

**Between a rock and a hard place:  
Undocumented migrants in Norway**



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**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the Master Degree in Philosophy**

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**June 2012**

## **Acknowledgement**

First of all I want to thank my informants for trusting and letting me be part of their lives. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me.

Very special thanks to my supervisor, Tone Bringa, thank you very much for your supervising and your productive and detailed comments. I want to thank the initiators of the project “Provisions of Welfare to ‘Irregular Migrants’” (PROVIR), especially Christine Jacobsen for her guidelines

I want to thank my very good friend for her encouragement, her support and for putting up with me while I was conducting fieldwork and writing the paper.

I would like to thank all my fellow students in the program, thank you for our conversations and feedbacks. I want to thank those who read my paper and gave me comments, thank you very much for that.

Amanda Haugen

Bergen, June 2012

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# Chapter one

## Introduction

In this chapter I will give a brief account of the categorisations of undocumented migrants and their numbers globally, in Europe and eventually in Norway. Then I will move into the conceptualisations of this group of migrants in the academic studies and researches. I will write about ethical considerations in researching undocumented migrants. I will review and summarise previous research conducted of undocumented migrants in Norway and other Scandinavian countries, and the contribution of my study within this body of work. I will then outline the chapters of this thesis and proceed to describe the fieldwork setting and the methods I used in conducting the fieldwork. Finally I will discuss the roles my particular background and language skills may have played in facilitating access to people and establishing trust.

### Who are the undocumented migrants?

Undocumented migrants are people who live in Norway without legal residence permits. (Ottesen:6) points out that there are several groups of people with different legal statuses who live in Norway without legal residence and they can be categorised as:-

1. People who entered Norway with a valid visa but has overstayed and their visas have expired.
2. People who have been granted residence permit based on so called “false information”, and therefore it has been withdrawn from them.
3. People who entered Norway without a valid visa and have not registered in the National Population Register<sup>1</sup> or have not asked for asylum.
4. And finally asylum seeker who have received final rejection of their asylum applications but have decided to stay in Norway(Ottesen 2008).

Regarding the number of undocumented migrants globally and on national levels, there are only estimations. Globally it is estimated in the annual report by the International Organisation of Migration (IOM World Migration Report 2010:29) that 10-15 per cent of 214

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<sup>1</sup> National Population Register: in Norwegian Folkeregisteret in which everyone lives in Norway should register and obtain a personal number.

million global immigrants are undocumented migrants. In Europe it is estimated that there are around 4, 5 million undocumented migrants (Zhang 2008 cited in Ottesen 2008:22). The number of people living without residence permit in Norway is estimated to be around 18 196 in 2006 which constituted 0.39 per cent of the total Norwegian population (Zhang 2008 cited in Øien and Sønsterudbråten 2011).

Regarding the number of different legal status among the undocumented migrants, Hjelde (2010a:22) states that the Norwegian authorities consider the number of people in category 1, people who overstayed their visa, and category 3, people who entered Norway without valid visa, to be low. She states that it is estimated that the people in category 4; - asylum seekers who received a final rejection, constitute the majority of undocumented migrants in Norway. Regarding people in category 2, she writes that people in this category had legal residence in Norway but it has been taken away from them because they have provided false information to the Norwegian authorities which is considered to be a violation of the immigration law. She argues that operating with different official categories of undocumented migrants shows that the status of being undocumented is not static and one can commute from having or gaining or losing residence permit (Hjelde 2010a:22).

### **Terminology**

There are various terminologies used to refer to people without residence permit depending on the contexts. Hjelde( 2010a:21) states that terminologies such as “illegal immigrants”, “clandestine migrants”, “hidden populations”, “unauthorized foreigners”, “sans papers”, “paperless migrants”, and “undocumented migrants “are used in national and international studies to refer to people without residence permit in the country they reside.

In his work on clandestine migration in Europe, Düvell (2008:480) gives a brief historical account of different concepts that have been used to refer to undocumented migrants. For example, he points out that the concept ‘clandestine migration’ was first used by the author Heek (1936) to refer to Chinese immigrants and people escaping from Nazi Germany to the Netherlands. He also points out that the concept “illegal migration” was first used in the 1930s by British authorities to condemn the migration of unwanted Jews to Palestine (Bauer, 1994 cited in Düvell (2008). He argues that temporary concepts such as “illegal migrants” or “irregular migrants” were not used at that time because migration policy was not yet developed and “there was no legal framework within which such people could be legally excluded and their behaviour illegalized “ (Düvell 2008:480). He further argues that

clandestine migration is socially, politically and legally constructed. He explains that only after states introduced legislations which made unwanted immigration illegal and punishable and introduced “technologies (photographs, passports, visas), administrations (immigration authorities) and enforcement procedures (deportation), did migration finally become clandestine” (Düvell 2008:480). Düvell points out that those concepts such as “illegal”, “clandestine”, “unlawful”, “undocumented”, “unauthorised” and “irregular migration” have specific point of reference such as law, crime, identity documents or regularity (2008:483). Regarding the usage and the point of reference each concepts can have, Thomsen argues that the concept “illegal immigrants” is used within the legal system and political discourse while concepts such as “irregular migrants” or “undocumented migrants” are used in social science studies to avoid discriminatory and criminalisation of “irregular migrants”, (a term she uses), and to denounce the “illegality” of human beings. She argues that concepts such as “illegal”, “undocumented” or “clandestine” often are used indistinctively. She establishes that the concept clandestine is used to refer to those who hide their existence while the concept illegality points to the legal and political concerns of the state. She further establishes that the concept irregular may include more aspects of the migration process both on state and social levels. She emphasises that “changing terminology does not necessarily change anything in itself but might just function as another labelling, and it is therefore imperative to change the definition as well” (Thomsen 2010:28-9). Certain concepts are more in use in certain regions and countries than other concepts. Düvell (2008:484) states that certain concepts are used in certain countries, for example, “unauthorised migration” is mostly used in the United States, “clandestine migration” in southern European countries and “illegal migration” in northern European countries.

I chose not to use the concept illegal in my project because first I believe no human beings is “illegal” and “illegality” is legally and politically constructed. And second, the term “illegal” has negative connotations and is usually used by the Norwegian authorities to criminalise persons without legal residence permit. I chose not to use that term so as not contribute to the production of the state discourse in criminalising this group. During my fieldwork I was interested in finding out what term undocumented migrants themselves used. Many of my informants use the Norwegian term *papirløse*<sup>2</sup>, which means paperless and is used in Norwegian context to refer to people without residence papers. The word paper in the

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<sup>2</sup> Papirløse which literally means paperless and is used to refer to undocumented migrants i.e people without residence paper, however sometimes the term is confusing and it is thought to be used to people who did not possess any identification papers.

term *paperless* refers to the residence permit itself and not identification papers. In this thesis I use the term undocumented migrants and by the word documents I mean the residence permit and not identification papers.

### **Research of undocumented migrants**

There are different viewpoints among scholars regarding research on undocumented migrants. Düvell (2008:485) states that some scholars consider it unethical to research “clandestine migration”, (a term Düvell uses). He explains that there are other scholars who argue that clandestine migration should be considered as a social problem and it should be researched. The history of research on undocumented migrants is very recent. He establishes that research on irregular migration, another term he uses, is a recent phenomenon and there are few publications on the subject and most of them are in the United States (Düvell 2008:483). Düvell states that the history of research of irregular migration in Europe goes back to 1970s (2010:3). He also states that the number of the studies on irregular migration increased in the 1990s and only in some countries in Europe such as Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Italy and France and later in Spain, Belgium and Greece. He argues that irregular migration in Eastern Europe, the Nordic countries and countries such as Austria and Switzerland has been researched less in comparison to other European countries. Düvell (2010b:3) further argues that there are four reasons that irregular migration is not researched on the same scale in those countries. According to him, the first reason is that irregular migration is considered as a recent phenomenon in these countries. He argues that the second reason is that “the estimated size of the irregular immigrant population is supposed to be low and thus the issue is “not considered an eminent social problem” (Baldwin-Edwards and Kraler 2009:218 cited in Düvell 2010)”. According to Jørgensen and Meret (2010:121), the size of the undocumented migrant in Denmark is estimated to be less than 5000, in Sweden 50000 and in Norway around 18000. The third reason for under-researching irregular migrants, Düvell argues that is the issue of political cultures in such countries, and he gives the example of Sweden. He argues that in a country such as Sweden the issue of irregular migration is “discussed within the refugee discourse and conceptualised accordingly” (Düvell 2010b:3). He points out that the fourth and final reason is the size of some of these countries. He argues that researching irregular migrants in a small country can create ethical challenges both for the researchers and the irregular migrants as well. He points out that researching sensitive issues such as irregular migration can create risks for the

irregular migrants in the sense that the research can lead to the identification of the location of both informants and the researchers. The risk for informants lies in the fact that they might be identified by the authorities, apprehended and deported to their country of origin. Regarding this last point, which can be applied to Norway due to its small size, I did not find it risky as a researcher to research undocumented migrants. Concerning the potential risk of identification of my informants, I have used pseudonyms for all my informants and used the information they provided in a way that would not lead to the identification of their location except in the case of the camp on a public square in downtown Oslo which was a public demonstration of presence. When it comes to the point mentioned by Düvell (2008:485) regarding -whether it is ethically sound to research undocumented migrants in the first place- I agree with Brunovskis in her argument when she poses the question whether it is ethical not to research “irregular migrants”. She argues that many irregular migrants live in exploitative conditions in Norway and to ignore their problems by not researching them would not make them or their problems go away (Brunovskis 2010:69).

### **Studies of undocumented migrants in Scandinavian countries**

There are only a few studies of undocumented migrants in Norway and in the Nordic countries in general. One of these studies is an ethnographic study conducted by Khosravi (2010) among undocumented migrants in Stockholm in Sweden. In his study Khosravi looks into the lived experiences of undocumented migrants in Sweden. He explores the living conditions of undocumented migrants and investigates the challenges they face and the survival strategies they pursue in managing work, housing and accessing healthcare. Khosravi concludes that undocumented migrants in Sweden are kept outside the mainstream society but at the same time they are part of society through political and juridical processes, media coverage, academic research and the labour market (Khosravi 2010). Another study carried out in Sweden is a master thesis of Shakibaie (2010) which is a qualitative and explorative study of undocumented migrants in Sweden. The study is part of the international master program in social work department in Gothenburg University in Sweden. In this study, Shakibaie (2010) explores the living conditions of undocumented migrants. She looks at the reasons for it and the circumstances surrounding undocumented migrants’ flight from their countries of origin, the difficulties they faced on the way and the reasons behind choosing the destination countries, in this case Sweden. She also explores the factors that made undocumented migrants stay in Sweden instead of leaving, after receiving the last rejection of

their asylum applications. She concludes that undocumented migrants show human agency in building social networks which are crucial for them to survive in Sweden in the absence of public services (Shakibaie 2010).

Hviid (2010) has carried out an explorative study among irregular Ukrainian trainees in agricultural sector in Denmark. In her study she explores the social, economic and legal aspects of the irregular labour migration of Ukrainian trainees who have come to Denmark through private invitations from their Danish employers. She argues the strict regulations of migration do not necessarily decrease or prevent irregular migration. Her study shows that the strict regulations for granting residence permit have forced more people into irregularity. She looks into how migrants shift their statuses from legal into illegal.

### **Undocumented migrants in the media**

In Norway, the topic of undocumented migrants has appeared in the public debate in the 2000s. Kjærre (2010:234) writes that in 2004 the Norwegian government took away economic support from 600 un-deportable migrants. He suggests that this action by the government was one of the events which put the topic of undocumented migrants on the public agenda. He mentions another event that made undocumented migrants visible which was an asylum march by a group of Afghani undocumented migrants in 2007. The opening of two “ waiting centres ” “ *ventemottak* ”<sup>3</sup> in 2006-2007, as the only accommodation for migrants without residence permit, was another event that drew the attention of the media and thus the public to the issue of undocumented migrants when these two centres were criticised for their poor living conditions (Kjærre 2010:234).

Øien and Sønsterudbråten (2011:20) demonstrate that the issue of undocumented migrants had become known to the public in 2007 when the newspaper *Aftenposten*, published series of articles about this group. They argue that these articles on *papirløse*, or paperless have contributed to raising awareness about undocumented migrants of whom very little was known until then. Øien and Sønsterudbråten (2011:21) further establish that the issue of undocumented migrants often are debated within the broader them of asylum policy and politics in the public debates. However some of the NGOs working with undocumented migrants consider the situation of undocumented migrants to be of a humanitarian nature, and not only an issue of asylum policy (Øien and Sønsterudbråten 2011:21). The humanitarian aspect of the undocumented migrants’ issue particularly focused on the access to healthcare of

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<sup>3</sup> The two waiting centres were in Lier and Fagerli town. Both of the centres were closed down during my fieldwork.

undocumented migrants. Undocumented migrants have access only to the emergency care which they have to pay the full price (Hjelde 2010b:324-5). In 2009 Red Cross in cooperation with the Church City Mission opened a healthcare centre for undocumented migrants. Øien and Sønsterudbråten (2011:21) write that the two organisations argued when they established the healthcare centre that the access of healthcare is a basic human right irrespective of the legal status of a person. Some politicians, nevertheless were against the opening of the healthcare centre, and argued that it would make undocumented migrants stay in Norway (Øien and Sønsterudbråten 2011).

The deportation of Maria Amelie to Russia in January 2011 was another event that drew the media attention to the issue of undocumented migrants. Maria Amelie had lived in Norway for eight years without residence permit and had written a book called “*Illegal Norwegian*”, (*Ulovlig Norsk*) about her experiences as an undocumented migrant. The deportation of Maria Amelie gave undocumented migrants a face in the media. In addition to the asylum march in 2007 by a group of Afghani undocumented migrants, during my time in the field another asylum march took place by a group of undocumented migrants from different nationalities, and a group of Palestinians started a protest (see chapter four). Both of these events drew more attention to the issue of undocumented migrants. The event of the asylum march raised a debate about the right of work for undocumented migrants in several municipalities. In the city council meeting in Trondheim city, the decision to grant undocumented migrants permission to work while they are waiting for deportation has received majority votes and the council has decided to establish a local solution by offering undocumented migrants work permits.

### **Living conditions and rights of undocumented migrants**

Undocumented migrants live in harsh conditions in Norway due to their deprivation of accessing most of the social services. Concerning accommodation, the two waiting centres mentioned above were the only accommodation options for undocumented migrants. The two centres were closed down in 2010. One of them was burned down, by the undocumented migrants who lived there, and the second one was closed down due to riots in the centre. At the time of my fieldwork, undocumented migrants were offered accommodation in regular reception centres. However, most of my informants had left these reception centres due to the difficult living conditions there (see chapter three and four). Some of my informants managed

to find shelter with friends and relatives; others lived in shared apartments with other migrants.

Concerning work, Ottesen (2008:11) states that since undocumented migrants do not have a work permit and cannot acquire legal jobs, they do not have regular incomes. In the case of my informants, who all were asylum seekers who had received final rejection, they did not have a work permit. Some of my informants worked, or had worked once, in informal jobs; however they are often subjected to exploitation by their employers.

Concerning education, Øien and Sønsterudbråten (2011) point out that education in Norway is mandatory for children and young people aged 6–16. The school system in Norway is divided into three age groups, children from age 6-12 attend primary schools, from age 13-15 attend lower secondary school, and from age 16-18 attend upper secondary(Øien and Sønsterudbråten 2011). Øien and Sønsterudbråten (2011) point out that children who are undocumented and are over 16 years are not entitled to the right of schooling.

Regarding the right to healthcare, Hjelde (2010b:324-5) points out that according to the Act on Patients' Rights, everyone who lives in Norway has the right to healthcare. She states that the members of the Norwegian public health insurance system are entitled to economic support for health services. Concerning the access of undocumented migrants to healthcare, she states that undocumented migrants do not have the right to this general healthcare and they only have the right to “emergency treatment”. Undocumented migrants do not have the right to economic assistance from the public health insurance, therefore they have to pay the full price for the emergency treatment (Hjelde 2010b:325).

### **Previous studies in Norway**

Most of the studies conducted in Norway focus on the health aspect of undocumented migrants. One of these studies is the study conducted by Hjelde (2010a) in which she examines the accessibility of healthcare to “irregular migrants”, a term she uses in her study. Hjelde is an anthropologist who conducted a qualitative survey by interviewing both irregular migrants and health personnel in Oslo. Her study focuses mainly on the health problems of irregular migrants but she also looks into the problems of those who work in the health sector and their interactions with irregular migrants. Her study shows that problems emerge due to the lack of clarity and the ambiguity of the rules that regulate the irregular migrants' entitlements to health care. Hjelde explores the relationship between the harsh living conditions of irregular migrants and their health problems, such as stress and psychological

problems. She states that they need medical help but they either do not receive treatment or receive it very late. She concludes that clarifications and the strengthening of health rights for irregular migrants are needed to make work situations for health personnel better (2010a).

Another study related to the health aspect of undocumented migrants is a master thesis in which Kristiansen investigates the experiences of medical doctors in treating irregular patients. Her study is based on data collection from a questionnaire survey performed in three municipalities, Oslo, Drammen and Lier. The survey was taken among medical doctors in these three municipalities. She explores the health problems of irregular migrants, how often they consult doctors, the way doctors give consultations to irregular migrants and whether the doctors refer the patients to other doctors or not. She concludes that there is a need for better access to healthcare for irregular migrants (Kristiansen 2008). The study of Kjærre (2010) is another study among the few studies of undocumented migrants. His study is a master thesis about experienced ‘illegality’ by undocumented migrants. He investigates the way illegalization shapes the everyday life of undocumented migrants, and explores different emotions that illegality generates such as feelings of abjection, experienced racism, fear of deportation, pain and feelings of shame (Kjærre 2010).

There is a need for more studies of undocumented migrants in Norway to provide broader understanding and knowledge of different aspects of their lives. My study is about the lived experiences of undocumented migrants in Norway’s capital city. I have examined different implications of a living situation characterised by uncertainty and the unknown and how this impact the way undocumented persons construct their self-perception. The predicament of living as an undocumented migrant in Norway generates feelings that in return affect the person’s self-esteem. I have also explored the way in which experiences of being an undocumented migrant affects the way they perceive of ‘home’. The topic of home has not been studied in relation to undocumented migrants and this is partially because it is taken for granted that their homes are in their “home countries”. I will contest this notion and argue that “home” carries different meanings for different persons and it is formed by different individual experiences. The topic of home is of special importance because undocumented migrants are supposed to be “returned” to their “home countries” when they are deported.

## **Chapter outline**

**In chapter two** I will look into some of the implications of living as an undocumented migrant can have for undocumented migrants. I will examine the way undocumented migrants

experience what they consider to be society's perception of them. I will write about the role of media in criminalising undocumented migrants and its impact on undocumented migrants' self-perception. I will argue that the status of not having a residence permit, that is to say not having the right to have rights in Norway, creates feelings of disempowerment and affect the self-esteem of undocumented migrants. At the end of the chapter I will explore some ways in which undocumented migrants try to regain some control and power over their lives.

In **chapter three** I will explore different meanings of home for my informants. Home is not always attached to a certain place, or a place of origin, as assumed from a sedentary point of view. I will argue that my informants are in search of a place they could call, feel and consider a home. In this chapter I will write about several notions of home which are affected by individual experiences. The experiences of violence, death and loss of family members and relatives affect the way undocumented migrants think of home and the meanings and feelings of being at home. I will also explore how living as an undocumented migrant in Norway may affect the way a person conceptualises "home", and "being at home".

In **chapter four** I explore the forms of exercise of power on undocumented migrants. I will discuss ways undocumented migrants carry out acts of resistance against the exercise of power by the state. I will argue that they have limited and risky room for resisting and that their resistance has little influence due to their legal status that deprives them from the right to have any rights. What they hope to accomplish is to appeal to the Norwegian society to act on their behalf and to influence the immigration policy in Norway.

### **Ethical considerations**

Conducting research among undocumented migrants raises many ethical challenges. One of the main ethical issue in participant observation based anthropological research is to "do no harm" to the informants. Undocumented migrants do not have a legal residence permit to stay in Norway, and are in danger of being detected and deported; an issue that I had to consider to avoid expose my informants or putting them at risk. When I was meeting my informants I let them choose a meeting place where they could feel safe. To be sure that they fully understood what they took part in, I explained the purpose of my research thoroughly before starting the interviews and informed my informants that they could withdraw or stop the interview at any time they wanted. I informed them that they would be anonymous in my research and I would not reveal any personal information that might reveal their identity through my written work.

Although some of my informants did not mind my revealing their real names, I decided to use pseudonyms for all them.

In her paper on the methodological and ethical challenges in doing research among undocumented migrants, Brunovskis (2010) points out several ethical issues that the researcher should take into consideration in researching undocumented migrants. She states that one of these issues is the psychological stress the researcher might cause by interviewing them. In the case of my informants, many of them had indeed experienced and witnessed violent incidents in their countries of origin. To avoid causing potential psychological stress, I did not explicitly ask my informants questions about these violent incidents. Neither did I ask about the reasons for them to come to Norway and apply for asylum because these topics were not the focus of my study. Another reason for why I avoided these questions was the potential risk of provoking emotional pain and severe stress should be questions provoke flashback to possible violence incidents that had made them flee. However, during the course of conversations, some of my informants recalled painful memories and violent incidents which had caused them pain and made them leave their country of origin. Another point I find important to mention is that; in the case of undocumented migrants, it is not only violent incidents and memories that cause psychological stress; the living situation as undocumented migrants alone is creating enough stress for them. In the cases where I noticed that my informants were psychologically stressed and emotionally affected, besides showing sympathy and understanding, I did not ask question or I tried to change the subject. Some of my informants have told me that talking about their situation was actually helpful and they felt relief. I also pointed out their strong and resilient sides as individuals evident in how they bore the difficulties of such living conditions.

Another ethical issue that Brunovskis (2010:63) points out is the relationship between the researcher and the undocumented migrant. She states that undocumented migrants usually need help, for example, medical and psychological help and she recommends that the researcher should use her social networks to offer help. In my case, I informed my informants about the healthcare centre for undocumented migrants in Oslo when I noticed that they needed medical attention. I offered my help in accompanying them if they needed. For example, I accompanied one of my informants to the healthcare centre, and I also assisted him with translation because he could not speak English or Norwegian.

## The fieldwork setting and the methodology

I arrived in Oslo to conduct my fieldwork in the beginning of July 2011. Before moving to Oslo, I had established a few contacts in Bergen who offered assistance in finding undocumented migrants in Oslo. I had also contacted the health centre for undocumented migrants in Oslo and asked if I could visit the centre in order to get in contact with undocumented migrants. I started to go to the health centre from August 2011. I contacted some organisations that are involved in the issue of undocumented migrants such as Self-help for Immigrants and Refugees (*SEIF Selvhjelp for innvandrere og flyktninger*) and *SOS Rasisme* hoping they would facilitate my establishing contact with undocumented migrants. However, this approach was not successful and I did not get to know any undocumented migrants through them. I started to visit the Palestinian camp; a group of Palestinian undocumented migrants lived in tents in the downtown of Oslo city, in the middle of July. At first I was not sure whether the people living in the camp wanted to be part of my research. When I visited the camp for the first time, after I was offered a cup of tea, I explained my project and the purpose of it. Fortunately they welcomed me and promised me they would assist me by any possible means. One day while I was in the camp, I got to know about an asylum march organised by a group of undocumented migrants who stayed at that time in the Antiracist centre. So I started to contact this group and participated in the march as well. In addition to these methods, I used the “snowball” method through which I made contact with some of my informants.

Due to the living situations of my informants, it was not possible for me to actually live together with them. Therefore I visited the Palestinian camp on a regular basis and stayed there until late in the night. I managed to find a room in a collective apartment very close to the Palestinian camp which made it possible for me to stay late in the camp. I participated in daily routines of the camp. Sometimes I helped them in preparing food, cleaning the camp, getting the wood for making fire or any other thing I could do.

I joined the asylum march and stayed with the march participants for a couple of days. I walked the march with them for two days from Hamar to Lillehammer town. I often invited myself to visit my informants, those who stayed with friends or families or rented shared apartments. I also invited one of my informants to my place. I participated in a demonstration organised by the Palestinians living in the camp after one of them was arrested and deported to Palestine. I also participated in another demonstration arranged by a group of Ethiopians. In addition, I attended a conference held by the European Migration Network about the issue of undocumented migrants and the regularisation processes in different European countries.

Furthermore, I attended a seminar held by Red Cross of Oslo about the issue of return of undocumented migrants.

The data was collected through participant observation and conducting formal and informal interviews. Before the interviews, I always asked my informants for permission to use the recorder. Most of them did not mind, after reassuring them that I would be the only person who could access the material. However, some of them did not want their interviews to be recorded and I wrote down notes instead. At the health centre I offered myself to work as a volunteer but there was already enough people working as volunteers. However, I sometimes translated for patients where my language skills were needed. I did not use the information I gained through translating in the healthcare centre in my project.

### **Language and the role of my background**

Regarding the issue of language in conducting my project, my skills in languages, such as Arabic, Kurdish English and Norwegian facilitated my work. My informants were from countries such as Iraq, Ethiopia, Iran, Palestine Afghanistan as well as Kurds from Iran, Iraq and Syria. I used a translator only once when one of my informants could not speak the languages mentioned above. Not having a language barrier made it easier for them to talk and express what they wanted to convey directly without mediation through a translator.

My informants were mainly men. Being a woman might have had advantages in the sense that my male informants felt more comfortable in expressing their feelings and opening up to a woman rather than to a man. All of my informants were asylum seekers who had received final rejection of their asylum applications. The fact that I myself once was an asylum seeker and have gone through part of the process of seeking asylum (such as the waiting phase in the reception centres), made it easier for me to relate to what they were going through. This common ground created a certain degree of mutual identification between my informants and me, and thus a degree of immediate trust. I could also to some degree identify with those who came from countries where they had experienced wars and/ or violent conflicts. Because I shared similar experiences with my informants, I had to remind myself not to take anything for granted, and presume I knew what they meant and how they felt. I had constantly to be critically aware of my own immediate assumptions. I was also reminded by some of my informants that I was an asylum seeker but I was not an undocumented migrant and I would not know how it feels to be in their situation. They were quite right on this point; I could not possibly know how it feels to be without any rights in Norway. However, at one occasion, for some seconds it felt as if I was undocumented too. It happened

when I was with the participants of the asylum march in Lillehammer. One of the politicians from Red Party<sup>4</sup> offered us, the participants of the march, her house to stay for the night. Although the house was big there were not enough beds for everyone. There were about five people scattered on the floor in one of the living rooms. I found a place for my sleeping bag under a table in the living room, and opposite me there were two men preparing their sleeping bags as well. Sleeping under the table in a living room of strangers, for a few seconds I felt like I was homeless, just until I remembered I had my room and my bed in Oslo that I could go back to. Then I looked at the two men sleeping opposite of me and thought; those, they do not have a place to go back to that they can call their own.

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<sup>4</sup> Red Party: or Rødt is a left political party

## Chapter two

### Implications of being without residence permit

#### Introduction:

How undocumented migrants perceive themselves and how do they think the society perceive them? In this chapter I will examine these questions and I will look into implications the status of not having residence paper can have on undocumented migrants. Many of my informants have experienced being criminalised or associated with criminal acts. To give a historical context to the criminalisation of “refugeeness”, as a form of displacement, in general, I will draw on Malkki’s work about the problematisation of “refugeeness” and the continuation of pathologising the refugees to the contemporary time. I will look into the role of the media in reinforcing the criminalisation of undocumented migrants and how undocumented migrants experienced this representation of them. I will examine the self-perception of undocumented migrants and the implications of not having the right to have rights in Norway. I will argue that the deprivation of being recognised as individuals with rights has a state of disempowerment in undocumented migrants and in return affected their self-esteem. As attempt of re empowerment, some of my informants tried to find explanation, hope and strength in various means and places.

#### The construction of “the refugee”

Malkki (1995a:496) in her study on the construction and the emergence of “the refugees” as subject studies for anthropology, opens by examining the history of displacement in Europe after World War II. The second theme she looks into is the construction of “the refugee” by tracing back different discursive and institutional fields within which “the refugee” was created. She argues that although displacement of people by banishment as a form of social death existed in the ancient times, we should not suggest an automatic historical development of “the refugee” as a phenomenon from ancient times. In other words, we cannot claim and suggest that there is a “proto- refugee” that can be considered as ancestor to the modern refugee. As there is no “proto-nation” of which the modern nation is a descendant (Malkki 1995a). Arguing that there is no “proto-refugee”, the modern refugee a descendant; Malkki (1995a:497) suggests that the emergence of “the refugee” as a new object could be located in historical moments of reconfigurations, namely, the post Second World War Europe. Aware of the fact that explaining a global phenomenon, such as the refugee and locating it in the

aftermath of the World War II in Europe may be considered as Eurocentrism, she argues that there are justifications for this localisation. She lists two reasons for locating the emergence of the refugee as a new object in Europe after the Second World War. The first reason is the emergence of management techniques for refugees during that time. She suggests that without denying the existence of management techniques for refugees before the World War II, it was in Europe after World War II that certain management techniques for refugees became standardized and afterwards globalised. One of the significant processes that took place in the post war period was the standardisation and globalisation of the institutional field of administering the refugee camps and the emergence of the legal field of refugee law (Malkki 1995a).

The refugee camp was used as a power tool for controlling the refugee. In the camp, Malkki (1995) argues that refugees were spatially separated and categorized which facilitated various processes such as the movement control of the refugee, the accumulation of documents and implementation of medical programs just to mention a few (Wyman (1988) cited in Malkki 1995: 498). She argues that these processes facilitated the birth of the refugee as an object of study. By taking us back to the years after World War II, she examines the transformation of the administration of the refugees from the military into the hands of humanitarian organizations. She points out that during the war, not only refugees, but also civilians were under the military control and the military had the responsibility for managing the problem of the refugees. She argues that this changed after the realization that after the war there would be expectations of a large “refugee problem” due to the fact that a huge displacement of people was concentrated in Europe and especially in Germany. She points out that the administration of the refugees by the military followed by various interferences and establishments of different humanitarian and international organizations, such as the establishment of one UNHCR in 1951 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), gradually transformed the “refugee problem” from a military problem into a more humanitarian and international problem (Malkki (1995:500)). The second and the final reason listed by Malkki (1995:500), for locating the emergence of “the refugee” as a new subject in the aftermath of World War II Europe, is the development of a new international refugee law during that period. She states that as a consequence of the Holocaust, a lot of people were seeking asylum around Europe and often they were denied protection. Denying people protection and asylum when they needed it most created feelings of shame and responsibility over these displaced people which in return necessitated international law for refugees (Malkki 1995:500).

By examining the techniques used for managing the refugee and the way refugee constructed as an object of knowledge, Malkki (1992:25) argues that the construction of the refugeeness as a form of displacement was created differently from other forms of deterritorialisation. She argues that this different construction of the refugeeness from other types of deterritorialisations is owed to the states, the organizations and scholars who were and are concerned with refugees. One of the significant influences in constructing the refugeeness differently from other forms of deterritorialisations is the spatial separations between nations as she argues. She draws on the concept used by Gellner (2006), “the national order” which accordingly one country cannot at the same time be another country and there should be a spatial separation of territories between nations as it is visualized by school atlas maps. Malkki (1992) further suggests that this spatial territorialisation is consolidated and integrated in the ordinary language. She points out for example, in English language; “the nation” is a metaphoric synonym to the country, or to the land or to the soil. Or sometimes the word “land” is the suffix as a part of the name of some countries such as Thailand, England and Switzerland (Malkki 1992). Malkki (1992:31) argues that this territorialisation of nations is an implication of a strong and powerful sedentarism in our thinking. She argues that this form of thinking is taken for granted and is almost invisible and undisputable. She further argues that this form of thinking, rooting people and cultures into national soils is deeply moralized and metaphysical which has implication of how displacement is conceptualised (1992:31). One of these implications of this sedentarism thinking is “reflected in language and in social practice...it actively territorialises our identities, whether cultural or national” (Malkki 1992:31). She argues that perceiving cultural and national identities closely tied to certain places makes displacement to be perceived as unnatural and pathological (Malkki 1992).

### **Problematization of movement**

In a world ordered, categorized and spatially territorialised, displacement or moving and crossing these borders is seen as problematic. Going back again to Europe during the World War II period, Malkki (1992) draws us a picture on how the movement of people was perceived as a pathological and morally problematic. Perceiving the relationship between a certain people and a certain land as normal and natural, the breakage of this natural connection was seen as a cause of moral breakdowns. Malkki (1992) argues that the uprootedness of people was considered as a condition where a person loses all his or her sense of morality.

Interestingly, Malkki (1992) suggests that the association of refugees with moral breakdown did not disappear all together after World War II, but continues to present times. Specifically, she points out the fact that literature on refugee during the Second World War studies of and studies of contemporary refugees both present refugees as a “problem”. Malkki (1995b:8) argues that the problematisation of the refugee comes in the form of portraying refugees as an anomaly that are in need for therapeutic correctness. She further argues that in refugee studies one often finds that the problem is internalised in the body of the refugee rather than problematising the political conditions or any other circumstances that made people flee. She argues that the problematising of refugeehood into the bodies and minds of the refugees themselves occurs in the way they are subjected to medical checks and therapeutic programs. Without underestimating the role and the intention of medical and therapeutic programs considering the often horrific experiences of war and violence many refugees are subjected to before their escaping, she criticises and problematises the absence of a focus on other factors and reasons in the refugee studies, such as political factors, in forcing people into refugeehood (Malkki 1995a and 199b).

In the following section I will discuss how some undocumented migrants internalise and perceive themselves as a problem due to the situation of being undocumented. Those undocumented migrants who are accommodated by friends and relatives, furthermore, feel they are often a problem and a burden on their hosts which in turn affects their self-esteem. Another point which I draw from Malkki’s analysis is the association of moral degradation attributed to refugees during World War II, and the continuity of this notion in contemporary criminal associations with undocumented migrants. Another issue which is related to the perception of the refugee as a problem and the need of therapeutic treatments, is the issue that some of my informants pointed out to me, which is the psychological damage they are subjected to because of their living condition as undocumented migrants in Norway which adds on to what they have already experienced prior to their escape. They have not only received treatment, but have also been subjected to more stress and damage. In the situation of undocumented migrants one can see the role of the state in producing and creating more damage to undocumented migrants, instead of treatment, and then deport them to their country of origin where they are expected to start their lives again and function as normal individuals.

## **Society's perception of undocumented migrant as experienced by migrants themselves:**

### **Criminalisation**

One of my research questions was to find out how undocumented migrants have experienced Norwegian society's perception of them. The undocumented migrants' perceptions are mostly based on their personal experiences through their interactions with Norwegians in the Norwegian society in general. The media representations of foreigners, and especially of asylum seekers, play a significant role in shaping how undocumented migrants understand society's perception of them. Many of my informants have experienced that they have been misrepresented and their image distorted by media by often associating asylum seekers with criminal acts. In addition to media representations, other factors that contributed and affected the formation of undocumented migrant's viewpoints were their social relationships and the length of their stay in Norway. The longer their stay, the more they have built social relations with Norwegians. However, this was not the case all the time. More years in Norway, as undocumented migrants, did not always mean stronger and more social relationships with Norwegians. There were other factors and components that played roles in building and shaping these relationships. For example, learning the Norwegian language, which is something undocumented migrants are deprived of, was one of the great elements in building relationships and gaining more knowledge about the Norwegian society and in turn obtaining and understanding the society's perception of undocumented migrants. The degree of active engagement in the issue of undocumented migrants in Norway was another way to get in contact with Norwegians most of whom supported the undocumented migrants. Through their engagement the undocumented migrants gained knowledge about how the issue of undocumented migrants are discussed in public debates, which in turn played a role in gaining insight into how Norwegian society perceive undocumented migrants.

Many of my informants shared a view that Norwegian society considered them criminals or associated them with criminal acts. My informants have experienced criminal associations in different situations and in different forms. Some undocumented migrants were working illegally and some of them had worked illegally once or more during their stay in Norway. Of course my informants had repeatedly focused on the point that they had not and did not wish to break the law and the regulations of the country, but they are forced to do so to survive. Those who had or were working illegally explained to me the situation that made them work illegally and break the law. They explained in detail the predicaments of their living situation before starting work illegally while still living in the reception centres, and

their current living situation. The purpose behind their detailed explanations was to give me a context to help me understand that breaking the law, by working illegally, is not something they desire, but rather as the only option for their survival in Norway. It was not their choice but circumstances cornered them into breaking the law. Another point that undocumented migrants who were working illegally, talked about was the exploitation they often experienced by their employers. The exploitations were in the forms of underpayment, or sometimes not paying them at all, not paying overtime, or firing them without any due course. Being aware that they are breaking one of the laws, by working illegally, they thought and were concerned that the society considered them criminals.

### **Police**

Another situation in which the issue of criminality was raised was the theme of the relationship of undocumented migrant to the police force. *“I have not done anything wrong, I am not a criminal”* was the immediate answer of my informant, Hameed, when I asked him if he was afraid to encounter police. I should admit that prior to going to the field and during my preparation for the project proposal, I read that some undocumented migrants are frightened to encounter police forces and they avoid them by any means. Having this in the back of my head, I throw the question, naively, at my informants, not aware, at that time, of the strong criminal associations undocumented migrants were experiencing. The purpose of my question was to discover if they are afraid of police forces, due to the risk of deportation, and what are the strategies they follow to avoid them ( see chapter four), and my intention and the purpose of my question was not whatsoever to make them believe that I thought of them as criminals. It is true that Hameed was not afraid of encountering the police, not just because he has not committed any criminal acts, but also because he did not risk deportation yet. He was from a part of Palestine for which Norway had not yet solved the practical issues connected to the deportation of asylum seekers. Hameed along with others responded with immediate denouncement of being criminals when I posed the question. However, later on when we continued the conversation, they revealed the fact that they are afraid of being detected by police and eventually being deported. Another situation where they made immediate connection of being perceived as criminals was when they were asked about the reasons for choosing Norway as their country of destination. Although I myself did not pose this question, they let me know others have. Some of my informants reported that some people think that they came to Norway to steal from the society by living on the social welfare

system. They denounced this by stressing the importance of work and of contributing to the society before they get to benefit from it.

### **The lack of identification as source of unknown**

*“People look at me in a strange way because I don’t have papers and because I am a foreigner, and sometimes I feel when they look at me they look at a criminal”* was a statement given by one of my informants, Kasim, when I asked him about his opinion of the Norwegian society’s perception of undocumented migrants. Making the connection between the lack of a residence permit in Norway and criminality was obvious in his answer, and he was not alone in this. Another informant of mine from Afghanistan, Sarhad, told me that: *“If you do not have an identification, which is the most important thing, you will be afraid to approach people, and they will be afraid to approach you too. You do not know how to introduce yourself. You do not have documentation to prove it... you do not have an address they can reach you...”*. He was telling me his experience of being perceived as source of uncertainty and fear by people he socialized with. For example, he told me about a situation when he met a woman and after introducing himself; she started to fear him after she learnt that he is an undocumented migrant. He experienced that not having a legitimation paper and an address was a source of fear and uncertainty for her.

### **Role of media in criminalising undocumented migrants**

Returning back to the role of media in criminalising undocumented migrants, media is contributing to reinforcing the criminal connotations of foreigners in general, and asylum seekers in particular, by highlighting the criminal incidents when foreigners are behind them. During my time in the field, and in the last few months, there was an intense focus by media on rape incidents in Oslo city. In connection with these incidents, some of my informants experienced that they were avoided by people and especially women during night time because they were perceived as a source of danger. To give a context to the situation and the reasons why some of my informants were perceived as a source of danger, it is necessary to explain some issues first. Most of the time, the perpetrator behind these incidents was identified as a man with a “foreign background” and a “foreign appearance” in the media. My aim here is not to negate or to discuss whether those who committed the crimes were falsely accused or not. And I am not trying to claim that crimes have never been committed by people with “foreign backgrounds” or “foreign appearance”. What I want to do is first, ask the

question of; what do “foreign background” and foreign appearance” mean and what do they carry with them of connotations and prejudices. Second, my point is to contest and problematize the almost taken for granted and non-questionable implications these terms hold. As it is used in the media, the term “foreign appearance” implies persons with dark hair and dark skin which in turn implies persons who have “foreign backgrounds”. That is to claim, naively perhaps, that all Norwegians have light skin and blond hair which should be taken as marked distinctions between Norwegian and foreigners and by extension between Norwegianness and foreignness. Again my point here is not to delve into the discussions about what makes someone Norwegian or foreigner. What I want to point out is that the media’s over- highlighting focus on foreigner’s associations with criminal acts was incorporated into the bodies of some of my informants and the way they were perceived, approached or avoided by people. As I mentioned earlier some of my informants has experienced avoidance by people because they felt that people considered them a source of danger. In particular, one of my informants from Ethiopia experienced that he was avoided, especially by women, during the night during the time of the rape incidents. He experienced that he has been criminalised and people were afraid of him merely because of the colour of his skin.

Another situation where the undocumented migrants experienced being perceived as a source of danger was the early hours of the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July in Oslo. In the early hour after the explosion in Oslo, and before the man behind the attacks was apprehended and identified, there was early speculations circulating in the media, that most likely Islamist fundamentalists were behind the attack. In the morning of that day, I was in the Antiracist Centre, where the participants of the asylum march were preparing for the march of the next day, when the bomb exploded. After hearing the early speculations in the media, the spokesmen for the march advised the participants to avoid the areas around the centre of the city and try to find shelters with friends and relatives. They advised them not to sleep in the centre, where some of the participants were staying, as a precaution in case Islamist fundamentalists were behind the attack. This sense of fear that they might be considered suspects was an automatic reaction to the fact that they might be seen as guilty by associations, of being Muslim and having a “foreign appearance”. On the same day after the explosion, I went to the Palestinian camp to check on my informants there. It was still not known who stood behind the attacks. Similar to what I observed with the participants of the march, beside the confusion, as the immediate reaction after the attack, a feeling of fear was

spreading among the habitants of the camp. They were afraid for their safety. For example, they were afraid that their tents might be burned down by people as an expression of anger and as an act of revenge if Islamist fundamentalists were behind the attack. They discussed intensifying the night guarding and be alert all the time. The early speculations in the media reinforced what the undocumented migrants consider to be the society's perception of them, namely the source of danger and at the same time targets to be blamed. So it did not come as a surprise that there was a feeling of relief in the camp after the news arrived that a blond Norwegian man was behind the attacks.

The lack of concern from Norwegian society towards undocumented migrants was another way some of undocumented migrants experienced the Norwegian society. Sarhad told me “...*they (the Norwegian society) do not care about undocumented migrants and they do not know about the situation undocumented migrants are living in. People are busy with their own lives*”. He explained to me that Norwegians do not bother to gain knowledge about them. Some of my informants did not have enough knowledge about the Norwegian society in order to understand the perception of Norwegian society of them. This lack of knowledge about Norwegian society for some by my informants was due to the difficulty in accessing the means for gaining knowledge, such as the Norwegian language. Some of my informants experienced the living within Norwegian society as undocumented migrants as living in a prison. This feeling of being enclosed or even incarcerated within the Norwegians society was caused by their limited opportunity to build knowledge about Norwegian society. When I asked my informant, Helene, if she felt that she is included in the Norwegian society, she answered me: “*I do not feel part of the Norwegian society, how can I? I cannot say I am part of the society because if you are part of it you have to have some ideas about it. I am paperless I have no idea about their lives. They are nice I know that. I do not know other details because I cannot read newspapers for example*”.

As I mentioned earlier, factors such as; the length of living in Norway, the intensity of the social relations undocumented migrants have built and their political engagement with the issue of undocumented migrants shape how undocumented migrants see and understand Norwegian society's perception of them. The undocumented migrants' experiences and perceptions of Norwegian society were not always of a negative nature, however. Through their social interactions with Norwegians, some of my informants have found sympathy, understanding and support from Norwegian people. For example, the Palestinians who were living in the Palestinian camp were visited and supported by Norwegian supporters along with

non-Norwegians. Those Norwegian supporters were not only supporting morally, but also supporting them materially by providing the camp with necessary equipments to maintain it. With the help from supporters, including Norwegian people, the camp was viable for almost a year. When, people living in the camp, were visited by ordinary people showing their support and understanding, this created feelings of acceptance and welcoming for some of my informants. For example, Kasim, the same man who expressed that he read and sensed criminal associations on people's faces, expressed being welcomed sometimes, when they could see beyond categories and me him as a person: *"...but sometimes I feel welcomed when I sit with some people( in the Palestinian camp). When people get to know me, they welcome me in Norway"*.

Sometimes, the social relationships undocumented migrants built created an atmosphere which was experienced as an emotional compensation for the absence of the love and warmth of the family left in the country of origin. Hameed, one of my Palestinian informants talked with warmth when he spoke of his interactions with people of the village where he worked before and how he was embraced by the majority of the population there. He felt accepted and included as an inhabitant of the village. He told me in his words: *"In the village where I was working, everyone knew me and everyone liked me. I was like a member of a big family. There were families and acquaintances who invited me to their homes. They were accepting me. Alhamdulillah,<sup>5</sup>( thanks god) I felt that I was living among my relatives. They were filling a gap in my life"*

## **Undocumented migrants as homo sacer:**

### **Who am I?**

Helene asked me the above question rhetorically when we were walking alongside a road in a cold November evening. Then she answered the question herself: *"I am no one. If something happened and police asks me for identification papers, I would feel guilty because I move around and I don't have identification paper. I am a paperless. I reflect and ask myself before they would ask who am I? If some accident happens to me and I lose consciousness, nobody knows me because I do not have any identification or if I die where will they take my body?".* Helene did not possess any form of identification paper because she does not have a residence permit to reside in Norway. By paperless, she refers again to the status of being denied the

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<sup>5</sup> Alhamdulillah: an Arabic word means praise God or thanks God.

residence permit. Not having the residence permit means she is not registered in National Population Register (folkeregisteret) and therefore does not a Norwegian personal identification number, i.e (fødselsnummer). The Personal Identification Number is used for identification purposes in the public institutions and without it one is not entitled to be issued any identification paper which could be used as the legitimate paper.

The only identification card most of my informants had was an expired identification card for asylum seekers. This form of identification is given to every asylum seeker, when they apply for asylum in Norway, with a Duf-numbering system. A Duf-number is given to every asylum seeker as a register number in a database system of foreigners who are coming from countries outside the EU and the EEA (European Economic Area) of which Norway is a member (<http://nn.wikipedia.org/wiki/DUF-nummer>).

To have a residence permit is *the* alpha and omega, for asylum seekers. It is, as many of my informants pointed out, the source for an existence as a person with rights in Norway.<sup>6</sup> It is the key that opens doors into the society. When Helene poses the above question about her identity, it is not to imply that she has doubts about who she is, but about who she is in Norway. The lack of a residence permit means the lack of all the rights that entitle and qualify one to enter into the Norwegian society, to contribute to the society and to benefit from the social services such as healthcare and education. Undocumented migrants are shut out of the Norwegian society. In cases where Norway was able to deport undocumented migrants to their country of origin, my informants described their situation as being imprisoned within the Norwegian society, without having been given the release date. Without the registration in the National Population Register, one's existence is illegalized and unrecognized. Hawre, one of my informants once told me: " *I live on the edge of the Norwegian society*". Deprived of rights, undocumented migrants are depoliticized into the form of bare life (Agamben 1998) . In the next section I will draw on Agamben's theory about "depoliticized life" or "bare life" to argue that undocumented migrants are reduced to the form of "bare life" by denying them the right to have rights. In chapter four I have examined the ways in which the state exercises power on undocumented migrants and how the state is producing the form of "bare life" In this part of the thesis I will examine the implications for undocumented migrants themselves of reducing their existence to bare life in Agamben's sense of the term, which indirectly

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<sup>6</sup> A person with legal residence permit enjoys all the rights in Norway except of the right to vote in the national election. One should have Norwegian citizenship to have this right.

shows the implications of exercise of power on them as well. I will attempt to give a sense of how the experience of being undocumented migrant affects these people psychologically.

Agamben (1998:8) deploys a figure of ancient Roman law, *homo sacer* to describe the bare life or the depoliticised life in “the state of exception”. He explains that *Homo sacer* means the sacred man, who was a man who committed a crime but was not punished according to the jurisdiction at that time; rather he was banished from society by subjecting him to be killed yet not being sacrificed. Agamben (1998) elaborates that *Homo sacer* was subjected to a double exception; in the sense that he was excepted from humanity by not being punished and also excepted from divinity by not being sacrificed (Agamben 1998). By the state of exception, Ellermann (2009) writes that Agamben (1998) refers to a situation when sovereignty was perceived to be under a threat and the governments announce a state of emergency. Ellermann (2009:1) further writes that in the state of exception individuals, who under normal circumstance have rights that protect them, are stripped of “the rights that mark them as politicized life- a quality of human existence that goes beyond the “bare life” biological subsistence” (Ellermann 2009). Regarding this political form beyond the bare life, Foucault (1990) writes in his work *History of sexuality* that “For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question.” For Agamben (1998) the meaning of this additional capacity should be problematized. He argues that the strange phrase such as “born with regard to life, but existing essentially with regard to good life” can mean that it is through politics that life is transformed into good life. In his excellent work, Agamben (1998) further elaborates that paradoxically in order for the political life to exist; bare life should be inclusively excluded. In other words, if there is no bare life, there would not be political life and what is now political life is always already bare life. Regarding reducing undocumented migrants to bare life, Ellerman (2009) argues that Agamben (1998) sees denying undocumented migrants a legal identity as reducing them to bare life. This denial of a legal identity is at the same time an essential element of state power, in the sense that legal status is the basis for individual rights. In other words, if one is denied the right to stay, which is the basis to have other rights in Norway, he or she is reduced to bare life and considered politically irrelevant of unrecognised.

One of my informants, Qadr, who often talked in metaphors, described their living situation as a bare life very well when he told me: “*The dead is buried into the ground, but we (as undocumented migrants) are buried above the ground. We are like birds without the wings.*” For him, deprived of all the rights a living person should have, life has lost its worth

and was likened to death. Another informant thought death a better alternative than being humiliated as an undocumented migrant in Norway. After living in the Palestinian camp for almost a year, Jabbar started to lose hope that protesting would lead to any changed or improvement in his situations and was considering returning to Palestine where his life was potentially at risk. He told me: *“It is better to die (there) than being humiliated (here).”* A sense of being humiliated and rejected protection they sought made some undocumented migrants feel utterly unwanted and undesired in Norway. As a result of being deprived of the rights to exist as a political life, thoughts of considering death as a better option than life was shared among many of my informants. I even witnessed a situation where a young undocumented man attempted suicide while I was visiting some of his cohabitants. Another form of experiencing and expressing bare life by the undocumented migrants was by comparing their living conditions to those of animals and even animals in Norway were considered be more fortunate than them because they at least had a home to return to and would be taken to veterinary if they became sick.

### **Disempowerment**

I have noted that there was a sense of being disabled and disempowered among many of my informants. This sense of disempowerment was strong especially among my Ethiopian informants. Most of them had been working for years and they were providing for themselves and for their families. Although they did not have the residence permit they had established a relatively stable life for themselves. However working was no longer possible after their work permissions were withdrawn in 2010. After losing their jobs they were forced either to go back to the reception centres where they had first lived or to find temporary shelters with friends and relatives. Though it was appealing to work illegally, and understandable considering their situation, they were refusing to work illegally because they did not want to break any of the laws and regulations in the country. At the same time, by refusing to work illegally, they wanted to convey the message to the Norwegian government and to the Norwegian society that they did not ask for asylum in Norway because of economic problems. They asked for asylum because they needed asylum protection and their lives were in danger if they were forced back to Ethiopia. As, Theresa, explained to me *“ We did not come here to make money. We came because of political problems. If it was about money, we have been working for few years and have made enough money to have a good life in Ethiopia and could have returned”*.

To further stress that they did not come here because of economic problems, Theresa told me that she and her husband had relatively good jobs in their country of origin which had provided them with an economically comfortable life. Theresa had worked as a teacher and her husband was a school principle. Their job and position meant they were independent individuals capable of providing for themselves. Some of my informants were the main provider for their families in the country of origin; others had the responsibility for helping their siblings in addition to their own families. They were not only independent individuals providing for themselves, but also had people depending on them economically. After they became undocumented migrants, their situation changed from being independent individuals to a situation where they could not provide even for themselves, let alone their families. For example, Hameed, told me: *I am paralysed from thinking, I reached a phase, which is a phase of incapability. I am not able to go to my country. I am not able to bring my family. I am not able to work. I am not able to do anything. I am like a disabled person who cannot do anything and who needs help*".

Many of my informants stressed not having the right to work when they were explaining the implication of being undocumented migrants. Having the right to work does not entitle you to the right of residence. However giving the undocumented migrants the possibility to work made their lives easier to some degree. Working took their minds off thinking about their situation. Theresa explained to me the role of work in making their living condition easier: *“Working is good, you get busy and you do not think too much. After work you get tired and you sleep. Your mind is free and you think less about your situation”*. Besides, having the right to work enables them to be economically independent and provide for themselves. The undocumented migrants are deprived of the right to work or to do anything which can facilitate improving their living conditions. Living in a situation where all doors are closed generated feelings of anger, helplessness, uselessness and disempowerment among the undocumented migrants. The feeling of disempowerment was the result of the fact that they were deprived of any possibility to do anything that might change their legal situation and improve their living condition. The undocumented migrants were pushed into a phase where they found themselves unable to help themselves. Hameed was not physically incapable of providing for himself, but he was disabled to do so, in the sense he was deprived of the right to earn his livelihood. Most of my informants repeatedly stressed the point that they are physically healthy and capable of providing for themselves if they were given the right to work. Helene, one of my Ethiopian informants told me: *“When people know about your situation they want to help you but getting help is painful sometimes for me because I am*

*a person and I have two hands. I can work and handle myself*". Helene, her husband and their child were living with a friend after their working permissions were withdrawn. For survival, they were depending on the help they received from friends and family members. Receiving help was very painful for Helene due to the fact that she both desired and was fully capable of providing for herself and her family but was prevented by the law to do so. The fact that she therefore could not give back something in return to her hosts added hurt to injury. She was the recipient without having the chance to reciprocate. This situation creates a feeling of being in constant and seemingly never ending debt to the people who are helping them because they are not in position in life where they can reciprocate. As a form of reciprocity Kabebe, was babysitting his host's baby. For some of my informants receiving help generated a feeling of humiliation. For example, Hameed felt humiliated when he was given money to send back to his family in Palestine. He was the main provider for his family in Palestine before coming to Norway. He has been working and could send back some money to his family before receiving his last rejection on his asylum application. After the rejection he found himself in a situation where he could not even provide for himself, let alone his family. He along with others who were living in the Palestinian camp by Jakob church in Oslo found their living condition humiliating and unworthy.

### **Exclusion**

I have noted some implications of being an undocumented migrant in Norway. As not having the right and the permit to engage in the society, through the right to work, study; establish a family, travel, in other words not having the right to exist as a social being, made life to be experienced as prisonlike, being stuck in the here and now, for most of my informants. In the absence of a strong social network and of the possibility to engage in the society, some undocumented migrants experienced that they live in a very closed and limited circle within a bigger Norwegian society, either with their own families, if they have families, or with their very limited friends. They felt that they are living on the fringe of the society; felt excluded and marginalized which had psychological implications such as the feelings of loneliness and depression in some of my informants. Some of my informants, one of them being Helene, told me that even if they are granted permit to stay, they need time and treatment to recover from the psychological damage they are subjected to as undocumented migrants. Another concern that most of my undocumented migrants shared was the uncertainty of future. They planned their life on daily basis and did not plan long term plans. The unknown future, the

psychological stress they were subjected to because of their legal status did not leave energy for investment in establishing social relations.

### Self-esteem

The feeling of disempowerment was internalized, creating a negative self-esteem for some of my informants. Some of them felt that they are useless and that they are letting down people whom they have caretaker responsibility for. Theresa, a mother of a baby girl, told me: “ *I feel like I am letting my child down and I am not a good mother because I cannot provide everything she needs. My child cannot go to kinder garden because she is paperless (undocumented migrant). She has to be four years (then the state will pay for the kinder garden). Otherwise we have to have a permission or she has to be 4 years, if not we have to pay by ourselves. How can we afford it? I was sending her to the kinder garden but when they stopped us from working, we did not have money to pay. Now she misses the kids and she wants to be with kids. She is always with us, grown-ups. I wish I could do more for her*”. Hameed shared the same feeling with Theresa, the feeling of letting his family down. He felt also guilty because he could not be there in Palestine with his family. He felt that he could not be a good father for his children and could not provide for them anymore.

### Privacy

One of the implications of living as an undocumented migrant is the deprivation of privacy. There was no room for any privacy whether the undocumented migrants lived in a reception centre, with friends or relatives, or if he or she had managed to rent a shared apartment. As I mentioned earlier, Helen and her family were living with a friend. She and her family did not have the luxury of privacy. For example she could not invite whom she wanted unless approved by the host in beforehand. When I proposed to visit her, I was not aware of the fact that she was not allowed to invite whoever she wanted, she hesitated and told me that she should have the permission from the host. Although, she and her family had a room for themselves, she was not allowed to invite me there. Another issue Theresa explained to me was that she was obligated and felt in debt to her host. This obligation came in the form that Helena had to consider her host and be attentive to her host at all the time. She had to be alert to read the emotions of her host and not upset the host. Another form of the obligation Helena felt towards her host was the obligation to tell everything about her life to her host because she was living under the host's roof. She felt that her life was invaded and she did not own it.

Theresa explained: *“When people want to help me, they should know every detail about my life in order to get help. I don’t have my life .I want my own life, I need my life, with my child, wherever I sleep what I do I don’t want to show to anyone but I have to since they help me and this is the most painful thing .It is so painful that you start to hate yourself first of all (here she cries). When you live with someone (referring to her host), you have to wait for everything you don’t have freedom, even to go toilet, I don’t feel good about it”*. In addition to the lack of privacy, being dependent and feeling like a burden on the host, another issue some of my informants pointed to was the arrangement of their time and their freedom of movement to match the movement and time of the host. If the undocumented migrant did not possess the key to the house, he had to organise his comings and goings according to that of his host’s.

Living with friends or relatives was not the only living arrangement that was characterized by the lack of privacy for undocumented migrants. Even when living in the reception centres, undocumented migrants did not have much privacy. For example, I visited some of my informants who were living in a reception centre around Oslo area, where a family of three lived in a small room which was used as a living room and a sleeping room at the same time. They had a tiny bathroom with a toilet in it which was also used as a washing room. To a certain extent they could be considered to have some privacy because they were not sharing the room with anyone else, which was a privilege only given to families. However, they still had to share the kitchen with everyone on the first floor and they were often visited by people they know, let alone the fact all three family members lived, ate and slept in the same room all the time. In the same reception centre, I also visited a young man who was sharing the room with three other men. While I was sitting in the room to drink a cup of tea, different people came to the room or just popped their head in. When I asked my informants about his privacy, he laughed and asked me ironically: what do you think? Undocumented migrants lacked privacy also when they rented an apartment, of course in cases they could afford it. In these shared apartments undocumented migrants often shared, not just the kitchen and the bathroom but also the bedrooms.

### **Re-empowerment by undocumented migrants**

In order not to yield to desperation and give up, some of my informants found some sort of re-empowerment and looked for hope in different places and different forms of activities. Many of my informants were seeking religion trying to find some sort of explanation, source of

hope and strength and encouragement to go on. In trying to find explanation in religion, they located “the problem or the mistake” in themselves. As one of my Palestinian informant, Jabbar, one day explained to me while we were sitting on the doorstep of the Jakob church: *“(Allah) God has written this (including ending up as undocumented migrant) to him as his destiny. It was my destiny to receive negative (rejection on his asylum application). If you build your life on a right basis, in the future you will have a good life. As a Muslim we do wrong things, this is why we are living like this (living in the tents as undocumented migrant). We bring this on ourselves”*. Jabbar was a religious person who tried to find explanations and justifications of his situation by pointing out holes and weaknesses in his belief. It was a way to remind himself not to lose sight of his faith and at the same time to reinforce his belief in the presence of what he considered as temptations that could weaken his belief. He explained that he was trying to be a good believer by avoiding drinking alcohol and fooling around with girls. Although Jabbar’s locating the explanation in the weakness of his faith and as a punishment from God was quite personal, he was not alone in saying that it is Allah’s will that they were currently in ended up in the situation they were currently in. Some of them they found, to some extent, comfort in believing that Allah had destined them to this situation to test the strength of their faith and one day, if not in this life, He will reward them in the life after death. They believed that Allah brings on misfortunes upon His beloved ones and His strong believers to test them and afterwards cherishes them. Faith in the unlimited power of God or Allah was a place where some of my informants found hope and strength. Theresa and Sarhad told me that after attending religious services at the church each time, they felt released and content. In the church they felt they could reflect and lay down their worries and distresses. They believed that God is watching over them and He will help them one day and find some resolutions for their situation. In addition to the function of explanations, comfort and source of hope, religion was functioning as a source of building social networks which are very crucial for undocumented migrants. Church or mosque was a place where undocumented migrants found opportunities to meet people who could help them economically or help them to find jobs.

### **Other forms of re-empowerment**

Protesting in the Palestinian camp or participating in the asylum march was another form of re-empowering attempt by some of undocumented migrants. One of my informants, Hawre, was one of the participants in the asylum march who found himself re-empowerment by

advocating for other undocumented migrants in Norway. Being politically active in his country of origin, he found affirmation and meaning in being engaged in the plight of undocumented migrants. Working for the interest of undocumented migrants gave him strength and a sense that he was doing something not waiting passively for an unknown future. For others, too, being engaged in politics helped keep some balance and gave some meaning to their lives. For example, for Zakaria, Yousef and Alemu, being politically engaged with Ethiopia was filling up their long days with something meaningful; they were contributing to the future political change in their country of origin.

For some others, the strength and resilience they had proved to themselves when faced with hardship and difficult predicaments in their country of origin, were sources for hope and motivations to carry on and bear the unbearable life of an undocumented migrant. Kasim, drew his staying power from his life in Palestine, which was characterized by difficulties unimaginable for many people. For Zakaria, his experiences in Norway as an undocumented migrant were sources of strength. In addition to the difficulties he had faced in his country of origin, living for 5 years as undocumented migrant and the difficulties such an existence brings with it was a source of motivation for him. One day he told me: *“You cannot imagine what I have gone through (referring to his life in Norway) and what I am capable of bearing”*.

## Chapter three

### In search of home

*“Wherever I lay down my head is home”*

Najeeb, Palestinian informant

#### Introduction

In this chapter I will write about the notion of home and the meanings to be at home for undocumented migrants. I will start the chapter by exploring the sedentary approach to the relation between people and place. According to the sedentary view people are rooted in places and they derive their identity and cultural significance from these places. The relation between people and place is perceived to be natural and normal. I will draw on Malkki's and her critical analysis of the sedentary mode of thinking in explaining the relation between people and place. One of the problematic implications of this mode of thinking is that movement of people is considered to be problematic and thus return is seen to be an unproblematic solution. By perceiving the relation between place and people as natural and normal it is taken for granted that people consider their physical location as home. It is also taken for granted that people have national and social belonging to that specific place.

Throughout this chapter I will argue the notion of home or being at home for undocumented migrants has been affected by many factors and experiences in the country of origin and in the country of destination, in this case Norway. Personal experiences, such as violence, loss and death of friends and relatives have formed the way they perceive and feel to be at home. I would argue that they leave their countries of origin with a dream to find a new home and a new life in Norway. Receiving rejection of their asylum application distorted this dream for most of my informants. Furthermore, I will write about the reception centres, as the only accommodation option offered by the Norwegian government to undocumented migrants, and how undocumented migrants experience living in these centres. I will argue that one of the reasons some of the undocumented migrants leave these reception centres is to obtain some sense of normality to their lives. Other reasons for leaving these centres I have discussed in chapter three. In the last section of this chapter I will write about deportation. This section is a brief insight into arguments on what the Norwegian government calls “voluntary return” what I will call “throwing out” process.

## Place, identity and home

In anthropological studies the relationship between place and identity of people has mainly been debated from two viewpoints, the sedentary and anti-sedentary. Jansen and Löfving (2009:14) in their introduction to the book *Struggles for home: violence, hope and the movement of people* write about both sedentary and anti-sedentary approaches to the relations between people and place. They write that according to sedentary approach people are perceived to be rooted in a particular place and that place is seen as the source of their identity and cultural significance Jansen and Löfving (2009:14). Malkki (1992) presents us with a good analysis of the way the relation between people and place is naturalized by using botanical metaphors. She argues that people are perceived to be rooted in place and their rootedness in that place is the source for their identity. She argues that a people's rootedness in a place is usually naturalized, and botanical metaphors are used to describe the attachment between people and the place to reinforce the naturalness aspect of it (Malkki 1992:27). She further explains that these roots, which supposed people have in place, are not just any kind of roots; they are often arborescent in form. She argues that metaphors which are used in the studies of kinship, such as motherland and fatherland, are giving the notion that the relation of people to land is a natural relationship. She argues that such metaphors of motherland and fatherland imply that "each nation is a grand genealogical tree, rooted in the soil that nourishes it"(Malkki 1992). Malkki argues that other metaphors such as "homeland" are also used in a sense that naturalises and territorialises the relation between people and place (1992). Territorializing and naturalizing the relations between people and place are taken for granted and have become almost unquestionable part of common sense and scholars are conceptualizing these relations using botanical metaphors. For example, Allen (1996:11) argues that anthropologists have written about territorially based tribes or ethnic groups as a natural given part of nature and their identity is produced from their attachment to territory. Jansen and Löfving (2009:14), in their critique to the sedentary approach point out that the naturalization of the attachment between place and people become more problematic when it is used in an exotic notion of the non-western societies to put them closer to nature. Appadurai (1988:37) argues that anthropologist have tended to confine people and plant them in places. He argues that natives are constructed as "natives are not only persons who are from certain places, and belong to those place, but they are also those who are somehow *incarcerated*, or confined, in those places" (Appadurai 1988). He further argues that this incarceration of people in places has moral and intellectual aspects and they restrained by what they know and believe(Appadurai 1988).

Jansen and Löfving (2009:14) argue that if people are perceived to be naturally rooted in a place, therefore, their movement is considered to be violent and problematic requiring a solution. Presuming that everyone has a root in a particular place, return to the “homeland” or the place of origin is anticipated to be the solution to the “problem” of the “refugee” (see chapter two).

Allen (1996:10) argues that return to the homeland, as a solution to the problem of movement of people, is embedded in the policies of European political theory of nationalism. According to the sedentary viewpoint, people are perceived to have a given national and social belongingness to the place they migrated from, thus return is unproblematic. One of the problems with the sedentary view is the presumption of the naturalness of the national and social belonging to a place. Based on my research materials, as I would discuss in the later sections in this chapter, I would argue that feelings of national, ethnic, and social belonging are far from being natural; instead they have been formed and characterized by certain factors and personal experiences. Individual experiences, which I discuss more in the coming sections, for example, social exclusion in the country of origin and the violence some of my informants subjected to are affecting their national and social belonging. Sometimes, these individual experiences are the main reasons for leaving the country of origin. Another factor that affected the national and the national belonging of some of my informants was the way they have been treated in Norway as undocumented migrants. Kibreab(1999:406) argues that the reasons that make people to leave a place and the way they are received in the destination countries affect the social and national belonging of people.

Malkki (1995b) is one of the scholars who criticized the sedentary view in her work on the Hutu refugees in Tanzania. She has looked into the reconstruction of national identity, meanings of home and homeland among refugees who had lived in camps and refugees lived in towns. Her work is one of the most prominent studies that contested the sedentary view of the relationship between people and place. The naturalness and taken for granted relationship between people and place has been contested in scholar studies in the last two decades. Kibreab (1999: 385) argues that this relationship is not just contested in the two decades but some scholars have gone farther and deny such a relation. He argues that people are perceived to be deterritorialized global citizens and the concepts such as national identities and homeland have lost their meanings. He calls this world without border an ideal world of homelessness and borderlessness. He argues that in this ideal world refugees are not perceived as a problem but as an issue of mobility. He is critical to this conceptualizing of the world in which we are all homeless and there are no borders between the nations. He argues in such a

world, issues such as the forces that make people leave their places in search for a safe haven and the restrictive border policies against asylum seekers or “others” are ignored and disregarded (Kibreab 1999: 386-8).

In my approach to place belonging and the significance of home, I have taken a more continuum approach between the two poles. My informants identify themselves with places rather than the place of origin and they renegotiate their national and social belongings. They are able to create new social relations if they were given the possibility and the chance to do so. They are neither planted in certain places, nor a global citizen in a borderless world. Rather there are factors, such as individual experiences, social exclusion or alienation both in Norway and places they left behind that play roles in the way my informants identity and feel belonging to places. They are people who are in search for a place where they could make or remake their homes and rebuild their social lives.

### **Home and mobility**

The theme of home has been debated a lot among the scholars writing about people on the move. In their work Rapport and Dawson (1998:6) take upon various notions of home. A traditional conceptualisation of home was that of a stable and safe place where one can leave and return. That safe place can be a house, a village, region or a nation where the space is under control of the person inhabiting it (Douglas (1991) cited in Rapport and Dawson 1998:6). For people on the move, home can be found in practices, dressing styles and stories they carry (Berger 1984:64)Rapport and Dawson 1998:7). Though movement is one of the characterisations of our time, the context and the motives behind the movement should be taken into consideration. In the case of asylum seekers, the decision to move and cross international borders has been taken under different circumstances, in comparison to other forms of movement, for example tourism. My informants, whom had asked for asylum in Norway, had different reasons for leaving their countries of origin compared to for example tourists visiting Norway. My informants had to leave their countries because of reasons such as violence, political persecution and imprisonment, in contrary to a tourist whom is merely in Norway to spent a good time and see the country. Another issue should be taken into consideration here is the return question to the country of origin. Contrary to other types of movement, my informants could not go back to their countries of origin. All these factors have impact on the way home is defined and experienced by my informants. Throughout my fieldwork with undocumented migrants, I have been given various definitions of home and

the significance surrounding it. In a context characterized by uncertainty, insecurity, instability and fear of an unknown future, home seems to be a postponed faraway dream-like thought for most of my informants. The individual and collective experience and situation prior and under leaving are of great significance in forming social and national belonging. Homes are in different places and mean different meanings for different individuals. Besides, there are other factors and variables that determine the place of home and the meanings of home such as, the right to stay, sense of possibility, safety, insecurity, fear of deportation and lacking the right to have a home.

### **Making home or re-making home**

If being at home implies feeling safe, loved, wanted and belonging to a place or to a society, I would say that some of my informants did not express these feelings associated when they talked about their country of origin. For some of my informants, their personal experiences within their families and within their society had affected the way they felt about being at home. The way they have been treated by their family members has formed the way they felt about being home. Hadi, one of my informants from Palestine, told me about his tough childhood and the harsh treatment he has received from his father when I asked him about the meaning of being at home. In addition to the state violence, either violence practiced by the Israeli state or the Palestinian authorities, he has experienced violence at home as well. Without going into the discussion about whether the violence exercised by both the Israeli and the side of Palestinian authorities has been domesticated or not, which is indeed a very interesting discussion, my interest here is the way violence has formed my informant's experience of being at home. Without going into the detail, he told me about violent incidents within his family that have affected him deeply. What he remembered about his childhood was characterised by violence. Hadi did not have, or he did not tell me, any warm recollections or memories or feelings of being at home. In addition to not having any nice recollections from his childhood, he also has experienced rejection or non-acceptance from the society as a whole. When I asked him about where is home for him, he answered me by telling me: *"I felt like....as if I was from another planet, I do not belong to Palestine as a whole ....."*. It seemed that he has never felt part of the Palestinian society due to his life style which was not in accordance with the accepted social norms in Palestine. Palestine was a place where he could not be himself. Rapport and Dawson (1998: 10) argue that being at home means living in an intellectual setting where one can mediate one's identity best and

live one's daily life. They argue that in the absence of this setting one becomes homeless (Rapport and Dawson 1998). Drawing from their argument, Hadi was homeless in his own country of origin because he did not feel belonged to the society and felt alienated and socially excluded. Palestinian society was not the intellectual and social setting where he could mediate his identity and be who he was. I found that there is also a connection between the feeling of belongingness to a place and the experience of being socially included or excluded. Hadi could not find a space to practice his individual freedom in what is supposed to be his "home-country" as he explained to me. For example he told me that he did not want to get married and establish a family which is a social norm after one reaches a certain age. After rejecting what is socially expected from him, Hadi felt that he was socially excluded and alienated. He left Palestine to find a place where he could be who he was. Norway was more like a home for him than Palestine. Though he lacked the right to establish a normal social life, he still had a space to practice his individual freedom to some degree.

*"I can only fantasise about what it could be and mean to be at home. I have not any connection to Afghanistan. There is no bridge connects me to Afghanistan, the bridge is destroyed. I feel Afghanistan is not my home and I do not belong there. I have nothing here I am between earth and heaven I am just flying. I belong to nowhere. I lost my country and I lost my family".* Sarhad, one of my informants from Afghanistan

As is mentioned above, the bridge between him and his country of origin is broken because he has converted to Christianity. He told me that returning to Afghanistan is not an option because he most likely would be killed. If not he would be socially rejected. He told me about incidents, in Norway, where he was harassed and beaten by religious men from his country, whom considered his conversion to be insulting to Islam. He has been called *murtad* apostate of his religion which implies that he has deserted all his principles, the only source of morality and the only true path to paradise. What he means when he said that he lost his country is that he has lost all the social ties to his country and he would not be accepted as a member of the society. When it comes to the loss of his family, as he told me, some of his family members have died or been killed and the only family members he has left are not living in Afghanistan anymore. In addition to the loss of some family members, he has been disowned by his own mother because he has converted to Christianity, something his mother did not approve. He told me that his mother has cursed him by telling him: "*man shir khudra be to nembakhshim* (this is a statement in Persian language which could be translated into: *I do not devote my milk to you or I will not forgive you for giving you my milk*). It is a very

strong way a mother can disown a child and break the child-mother bond by not forgiving him/her for not reciprocating or reciprocating by dishonouring the mother. Here the act of breast-feeding is considered to be a form of gift his mother has devoted to Sarhad; in return he should not dishonour her. In Sarhad's situation, he has dishonoured his mother by changing his religion and thus he does not deserve that he was been breast-fed by her. He told me the statement above is the worst thing a mother can say to a child of hers and the worst way a mother can disown a child. Besides being rejected by his only family member left, he would risk his life if he was deported to Afghanistan, if not he would be socially excluded due to his conversion.

*"I have never experienced a nice day in my whole life in Afghanistan... ..they (people from other ethnic groups) tell me that Afghanistan is not for Hazara people..."* Ari, my young Afghani informant told me that when he was talking about how Hazare people, who are an ethnic group in Afghanistan, were treated by other ethnic groups. Due to the war and poverty in Afghanistan, Ari was deprived of getting education and he had to grow up fast. Being discriminated against constantly because of his ethnicity, he experienced estrangement in his own supposed home-country. In contrast with his early childhood in Afghanistan, Ari spoke with joy about the period when he was living in one of the reception centers for minors in Norway. At that period he could go to school, he could do sports and he had good friends, as he told me. He was living his teenage period and had almost everything a teenage of his age would have in Norway. For a short period of time, Norway was a home he never had, a safe and peaceful haven where he could be a normal teenage boy.

The notion of home is often taken for granted and there is the presumption that home, in its material and symbolical form, already existed and people are re-making it in another place. For Ari and Hadi, "home" a place where you associate with warm and nice memories, where you could feel safe and wanted, never existed. They wanted to make home rather than re-making home. For Sarhad, home was lost when he has lost all social ties and relations with his country of origin. He was searching for a home. They were in the search process for a place they could associate with all the meanings surrounding home, such as acceptance, love and belonging. I would call this the process of search for "home". They have started this process by leaving their "home-countries" in spite of the risky road to that floating dream. The road is risky because of the actual physical risk of crossing borders illegally. And it is a floating dream because they have not landed on the ground yet.

## Home and violence

*“I was living fine among my relatives, friends and siblings, my family. But you get to a point that you cannot bear anymore. The circumstances I were in drove me out of my country ... What I had I lost. I lost it all. I had a house and ... I lost it. I live in the street now. Homeland and my home is the street. I don't have a house I came here to search for life, just life I look for a better life. If I sit in Gaza, I will be waiting death”*

This is the statement of one of my Palestinian informants, Hameed, when he was explaining what is home for him. For him home was his family and to be at home was to be among his family. The meaning of home was to be with his family in a safe place. What tied him to Palestine was his family and his social relations rather than the assumable relations between people and soil. When I asked about home, he immediately started talking about his family and his longing to create a safe home for them here in Norway. The safety and the wellbeing of his family and home were inseparable. As he stated above, he had to leave Palestine and his family, thus his home. He had to leave because, as he said above, he would be awaiting death and he had to leave in order to establish a safe home for his family. To save his life and in the hope to save his family and securing them a safe home in the future, he had to leave Palestine. His family was the only connection to Palestine and he had lost everything else over there. He showed me two photos of his house before and after the destruction by the Israeli military. The one before the destruction was a photo of a beautiful house by the sea while the second was a ruin without doors and windows. The photos symbolized the loss of home, the material and the symbolic one.

The on-going violence in Palestine due to the Israeli occupation has shattered the life course of people and the normality of life is obscured. The stories most of my Palestinian informants told me shared the notions of violence, loss, death and destruction. The loss of land and house, the death of relatives, family members and friends were normal parts of their stories. It seemed as if violence had become a normal part of their lives in Palestine and in return in their life stories. Violence was associated with the life they had lived in Palestine. They had left this life behind and came to Norway in hope to find a new life, a normal life as they themselves put it. The connection between violence and the place where violence has taken part cannot be separated. Jansen and Løvving (2009:7-8) revisit the current approaches to violence which ignore the significance of the place of the violence and its relation to the migration. People's perception of place cannot be separated from the violence they were subjected to (Jansen and Løvving 2009:7-8). Kasim, another Palestinian has told me about the

loss of his family members and friends in Gaza because of the occupation. When he was describing the living situation in Gaza, he told me: “...it is not a living, it is the most dangerous place in the world. I came here because I had big problems but I came with a big dream. I came here because I have nothing in Gaza and I had lost a lot of things...I came here to be a normal person and to live like a normal person. I will not go out of Norway because I will be going towards death if I go back, a death I run away from. I lost what I lost”. He came to Norway with a dream to start a new life over, a normal life as he described, a life not characterised by violence on daily basis and not threatened by death. For him, the meaning of home and the feeling of being at home was strongly associated with having a life free of violence. Having lost friends and family members to the war, going back was not an option for him, because death might be his fate too. He told me that one might get killed anytime, and one is never safe. There was nothing for him to go back to.

The experiences of loss, violence and death characterised the stories of many of my other informants. Some of them have been imprisoned and tortured in their countries of origin. Omed, one of my informants told me about his experience in one of the prisons in Iran when I asked him about home. He described to me how he has been tortured: “...I was in prison for 6 and half year. I was in isolation; it is called (*infiradi*) in Persian, it was like a grave. You cannot know when it is morning and when it is night time. There is a small window up in the room. The electricity cables are very high because it is possible a prisoner in isolation might become suicidal..... I was in isolation for 11 months. They tortured me 3 or 4 times every week. They came especially after midnight.....you cannot... when you are tortured it is very painful. They handcuffed me with police handcuff. They start with different cables to beat you. They put head against the wall and they keep asking you questions...they are sadist people”. After what he has experienced of violence in Iran, for Omed home was no longer in Iran. He escaped Iran to escape being jailed and tortured again and start a new life somewhere else. He told me that he does not want to live with the memories of torture and he will try to forget about it, however memories of imprisonment came back to him when he thought of the risk of being sent back to Iran. He told me that he spends night without sleeping when he thinks about being sent back. In particular he told me about the way he experienced imprisonment in Trandum, a detention centre for immigration by Gardemoen airport in Oslo. He told me: “ ....there were police in the room where we watched television. I became very nervous and I remembered things from the prison in Iran. I could not eat a lot, I just drank tea. I felt that I am in prison and I was afraid”.

The impact of violence does not end once one departs from its source. They had left their families and beloved ones behind. The fear was following them in the form of fear of the lives of their families and friends. For example, Omed was concerned about the safety of his family, especially his wife. Qadr, one of my Palestinian informants, was always concerned about the safety of his family in Palestine. He often showed me the news, or received news when he was calling his family about the attacks by the Israeli settlers in the place where his family lived. One evening I was in the Palestinian camp when he received news that some settlers have attacked his house and broke some windows, but luckily his family was not in the house. They were staying with his parent's which is something they did often for their safety.

These individuals mentioned above, and many of my other informants, had taken the decision to leave their countries of origin in the hope of finding a new start and a new life in a new place. The home once they had in their country of origin was no longer home because the safety of themselves and their families was in danger. To be safe and feel safe cannot be separated from the feeling of being at home in the case of those of my informants

### **Norway as a temporary shelter or a transit:**

*"...if the situation in my home-country will change, I will go back tomorrow"* this is a statement of my Ethiopian informant, Zakaria, when I asked him about home. He has been living with his family in Norway for five years. For him, "home" was in the home-country and Norway was just a temporary shelter. Most of my Ethiopian informants were forced to leave Ethiopia because of the brutality of the current ruling regime and due to their political engagement. Although they had received last rejection of their asylum application they still had the permit to work. Most of them had been working in Norway over several years and thus had established relatively stable lives, social relations and a homelike milieu. However, in 2009 their working permit was withdrawn from them and had turned their world upside down (I write about of the implication of this decision more in chapter two). They lost their jobs, their home and their social networks. They were stripped of what they have accomplished over years. The only accommodation alternative left for them was their first reception centers. Some of them have returned there, while others found shelters with friends or relatives.

Some of my informants, those who were engaged in politics, had left Ethiopia in hope of finding a safe haven until one day they could go back home. However, returning home was

a hope rather than an actual reality under the current political status quo. This is also not to imply that they would not attempt or desire to establish a home in Norway if they were given a permit to stay. I also noticed a strong national identification among them most of my Ethiopian informants, which I would say was partly because of their political engagement both in Ethiopia and in Norway. Another reason I would say was because of the way they had been treated, been rejected and taken away a life they had built over years here. I would also say that the wish to go home was connected to the difficulties they had experienced over the years in Norway. There were also connections between the reason they were forced to leave Ethiopia, the social relations which were pulling them to Ethiopia and the forces that were pushing them away out of Norway.

Those, who were actively engaged in the politics, were forced to leave Ethiopia otherwise they would have risked persecution and imprisonment. They came to Norway looking for protection until the political situation is changed in Ethiopia. Some of them, such as Zakaria, were even ready to participate in changing the political situation if there was the indication of a revolution back home. They had strong family ties with their families back home and felt obligations for acting for the well beings of their families and relatives. They talked with nostalgia and affection about the memories with families and friends. They were in the place where they were supposed to be. As one of my informants, Teresa, told me: “ ... *they (Ethiopians) are my people, they speak my language...it is my country...* ”.

The feeling of identification and belongingness were pulling them towards Ethiopia. In spite of the fact that they were living in Norway, it was not considered home. They have appealed the rejection decisions many times and still had received another rejection. The implications of being rejected many times and the withdrawal of the working permit was that they felt unwelcomed and unwanted in Norway. As undocumented migrants they lacked the possibility to learn the language and engage in the society which made them socially isolated (I have written more about this theme in chapter four). The rejection and the social exclusion they experienced fed the feelings of not being welcomed or wanted in Norway. Besides being unwanted in Norway there was also a constant fear of forced deportation if Norway came to returning agreement with the Ethiopian government. The feelings of not being wanted and the risk of deportation were pushing some of them away out of Norway. Home was somewhere they could feel both safe and wanted. Being torn between pushing and pulling ties and forces, home was yet to be re-imagined. Teresa summed up very well when she said: “... *I don't know where is home. For now I don't know where is my home. You feel home... to be safe in*

*your home and work and you do normal life, you know. But I don't feel Norway my home right now because I don't have rights to do anything. Home means you have right to... you have right to work that is why you called home, right? ....so I cannot do that in my home country and I cannot do that here, so I don't know where is my home, for now I don't feel there is home for me, I still have the feeling of being refugee....refugee. When you say: oh I will go home, you feel free, you know? You know what to do, that is why I don't feel that is home for me .This is not home for me, sitting, waking up, sleeping. That is what I am doing. That is not home for me because I am not sure they are going to take me home. Any time they will agree with the dictator, they will return us. They going to take me to Ethiopia, I am not sure so I don't feel home”*

The perception of Norway as temporary was shared by other informants of mine. In the absence of the stability and certainty, Norway was experienced as a transit, a place where one is always under threat of being deported. Hawkar, my Afghani informant told me *“In Afghanistan, I don't feel that I have a home. Everything is finished, the bridge is closed. But in Norway I thought it is my home, but when I got the rejection.. I don't feel it is my home, house .I feel that it is a transit, maybe for one month or three months”*. Receiving the last rejection has closed doors and instabilised life. It has pushed some of my informants back into the state of being refugee and on the move, as Teresa has stated above. My Palestinian informant, Najeeb said *“I applied for asylum and I am still seeking. That is the problem with asylum seeking; you keep seeking, seeking where? You don't know”*. However, the last rejection does not stop one from seeking asylum in other places or return to Norway after deportation. People keep coming back to Norway or planning to go other places outside the Dublin agreement to take their chances. It is an on-going process of searching for a place to be called home.

### **Home without rights**

Not having a residence permit means you are deprived of the right to have rights in Norway. The deprivation of having any rights, such as working, studying, or establishing a family limit the possibility for undocumented migrants to establish social relations and have a normal social life( see chapter two). Despite this deprivation, some of my informants have managed to do so and create a milieu that gives some sort of normality to their lives. For example, one of my informants from Iran, Hawre has managed to establish a social network and learn the Norwegian language which made him engage and gain knowledge about the Norwegian

society. He told me that he managed to learn the Norwegian language by himself because as undocumented migrant he does not have the right to attend courses for learning Norwegian. He was aware of the fact that he has no rights in Norway but still Norway was experienced as a home for him. One evening we were walking towards the down town of Oslo when told me: “Norway is my home but without rights”. For him Norway is home though he does not have a permanent place in Norway. He felt home in Norway but he felt that Norway does not belong to him because he lacked the privilege of being included and entitled to the right of residence.

### **The reception centres**

Reception centres are the only accommodations offered to the undocumented migrants by the Norwegian state. They are allowed to stay in these centres till they are deported. They are offered around 800 NOK<sup>7</sup> every fifteen days which is supposed to cover food, clothing and travel expenses. Life in the reception centres is the life in its survival form, the provision of shelter, food and cloth. The money they receive barely covers food and clothing. They do not have enough economic resources to participate in any physical or mental activity. The reception centres are usually located in remote areas and far away from downtown cities. Some of the reception centres are former military camps and exhausted hotels. For example, the one where some of my informants were living in a city around Oslo was a former hotel. In these reception centres there is no room for privacy especially for single men and women. They usually are placed in a room where more than two people live. Sometimes families are given a room alone but still have to share the kitchen and the bathroom with others. My informants told me, those who have been living in the reception centres or still living there, that it is not allowed to have guests over for the night. It is not allowed to stay away more than a couple of days in a year. One can ask for permission to stay outside the centre for some days in a year. Apart from these days, being away for several days and without permission, one loses the allowance one receives and eventually loses the right to stay there. Through constant control by the personnel working in the reception centres, they can find out if one is absent or not. As my informants told me, if one is thrown out of the system as they themselves put it, one has to go to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and beg them to give him or her back the accommodation place.

Living in the reception centres is characterised by idleness and passivity. Undocumented migrants do not have the right to work, study or to do any other activity which

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<sup>7</sup> NOK=Norwegian Krone

they can use their time with. As they always said there is nothing to do, they just eat and sleep. There is not possibility to establish social relations. Reception centre is impersonal place to live for a social being and deprives undocumented migrant of the possibility to live a normal social existence. Most of my informants have told me that one of the reasons to leave the reception centres are because of living in such a place is unbearable. Being social beings, undocumented migrants attempt to maintain some sort of homelike activities in an attempt to regain some normality to their lives in a situation that characterized by abnormality. To keep some balance and preserve some kind of sociality to their lives, many of the undocumented migrants have decided to leave these reception centres. Outside the reception centres, there were better chance and room for socializing and performing social interaction. For instance, in the Palestinian camp, several wedding ceremonies took place. They did not celebrate the wedding in the same way as they usually celebrate in Palestine due to the absence of close families and relatives. However, the couple were surrounded by those who were living in the camp and other acquaintances. The songs and the dance coloured the atmosphere and gave the event some sort of home-like feeling. The way they congratulated and expressed their happiness to the couple, which was a combination of social obligation and an expression of social inclusion, gave a feeling of being shortly at home.

Along with celebrating, there were death incidents of family members in the country of origin. Not being able to travel and say good bye to the loved ones was one of the difficulties they had to cope with. When the mother of one of my informants, Sazan, a woman from Iran, died, she arranged a memorial service. Sazan has not seen her mother for several years, and she could not say a last good bye to her. Having friends and acquaintance around, which she and her daughter have made through their social interactions, made the grieving process easier to handle and lightened the burden of the loss to some degree. If she was still living in the reception centres, she would not have the possibility and the room for having people around. She would not have been able to establish social contacts due to the isolating situation of the reception centres.

### **“Return” to where?**

The sedentary presumption of the natural attachment between people and place has been incorporated in the migration policies of many European states. Perceiving the migration as a problem and the return or repatriation as a solution is often explained in context of a natural existence of national identification and social belonging to the place of origin. Out of what I

said about the connection of the social exclusion, alienation, deprivation and the belongingness to “home- country”, I am critical to what the Norwegian government calls the returning process to home-country. The Norwegian government uses the argument that those who have been given the final rejection should “return” “voluntarily” or forcibly to their “home-country”. What I find to be important and in need of scrutinizing are the notions of “voluntary”, “return” and “home”. It is considered to be “voluntary” return when the undocumented migrant sign up for deportation after he or she has received the date for deportation. If they do sign up “voluntary” they will be forcibly deported if they are still accessible to the authority. That is to say that they are still living in the reception centres, where the authority has control over, or living in known addresses. In sense, it is not “voluntary” when eventually they are deported by force. Undocumented migrants are not left with so many options, apart from deciding to leave the reception centres and disappear into the society, once one received the date of deportation (see chapter three). In case Norway has not signed return agreement with the country of the undocumented migrant, he and she should live and wait in a reception centre. Some of my informants described this situation as psychological warfare by the Norwegian government against them. They told me that they are forced into this situation by the Norwegian government to make them fed up and decide to sign up for “voluntary” return. They often told me that if they could go back to the country of origin they did the risk of crossing borders illegally and bear the harsh living condition of being undocumented migrant. Theresa told me: “...*what they ( the Norwegian government) does is a psychological warfare: they try torture people, they think when we suffer we will run away and go back( to Ethiopia). If there is a way to run away why I will sit here and suffer. Why do you destroy people’s mind, if we have peace in home country, why we are destroying ourselves here*”. When undocumented migrants are cornered to choose between living a life as undocumented migrant or to be deported, I find it hard to consider voluntary or to differentiate between voluntary and forcibly.

The second concept that should be problematized is the concept “return”. Both of “home” and “return” in the argument are insufficiently nuanced. The focal point is to deport rather than to return. The aim of the deportation policy is to get rid of a problem rather than solving it. They do not “return” people to a safe and familiar milieu; they rather take them out of Norway. I would go further and call that process “throwing out” rather than “returning”. The third issue which needs to be contested in the argument is the concept “home” and it’s juxtaposition of home and country. If we look at the notion of home or *hjem* in the Norwegian context, it is associated with family, warm, care, love, belonging and safety. If home means

all these meanings for Norwegians, does home not mean the same for undocumented migrants? For my informants, whom we encountered in this chapter, home means exactly the same as for Norwegians. I would argue that undocumented migrants are not “returned” to home because they are deported to place where they are not safe, or do not have any family to go back to or do have feelings of belonging. When the concept home is used in the argumentation about deporting undocumented migrants to the “home-country”, the notion of home and what it means to be at home are intentionally under-toned and neglected for the sake of the argument. The last issue I want to problematize is the notion that home and country are one and the same. It is taken for granted that there exists a home in the “home-country”, the material or the symbolic. The existence of feelings of national and social belongingness is also taken for granted. Undocumented migrants are deported to their countries, though in some cases that country does not exist and not recognized internationally, rather than returned to their homes. These are individuals who already have taken the decision to leave their countries and they have not accounted to be returned there. When they are deported to their countries, they do not return, they are rather “returned”. This does not imply the passivity and being acted upon because in many cases, they leave their country again after the deportation has taken place.

## Chapter four

### The exercise of power on undocumented migrants and the possibilities of resistance

*“I just want to have the right to be”*

Kasim, Palestinian informant

#### Introduction

The relationship between undocumented migrants and the state is a relationship of power. In this chapter I will write about the process of asylum seeking, different stages of that process and the ways power is exercised on undocumented migrants. I will mainly draw on Foucault's theory of power in explaining the power exercise of the state on undocumented migrants. For Foucault the existence of possibilities to resist power is one of the conditions for power relations to exist. Power is exercised only on free subjects as Foucault argues. Therefore, I will write about the possibilities and the room in which undocumented migrants can resist power. The possibilities of undocumented migrants to resist the power relations are limited and risky as I will argue. However, undocumented migrants follow different strategies and carry out acts that could be considered as resistance to the power of the state. Some undocumented migrants decide to “disappear” in the society as a survival strategy while others make themselves visible to resist the power of the state. I will write about two of the acts carried out by undocumented migrants during my time in the field, the protest by a group of Palestinians and an asylum march by a group of undocumented migrants from different nationalities.

#### Power relations and undocumented migrants

The issue of power has been debated and approached in different ways in anthropological studies. I will be approaching the issue of power from a Foucauldian perspective to explain the ways power is exercised on undocumented migrants. For Foucault (1990:94) power is not something that individuals can hold or obtain, it is rather exercised through various relations between individuals and groups. He argues that power is exercised in the form of certain modes of action. These actions modify and determine the mode of actions of others, and what mediates the power to be exercised is the existence of relationships (Foucault 1982:788-89). Foucault (1982:93) further argues that these “power relations have come more and more

under state control". He points out that "power relations have been progressively governmentalized, that is to say, elaborated, rationalized, and centralized in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions"(Foucault 1982). Foucault (1991) summarises what he means by governmentality in three points: (1) the co-operation between institutions facilitates the exercise of power which has populations as its target of control, (2) the formation of different governmental apparatuses and (3) the transformation of the state of justice of the middle ages into governmentalized state (Foucault 1991:102).

Foucault (1982:779-93) further argues that the power of state is totalized in individuals. In the case of undocumented migrants, many of my informants implied and experienced that the power of state was exercised through immigration offices and people working in these offices. So I will examine the exercise of power from the point of my informants and the way they experienced it. In this sense the power of the state is accumulated in individuals, case workers, which can be considered as individualisation of power. Power practice is rationalised and justified by the fact that the asylum applications are being evaluated and treated through proper channels. The relationship of undocumented migrants to the state is a relationship of power. This relationship starts with seeking asylum. Seeking asylum in itself is a one sided power practice. Some my informants implied that the case worker who interviews the asylum seeker and evaluates the asylum application has the power to determine if the asylum seeker fulfils the criteria to be granted protection or not. The asylum seeker himself has only his experiences and his life story to contribute to the decision making. In order for their words to be taken as reliable truth they have to document their identity, their age and sometimes even their experiences. One of my informants, Ari, who did not possess birth documents, had to undergo a dental test to determine his age. The test result came with very rough calculation, estimating his age between 16 to 20 years. Ari told them that he was 17 years old. Being born in a rural area of Afghanistan, where birth records are not properly documented or preserved, it was not easy or even possible for him to get a birth document, especially after 17 years. In life threatening cases, asylum seekers are often asked to document that their lives are threatened. Some of my informants often wondered: "*How could I ask those who threatened me for document?*" Not having the "right" documents and their words not being accepted as the truth, they had little or no leverage to influence a decision which will fundamentally alter their lives. This relationship is characterized by powerfulness of the case worker and powerlessness and vulnerability of the asylum seeker.

The relationship of the undocumented migrant to the state becomes more imbalanced when the asylum seeker receives the final rejection. The decision to deny protection defines and redirects the actions undocumented migrants might take later. Once the rejection is received, an undocumented migrant can either be deported immediately or deportation may be delayed to further notice. In cases where Norway has signed a return agreement with the undocumented migrant's country of origin, he will be notified of the deportation date and eventually deported. If the undocumented migrant had applied for asylum in another European country within European Union, he will be returned to that country. The deportation occurs in accordance with Dublin Regulation between countries within European Union along with Norway, Iceland and Switzerland. The objective of Dublin Regulation is to determine the responsibility of the Member State of the European Union for considering the asylum application. Members of the European Union have established a shared fingerprint database which registers the fingerprint of asylum seekers. If the asylum seeker has applied for asylum in more than one country within the coverage of Dublin Regulation, he will be deported to the first country he applied for asylum.

During this period of waiting for deportation, the undocumented migrant is given the chance to return "voluntarily" to his country of origin. This so-called "voluntary" return appears as an attempt by the state to "give back" a sense of decision making power to the undocumented migrant. The meaning of "voluntary" is distorted when it is closely linked to a threat of forced deportation when the deadline is up. The undocumented migrant is eventually deported by force in case he is detected by the immigration police. After the apprehension, he will be imprisoned at Trandum, which is an immigration detention centre near Gardermoen airport in Oslo. The undocumented migrant is detained at the centre under constant surveillance until the practical procedures for his deportation are finished. At his stage, the physical movement of the undocumented migrant is controlled against his will. This deprivation of movement goes even further when undocumented migrants are hand cuffed or put in restraining jackets in case of any indications that he might resist on the way to the airplane. The undocumented migrant is deprived of any possibility to act or resist. According to Foucault (1982:790) this form of relationship is a physical relationship of constraint, rather than a power relationship. He argues that "power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free, by this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse compartments maybe realized" (Foucault 1982:790).

Another form of power exercised by the state is the power to postpone life of undocumented migrants to “further notice”. This form of power exercise takes place when there is no return agreement between Norway and the undocumented migrant’s country of origin. The undocumented migrant has to wait in reception centres until such an agreement one day is signed. He has to put his life on wait for years. Because the Norwegian authorities cannot deport him by force, he is encouraged and told that he can leave on his own responsibility. As I mentioned earlier the undocumented migrant is told that he is “free” to leave, but only if he returns to his country of origin. If they decide to return they can only be given their passports or any other travel documents at the airport. This is to make sure that they will return to their country of origin, and not to another country, and they will leave Norwegian territory. The power exercised by the state is not questioned because it is considered legitimate.

### **Resistance by undocumented migrants**

For Foucault resistance can be a starting point in approaching power relations. As Foucault (1990:95) has noted, “where there is power there is resistance, and yet or rather consequently this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power”. Foucault notes that in order for power relations to take place there should be rooms for resisting and power is only exercised on free subjects (Foucault 1982:789-90). The scope of resistance by undocumented migrants can be limited due to their legal statuses of not having the residence permit. In her work, Antje Ellermann (2010) explores how undocumented migrants resist the power of the state in a liberal state such as Germany by destroying their identification papers. She argues that undocumented migrants destroy their identification paper to resist deportation because if the state does not know the identity of the undocumented migrant he or she cannot be deported. Ellermann (2010) argues that when undocumented migrants destroy their identification paper they want to resist the deportation and thus they often succeed in preventing the state from exercising one of its most significant powers. She argues this form of resistance, which is carried out by an isolated individual and not collectively organised, is considered an individual acts of desperation. She further argues that this form of resistance is only considered practical when the individuals carrying out the act, in this case undocumented migrants, have nothing left to loose. She points out the fact that undocumented migrants have lost all the claims against the state and thus they have nothing left to loose in defying the orders of the state. She argues that ironically the powerlessness of undocumented migrants

threatens the exercise of power by the state (Ellermann 2010). Ellermann points out that this form of resistance is close to what James Scott described “Weapons of the weak” (2010). Scott (1985:31) writes about everyday resistance by peasants in Malaya during the colonial time, and argue that this form of resistance takes the form of “passive noncompliance, subtle sabotage, evasion and deception”. He further argues that everyday resistance is not organised, it is informal and aimed at immediate changes.

In my research I found that undocumented migrants resist final rejection of the asylum application in different ways. I found that they carry out both forms of resistance, the individually and collectively organised acts. The survival strategies are usually carried out as acts of individuals while the act such as protesting and walking on a march are organised and carried out as collective acts of resistance. The survival strategies they follow, such as leaving the reception centres and “disappearing” into the society, and the acts taken by undocumented migrants, such as protesting and the asylum march, can be considered as acts of resistance. These forms of acts can be considered as the last resort for undocumented migrants in the absence of other forms and possibilities of resistance. Before moving to the forms of acts taken by undocumented migrants and the strategies they pursue to survive, the frame and the context in which they act should be clarified. Not having the legal right to reside makes the scopes of resistance of undocumented migrants very limited. Not having the right to reside means that undocumented migrants are deprived of the right to have rights in Norway. One needs to have the permission to reside in order to be entitled to other rights, among them the right to work, the right to study, the right to establish family, the right to travel and the right to vote. Not having the right to have rights limits the possibility that their acts of resistance can have any influence in changing their legal situation. The lack of the right to be residence means that their voices can easily be ignored by the authority without any significant consequences.

They might have the possibility to resist, though limited, but it does not mean they have the power to influence directly. Undocumented migrants themselves are aware of the fact that their acts of resistance can have little impact on affecting their legal statuses. What they want and hope for is that the Norwegian society will act on their behalf and press the government to change its immigration policy. Undocumented migrants take a risk by taking actions such as protesting or participating in a march because these actions make them visible and accessible to the authorities to apprehend them and eventually deport them. It is especially risky for those undocumented migrants whom Norway has return agreement with their countries of origin. For example, during my time in the field two of the Palestinians

living in the camp were arrested by the immigration police, imprisoned in Trandum and eventually deported to Palestine

I would argue that both invisibility, by disappearing into the society, and visibility, such as protesting and participating in a march, are forms of resistance. The survival strategies some of the undocumented migrants follow, such as being invisible to the authorities, can be considered as a form of resisting the deportation decision. They use invisibility as a strategy to avoid detection and defy the authority's decision of deportation. Some of undocumented migrants leave the reception centres, after receiving the last rejection of their asylum application and "disappear" into the society. Another form of resistance act taken by undocumented migrants is to be visible. During my fieldwork period two acts of resistance were taken by undocumented migrants, a protest of a group of Palestinians and an asylum march from Oslo to Trondheim. The Palestinians lived in tents by the Jakob church in Oslo as a protest against the decision of denying them asylum. The asylum march was organised by a group of undocumented migrants from different nationalities. I will write in detail about both, the Palestinian protest and the asylum march in later sections. Both of these actions were organised collectively and both could be considered as acts of resistance.

Sometimes some undocumented migrants inflicted physical harm on themselves, such as hunger strike and suicide attempt, which are acts of despair, and can be seen as protests against the unjust treatment they received. A Palestinian who was living in the Palestinian camp, set fire to himself in front of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) office. I was on the asylum march when this happened. I went to the Palestinian camp as soon as I came back to Oslo and when I asked him about the reason he set fire to himself, he answered me ironically: *"because Norway is a humanitarian land, Norway has done a lot for me, has given me residence and everything, I want to show that by burning myself"*

### **Invisibility: a strategy to avoid deportation**

Before receiving the final rejection, the migrant has the right to work and go to Norwegian language courses. He has these rights as long as he has appealed his first rejection and his case is in the process of re-evaluation. These rights are taken away once he receives the final rejection and thus he is an "undocumented migrant" or "irregular migrant". If Norway has signed the return agreement with the country of origin, the undocumented migrant has to wait in the reception center until he will receive an order of deportation date. In case Norway has not signed the return agreement yet, the undocumented migrant has to wait in the reception

center until that day arrives. Those of the undocumented migrants whom I have contacted, who were living in reception centers, were not afraid of deportation because Norway had not signed the return agreement with the country of origin yet. Some of these centers have poor living standards; crowded, usually four persons in one room and definitely not hygienic. The rooms are very small, usually with a shared kitchen and bathrooms. These reception centers are usually former hotels or military camps in remote areas and far away from city centers. They are not built to be used for a prolonged stay and especially not for families with children. Beside the poor living conditions in these centers, the undocumented migrant has no possibility for any activities, physical or mental, except waiting. There is no school to go to, no work, and no clear future to look forward to. Life is reduced to eating, sleeping and thinking about an unbearable situation. For many undocumented migrants, life seems in vain and the future cloudy. One of my informants, Basim, told me: "*... that there is nothing to do there, just eat and sleep like an "animal" and after a while you start to lose your mind, it is like a prison*".

Above all, undocumented migrants are under constant control during their stay in the reception centers. The authority maintains constant control over the undocumented migrant's movement. Through routine and random checks, the authority can keep track of undocumented migrants' movement and location. Random checks are carried out by personnel working in the reception centres. They can go to the rooms of undocumented migrants at any time to check if they are present. Ari, one of my informants, told me: "*...sometimes they are coming very early in the morning, around 7 o'clock, they came to check if everyone is here or if we have guests here*". It is not allowed to have guests sleeping over. Being away for several days the undocumented migrant risks losing the allowance of 800 NOK he receives every 15 days, which barely covers food and clothing expenses, and eventually he loses the right to stay in the centre. He would be "out of the system" as my informants themselves put it. To be reaccepted again into the reception centre system, he should apply to the office of Norwegian Directorate of Immigration.

Staying in reception centres means that undocumented migrants are controllable and accessible to the authority. Having constant control and surveillance over undocumented migrants facilitates the deportation of the undocumented migrants. If Norway has the return agreement with the undocumented migrant's country of origin, one is facing deportation at any time. In this situation, the reception centre is not a safe place for the undocumented migrant if he wants to avoid deportation. In the presence of constant fear of deportation, many undocumented migrants decide to leave reception centres and "disappear" into urban society.

The decision of leaving these centres is a strategy to avoid being detected and eventually deported. This decision has its difficulties due to the limitations in finding alternative accommodations. Finding alternatives depend on the social network the undocumented migrant might have. One should have a reliable social network when one decides “to leave the system”, as the undocumented migrants themselves say. Some of them find temporary shelters with friends and relatives. They do not stay in one place more than a month because they do not want to be a burden on the people accommodating them. Others live in shared apartments, either with other undocumented migrants or migrants who have a permit paper. One has to work, usually informal work, to be able to afford the rent. These apartments are usually for one person or for a couple with one bedroom, living room, a kitchen and a bathroom. However sometimes up to 12 undocumented migrants live in a one-person apartment.

A social network is very crucial for undocumented migrant in managing to find accommodation. In his study of the Mexican undocumented migrants in the United States, Chavez (1990) argues that Mexican undocumented migrants in the United States use social organisation as strategies to survive and find work in the United States. He argues that undocumented migrants form and reform the residential types when they stay over long period in the United States. He points out that undocumented migrants live with other single undocumented migrants when they first came to the states but later they might establish family and move in with their spouses (Chavez 1990). In my research I found that these social relations are also used as survival strategies by some of the undocumented migrants but on smaller scale than the United States’ context. I found that often these social relations are with people from the same country of origin or the same ethnic group. These social relations are formed or existed prior to the migration, or have established during the undocumented migrant’s time in Norway. Some undocumented migrants have already relatives or acquaintances when they came to Norway whom they could need in providing accommodation or finding a job. Others have established some social relations during time in Norway. Sometimes, undocumented migrants themselves can be the social network for other undocumented migrants by providing shelters. One day I was invited to one of these shared apartments by one of my informants, Karwan, a Kurdish from Iraq. The apartment was an old apartment of one bedroom, a living room/kitchen and a bathroom. There were three beds in the bedroom, a bed and a bunk bed. Karwan told me, and showed me photos of, that sometimes nine people had lived in the apartment. He had accommodated some undocumented migrants who needed a temporary place to stay until they had managed

another place to live. During their stay he had also provided them with food and other necessities as well.

Chavez (1990) argues that the presence of undocumented migrants in the United States is an act of defiance to the powers that combine to limit their opportunities and to keep them marginalised. He argues that the political context should be taken into consideration in which undocumented migrants are deprived from services such as health care, education and housing (Chavez 1990). Norway being smaller than the United States with fewer possibilities for undocumented migrants to manage to find accommodation and manage to survive, despite all the difficulties they face, some undocumented migrants chooses invisibility rather than being deported to their countries of origin. Choosing invisibility is a strategy to survive, a way to resist the decision of the final rejection and defy the deportation order. It is a way to resist the decision of denying them the right to stay in Norway. They are given the “choice” to leave, that they can return voluntary to their country of origin, but denied the right to stay. By “disappearing” into the society and being invisible to the authorities they are claiming their right to stay even without the permit to stay. Undocumented migrants claim the right to stay because they meet the criteria for asking asylum. For example, the Palestinian argued that they do not have a state and their statue as stateless should be enough to be granted asylum. Farhad, one of my informants told me: “...*there is not any gap in my case. The strict rules here are the reason for not getting permission to stay*”. He told me that he needed and deserved the protection and he has meet all the criteria one needs to have in order to be granted asylum protection. Some of my informants used the argument that their lives were in danger in their country of origin and they could not return back. Hameed, from Gaza said: “...*I have all the conditions for the asylum seeking. Gaza is registered to be a dangerous place, internationally, in the entire world. But they tell you that Gaza is safe. Gaza is a safe country. But how it is safe? When a Norwegian will go to register for a visa to visit Gaza, they tell him: no Gaza is registered to be dangerous internationally and it is not safe. When a Palestinian from Gaza comes to Norway and ask for asylum, they tell him no your country is safe, go back. So what is the different? a Norwegian is a human being, and they are afraid of his life? And we are not?*”.

Undocumented migrants are on constant guard to avoid the authorities. They avoid situations that might put them in confrontations with police or any other form of authority. For example, Sazan, one of my informants, told me that she was afraid to call the police when she found herself in a threatening situation. She was followed by two men in a car in a quite remote area. When she finally reached a small shop, she realized that she could not call the

police for help due to the lack of legitimate identification papers which might put her in another danger; that of being handed over to the immigration police. Undocumented migrants take other precautions to avoid authorities, such as making sure they have valid tickets when traveling with public transportations in case of ticket controls. Or they avoid places with intense police presence especially in the center of the city. I had, for instance, an appointment with one of my informants, Kazim, and unaware of his fear of being apprehended by police, I chose a place with constant police patrolling because it was one of the public places I was most familiar with in Oslo. A few minutes before our arranged meeting, he changed the meeting place. Not being certain of my intention in meeting him, he told me later that he was watching me waiting in the second place to make sure that I was not accompanied or followed by police. Even during our meetings, he was on constant guard and watching out for any suspicious movements by people nearby.

## **Visibility as a resistance**

### **The Palestinian camp**

During my time in the field, two main acts of resistance were taken by some undocumented migrants, the protest by a group of Palestinians and an asylum march. Both were organized and performed collectively. Undocumented migrants participating in both resistance acts were resisting the rejection decision of their asylum application and considered it as unjust. One of these acts taken by undocumented migrants was the protest of the Palestinians by creating a camp in the centre of Oslo. Before moving to the goals of this form of protest and what the participants wanted to convey and demand, I will describe the how the camp looked like, who lived there and how it was organized.

A group of undocumented Palestinian men, Palestinians from Palestine and other countries in the Middle East, had decided to come to Oslo and live in tents. The Palestinian camp was created in May 2011. It was located by the Jakob church in the centre of Oslo city. In middle of July, when I first visited the camp, it consisted of seven tents. Close to the street there were two big tents, facing a small opening, which functioned as a “living room” followed by more tents. In front of one of the big tents on the left there was a “small kitchen”. On the right side of the living room there was a small room which ironically they called “The Palestinian Embassy”, referring to the fact the Palestine is not recognised internationally as a state, therefore it does not have an embassy. The room was made of wood and there was a space for three people to sleep in. There were two more tents after the “embassy” and three

tents on the other side of these two tents. These tents in the back and “the embassy” were providing a sort of “privacy” for those who lived there. Sometimes, those who were not religious used the room and these tents to eat and drink alcohol, especially during Ramadan, the fasting month. However everybody, the men lived in the camp, could enter those tents or “the embassy”, in this sense the privacy these places provided was intruded all the time. I attempted to restore some “privacy” to the people lived in the camp by, for example, knocking on the door of “the embassy”, though nobody did so, and not entering before receiving permission to enter. Or I asked about permission before entering those tents in the back.

The kitchen was made out of two small base cabinets. The top of one of them was used for cutting food materials. At that time they were using fire to cook food. They used a half oil barrel to make fire in, and a small iron net to put on the fire so they could put a cooking pot on it. What I called a “living room” was an opening in front of the two big tents. There were three sofas and a few chairs surrounding two small tables which were used for eating and other purposes such as playing cards. The living area was covered with different pieces of tent covers. They had a copy of the key to Hausmannia, a cultural house close by the camp, where they could use facilities such as bathrooms, toilets, cloth washing machine, washing dishes and charge their electronic devices. The whole camp area was separated from the “outside” by plastic tape, a way of marking the border between the camp and the outside. There was a small poster, welcoming people to the camp, in the entrance of the camp. Photos showing different aspects of occupation were hung around on the tapes and some of the tents. These photos were of strong images of injured and dead children, Palestinian prisoners being arrested and humiliated by Israeli military, women weeping over the dead ones and buildings being destroyed. Inside some of the tents there were writings telling the story of the camp. There was written the date they created the camp, where they had been before and how long they had been living in Norway. On the outside of the tents there were statements such as “free Palestine”, “two years in Norway but living on the street” and “three years in Norway without any rights” . Around the tents there were different posters indicating rights and what they want such as “everyone has the right to nationality”, “we do not want to fight, we just need our right”, and “everyone has the right to a place to be”.



### The organisation and management of the camp

The *al shabab*<sup>8</sup>, the guys, a term used by the Palestinians themselves, were from different ages, from 19 years old up to 35 years old, different social and religious background and different political affiliations. Their number was 25 to 30 when I started to visit the camp and

<sup>8</sup> Al shabab: an Arabic word means the youth or the young ones. They referred to each other using that term.

it was changing constantly due to the fact some people were leaving while new arrivals were coming to the camp. After living in the camp for a while, some people were going back to their reception centres. Some of them were able to afford a place to live and coming to the camp just during day time. Among them were also few whom were staying in the camp but going to their receptions centres in order to keep their right for the economical help. The Palestinians living in the camp had been living in Norway from 1-3 years. Most of them had received the final rejection to their asylum application. A couple of them had only received the first rejection. Before coming to Oslo, they had been in reception centres in different parts of Norway.

Though it appeared chaotic and non-organized sometimes, the camp had some sort of organization. The eldest men were given the responsibility of managing the economy and receiving the donations given by different people or organizations. They were acting as father figures to the rest and were given special respect because of their age. The Palestinians living in the camp were often given donations from individuals visiting the camp. The two men who had responsibility of the economy registered the amount of money, the date the money was received but the donor stayed anonymous. Keeping the anonymity of the donor was accordance with the Islamic way of giving *zakat*<sup>9</sup>. *Zakat* is an act of almsgiving in Islam the rich have to give to the poor to purify their wealth. This is not to claim that the donations by the donors were considered as *zakat* because the donors were from different religious backgrounds. Beside the responsibility of the economy, those men were also responsible of managing the money spent on food and other necessary items for the camp. They kept the receipt and registered the expenses to have overview on the money. Beside the donations, some who lived in the camp had temporary jobs, informal jobs, and they gave away part of their payment to the camp. They also collected some money selling T-shirts and post cards, with different logos and statements about their situation and the Palestinian case in general. Sometimes they sold furniture and other items they did not need, which they were given away by people, in the second hand market. Another source of income was donations by organisations such as Antiracist centre. Making food was not appointed to one person in particular, and anyone was allowed to cook if he wanted. During winter time, some restaurants served them food free, sometimes at least one day a week. Or sometimes individuals cooked for them at home and brought it to the camp. They had some kind of

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<sup>9</sup> Zakat: it means to purity. It is one of the five pillars of Islam: 1, the shahada(to believe in Allah and his prophet Mohammad) 2, daily prays (5 times) 3, almsgiving ( zakat) 4, fasting during Ramadan 5, the pilgrimage to Mecca.

cleaning campaigns of the camp area and everyone was participating in it. They made a list for cleaning the dishes, however it did not last and nobody was following it. It was often the youngest who cleaned the dishes. They had a guarding system with two persons every night to guard the camp. The ones who could speak English were given the positions of spokes men, explaining the situation and meeting with media.

The decision to live in tents was a peaceful protest against the rejection decisions their asylum applications. They had become tired of waiting in vain and of living passively in these centres and they saw visibility as a better option for their situation. Kasim, one of the initiators of creating the camp explained to me the reason they decided to protest and how they organised it. He told me: *“When I was living in the reception centre, I was just sitting and waiting ....and waiting. They<sup>10</sup> have decided our destiny. I said to myself it is enough. You will do something to help to change the situation. So I decided to do something, for myself in the beginning, then to my Palestinian brothers and sisters because they are suffering like me. I start to make a facebook group and I invited all the friends I remembered from the first mottak<sup>11</sup>. And those who lived with me in ...<sup>12</sup>, I collected 390 Palestinians then we decided to get together for a demonstration and we came here in 5 April 2011. Why I did this? Because I believe my situation is not personal situation, it is for all, it is general for all the Palestinians and we will fight and find a solution together. Because you are human being and you have the right. Here we are fighting for our future”*.

They considered the rejection decision to be unjust and it was politically motivated. As Basim has mentioned above, the Palestinians participated in the protest considered that they have received rejection merely because they are from Palestine. They argued that almost all of them have received the same argument that Palestine is safe and they can go back, as the reason for rejecting their applications. While they argued that the fact they are from Palestine, that they are stateless should be in itself enough to be granted protection, let alone the fact that Palestine is not a safe place to live. By coming to Oslo, the capital, and living in tents, they wanted to show that their applications should be reconsidered and they should be granted protection because they meet the criteria of asylum protection. They wanted to be recognised as asylum seekers who deserve to be granted asylum protection. In their arguments they often used the language of human rights and humanity. Having known or heard about Norway as a country respecting human rights, they were using the language of human rights to appeal to

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<sup>10</sup> By *they* he meant those who work in the office of Norwegian Directory Immigration (UDI).

<sup>11</sup> Mottak: a Norwegian word meaning reception centre for asylum seekers.

<sup>12</sup> I omitted the name of the city he was living in for anonymity purposes.

most people. For example, one of their logos was “We are not just numbers”, to point out what they considered to reducing humans to numbers. By numbers they referred to the Norwegian Personal Number<sup>13</sup> which entitles persons to have rights in Norway (see chapter two). They wanted to be seen as humans who are in need of protection in the first place instead of being categorised as having numbers or not.

They wanted to be visible to the Norwegian society and inform the society about the situation of undocumented migrants in Norway in general and the Palestinian situation in particular. They wanted to give the undocumented migrants a face and to be visible to the Norwegian society. As Najeeb told me: *“I am here [in the camp] to tell and explain our situation to people. By telling people you are creating yourself a face and creating yourself some support in the community. You can find people who support you in this. And if the people here convinced about your case, they can put pressure on the government and it will be convinced. ....so keep telling people is very important”*.

As Najeeb explained they hoped that people will react, press and influence the decision of the government. They hoped and expected that their protest will provoke people who in return press the government to change its immigration policy. By making the society aware of the situation of undocumented migrants, they were making the issue of undocumented migrant the issue of society. They were using all forms of communication to convey their messages and tell their stories. The photos which were hung around the camp were a reminder of the living conditions in Palestine. The posters and the writings expressed their situation here in Norway. They were holding seminars and arranging festivals and demonstrations to inform people about the living situations. They were using all accessible means of communications to make their case public and make the society aware of their existence.

### **The location of the camp**

The location of the camp had significance in spreading their message. It was located in the centre of the city which made it attract many people. The location of the camp made the mission of informing most possible people easier. The centrality of its location made the camp a stop point for many people. The fact that the camp was located in the heart of the city was an effective way to expose the immigration policy of the government to Norwegian society. It was a way to make the society aware of the inhuman immigration policy. They wanted to influence the society to press the government in order to change the immigration policy.

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<sup>13</sup> Norwegian Personal Number: it is a number given to persons registered in the national populations register in Norway

They wanted to make people revolt against that policy. It was an act to change and reform the politics by using people as a medium. -By being open and accessible to everyone, they wanted to denounce the criminal label -which is often pinned to undocumented migrants. By being visible and open, they wanted to say that \_“we are transparent and we have nothing to hide”\_.

Besides functioning as accommodation for the undocumented migrants living there, the camp was also temporary shelter for people who needed a place to stay. For instance, a group of students from different parts of Europe stayed for a while in the camp until they arranged another place for themselves. The camp was open to everyone and everyone was welcomed and offered a cup of tea. By being open, tolerant and hospitable they wanted to show an example of how the Norwegian society ought to be towards undocumented migrants. The openness of the camp attracted many supporters but at the same time it made those who lived there vulnerable and exposed to unpleasant incidents. They were subjected to verbal comments by people who did not want them there. They could not decide who could enter the camp or not because first, the camp did not have an actual fence that could mark a boundary between them and the outside, second it was not their property to decide who can enter or not. The decision to be visible did not mean that they were exempted from deportation. As I mentioned earlier, during my time in the field two of the undocumented migrants living in the camp were arrested and deported to Palestine. Therefore they were on constant guard for detecting any suspicious movement around the camp. Sometimes, those who were under immediate threat for deportations, such as people from West Bank, were accommodated by friends and relatives outside the camp.

### **The asylum march**

A group of about 25 undocumented migrants from different nationalities, Ethiopian, Afghani, Iranian and Kurdish from Iran came together to walk in a march from Oslo to Trondheim. Before deciding to walk the march together, different nationalities had organised different actions separately. For example, the Ethiopian had sought asylum inside the Oslo Cathedral<sup>14</sup> in Oslo in early 2011. In April the same year they put up a tent outside the Cathedral. In June, the Ethiopian were joined by a group of Iranian and they too set up another tent outside the same Cathedral. In this way undocumented migrants from different nationalities have established contacts with each other and an idea about a multinational march was born the

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<sup>14</sup> Oslo Cathedral: in Norwegian Domkirke, is located in the centre of Oslo and is one of the tourist attractions in Oslo

march that took place in August the same year. The march was planned and organised by the participants themselves with the assistance from Antiracist centre and individual activists who supported the issue of undocumented migrants. These individuals coordinated and managed places for sleeping in some places under the way to Trondheim. Responsibilities, such as the finance, preparing food during the walk and cleaning the places used and slept in were divided between different participants. The participants of the march walked the pilgrim route which was about 600 km long. They had contacted the pilgrimage centre in Oslo which provided them with a map of the new pilgrim route and practical advices about the route. They usually followed that route but sometimes they took short cuts under the march. The fact that the route was a Christian pilgrimage route did not have significant because the participant were from various religious backgrounds. Besides, they were not performing any religious duties, which usually a pilgrim should do under the march, such as visiting the churches they stopped by. The reason and the purpose behind choosing this route was that the participants considered this route to be of heritage meaning for Norwegians and they wanted to convey the message that they are familiar with the history and traditions of Norway. They wanted to experience what they considered to be of historical importance for Norwegians. The route was meant to be a symbolic gesture to the Norwegians that undocumented migrants are also sharing the history of Norway and willing to explore and experience such historical route. They wanted to show that they are also part of Norway and walking the landscape is a symbolic gesture to show that they want to belong to Norway. The march was under the slogan “We are part of Norway, let us contribute”<sup>15</sup> and it took about 26 days

Similar to the protest by the Palestinians, the march was another organised act of resistance to give undocumented migrants a face and make their issue more public. Most of the participants had received the final rejection and a few only the first one. The participants of the march had chosen three spokesmen to represent the three different nationalities, Iranian, Ethiopian and Afghani. The march was due to start on 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2011. However it was postponed to 15<sup>th</sup> of August because of the terrorist attacks on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. They delayed the march in respect for the victims of the two attacks. They also participated in the peaceful gathering took place in Oslo on 25 July to show their sympathy and participate in a collective mourning over the victims.

Before starting the march on 15<sup>th</sup> of August, the participants gathered in front of the Norwegian Parliament. Different politicians from left oriented parties gave speeches showing

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<sup>15</sup> In Norwegian the slogan was: «Vi er en del av Norge, la oss bidra»

their support to the undocumented migrants and appealing for less restricted asylum policies. The event ended with an appeal from two of the representatives for the march participants. In their appeal, they used a language which resonated with the current situation after the attacks. In addressing people after the terrorist attack on the Norwegian Parliament and the massacre of Labour party youth camp at Utøya, the Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, promised that the answer to the terrorist attacks will be more democracy and more openness. The spokesmen of the march participants used the same language of openness, inclusion and community (*felleskap*) in their appeals. They were challenging the government to give them a chance to be part of the Norwegian society. They urged the government to put in practice what they spoke of after 22<sup>nd</sup> July, as one of the spokesmen of the march said: *“We are like a workshop for government to practice what they talked about after the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, about more openness and more democracy”*. They were asking and hoping to be included in a “we” which was more including. They were calling for a “New Norwegian we” after the 22<sup>nd</sup> July, a “we” that includes, tolerates and embraces everyone living within Norwegian territory.

They were also focused on the point that they are part of the solution rather than part of a problem. If they were given a chance, the message was, they would work and provide for themselves and their families. They emphasised on the point that they are capable of contributing to the society as they stated in their appeals: *“We are not causing any problem to Norway. All we ask is a fair and human treatment, lasting security and ability to give our contribution to the Norwegian society. And many of us have done it for years”*. They were referring to the fact that many undocumented migrants, especially immigrants from Ethiopia, have worked and paid taxes over years. They focused on the point of contribution to validate that they have the right to be include in the Norwegian society.

During the march, they were using every opportunity to inform people about the situation of undocumented migrants. They were often visited by local politicians and local media. They were distributing flyers and doing interviews with local newspapers. By being visible and public, they wanted to make people realize that the problem of undocumented migrant concerns the larger society as well. Hawre, one of the representatives told me: *“The issue of undocumented migrants is the problem of the society and not just only the asylum policy”*. They wanted to point out the issue of undocumented migrants is not only a matter of politics but it should concern the whole society. By making it the problem of the society, they hoped that the society will press the government to reform and change its immigration policy. The participants of the march were not only speaking for themselves but also advocating and representing all undocumented migrants whose voices were neglected and not heard. Hawre ,

one of the spokesmen of the march said “*we are conveying the voice of those who are sitting in the reception centres too*”.

## Concluding Remarks

In this thesis I have examined different aspects to the lives of undocumented migrants. In the introduction chapter, I have written a brief account about the living situation and the limited rights of undocumented migrants in Norway to give a context to their situation. I have examined some of many ethical considerations in reaching undocumented migrants. The sensitivity and vulnerability of the situation of undocumented migrants make conducting research difficult and emotionally exhausting. Most of my informants have experienced criminalisation and discrimination. As I have written in chapter two, sometimes my questions were misinterpreted; therefore I had to be very careful in formulating my questions in order not to offend them. I have written about the role of the media in representing migrants or “foreigners” in general and associating them with criminal acts. This representation was mirrored in the way undocumented migrants formed what they understood as Norwegian’s society of them in general. As I have argued in the same chapter, notions of criminalisation were reconfirmed for undocumented migrants after rape incidents in Oslo in the fall of 2011. Undocumented migrants lived in the Palestinian camp have even showed their condemning and denouncement when they put a poster in front of the camp (see chapter four). I have also examined some of the psychological effects of living surrounded by deprivation of all rights, in security and uncertainty create. Corned in a situation where life is reduced to “bare life” and to its basic forms of survival, undocumented migrants experience disempowerment and develop low self- esteem. Towards the end of the chapter I have argued they try to find explanations to the peculiarity of their situations. Some of them bring hope and strength from their current difficult situations as undocumented migrants, or from their experiences in their country of origin.

In chapter three, I have argued that undocumented migrants are in search of home. Home for most of my undocumented migrants was a postponed faraway floating dream which they did not know if it would ever come true. Because of the constant fear of deportation, even if they have been living in Norway for years, they could not dream of a “home” in Norway. Some of my informant lost all connection with their country of origin or “home country” as it is called in the discursive argument by the Norwegian government. In chapter three, I have also argued that there is a connection between the experiences of undocumented migrants in Norway and the way they think and dream about “home”.

In the last chapter, I have argued that undocumented migrants use survival strategies and visibility as acts of resistance in a situation where there are very limited and risky possibilities. Undocumented migrants are under constant risk of deportation which makes

resistance very risky. They do not have any rights in Norway, in this sense they are unrecognised politically and their acts of resistance have very limited influence. I have written about two acts of resistance that happened during my time in the field; the protest of the Palestinians and the asylum march. Undocumented migrants showed agency by resisting the rejection decision of their asylum application. They hoped that Norwegian society would act on their behalf and be their voices in changing the immigration discourse. The spokesmen of the asylum march addressed the topics of inclusion, tolerance and contribution to the society in their appeals before the Norwegian parliament. They wanted to emphasise their readiness and wish to contribute to be part of the Norwegian society, as the slogan of the march expressed it very well “we are part of Norway, let us contribute”. They wished to be let in.

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