the people I met, Jengar never told his family about his difficult situation. This could be related to the humiliation he felt at not being able to achieve the expected migratory
success. Jengar generally avoided telling them about his life because they could not do anything: ‘It is no use to say anything, you just make them worried, I just say I am fine’.

Supporting the family is a meaningful activity that confirms relatedness and belonging, although this is difficult for rejected asylum-seekers. Some unauthorized migrants receive financial support from family at home. Kharim (32), a Kurdish-Iranian political activist, explained how his parents had sold fields and many things to support him, because they found it too dangerous for him to return. However, the exchange rates gave weak purchasing power, and receiving or sending remittances was complicated without valid documentation and bank accounts. Also Jawed explained that his family had supported him:

The family can help us for a while, but I have been in this situation… four years, and they can’t always support me… Money from Iran is not worth much here because of the currency. […] When they call me now I just say I am OK. I will not make them think about my life here… because I don’t know how many years it will be like this…(Jawed-29-Iran)

These cases show how the question of return is more than an individual choice: it involves the expectations and considerations of family members and other people.

**Families dispersed**

The term ‘transborder family relations’ refers to families dispersed among several countries. It emphasizes the impact of borders as something more complex than a dichotomized relationship between ‘here’ and ‘there’. One result of illegalization is that family members often end up in separate countries. The oldest girl in the Libyan family mentioned in the beginning of this chapter had disappeared during the journey to Norway and ended up in another country where she had applied for asylum. The family was unable to meet her, but hoped that she would be allowed to stay in another country since she was now travelling alone. Illegalized travels through Europe create anxiety about losing family members. Families are often separated, with various members left in vulnerable situations in several countries (cf. Khosrawi 2010). Different times for travelling through Europe, or people becoming separated on the way, create dispersed families. This is largely a consequence of the Dublin system, which often leaves family members stuck in separate countries. While those who are legalized may reunite, illegalized migrants who become separated may spend years without seeing each other because of fears of being detected.
David’s (25) younger brother was living in Belgium. After losing contact with their mother in Turkey, the two brothers had travelled to Europe together. The older brother had migrated earlier and managed to get to the USA. David assumed that his mother was somewhere in Europe or possibly Israel, but he was not sure. They had left Iran because their father was arrested and, they assumed, killed in prison. David left his younger brother behind in Belgium because he was told it would be easier to gain legal recognition in Norway. Furthermore, he thought it would be easier for his brother to get asylum if he travelled alone.

Many of the migrants I met were caught in this kind of transborder family situation. Zakariah (31) from Iran had a sister in Germany and his parents in Iran. Tariq from Afghanistan had his mother and sister in a refugee camp in Pakistan. Suran (46), whose eight-year-old son was first on the streets in Greece and later in a closed camp, hoped to get the child to Norway:

It was not possible to support him, so they [people in Iraq] sent him here. Now he is alone in Greece… you know how it is to be a refugee there... He may be sent back to Turkey. You see what is going on there... I hope he can manage to come here. He is my only hope. (Suran-46-Iraq)

While his son was in Greece, the country was heavily criticized by the UNHCR, as well as by several organizations and the media, and the Norwegian authorities stopped the return of ‘Dubliners’ because of the situation (Regjeringen 2010). Suran was afraid that his son could end up in another European country if the smugglers could not manage to get him to Norway. Anxieties related to the situation made him depressed. He complained about frustration and loss of energy. Having his son in an uncertain situation in Greece while he was himself struggling with isolation in the waiting reception centre made him react violently. He was accused of aggressive behaviour and isolated in a psychological clinic before being granted a place in a regular asylum camp.

**Family life in Norway**

As in David’s case, transborder family relations may entail that some family members gain legal status in one country while others are illegalized in another. We also find families in Norway where some family members are legalized and others not. It thus becomes difficult to talk about ‘illegal’ or ‘paperless’ families (Coutin 2006). In any case, illegalization of family members has profound effect upon family life. Chicha (34), whom I met in a church, came from an African country in 2003, but his application was turned...
down in 2004. While living in the asylum centres he met Nora, who was a Norwegian citizen, and in 2007 their daughter, Joy, was born. When Chicha was told the date of his forthcoming deportation, he went into hiding. His description of the family situation shows how deportability can challenge family relations and the relationship between parents and children in Norway.

If the police come looking for me… they know Joy and Nora are there. This is why I cannot stay with them; because they look there first. If I want to see them we go somewhere else… outside, in another place. They say, if I want to see my child, I have to go back [to Africa] and come here again, I think… but it is not easy… They must change, it is not normal… I only cry. Adult man crying…(Chicha-34-Ghana)

Since Chicha feared deportation, his daughter was deprived of what would generally be considered a normal family situation. Chicha’s reasons for not returning to Africa related to how he had been expelled. Since he had overstayed the date of departure from Norway, working in informal jobs to support his daughter, he had been expelled for four years, meaning that he would have to wait for four years before he could apply for family reunion in Norway. Persons who are expelled are not allowed to return to the country for a period between two years to lifetime; if the violation of the law is serious, expulsion may apply to the whole Schengen area (UDI). The idea behind expelling people is to prevent unwanted migration and asylum-seeking. Paradoxically, this ban, and not a difficult situation in his home country, was why Chicha was afraid of returning to Africa. His fears related to the possibility of not being able to see his daughter growing up. Furthermore, he was uncertain if Nora would be able to earn the 225 400 NOK required for family reunion, as she was not working full time and received some social security which could disqualify for family reunion (UDI 2009).

Coutin's (2006) concept illegal time refer to a juridically non-existent period where the events occurring during this time are generally not recognized as legally valid. If a person has a baby during such ‘illegal time’, the relationship is not recognized. Since Joy was born while Chicha was residing in Norway on illegal time, the relationship was not recognized and he could not marry Nora. Thus Chicha was not legally seen as the real father. Sexuality, reproduction and the private/biological sphere become the object of state sovereignty, and bodies are the battlefields of migration polices (Khosrawi 2006). Although migrants are severely restricted in their rights to healthcare, the right to abortion is one of the rights they do have. Hjelde (2009) notes how illegalized women she interviewed found no other choice but involuntary abortion. Their lives and family
relations could not be recognized because of legal precedence and illegalized reproduction. To have a child as an illegal migrant is often mentioned as being selfish and egocentric. Hence, illegalized parenthood is stigmatized.

On 30 January 2009, not long before I talked to Chicha, a dead new-born baby was found in a bag outside the city of Stavanger (Aftenbladet 2009). Newspaper debates immediately followed, and were connected to the topic of ‘paperless’ parents through comments such as: ‘The first thing that hit me when I read about the baby in Stavanger was that it must belong to a so-called paperless family.’ In fact, there was no such evidence. Ensuing debates were connected to how rejected asylum-seekers could not be good parents, and how they put the lives of their loved ones at risk in order to get permission to stay. The Church City mission indicated that they knew of parents who did not provide sufficient health for their children (). These examples give a glimpse into the stigma and suspicion sometimes created towards illegalized parenthood, and how these suspicions may escalate. In Sweden, accusations against parents in this situation went even further. Parents were blamed for poisoning their children. Blood and hair samples were taken, children isolated. Also here, however, there was little evidence (Tamas 2009). Rejected asylum-seekers are suspected of doing almost anything to get permission to stay, even putting their children at great risk. Although the migrants I knew expressed hope that their children could be an opportunity for them, one of their main concerns was their children’s well-being and the painful difficulties of being worthy parents.

Chicha said: ‘When you are in this situation, people think that you are a bad parent… but how can you be a good parent… you can only do the best you can.’ It was also a challenge for Nora, who tried to support the whole family both financially and practically. Chicha explained that he felt humiliated at being supported by Nora, and how it hurt, not being able to fulfil what he saw as his fatherly duties as a breadwinner.

According to the organization Self Help for Immigrants and Refugees (SEIF), there were 313 unauthorized children who had been staying in Norwegian asylum camps for more than three years by 1 November 2010 (SEIF 2011). Some have been there for over nine years. These numbers do only account for children inside the system. Children of families like the Libyan family in the introductory case who tried to get asylum in several countries may be in an irregular migratory situation for a much longer time, since the authorities only account for time spent in their own country. The Libyan children were all minors and had spent seven years in camps or in hiding.
Although I find no reason to stigmatize illegalized parenthood, it is clear that children often fall between parents’ efforts to give them a better life and the authorities’ efforts to get them out of the country. Children may also suffer from the psychological condition of their parents. Suran, who struggled psychologically and was anxious about his son being alone in Greece, hoped that his son’s arrival would also solve his case. He hoped that the Norwegian authorities would support his son when he could not. Finally his son arrived, but he too was denied asylum, leaving Suran in a difficult situation which made him frustrated. His anger clearly affected his son.

The children I met stated that it had not been their choice to come to Norway. They had come because of their parents’ problems and their efforts to give them a better life. The situation distorted the conventional relationships between them. As in the introductory case of this chapter, unauthorized children may immediately respond by comforting their parents. Children may also become one of the few connections parents have towards the larger society. The inability of some parents to fulfil their roles places more responsibility on the children.

Rashid (24) was the eldest son in an Iranian family. His family was among the 4000 rejected asylum seekers who were staying in regular reception centres. Like most of the families I met, they were struggling to make ends meet as they received less pocket money than others at the centre (approx. 4000 NOK a month + housing). Rashid’s father was the main applicant; he had come to Norway because of political problems in Iran. They left Iran when Rashid was 15 and came to Norway when he was 16. It was thus nine years since they had been in Iran. Like a few of the rejected asylum seekers I met, Rashid had successfully managed to get accepted for higher education through informal channels. He related this to how he had been working hard and got good grades, and how people helped him because he fulfilled his duties. Rashid’s parents did not speak Norwegian. Thus Rashid was left with much of the responsibility for creating a form of normality in their lives, and he was left with little time of his own to study or meet friends. Rashid saw his efforts to help his family and to succeed as a way to please his parents in the difficult situation. Although his family took most of his spare time, helping them created a form of meaning and feeling of belonging. That was something many rejected asylum-seekers without family did not have.

It was my goal. I can contribute to a positive feeling for my parents. When my parents see that I am in such a situation, have come to such a position in society, and come far with my studies, it will give them a positive feeling. It will perhaps make up for a small
percentage of the all the problems they have […] my main task is to look after my parents and little brother. I’m the grown-up who speaks Norwegian in the family. I’m responsible for all the work. (Rashid-24-Iran)

Rashid often had the full responsibility for taking care of his 11-year-old brother and he helped his parents by working on the asylum case, interpreting in meeting with organizations, lawyers, and at the doctor’s. ‘UDI papers, police papers, UNE meetings, my little brothers school, parents meetings, everything which is about language, this is my responsibility’, he explained.

In Norway, children below the age 18 are entitled and obliged to go to school. Since his parents did not speak Norwegian, Rashid became responsible for the correspondence with his brother’s school. Other activities, such as his brother’s sports club, were also his domain. Hence, Rashid became the head of the family. He was concerned about his brother:

Now that he is eleven he starts to understand what is going on around him. He wonders why this is happening. Why can’t we live like other people? Why can’t we live like other people do?... It seems to have kind of psychological impact on him. Because he can’t handle what adults can. I see, he is starting to become, in a way… sad. He is isolated from the other in the family, starts to think that it is our fault. He says it is the adults’ fault that we are in this situation. When his parents cannot speak Norwegian the other children at school tease him. (Rashid-24-Iran)

Rashid found it difficult to witness how his brother often withdrew from social life, school and the other members of the family. Still Rashid saw his brother as the only hope they had left. The situation affected his parents who were often arguing and had few meaningful things to do. Rashid helped them because he felt they had given him a good childhood in Iran before all the problems started. When I asked him what his parents could do, he answered:

What they do, wake up, eat breakfast, and stay in the room. Talk to other people through body language… they don’t understand anything. They don’t have a clue. They sit there together and talk to the other people and try to inform each other about things that they do not know… because they are isolated from society they don’t know what is going on out there. (Rashid-24-Iran)

Rashid’s observation shows how limited knowledge and lack of language reinforce the difficulties of being an outsider, and how language has a particular effect upon
parenthood and the children’s situation. Rashid pointed out how both he and his brother found it humiliating to see his parents in this situation of helplessness.

A woman who experienced helplessness herself was Mia, the mother of a Russian family. Mia already spoke some English, and had managed to learn Norwegian by reading and practising at work. Together with her family she had left Russia in 2003 and had stayed seven years in Norway together with her husband Andrey (53), and their two children Anna (16) and Movlet (9). Almost five of these years were spent in hiding, moving around between different places. Andrey, the main applicant, sometimes worked in construction. When there were no jobs where they lived, he often travelled to work elsewhere. This created anxiety towards his family and it became difficult to be apart. As Mia said:

We are always afraid; it is because of the children. I think… What if he gets deported and doesn’t come back. Then I am here alone with the children, without husband. My health is not good, what can I do… Anna [her daughter] help us, but I don’t like it, I become nervous, don’t feel much energy, and she helps… […] What is a mother in this life? (Mia-46-Russia)

Mia provided most of the family’s income by working as a housekeeper. However, she was often ill, and when she could not work, her daughter Anna would take responsibility for her job after school. Anna knew that she did not have to take her mother’s job, but also knew that they needed the money. She was ashamed of the way her parents dressed. Since Andrey found few jobs, there was sometimes not enough money to buy food.

Like all the children mentioned here, Anna spent much time away from school. She also said that it was difficult to concentrate at school. When her father was working, she felt that she had to take care of her mother. Like Rashid, she was concerned about her little brother, who had difficulties in understanding the situation and sometimes felt that it was his father’s fault. Andrey noted in broken Norwegian:

Sometimes he says… “I don’t need this family. I want another family. I don’t need you.” I think… I know it is difficult for him to understand since he is only a child. He says to his father… “I hate you papa”. Then he wants a father like his friends have. Because we cannot give him things… One time he said that he should call the UDI and tell them he wanted another family… they could send us back. When he sees other children at school, he says that he will move to them and become a refugee…(Andrey-53-Russia)
Andrey’s account of being a father shows some of the difficulties created by the disempowered situation. For instance, losing his son in the Oslo metro:

Because of the situation I become [putting his hands towards his head] ... It was... In Oslo, I lost my son in the Metro. I left the station and he did not follow. I was only worried ...this situation ... How could I do this? I was afraid they would find us...What if something happened to him. Or maybe they [the authorities] take him away from us... I could not find him anywhere [...]. I could not tell Mia, I had to find him... I only prayed... later I found him at another station... I thought, who can be a father like this, how can he believe me again...(Andrey-53-Russia)

Andrey was worried about letting the children go outside. He said that they should try to stay inside, but knew that they also needed to be social. At first, Anna and Movlet were not allowed to go out or to school. ‘In the beginning they could not go out, but now it is safer.’ Risking deportability, parents may become overprotective, and that may affect the children’s social life. Additionally, illegalized migrants move around often. Mia’s family had moved five times in four years and additionally three times while living in the asylum centres. They were now renting a small flat, but were already struggling with the rent and living on the good graces of the owner. When families move around, children are left with few stable social relations (cf. Khosrawi 2010). They often experience the loss of friends and significant others.

Not being able to fulfil their children’s financial needs and wishes loomed large. Andrey’s and Mia’s children often came home and said that they lacked the things other children had. Illegality in Norway is first and foremost an economic problem. The sense of relative deprivation that arises from the meeting between illegalized children and Norwegian children limits their possibility to participate. Activities require money: football groups, children’s clubs, birthday parties and gifts, school trips. Andrey told about the humiliating experience of asking whether it was possible to bypass the payment to his son’s football club because they were asylum-seekers. He was told that asylum-seekers always wanted to have things for free and that this was not possible.

Humiliations often reinforce the experience of being different, which may lead to confusions about belonging. Azadeh was a 36-year-old single mother who had fled from family violence in Iran. She was now hiding with her new partner in Norway. Occasionally I joined them at a gathering where several rejected asylum-seekers came to eat and socialize. They prepared food together, arranged language classes for the children in their own mother tongue, and spent time trying to solve the asylum cases. Her
daughter Fatima (9) was often curious about Iran. She asked ‘do they have 

Norwegian secondary school students celebrating graduation.

We try to keep her away from the difficult things. She is not allowed to go to Internet and learn about Iran, but she understands a lot, and then she becomes worried... she has been through much. When she was a child she saw her father in Iran hit me... in Iran the child belongs to the father, and he is not a nice man. […] In the asylum centre we went to a psychologist. But she can’t do that now. Sometimes she sleeps badly at night and pees in her bed. This can be normal, but it can also be the difficult life we live […] after six years in this difficult situation she has come to know Norwegian culture. […] She says she is Norwegian and that she doesn’t want to be foreigner. But sometimes she thinks she is from Iran... then she is afraid of losing her friends... and she becomes confused […] Sometimes she is afraid of being with friends, sometimes she doesn’t want to go to school or bring friends home. […] She is afraid they will tease her, and she feels shame. Then she often stays at home. (Azadeh-36-Iran)

Azadeh’s and Fatima’s problems related mainly to experienced difference and fear. They did not seem to have financial problems as they received money from a support network and Azadeh’s partner. Additionally Azadeh worked as a housekeeper. Azadeh said that Fatima was sometimes getting spoiled because many people gave her things. In this way they stood out from other families who were struggling to meet their basic needs. Khalid (39), who was the head of a family of four, said that he was not always able to buy milk and nappies for the children. They had been in hiding for two years. He expressed little hope that they their situation would change:

People help us because of our children, but all the things a youngster needs, shoes, pants, t-shirts, school material. When the children become older, they will see all their
friends have nice things, cars and driving licences. Then they will become everything that the others are not. (Khalid-39-Iraq)

Khalid was worried about his children’s future, he underlined how economic deprivation made his children see themselves as the negation of citizens. It was difficult for his children to participate in social activities, as they did not feel socially representable compared to the other kids. As Andrey explained about his little son, and Rashid about his brother, they often retreated from social activities. Andrey’s account of his daughter’s reactions shows how children may resist the situation:

When Anna was smaller she did not want to meet other people … It was difficult for her to have contact with other children… She often said I am nobody here, that she is invisible because she cannot do things. Then she hid away under the blanket. ‘I am invisible’, she said. ‘Nobody sees us here. It is dark under the blanket and it is dark outside.’ This is how she thinks about the situation… because she could not do things… (Andrey-53-Russia)

Metaphors of dark, waste, invisible, nobody, animals, not existing – these were used by many of the adults to describe their situation. Children imitate and repeat how adults talk and act. The ways they embody and internalize illegality become visible and acted through child’s play. Khosrawi (2010) notes how a little girl took refuge in a fantasy of being a dog, moving eating and talking like a dog, while she explained that nobody saw her and that dogs were treated better. Bækkelund-Ellingsen (2010) writes of how the son in a family wanted to kill the people who threatened them; and sometimes wanted to throw his father in the garbage because he was useless. She also notes how the little son in a family she interviewed played games with papers and explained how he would go to the lawyer because his mother was crying. These cases show how children may express and embody their experiences of being isolated and misrecognized. Suran’s son often reacted by being angry and negative like his father. In Sweden, over 400 children of undocumented migrants were diagnosed with pervasive refusal syndrome (PRS), refusal to talk, nourish or move over periods. Some of these children became unresponsive, comatose and had to be tube-fed (Khosrawi 2010; Tamas 2009). Although I did not find such extreme cases, many of the migrants I knew, children as well as adults, would withdraw from social interaction. Children internalize and embody illegality, and physically resist the situation by retreating from social activities.
Final thoughts

This chapter has shown how illegalization shapes migrants’ family relations, which include both transborder relations and family life in Norway. Illegalization alters conventional family structures, making it difficult to fulfill expected patterns of social exchange. The migrants I have studied experience major difficulties in fulfilling what they see as the requirements of parenthood. Childhood may be severely affected. The children may experience heavy responsibility and become the family’s main connection to society. For small children, illegality may also lead them to withdraw from social activities or internalize the difficult situation through play.
Closing the case

Rejected asylum-seekers, so-called ‘paperless immigrants’, increasingly figure as ‘the others’ of our times: both as antipodes of the citizens, and in their experienced otherness. To see how we can understand the illegalized space which they navigate, I have drawn upon Agamben (1998, 2005) to argue that rejected asylum-seekers in Norway are captured within a space of everyday exception. Its space is both existential and symbolic. As a materialization of the law, it is a space where sovereign power is both inscribed and resisted. Following Scott (1985), I claim that this space is characterized by everyday forms of resistance, like concealing documents, and using the Dublin system to access healthcare or to avoid humiliation and the exhaustion of personal social networks.

In chapter two I showed how residents in the waiting reception centres deployed a range of tactics to cope with an illegalized time that certainly took its toll. Acts of resistance were often based upon frustrations and took the shape of mistrust and sabotage, but were mostly related to a need to do something to maintain mental well-being and avoid thinking too much. Most migrants tried to stay ‘outside the system’, where they employed various tactics to maintain a livelihood. These acts of resistance and survival were generally limited to activities where they could maintain a form of moral citizenship; they tried to avoid activities that were morally and legally illicit for citizens, and they wanted to contribute to society. Most were, however, heavily exploited, which created immense irregularities in everyday life.

Chapter four looked into the difficulties of finding a place to stay. It also showed how acts of resistance were often concerned with preserving dignity and self-respect. In chapter five we saw how the situation affected parenthood and relations with children. On a day-to-day basis, it is within the close relations that sovereign power is resisted, and that may severely affect childhood. This is where migrant illegality is produced in everyday life.

Agamben describes the state of exception as a ‘zone of indistinction’ between power and bare life. I interpret this to mean that the boundaries between the inscription of power and its resistance conflate. When migrants embody and internalize illegality through the ways they move in public space to avoid deportation, it is hard to distinguish between how power is inscribed and how these movements are also forms of resistance. This becomes more evident in extreme acts. Some of my informants had employed tactics like cutting themselves, hunger strikes or suicide attempts. Were these acts...
inscription of sovereign power upon their bodies, or acts of self-destruction? Were they simply acts of resistance aimed at getting attention, or were they tactics to locate the pain and find an object for a painful thinking that was both structurally rooted and diffuse? Migrants’ acts of resistance are sometimes made public; to what degree do they reproduce sovereign power in its symbolic form? A politics of signals is often an explicit technology of government. The symbols of these politics are the migrants’ illegalized bodies, their pain and the representations of it. As the official said: ‘When the NGOs and asylum-seekers make the situation worse than it is, they actually help us [to prevent those yet to come]’.

The discourses about this exceptional space indicate the rejected asylum-seekers’ ‘unwillingness’ to return – paradoxically, within a language of freedom. Rejected asylum-seekers are ‘free’ in the sense that they are excluded but do not stay in this situation voluntarily. Still, a language of voluntariness contaminates the discourse that frames this illegalized space. Waiting reception centres were officially described as ‘voluntary accommodation services’; and migrants are entitled to ‘voluntary assisted return’. They are said to be staying ‘voluntarily’ as if they enjoyed liberal democratic rights. On the contrary, Øien and Sønsterudbråten (2011) argue that many of these migrants are in a situation characterized by a ‘no way in, no way out’. From my fieldwork, I believe that this argument could be extended. I suggest that this space of everyday exception in the Norwegian context is characterized by a form of magnetic force whose structures capture people in what appears to be an asylum-trap. It reinforces the difficulties for those who are most vulnerable and leaves them with few possibilities for a viable return. I will conclude with some of the reasons why I believe that this is so.

In the introduction I showed how the police in many cases do not allow migrants to return. Migrants’ modes of resistance and survival left many to be punished for fines they had no way of paying. They were not allowed to return ‘voluntarily’, and the police had few resources for deporting them. We have also seen how practical and economic problems created by the criminalization of entry left many in limbo. Their dependence on smugglers’ advice and documents – both fake and real – also seemed to affect their asylum cases. As an extension of the time already spent in the asylum centres, the time in the waiting reception centres appeared to me as a human experiment that created frustration, abnormal behaviour and a difficult health situation. It seemed to deteriorate peoples’ mental health. Such a situation cannot be said to create empowerment or to encourage return migration.
In chapter four I indicated how the uncertain situation seemed to reinforce migrants’ fears and nervousness. Chapter five showed some of the effects of the Dublin system where family members were caught in different countries with few possibilities to maintain social relations. I also showed how illegalization made people loose contact with their home countries and family members. In the waiting reception centres, migrants were generally deprived of opportunities for contact with their home countries. The idea seemed to be that the difficult situation would make them return.

Efforts to promote return migration cannot, in my opinion, be captured through an economic model of ‘push and pull’ based upon the belief that making things difficult in Norway will make them leave. Stability and activities that offer a meaningful direction are crucial to human well-being, and the possibility to form coherent narratives about the future is fundamental in maintaining a meaningful existence and sense of self (Good 1994; Desjarlais 1997). This must also be seen as the basis for promoting return migration. If migrants are not empowered to return, and their relations are not re-established, many will remain in this situation. In this space of exception, bare lives will not only be objects in the constitution of sovereign power. Other powerful actors will also feed on these bare lives – whether they are civilizing missionaries and charismatic churches seeking to convert frustrated migrants at the borders, immigrant entrepreneurs or mere mafia. Ethnographic fieldwork is a useful tool to investigate these structures from below. Further attention could be given to transborder families to create a thicker description of how these are affected by the Dublin regulations.

I will close this case together with the camps at Lier and Fagerli, both of which were burnt to the ground at the end of my fieldwork. On 6 June 2010, some rejected asylum-seekers rioted against these symbols of sovereign power. According to Jengar (26), a small group of residents came back to Lier drunk in the evening. They started to make noise and to knock on the windows. Later another group of migrants had enough of all the noise. They claimed that they wanted recognition. According to some of the staff, those who had not been allowed to return to their home countries or who had had to wait were among the most frustrated. When they did not get their demands fulfilled they set the camp on fire.

These riots occurred simultaneously at both Lier and Fagerli. Jengar did not participate; he realized something was underway and stayed outside. However, he blamed himself for not rescuing his personal belongings. The worst loss was the picture of his father who had died of stress three years earlier, in the same situation as him. He also lost
pictures of his family, with whom he had less and less contact. If migrants are not allowed to stay, such relations can be important in re-establishing confidence in returning. Thinking about collective return programmes could also be a way of re-establishing confidence for people otherwise left in a lonely, insecure and vulnerable position – that is, if returning can be considered safe at all.
Acronyms

**AID** – Ministry of Work and Inclusion – Arbeids- og Inkluderings Departementet

**EU** – European Union – Den Europeiske Union

**IOM** – International Organization on Migration – Internasjonal Organisasjon for Migrasjon

**JPD** – Ministry of Justice and the Police – Justis- og Politi Departementet

**MUF** – Temporary residence permit without opportunities for Family Reunion – Midlertidig oppholdstillatelse Uten Familiegjenforeing (Usually refer to a group of Iraqis that travelled in and out of legality as a result of political disagreements. Some for over 10 years)

**NOAS** – Norwegian Organization for Asylum-Seekers – Norsk organisasjon for Asylusøkere

**NOK** – Norwegian Kroner – Norske Kroner – Norwegian currency. (In 2010 1 US$ was about 6 NOK. A bottle of milk 14 NOK)

**PTSD** – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – Post Traumatisk Stress Lidelse

**PU** – Police Foreign Unit – Politiets utlendingsenhet – Special police unit for immigration in Norway

**UDI** – Norwegian Directorate of immigration – Utlendingsdirektoratet – The directorate taking care of asylum applications and the asylum system as well as other issues of migration in Norway

**UN** – United Nations – Forente Nasjoner

**UNE** – Immigration Appeals Board – Utlendingsnemnda – Appeals board that overrules or confirm the UDIs decisions on asylum application.

**UNHCR** – United Nations High Commission for Refugees – Forente Nasjoners Høykommisjonær for flyktninger

**SEIF** – Self help for Immigrants and Refugees – Selvhjelp for Innvandrere og Flyktninger

**SIS** – Schengen Information System – Schengens Informasjons System
Appendix-1. Statistics

Table 1: Informants, by territory and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>SUM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran (also Kurdish)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq (also Kurdish)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia (also Chechen/other)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Sri Lanka, Eritrea, uncertain)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 2: Wages mentioned by 25 Informants between March and May 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wages</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No wage labour at time of interview (did not tell)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked for food and accommodation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00 - 19 NOK an hour</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 39 NOK an hour</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 – 59 NOK an hour</td>
<td>6 (1 woman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 – 79 NOK an hour</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 – 99 NOK an hour</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 – 110 NOK an hour</td>
<td>2 (women)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wages</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Types of work mentioned by 25 Informants between March and May 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of employment</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car wash</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery store</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiter</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant/Kitchen</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call centre</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving/carrying</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>3 (1 woman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
<td>2 (women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self –employed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (not mentioned)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of employment</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix-2: Photography as methodology

Inspired by Brekke (2004) I have used photography as a qualitative technique to gather information. I have handed out cameras and asked informants to take pictures that I have later used for the interviews. I asked them to take pictures about what was important for them. A few of the pictures are gathered in this appendix. I found photography as a fruitful method to involve the informants in the research process. It was useful tool to access their phenomenological worlds, and privilege their voices. Some migrants did however find it difficult to participate in this method. Especially one informant living in Fagerli waiting reception centre asked if he could skip taking more pictures. He found that taking photography of the camps made him reflect upon his difficult situation. I said that he did not have to participate if this made things worse for him. Other’s, however, seemed to enjoy the task. By using photography as a methodological tool I was also able to get useful information that I would not have accessed in other ways. (See also pictures on page VI and the front cover). I did however start to use this method late in the research process and not all informants wanted to take pictures. Some wanted me to take pictures of them; others wanted to use pictures they had taken earlier to illustrate their situation. Those living in the waiting reception centres were the most eager to participate in this task. Perhaps because there were few other things to do.

Picture 2: Signs like the one John (29) walked by has made unauthorized migration more visible in Oslo. John was concerned with the material conditions of the situation rather than discourse. He said it did not help to change the word. The statement could also be interpreted as a way to define his own situation.
Picture 3: David wanted me to use a picture he had that showed him waking hopefully in the shadows towards the light to illustrate his situation.

Picture 4: Anna’s (16) picture indicates mutedness and a wish to define ones own life-story and to regain control: ‘my life is my story’. The flag was a symbol for hope and Norwegian residence. The picture is from her room. The picture witness how rejected asylum-seekers are outside the national order of things. Simultaneously it witnesses how it is this order that gives meaning to their projects.

Picture 5: The gate at Lier was a multivocal symbol in the political theatre around the camp. Jengar, who took the picture called it the gate to freedom. Organizations used it as a symbol for the dehumanizing conditions in the camp. The leader in the waiting reception centre said it was to protect the migrants, while the police tried to keep track on who was inside. Jengar also said that walking trough the gate made him feel like a criminal.

Picture 6: The computer room at Lier. Computers were important to access information about changes in the law, what happened in the UDI as well as to maintain contact with friends and family outside the camp or at home. Information about deportation orders and the situation in the home country was also important. Zakariah (31) who took the picture said that when he had access to the computer it was like another world, an alternative space where he could seek relief.
Picture 7: Jengar (26) took a picture of his room. For him, as for many others, national symbols like the flag witnessed their hopes and desires. At other times these national symbols were the targets of frustration and resistance.

Picture 8: The pool table Jengar took a picture of was a children’s pool table. It witnessed his experience of being treated as a child in the camp. With few possibilities to contribute this was how many expressed a disempowered situation.

Picture 9: Hamid (25) did not want to take many pictures. All of his pictures did however show things that were broken and destroyed. He had contacted a pastor that he knew from church to ask if he could avoid taking more pictures. He said that taking the pictures of all the things that were destroyed reminded him about whom he were. Furthermore, he said that all the things that were changing all the time were difficult psychologically. I said that he should not participate in the project if things were difficult for him.

Picture 10: Most of the pictures from the camps captured conflict zones. Mohammed took this picture of the reception desk. As others Mohammed said it was humiliating to ask for things and that the architecture in the camp created a distance between the residents and the staff. Much like the ‘hole in the wall’ where they could contact the staff.
Picture 11: The riots at Lier and Fagerli. Photo of Lier camp by Terje Bendiksby, SCANPIX

Picture 12: My picture: Arriving Fagerli camp I was often met by people walking along the road. Many of them seemed to be walking lonely, but in hope of a better future.
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