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The Faculty of Landscape and Society  
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**“I live without a plan”**

**A livelihood study  
of people with rejected asylum  
applications and a protracted stay  
in Norway**

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## **Declaration**

I, Eline Anker, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature..... Date.....



## **Abstract**

Around 18,000 people live without residence papers in Norway, the majority with rejected asylum applications (Zhang, 2008). To restrict immigration, Norwegian law limits rejected asylum seekers' access to social rights and the formal labour market. We know little of their everyday lives and how they make a living. The present study uses a livelihoods framework to analyse how rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay obtain the necessities of life including healthcare, housing, food, safety and social relations. Ten rejected asylum seekers are interviewed to explore how they use resources to employ tactics and strategies which then result in livelihood outcomes. This study examines what constraints and possibilities the context, institutions and organisations pose to rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay. The findings of this study show that the respondents make do by relying on their social capital. They use creative tactics and strategies to acquire healthcare, housing, food, safety and social relations, though with few long-term plans for life. Institutions, such as state policies and law, constrain their access to formal work, social rights and feelings of safety, while non-governmental organisations enable them to access healthcare and maintain social relations. Results of their struggle to make do are feelings of depression and stress. However, through volunteer work and informal work the respondents find hope and well-being in social relations. This study also reveals exploitation in the informal labour market and thus recommends the Norwegian Parliament to allow rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay the right to take on formal work and pay taxes.





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## List of abbreviations

<b>EDAL</b>	-	European database of asylum law
<b>IOM</b>	-	International Organisation for Migration
<b>NESH</b>	-	The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees
<b>NGO</b>	-	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NOAS</b>	-	The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers
<b>NOK</b>	-	Norwegian kroner
<b>NSD</b>	-	Norwegian Centre for Research Data
<b>PU</b>	-	Police unit for foreigners
<b>UDHR</b>	-	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>UDI</b>	-	The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration
<b>UNE</b>	-	Immigration Appeals Board



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## 1.0 Introduction

Changes in economic, political, social and environmental conditions have always made people seek opportunities in new places. Poverty or insecurity can push people to leave a region, while welfare opportunities can pull people to another country (IOM, 2017). Some people settle in foreign states for family reasons or employment opportunities, while other people escape war and seek asylum elsewhere. Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, migration was relatively unregulated, however in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the movement of people across state borders became increasingly regulated by citizenship treaties, law and international cooperation (Castles, Miller, & De Haas, 2014). Today, it is necessary to obtain residence permits to reside legally in foreign states. However, estimates show that between 1,8 and 3,8 million people reside without legal residence papers in Europe (Morehouse & Blomfield, 2011).

In Norway, a country geographically far away from traditional migration routes over the Mediterranean coast, an estimated 18,000 people live without residence permits (Zhang, 2008). People living without residence papers in Norway are mostly men, aged from 20 to 40 and originate from Asia, Africa, Latin-America and Eastern Europe (Kirkens-Bymisjon, 2016). They are a diverse group of people with different backgrounds, resources and situations (Øien & Sønsterudbråten, 2011). Most people who live without residence permits in Norway have rejected asylum applications (Zhang, 2008).

According to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948, art.14), all people have the right to seek asylum and protection in another state. However, not all asylum seekers are acknowledged as refugees or in need of protection. Out of over 23,000 asylum applications processed by the Norwegian state in 2016, 54 percent were accepted (UDI, 2016a). The asylum seekers who are rejected are obliged to leave the country. Some rejected asylum seekers leave the country voluntarily, others remain registered by the state or hide from authorities. In 2016, 19 percent of asylum seekers living in asylum reception centres disappeared (PU, 2017). Some asylum seekers might hide in Norway, while others might have left for other European countries.

In some cases, deportation from Norway may be impossible because certain countries do not receive their citizens unless they return voluntarily (Møkkelgjerd, 2017). According to the Norwegian Association for Asylum Seekers (NOAS, 2015), between 3,000 and 5,000 rejected asylum seekers in Norway are non-returnable with a protracted stay. They cannot be deported by Norwegian authorities and have lived in Norway for more than five years. Hence, people with rejected asylum applications can live in Norway for many years, though with strictly limited social rights.

The Norwegian state is based on a social democracy with universal welfare and equality. However, rejected asylum seekers are excluded and only given fundamental rights in precariat situations, such as life-saving healthcare and basic housing in asylum reception centres (Jacobsen, 2015; Møkkelgjerd, 2017). Since the Norwegian society is based on formal welfare services, identification numbers and a highly-regulated job market, it may be more difficult to survive without residence papers in Norway than in other countries with more informal sectors (Jacobsen, 2015).

“I did not make any crime, but they made me a criminal” said Yemane Teferi - an asylum seeker from Eritrea, after spending 24 years in asylum centres (Poppe, 2015). His application was rejected by Norway in 2006, thus his residence permit was not renewed. Because the state could not deport him to his country of origin, he continued to live in Norway without access to general healthcare, education or legal work. In the asylum centre, he received a small amount of money, yet the allowance did not cover enough food or travel expenses to visit his friends. People with rejected asylum applications make a living with few social rights ensured by law and no formal right to work. In the documentary ‘No man’s land’ (Poppe, 2015), Yemane talks about how he spent his days collecting plastic bottles and using pain killers for stress. In 2016, at the age of 58 and still residing in an asylum centre, he died (Berglund & Haugsbø, 2016). He was never excluded from Norway nor was he included.

In 2010, another rejected asylum seeker with a protracted stay was subject to the public debate. Maria Amelie, a woman in her 20’s, was arrested after publishing a book about her life as an ‘illegal Norwegian’. Together with her family, she fled Russia when she was a minor. However, her asylum application was rejected. Without residence papers and while hiding from the authorities in Norway, she went to high school, worked in the informal sector and obtained a master degree at the university. After eight years of hiding from the authorities, Maria Amelie was arrested by the Norwegian authorities. She was deported to Russia, but eventually she could return to Norway because of a job offer (Akerhaug, 2011).

The cases of Yemane and Maria Amelie illustrate how different the lives of two people with rejected asylum applications can be. One lived in an asylum reception centre collecting plastic bottles, while another obtained a university degree. Many rejected asylum seekers hide from authorities. We know little of how their lives are and how they acquire necessities of life. The fact that people live in Norway without residence papers pose a problem to both the Norwegian state and people living these lives. Rejected asylum seekers, hiding or not hiding from the state, live a life prone to exploitation and human rights violations.

The Norwegian Government (2017) promotes human rights through its foreign policy. As a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948, art.1) proclaiming that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”, the Norwegian state is responsible for the human rights of people living without residence permits in their country. Without knowing how these people survive in the society, it may be difficult for the state to ensure their human rights. This study therefore seeks to explore how rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay make do in Norway.

## **1.1 Problem statement**

Rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay are offered few social rights and have no formal right to work. There is a need to know more about their everyday lives to prevent them from going through life with their human rights violated. Taking this into account, I seek to explore how rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay make do. In other words, how they acquire the necessities of life including healthcare, housing, food, safety and social relations. To study how rejected asylum seekers make do, I explore their behaviour, but also the context they live within.

## **1.2 Research question and objectives**

The aim of this thesis is to use a livelihoods framework to study how rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay obtain the necessities of life including healthcare, housing, food, safety and social relations.

I therefore ask the following research questions:

1. How do rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay obtain the necessities of life including healthcare, housing, food, safety and social relations?
2. What constraint and possibilities do institutions and organisations pose to rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay when they make do?

To answer these research questions, I seek to:

- A. Explore and interpret through semi-structured interviews, how rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay obtain the necessities of life including healthcare, housing, food, safety and social relations.
- B. Use a livelihoods framework to analyse what resources, strategies and tactics they use to make do and explore the outcome in terms of their well-being.
- C. Use a livelihoods framework to analyse what institutions and organisations rejected asylum seekers say they must negotiate with to make do and what constraints and possibilities these institutions and organisations represent.
- D. Describe parts of the rejected asylum seekers socio-political and juridical context with a literature study containing policy documents and reports.

### 1.3 Motivations

My major motivation for this research is a basic understanding that human rights are universal. I was curious of how states ensure the rights of people who are not their own citizens but still reside within their borders, in particular people who do not have legal residence in the state where they reside. However, my field of study is not international law. I study the world from an interdisciplinary perspective, within development studies. I wanted to study a group of people living in the same country I was born in, but who are not included in the welfare rights that I take for granted. To accomplish a better life for all, I believe rights and human worth must include not only those who are protected by a state, but all human beings despite residence status. If the results of this study can help rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay in Norway, it will be meaningful.

### 1.4 Structure of the thesis

In **chapter 2**, I introduce the livelihoods framework with its components; resources, strategies and outcome, and the context, institutions and organisations. I shortly present the structuration theory on how human behaviour is shaped both by structure and agency. Then, I put forward important concepts to the research field, before I end the chapter with a theoretical and conceptual discussion of human rights and state sovereignty. In **chapter 3**, I describe parts of the Norwegian context that rejected asylum seekers live in. I focus on the socio-political and juridical context by presenting the Norwegian asylum debate, the legal process of seeking asylum and what social rights they are offered. In **chapter 4**, I discuss my choice of methodology, ethical considerations and imitations. In **chapter 5**, I answer my research questions and present the main findings of the study. I analyse the narratives from the qualitative interviews and discuss the findings by applying the livelihoods framework and additional theories and concepts. In **chapter 6**, I sum up my findings and add recommendations for policy changes and future research.

## **2.0 Theory and conceptual framework**

In this chapter, I present the framework, theories and concepts used. First, I discuss what terminology I use when I refer to the subjects of this research. I shortly describe Giddens (1984) ontological understanding of human behaviour as influenced by structure and agency. Then, Scoones' (1998;2015) livelihoods framework, that connects to Giddens ontological understanding, is presented. The livelihoods framework is a perspective on how people are influenced by the context they live in, but also their resources, strategies and outcome when making a living. I supplement the framework with de Certeaus' (1984) concepts of strategies and everyday tactics. Then, I present relevant literature and theoretical concepts. Lastly, I emphasise how the concepts of sovereignty, nation-states and citizenship influence the context that rejected asylum seekers live in.

### **2.1 Establishing terminology**

There are several conceptual definitions one need to keep straight when studying people with rejected asylum applications. First, migrants are people moving from one geographical place to another. This geographical movement can be caused by labour or family reunion, but also war and persecution (IOM, 2011). However, migrants who flee war and persecution are considered refugees if they flee because of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a social group (the Refugee Convention, 1951, art. 1). People who apply for protection as refugees in a foreign state are considered asylum seekers. Rejected asylum seekers are not considered refugees nor in need of protection by the state processing the application (Weissbrodt, 2008). If rejected asylum seekers do not leave the country where they have sought asylum after their residence permit expires, they can be considered irregular migrants because they have no valid residence papers. However, the concept of irregular migration can also include labour migrants without legal residence. Hence, irregular migration include all people living in a country without valid resident permits (IOM, 2011).

Other terms used to refer to people who do not have residence papers are 'illegal' or 'undocumented'. These terms imply a dichotomous understanding, where you are either legal or illegal, documented or undocumented (Jacobsen, 2015). This is not always the case. You might arrive in a country illegally, for example with human traffickers. When applying for asylum you reside legally, but if the application is denied you would reside illegally again. Even migrants themselves do not always know whether their juridical status is legal or illegal (Kjærre, 2010). The term irregular migration acknowledges the complexity of the situation and lacks emotional references; therefore, it is often used by researchers (Jacobsen, 2015).

To specify what group of irregular migrants this study involves, I use the term rejected asylum seekers. It would be too vague to use the term irregular migrants, because the respondents of this study all have received rejected asylum applications. However, there are issues with the term rejected asylum seekers. Similar to the term illegal, rejected implies a dichotomous understanding where you are either a rejected asylum seeker or not. The outcome of an asylum application is much more complex. Some people might be acknowledged as refugees in one country, while in another country as rejected asylum seekers. Keeping this in mind, I still use the term rejected asylum seekers because I find it important to be as specific as possible when considering possible generalizations of the findings. For instance, irregular migrants who are labour migrants may understand the world differently than rejected asylum seekers, but they are both irregular migrants. The subjects of this study are people who have received rejected asylum applications and have a protracted stay in Norway. They are not solely rejected asylum seekers. Rather, they are also mothers, siblings and participants in the society - people with a variety of resources, identities and backgrounds. Hence, to be an irregular migrant and a rejected asylum seeker are no permanent or fixed identity, but change over time (Jacobsen, 2015).

## **2.2 Agency and Structure**

How rejected asylum seekers make do is influenced by how they behave, but also the social system they live in. According to Giddens' structuration theory (1984), human behaviour is explained by agency and structure. He understands agency as the ability to act and structures as a set of "rules and resources" in social systems (p.25). Rules are memories and social practices, while resources manifest in material or non-material ways. Material resources can be natural resources or money, and non-material resources can be social networks or social status. Following Giddens, there is a dual relationship between agency and structure. They are two different phenomena, yet not independent. They influence and reproduce each other.

Scoones' (1998;2015) livelihoods framework (explained in the next section) connects Giddens (1984) ontological understanding to how people make a living. Scoones' does not study livelihoods from an understanding of behaviour as influenced by either structures or agency, but combines them as Giddens does in his structuration theory. In Scoones framework, structures are understood as the context, institutions or resources that influence what people do to make a living, while agency can be understood as strategies. As Scoones (2015, p. 37) writes, "what is more important: What people actually do or the factors that constrain or enable their actions? The answer, of course, is neither". Thus, after Scoones,

agency and structure are equally important to how people make a living. I use Scoones' (1998;2015) livelihoods framework because it allows me to explore rejected asylum seekers not as passive recipients of structures. In this framework, rejected asylum seekers behaviour depends on both agency and structure and such allows me to study them as active individuals, making their own choices, while simultaneously being influenced by the structures.

## 2.3 The livelihoods framework

Conway and Chambers (in Scoones, 2015 p. 6) define livelihood as “the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities for a means of living”. In other words, a livelihood consists of what you *can do* with the resources available, and what you actually *do*, the activities, to make a living. Scoones (1998; 2015) combines the different elements of making a living into a sustainable livelihoods framework<sup>1</sup>, used to analyse people's livelihoods. The framework, presented in figure 1, includes: *resources* used to employ *strategies*, which again result in livelihood *outcomes*. Resources, strategies and outcomes influence and are influenced by the *context*, such as historical, political or economic processes and formal or informal *institutions* and *organisations*. A livelihoods framework is not a theory, rather it is a collection of several theoretical perspectives and concepts on processes of making a living, aiming to understand inequalities (Scoones, 2015).

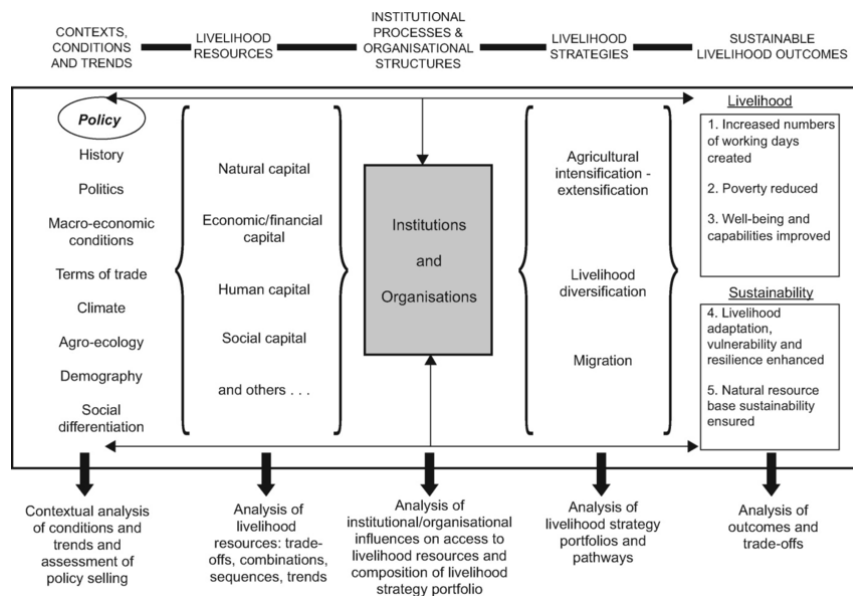


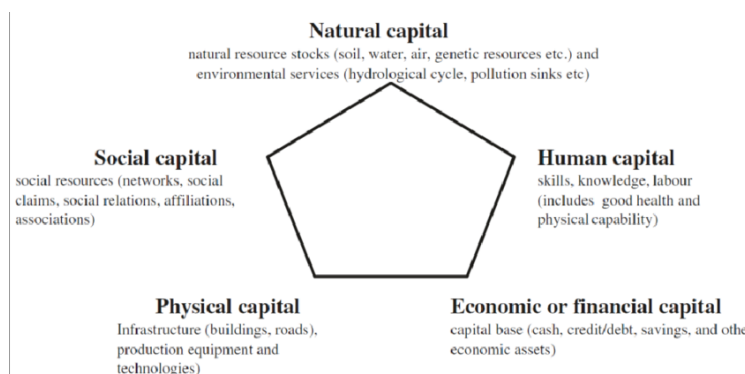
Figure 1 – The sustainable livelihood framework illustrated by Scoones (2015, p. 36). The illustration shows the interconnectedness of the different aspects.

<sup>1</sup> A sustainable livelihood does not “undermine the natural resource base” (Conway and Chambers in Scoones, 2015 p. 6). I do not use the sustainable aspect of the livelihoods framework because this is not a study of rural communities relying on natural resources, such as agriculture or foresting, to make a living. Rather, it is a study of urban livelihoods with less reliance on natural resources. Thus, I exclude the sustainable aspect of Scoones livelihoods framework in this study.



### 2.3.1 Resources, strategies and outcome

Although frequently debated and interpreted in different ways, **resources** can be understood as ‘capitals’. Capitals are material or non-material assets that people have access to and can base their strategies on to make a living (Scoones, 2015). Thus capitals “are used to achieve certain ends” (Philips, 2002, p. 133). Capitals differ from economic to human and social and are presented in figure 2. Most important to this study is the economic capital, human capital and social capital. Economic capital can be cash or savings, while social capitals are networks of people and human capital can be understood as the ability to work, health status, education or language skills. Hence, capitals can be tangible, such as money and land, but also intangible, such as social networks (Scoones, 1998). According to Meeteren, Engbersen & San (2009), it is not solely the type of capital people possess that must be studied, but also what type of capital that is needed to achieve a specific aim or strategy. Not only does capitals affect what strategies can be used to make a living, but it can also give meaning to people’s lives and influence how they challenge and sometimes change the context they live in (Scoones, 2015; Bebbington, 1999).



*Figure 2 - “The five capitals of sustainable livelihoods” that can be used to employ strategies to ensure a livelihood (Morse & McNamara, 2013 p. 28).*

Definitions of social capital are manifold. Social capital can be understood as “durable networks of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Meeteren et al. 2009, p. 884). However, in addition to networks, social capital also consist of the norms and customs that keep these networks connected. It is a “cluster of norms, values and expectancies that are shared by group members”, but also “sanctions” among them (Halpern, 2005, p. 10). In other words, social capital is mutual networks of acquaintances, friends or family that can lead to opportunities or constraints.

To poor urban people, social capital is particularly important to cover basic needs. This is because poor people often lack material capitals such as money (Meikle, 2002). People

without much economic capital can rely on their relationships or networks of fellow poor people and survive by sharing food, information and labour. Yet, these relationships are not always between fellow poor people, but can occur across different social classes. Some social networks can result in an asymmetrical power relations and be exploitative (Philips, 2002). The amount of social capital that people possess depends on the size of the networks, how and when these social connections are used (Meeteren et al., 2009).

**Strategies** are what people *do* when they make a living. What strategies people follow are influenced by the combination of resources, the context and personal objectives (Meikle, Ramasut & Walker, 2001). In other words, a livelihood strategy is based on assessments of what you *can do* and what you *want to do*. Strategies influence livelihood outcomes, and can eventually strengthen or weaken resources. For instance, using child labour could lead to an increased income in the short run, but in the future, it could lead to fewer resources available because of lacking education. Some people might employ strategies such as to specialize in one source of income, while others opt for a livelihood diversification. A livelihood diversification involves developing more than one source of income to survive. Strategies can be based on long-term objectives, like investments in resources that do not pay off until later, for instance education (Meikle et al., 2001). However, some objectives are not long-term, but rather short-term. A short-term objective such as **tactics** can be used when there are few options available and perhaps a time pressure. According to Scoones (1998), examples of tactics are borrowing, sharing and stealing.

We can expand the concept of livelihood strategies, by using de Certeau's (1984) concept of strategies and tactics in everyday life. According to de Certeau, when people make do in everyday life, there is a battle between the powerful and the weak. Strategies are made by the powerful and tactics by the weak. The powerful possesses its own place to employ strategies. For instance, the Norwegian state can be understood as powerful using strategies to exclude rejected asylum seekers. Simultaneously, the weak manoeuvres within the environment of the powerful with tactics. Tactics depends on and take advantage of opportunities, without planning. It can be used in many creative ways by resisting or adapting to the strategies of the other (de Certeau, 1984). However, de Certeau does not understand tactics as subordinate to strategies. Rather, the powerful and the weak are equal, though opposed to each other. Using de Certeau's concepts allows me to explore the strategies and tactics that rejected asylum seekers use to make do. It also allows me to examine how their behaviours challenge or adapt to the strategies of the Norwegian state.

According to Scoones (2015) there are four fruitful ways to explore livelihood **outcomes**, though many more exist. The first one focuses on welfare and utility maximization

by using poverty lines and measuring income through household surveys and human development indicators. The second way to explore livelihood outcomes is to use both objective and subjective aspects to consider concepts of freedom and human development. The third one is quite like the second in the way that it concentrates on well-being. However, it focuses more on the subjective and self-defined experiences of well-being, such as self-esteem and hope. The fourth one, explores inequality and study livelihood outcomes from a broader political and social context. It is easy to get lost in the ‘jungle’ of ways to measure livelihood outcomes; however, common to the different approaches are that they intend to measure what people have, and what they do with it.

This research focuses on the subjective experiences of livelihood outcome, i.e what is explained as the third outcome above. Experiences from everyday life can reflect rejected asylum seekers well-being or ill-being and allow *them* to define the criteria for *their* livelihood outcome. Ill-being is experienced as a bad quality of life (Chambers, 1997). Subjective perspectives can result in a range of non-material criteria like self-esteem, happiness, stress and vulnerability, but also material concerns (Chambers, 1997). Non-material aspects are important to explore when studying people’s livelihoods because e.g. hopelessness can influence motivations to improve the livelihood and lead to increased or a continuous poverty situation (Scoones, 2015).

### **2.3.2 Context, institutions and organisations**

The **context** is the surrounding conditions at a local, national and international level (Meikle, 2002). It can be trends such as history, politics and economy (Scoones, 1998). The context influences people’s livelihoods through organisations and institutions that create opportunities or constraints. Nevertheless, people also influence the context through organisations and institutions (Meikle, 2002). The surrounding conditions and trends impacts what access to resources people have, thus how vulnerable a livelihood is. Constraints posed by the context can be both short and long term, “shocks” and “stress” (Morse and McNamara, 2013, p.35). For example, law, policies, aid from non-governmental organisations and the public opinion are all part of the context that influences what asylum seekers can do and how vulnerable they are (Jacobsen, 2006). What resources a rejected asylum seeker possess and what strategies or tactics are chosen, depend on the surrounding context, but also on institutions and organisations.

**Institutions** are “patterns of behaviour structured by rules and norms of society which have persistent and widespread use” (Scoones, 1998, p. 12). Institutions can be economic, political, social and cultural. It can be subjectively interpreted and manifest in either a formal or an informal way. Formal political institutions include law and policies, while most social

and cultural institutions are informal. Informal institutions are expressed in behaviour and interactions between individuals and groups, such as customary practices, norms and routines (Leftwich & Sen, 2010). There is no clear division between formal and informal institutions because they constantly change and influence each other. For example, formal law or official statements are influenced by more informal negotiations and norms, on the other hand norms can also be influenced by law. Both the formal and informal institutions impact and are impacted by organisations.

**Organisations** are formal or informal “organized human agency” (Leftwich & Sen, 2010, p. 18). Formal organisations can be non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, political parties, news media and religious organisation, while informal organisations have no formal constitution or public profile such as criminal gangs, secret societies or political factions (Leftwich & Sen, 2010; Scoones, 2015). Institutions are “the rules of the game” and organisations are “the players” (North in Scoones, 2015, p. 46). The players give access to opportunities or means of making do, such as NGOs distributing food to rejected asylum seekers, whereas institutions such as laws and policies influence what room of action NGOs has – the rules.

Institutions and organisations constrain or give access to resources, hence can influence what capitals a person possess and what strategies are followed. For instance, a law can restrict health services to rejected asylum seekers and therefore influence what access they have to healthcare. Nevertheless, institutions can also be meaningful, reflect perceptions, identities and positions in the society (Scoones, 2015). To asylum seekers access to work could reflect dignity and feelings of participation in society and not merely a source of income. How institutions are perceived can affect what resources and strategies are chosen and thus the outcome of the livelihood situation. Thus, the context, institutions and organisations are closely connected to resources, strategies and outcome when making do.

## **2.4 Literature on irregular migration**

The work of the Italian philosopher Agamben (1998) on sovereignty and exclusion, is often used when researching the field of irregular migration (Jacobsen, 2015; De Genova, 2002; Khosravi, 2010; Kjærre, 2010). Agamben writes about ancient Roman law and the figure ‘homo sacer’. Homo sacer is a man who is banned from the state. He is convicted for a crime, but not sentenced to death. Rather, homo sacer is excluded from the society and placed outside of the law, others can kill him with impunity. According to Agamben, the relation between the state and its citizens builds on entitlements to rights and a distinction between insiders and outsiders. The sovereignty of the state relies on excluding some people and including

others to maintain authority. The life left to live for the homo sacer is a 'bare life', a simple state of existing without rights. Agamben compares homo sacer and his bare life to refugees residing in camps. Khosravi (2010, p. 111) relates the concepts of homo sacer and bare life to an "inclusive exclusion" of irregular migrants. Irregular migrants are not deported, but at the same time not seen as participants in the society. They are not included today because they are to be excluded tomorrow (Khosravi, 2010). By law, irregular migrants are excluded from rights, yet they are included on other arenas such as policy, juridical processes, media, and local communities. Thus, irregular migrants are not completely excluded, rather there is an 'inclusive exclusion' where they exist in society, but are not seen as legitimate members.

McNevin (2013) and Willen (2007) criticize Agamben for understanding the lives of irregular migrants as shaped by structures, hence neglecting their human agency. According to McNevin (2013) irregular migrants are part of the process of social change and are politically active people. By not acting according to immigration law, irregular migrants are active agents resisting the sovereign state. Willen (2007) emphasizes how the experiences of irregular migrants need to be explored in order to understand their lives and behaviour. To include irregular migrants' experiences and an agency perspective, Willen (2007, p. 10) develops a "critical phenomenological approach of illegality". This approach explores irregular migrant's consciousness, self-awareness and how they experience 'illegality' in their everyday lives. To better understand the lives of irregular migrants there is a need to further explore the concept of illegality.

According to de Genova (2002), illegality is a legal and socio-political constructed concept. Illegality is a way modern nation state's discipline and coerce its inhabitants through defining who is included and who is not, the citizen and the non-citizen. 'Deportation' is therefore strongly connected to the concept of illegality because it represents the state's ability to exclude and to perform its power (de Genova, 2002). However, illegality is more than a set of legal codes such as immigration law. It is expressed in everyday practices of the police, state officials and private citizens through e.g. refused housing, exploitation in the labour market, less welfare opportunities and even in social organisations refusing to help migrants without documents (de Genova, 2002). To Willen (2007), these practices in everyday life affect how irregular migrants structure their lives, but also how they understand space, time, social relations and themselves. Illegality affects what she calls "embodied experiences in the world" (Willen, 2007, p.10). Hence, illegality must be understood from three perspectives: illegality as a juridical status, a socio-political condition and as an experience of being-in-the-world (De Genova, 2002; Willen, 2007).

Illegality create social spaces where irregular migrants are invisible, excluded and subjugated, so called “spaces of non-existence” (de Genova, 2002, p. 427). These spaces of non-existence manifest in concrete experiences such as lacking identification papers, hunger, unemployment, enforced clandestinity and exploitation. Even daily activities such as traveling and work may be experienced as illegal and suppressive. De Genova (2002) argues that illegality and spaces of non-existence is closely linked to the possibility of deportation. Deportation leads to a life with only short term plans and no hopes for the future. However, fearing deportation also leads to exemplary citizens who do not violate any law because of the increased possibility to be caught by the police and deported (Bendixsen, 2015). On the other hand, irregular migrants do not solely experience exclusion. They also experience inclusion and hope.

The context surrounding irregular migrants can be experienced as spaces of non-existence, but irregular migrants can also create spaces of belonging. Willen (2014, p. 86) argues that despite the internalization of illegality and spaces of non-existence, irregular migrants create spaces that are familiar, safe and meaningful, so called “inhabitable spaces of welcome”. Inhabitable spaces of welcome can be physical places such as apartments, NGO offices or churches. A space of welcome can also be a more abstract space, such as social relations, membership in a soccer club or family and friends (Willen, 2014). Hence, people without residence papers are not passive recipients of a socio-political structure that is influenced by the strategies of sovereign modern states. Rather, they are active agents adapting and resisting to the world around them.

## **2.5 State sovereignty, citizenship and human rights**

The relation between the nation-state and its inhabitants relies on the political contract of the constructed concept - citizenship. The citizen has both rights and duties towards the state and the state has obligations towards the citizen, while a set of institutions guarantee these rights (Castles, Miller & de Haas, 2014). This political contract creates a division between insiders and outsiders. According to Agamben (1998, p. 117) the refugee, challenges this political contract. “The refugee should be considered for what he is, that is, nothing less than a border concept that radically calls into question the principles of the nation-state”. Asylum seekers and refugees are non-citizens of the state they live in and are therefore not entitled to the same rights and duties as citizens. However, non-citizens do have rights in foreign states, according to human rights law<sup>2</sup>, but these rights are often violated in practice.

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<sup>2</sup>According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948, art.1, art. 2(1)), “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this

In 1951, Arendt criticized the abstractness of human rights in her book “Origins of Totalitarianism”. She did not believe human rights ensured the dignity of human beings, but rather the dignity of those who were citizens of nation states. This was because states failed to protect non-citizens or refugees, as verified in the second world war. “It turned out that the moment human beings lacked their own government and had to fall back upon their minimum rights, no authority was left to protect them and no institution was willing to guarantee them,” Arendt (1951, p. 381) wrote. Agamben (1998) finds that Arendt’s criticism of human rights is still relevant. Refugees live ‘bare lives’ in camps with few human rights. Agamben, similar to Arendt, understand the refugee as a challenge to the whole concept of human rights: “the figure that should have incarnated the rights of man par excellence, the refugee, constitutes instead the radical crisis of this concept,” (Agamben, 1998, p.116). Today, this ‘bare life’ can be seen in refugee camps in Greece with detentions and inadequate standards of living, they lack water, electricity and heat (Cotterill, Henderson-Howat, Puhakka & Welanders, 2016). The surrounding states fail to take responsibility for the human rights of refugees, irregular migrants and rejected asylum seekers.

On the other hand, Stenum (2010) disagree with Agamben’s (1998) complete rejection of human rights. Stenum argues that a human rights framework and NGOs can improve the possibility for irregular migrants to enjoy their rights in practice. For instance, in 2000 the Council of Europe issued a recommendation ensuring non-citizens, such as irregular migrants, the right to minimum social rights. Despite “the status of foreigners”, “any person in a situation of extreme hardship”, have “the right to the satisfaction of basic human material needs” (Cholewinski, 2005, p. 7). Also, human rights can contribute to develop norms that influence how states can act towards its non-citizens. However, Stenum (2010) suggests a re-conceptualization of irregular migrants’ human rights as to address their everyday struggles. This study seeks to use the livelihoods framework as a means to explore the context and institutions, among them human rights, in which the everyday struggles of rejected asylum seekers occur. Using the livelihoods framework allows me to go beyond exploring rejected asylum seekers solely through a contextual and institutional human rights perspective, but to also consider their lives and their experiences.

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Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” every human being are entitled to human rights – including non-citizens.

### **3.0 The Norwegian context**

The context surrounding rejected asylum seekers influences what constraints and possibilities they have; how vulnerable they are and what strategies they follow. Institutions such as law and policy regulate rejected asylum seekers' access to formal social services. I therefore describe the context from a juridical and socio-political perspective. I present historical trends in Norwegian asylum policy and immigration law and emphasise how today's asylum policy reflects strategies to restrict immigration to Norway. I briefly describe the process of applying for asylum in Norway, and the opportunities rejected asylum seekers have after a final rejection. Then, I present the social rights that are offered to rejected asylum seekers and discuss how trends in asylum policy and human rights obligations influence what social rights they can access in Norway.

#### **3.1 Norwegian asylum policy and immigration law**

Major immigration trends in Norwegian history have occurred in three different waves (Brochmann & Kjelstadli, 2014). From the 1950's until the 1970's the combination of liberal immigration regulations and an expanding economy attracted the first wave of immigrants - the labour migrants. However, in 1975, the governing labour party restricted labour immigration to Norway. According to Brochmann and Kjelstadli, immigration policy was influenced by an understanding that increased immigration to Norway, would lead to a pressure on the welfare state. One of the reasons for this restriction was thus the so called "double politics": the need to prevent potential new arrivals of immigrants to better integrate labour migrants, who had now settled for good in the Norwegian society. The second wave of immigration occurred when labour migrants applied for family reunion. In 1975, the third wave of immigration to Norway began with asylum seekers (Brochmann & Kjelstadli, 2014).

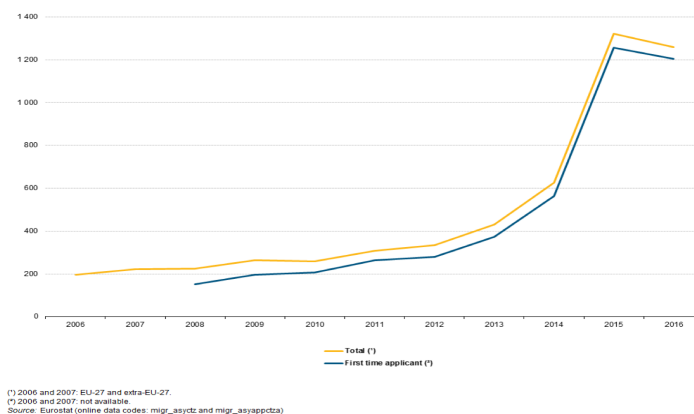
The first refugees to Norway originated from Vietnam and Chile. They were picked up by the Norwegian Government and transported from their countries of origin to Norwegian territory. They were called "jet refugees" because they were transported to Norway by airplanes (Brochmann & Kjelstadli, 2014, p. 255). However, in the 1980's asylum seekers began travelling on their own. People defied dangerous routes, while paying human smugglers to arrive in Europe and Norway. The Refugee Convention (1951) obliges countries to assess the need for protection that people arriving on their territory might have. Therefore, Norway had to process asylum applications from any person arriving on its borders. The convention also forbids the return of people to countries where their lives are in danger (the Refugee Convention, 1951). Thus, Norway could no longer control the number of refugees and asylum seekers arriving, as they could with the "jet refugees". In the following years,



asylum seekers arriving to Norway differed each year from at the least 1,500 people to at the most 17,000 people, depending on conflicts in the world (UDI, 2015a).

Following these developments, European states including Norway, made new treaties and policy changes to control immigration. In the 90's, the Schengen agreement in Europe increased the control of immigration from outside of Europe, while it facilitated people's movement within Europe. In the new millennium, the Dublin agreements and the Lisbon treaty introduced new asylum regulations and restrictions to Europe (Brochmann & Kjelstadli, 2014). The states restricted immigration policies partly because people lived on the continent without legal residence (Brochmann & Kjelstadli, 2014). However, despite these restrictions, people continue to migrate to the region, both legally and illegally.

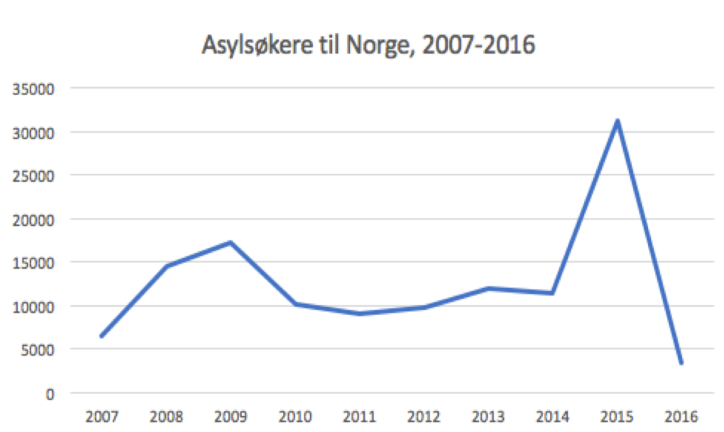
In the past decade migration and diversity policy in Europe and Norway has moved further to the political right and in the direction of a more restrictive policy with an anti-immigrant focus (Castles, Miller & de Haas, 2014; Austenå, 2016). The Norwegian Government (2013 – to date) aims to have the most restrictive asylum policy in Europe (Møkkelgjerd, 2017; Austenå, 2016). Meanwhile, in the past five years the amount of asylum seekers arriving in Europe has increased drastically, see figure 3 (Eurostat, 2017).



*Figure 3 - Asylum applications from non-EU citizens to EU member states (2006-2016) - Numbers in thousands (Eurostat, 2017).*

In 2015, 30,000 asylum seekers arrived in Norway - the most the country had ever received (UDI, 2015b). The Norwegian state reacted by implementing several restrictions to the asylum policy. These restrictions made it more difficult for refugees to obtain family reunification, it increased the use of temporary protection and allowed for the return of asylum seekers to internal displacement (NOAS, 2017a; Johansen, 2015). The group of asylum seekers who were mostly affected by this was the afghan asylum seekers. In 2015, 139

afghan asylum seekers were rejected, while over 3,000 were rejected in 2016. The state refused an increased number of applications despite the worsening security situation in Afghanistan (NOAS, 2017b). In 2017, France chose to not return an afghan asylum seeker, who had previously applied for asylum in Norway, because of the probability that Norway would deport the asylum seeker to unsafe areas in Afghanistan (EDAL, 2017). Today, Norwegian asylum policy toward afghan asylum seekers is one of the most restrictive in Europe (Møkkelgjerd, 2017). In 2016, the number of asylum seekers that came to Norway was down to 3,400, the lowest number since 1997, see figure 4 (UDI, 2016b). Meanwhile, arrivals to Europe has not decreased equally.



*Figure 4 - Asylum application to Norway (2007-2016). Based on statistics from UDI (2016; 2015b; 2015a).*

Norwegian asylum policy is influenced by considerations related to the regulation of immigration and the use of policy signals to restrict immigration. Immigration regulating considerations are different measures taken to control and limit immigration. For example, Norway is restrictive when giving residence on humanitarian grounds, because this could create precedent and lead to increased immigration (Møkkelgjerd, 2017). Immigration considerations can also impede the possibility for a legal juridical status to rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay. The argument is that an amnesty to this group could send signals to future asylum seekers and lead to more immigrants. Based on a view that a liberal asylum policy attracts more asylum seekers to a country, one of the aims of the Government is to send certain signals of a restrictive policy to possible asylum seekers (Austenå, 2016). An example of sending policy signals is the Government's Facebook campaign promoting stricter asylum regulations in Norway (the Norwegian Government, 2016). Another example is to restrict what social rights are offered to non-citizens. Thus, the context surrounding rejected

asylum seekers is influenced by the state's considerations to regulate immigration and to send certain policy signals.

An aim of the current Minister of Migration and Integration is to deport as many people without legal residence as possible (Johnsen, 2017b). In 2016, accompanied by journalists, the Minister visited several shops and restaurants to look for people working illegally without residence papers and to deport them (Zaman, 2017). With this media stunt, she sent strong political signals on the aims of the Government to restrain irregular migration and defeat the informal job sector. 2016 is the year that most people without residence permits were deported from Norway (Skjeggstad, 2017). Meanwhile, there has been an increase in young asylum seekers trying to commit suicide (Sæther, 2017). As the Government restricts asylum policies and increases deportations, more people than before leave the asylum reception centres to hide from the state and live without residence papers (Skihamn & Skjetne 2017; PU, 2017). With a restrictive asylum policy and increased deportations, rejected asylum seekers can face an even more difficult struggle to make do, while they hide from the state and fear deportation.

### **3.2 The asylum process in Norway**

Norway is a signatory to the Refugee Convention (1951) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which both ensure the human right to seek asylum. In Norway, the five largest groups of people who seek asylum origin from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq and Somalia (UDI, 2016b). By the entry of 2017, over 13,000 people were living in asylum reception centres in Norway, however by the end of the year the number was down to 6,000 people (UDI, 2017a). When a person applies for asylum in Norway, the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) process the application. The time spent to consider the application differs between nationalities and time of arrival. If the application is rejected by the UDI, one can appeal the decision to the Immigration Appeals Board (UNE). A decline from UNE is considered final; the asylum application is rejected and a deadline for leaving the country follows.

Yet, rejected asylum seekers can continue their struggle for residence. However, obtaining legal residence after a rejection is difficult because of immigration regulating considerations and policy signals. A rejected asylum seeker can bring the case to the courts by suing the state for basing the asylum decision on wrongful facts. This is very costly and asylum seekers must cover the expenses themselves (Møkkelgjerd, 2017). There is also a possibility to receive residence based on humanitarian grounds. Residence on humanitarian grounds can be applied for when there are strong affiliations to the state, or if the health status

of a person is critical (Vevstad, 2017). Yet, immigration regulating considerations are emphasized in these decisions. Residence on a humanitarian basis is rarely given in order to prevent a legal precedence with an increased number of rejected asylum seekers obtaining residence in Norway (Vevstad, 2017; Møkkelgjerd, 2017).

For those who have family in Norway, there is a possibility for family reunification. However, family reunification is usually restricted to children under 18 years old and spouses or people in common-law marriage (Møkkelgjerd, 2017). When a spouse of a legal resident applies for family reunification from Norway, and not from their country of origin, it can be more difficult to obtain residence. The state wants to prevent sending signals that can motivate people to travel to Norway on their own (Møkkelgjerd, 2017). Asylum seekers with a final decline from UNE can either return to their country of origin voluntarily or continue to stay in Norway and risk deportation.

Some rejected asylum seekers cannot be deported by the authorities even though they remain registered. NOAS (2015) estimates that between 3,000 and 5,000 rejected asylum seekers have lived in Norway over five years and cannot be deported by the state's immigration authorities. Some of these rejected asylum seekers cannot be deported because they do not apply for travel documents from their country of origin. If the country of origin does not want to receive their citizens without them having requesting travel documents, the Norwegian authorities cannot deport the rejected asylum seeker (NOAS, personal communication). Without being deported nor having residence papers, these people are left to live a life with few rights.

### **3.3 Social rights**

As a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, art.1) proclaiming that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights", Norway is responsible for the human rights of non-citizens such as rejected asylum seekers living in the country. Norway is also a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, a treaty that ensures all people the right to a minimum standard of living, healthcare and education (Weissbrodt, 2008). Although the state does not provide extended social rights to rejected asylum seekers, such as general healthcare, Norway does ensure 'emergency rights' to people without legal residence. The state ensures emergency healthcare, primary education to children and shelter in asylum reception centres (Søvig, 2013).

Meanwhile, the state aims to restrict immigration. According to Cholewinski (2005) Asylum policy in Europe often undermine the human rights of rejected asylum seekers. In 2004, the Norwegian Government decided to no longer support rejected asylum seekers with

housing in reception centres – people were left to live on the streets. The aim of the Government was to make rejected asylum seekers leave the country (Kjærre, 2015). This illustrates how human rights can be violated to promote a political goal. After reactions from the civil society, rejected asylum seekers received basic social services such as housing in reception centres and a small allowance to buy food (Kjærre, 2015). However, the social rights offered by the Norwegian state to rejected asylum seekers are limited, temporary and conditional (Bendixsen, 2015). To conclude, rejected asylum seekers are not left to live on the streets, but the Norwegian state limits the amount of social rights given in order to restrict immigration.

For people without residence papers, it can be more difficult to access social services in a strong welfare state than in other countries with less welfare and more widespread informal sectors (Bendixsen, 2015; Khosravi, 2010). In Norway, most social services are ensured by law and require identity documents (Brochman and Kjelstadli, 2014). Since rejected asylum seekers are by law excluded from many of these services, they need to access them in informal ways. Hence, social networks, informal jobs and services offered by NGOs, influence how people without residence papers make do in Norway (Jacobsen, 2015). In the following paragraphs, formal and informal ways to access work and social services in Norway are presented.

### **3.3.1 Work**

Rejected asylum seekers are not allowed to work in Norway. However, until 2011, they could participate in the formal labour market because UDI did not inform the tax department on the legal status of asylum seekers. The tax department issued tax cards without checking the residence permit of the asylum seeker until they discovered this practice in 2011 (Skille, Ekroll & Fjørtoft, 2011). Thus, many rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay in Norway have experienced working and paying taxes (Øien & Sønsterudbråten, 2011). However, today rejected asylum seekers cannot participate in the formal labour market and are therefore left to exploitation in the informal labour market.

Irregular migrants experience difficult working conditions and exploitation through underpaid, harmful and random jobs in Norway (Kirkens-Bymisjon, 2016). Language barriers and no knowledge of rights and law makes irregular migrants vulnerable to exploitation from Norwegians and other migrants. They often work in labour sectors such as agriculture, construction, restaurants and cleaning. The City Church Mission (Kirkens-Bymisjon, 2016) refer to irregular migrants as a social class of ‘precariat’, because they have no social security, rely on short-term jobs and their opportunities depend on other people.

### **3.3.2 Housing and food**

Today, rejected asylum seekers can live in asylum reception centres and receive financial support. Residents in asylum reception centres must remain registered by the authorities, but are free to leave and enter the centre as they want (Kjærre, 2015). Around 1,800 rejected asylum seekers live in reception centres, by February 2017 (UDI, 2017b). Rejected asylum seekers who live in these centres receive an allowance of around 1,800 Norwegian kroner (NOK) each month; a reduced amount from 2,300 NOK before the final rejection (UDI, 2017c.). In addition, the allowance can be further reduced if residents do not attend obligatory conversations on return. The government can thus use the allowance to control rejected asylum seekers (Kjærre, 2015). The allowance is meant to cover living expenses such as food, clothes, medicines and transportation. Compared to estimates on Norwegian living expenses, the allowance is very low. The Directorate of Labour and Welfare (2017) estimates the lowest living expense of a single person in Norway to be slightly above 8,000 NOK each month, excluded housing. Rejected asylum seekers can decide to not live in reception centres and find shelter on their own, but will then lose their financial support. According to estimates, around 12,000 – 15,000 rejected asylum seekers have declined shelter in reception centres, many because of experiences of isolation and passivity (Øien and Sønsterudbråten, 2011).

### **3.3.3 Healthcare**

The fulfilment of rejected asylum seekers right to health services in Norway varies among them. People without residence papers are entitled to emergency healthcare, but have no right to a regular general practitioner (Øien & Sønsterudbråten, 2011). Since they lack residence papers, they are not part of the national insurance and health treatment will not be covered by the state. If rejected asylum seekers receive healthcare they must cover the expenses themselves, unless the institution treating them pay for the treatment (Møkkelgjerd, 2017; Søvig, 2013). This situation results in an arbitrary access to healthcare, where economic capital or support from local health services determines the outcome (Øien & Sønsterudbråten, 2011). In 2013, rejected asylum seekers' lacking access to healthcare in Norway was criticised by the UN committee of economic, cultural and social rights (Stortinget, 2017a).

On the other hand, there is a health centre in Oslo for irregular migrants. It is run by the City Church Mission and Red Cross and offers general healthcare from doctors, psychologists and dentists. Over 3,000 irregular migrants, mainly former asylum seekers, have received treatment at the health centre (Kirkens-Bymisjon, 2016). Indirectly, the

Norwegian state supports this centre by financially assisting the NGOs running it (Søvig, 2013). In 2017, the city council of Oslo decided to give the centre a one-time financial support (Braaten & Dommerud, 2017). The same year, a proposal to legislate rejected asylum seekers right to general healthcare was put forward in the parliament. However, this proposal was defeated, despite the earlier criticism from UN on human rights violations (Stortinget, 2017b). It is a paradox that the Norwegian state supports general healthcare to rejected asylum seekers through NGOs, while on the other hand rejects legal changes to ensure their right to healthcare. It could be that the state fears to send certain policy signals of improved social rights to potential migrants, while the state simultaneously fears to violate human rights. However, the financial support to the health centre in Oslo, only benefits rejected asylum seekers living there. A result of the state's policy and their possible intentions to ensure human rights, is thus an arbitrary fulfilment of the right to healthcare.

## **4.0 Methodology**

In this chapter, I discuss why I chose a qualitative and narrative research design and how this influenced my research stages such as to collect data, recruit respondents and analyse the findings. Then, I reflect upon ethical considerations. I discuss challenges and limitations and assess the research quality by looking at the trustworthiness of the study and how my background influenced the research.

### **4.1. Social constructivism and interpretivism**

When researching it is important to reflect upon the nature of phenomena – the ontology and how phenomena should be studied – the epistemology (Bryman, 2012). The ontological and epistemological approach depend on the type of study, if it is the social world or the natural world. I study the social world with a social constructivist ontology and an interpretive epistemology. The social world is dynamic and constructed by human behaviour and social interactions (Bryman, 2012). According to Giddens (1984), individuals engage in the construction of the social world through behaviour that depends on This behaviour is influenced by their agency and the structures. Thus, the social world of rejected asylum seekers are dynamic and constructed through human interactions based on agency and structure. I study rejected asylum seekers' world by interpreting their stories and narratives that reveal how they understand their world and give it meaning. Rejected asylum seekers' lives are studied through a double interpretation. First the respondents interpret their social world and express their interpretation through narratives. Then, I interpret their narratives based on my cultural understandings and background (Bryman, 2012). I constantly interpret their world, especially when analysing the data (Berg & Lune, 2012). On the other hand, interpretations are not only verbal. The respondents interpret their world through feelings, cultural understandings and assumptions. These interpretations are only partly accessible to me. I interpret rejected asylum seekers constructed world to explore how they make do.

### **4.2 Qualitative and narrative research design**

Using a qualitative research approach allowed me to study rejected asylum seekers' experiences in terms of words and meanings, rather than numbers. These words and meanings were explored through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allowed the respondents to give narratives on how they understand specific parts of their lives, while I could remain open to their stories, see their spontaneous reactions and ask follow-up questions. By telling life stories, the respondents construct their world and express meanings and understandings. I used these narratives to interpret how the respondents give meaning to their lives through interactions. I also analysed the narratives to find similar patterns and



differences among the respondents (Johannessen, Tufte & Christoffersen, 2008; Berg & Lune, 2012). Through the respondents' life stories, I studied how they make do, as Mishler (1986, p.67) writes "stories are lived, before they are told". Semi-structured interviews that allow for narratives can reflect how meanings are constructed in a larger socio-cultural context (Mishler, 1986). Thus, I was able to explore the constraints and possibilities that institutions and organisations pose to the respondents by interpreting their narratives. If I had used a quantitative approach, it could have been more difficult to reveal the respondents' understandings of the surrounding institutions and organisations. This is because a quantitative approach would have emphasized numbers and data collection through surveys, while relying on a deductive approach (Bryman, 2012). Through a qualitative approach, I analysed the data through inductive categories based on the respondents' narratives and deductive categories based on theory. See section 4.4. Data analysis for a description of the inductive and deductive approach.

### **4.3 Data collection**

The data collection consists of ten semi-structured interviews with people who have received rejected asylum applications and lived in Norway over five years. I also did some participatory observation and a literature study. The field work was done in Oslo, Trondheim and Stavanger from March to May 2017.

#### **4.3.1. Recruiting respondents**

The sample frame consists of ten people. Five women and five men, with different ages, life situations and backgrounds. I used a purposive sampling, where my intention was to do a maximum variation sampling. However, it was a challenge to recruit respondents and therefore I chose an opportunistic sampling (Bryman, 2012). Although earlier studies show that there are few natural meeting places for irregular migrants (Brunovskis & Bjerkan 2008; Øien & Sønsterudbråten, 2011), Facebook led me to a meeting place for people with rejected asylum applications. It was a group of people without residence papers who meet frequently with support from a Norwegian NGO, the City Church Aid. They call themselves 'People in limbo'. I attended several weekly meetings of this group to recruit respondents. In the meetings, I passed around a sheet where people who wanted to participate could sign up with their names and telephone numbers. My intention was to contact people from this list, making sure that the background of the respondents varied. Out of the ones who signed up some did not answer my calls or messages, while others were too busy to meet. I therefore began sampling opportunistically. I interviewed the ones who agreed to participate, without

considering a variety in the background of the respondents. However, phenomena can differ between people and different contexts; therefore, a large variation of criteria is important (Johannessen, et al., 2008). After I had interviewed five people from the same region and with the same gender, I decided to expand the sample location to increase the variation in the respondents' backgrounds in terms of gender. I visited Trondheim and Stavanger to interview more respondents.

I contacted an employee at the City Church Mission in Trondheim to arrange interviews with members of the People in limbo group there. I had earlier met her in one of the People in limbo meetings in Oslo. The employee became a gatekeeper; she gave me access to the field and to respondents (Johannessen, et al., 2008). The employee forwarded information about the project to possible respondents and arranged for me to interview the ones who wanted to participate. I also used a gatekeeper in Stavanger; a man mediating work for rejected asylum seekers. After email and telephone correspondence, he agreed to arrange interviews for me. Eventually, after expanding the sampling location to other cities, the data became richer and the variation among respondents increased. I had enough information and variety in the sample to analyse the collected data and answer the research questions (Johannessen, et al., 2008).

#### **4.3.2. Semi-structured interviewing**

I used semi-structured interviews to elicit respondents' descriptions of their everyday lives. For the interview guide see appendix 1. I started the interviews with 'warm-up' questions, followed by open questions allowing for narrative descriptions on a typical day, social life and network. These questions were followed by more personal questions concerning economy, housing and challenges. I ended the interviews with positive questions asking about their friends and family or their hobbies. I found it important to ask the respondents how they experienced the interview and if they had any questions. The respondents gave me positive feedback. They were interested in my motivations for this study and were grateful to have someone they could tell their stories to.

The interviews were done in Norwegian or English, depending on the respondent's language skills and lasted from one to two hours. I used a voice recorder, with which none of the respondents had a problem. The interview locations were in private meeting rooms. The respondents had all been at the interview locations before. A private and familiar interview setting may have resulted in richer narratives than if the interviews were done for instance in a coffee shop. I did not do any follow-up interviews, although I did meet some respondents in Oslo at several occasions.

#### **4.3.3. Participatory observation, interviews and a literature study**

I did some participatory observation when attending several meetings with the People in limbo group in Oslo and when visiting the group in Trondheim. When I attended the meetings, I informed the group about my research project so others would know my background and intentions. Participating in these meetings gave me a better insight to rejected asylum seekers' lives and helped me to see the variety of people with rejected asylum applications. To study the context rejected asylum seekers live in, I used literature such as policy documents, research journals and reports. I also followed media coverage on the subject. In addition, I interviewed two people working with rejected asylum seekers, Arne Viste and an employee at the Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS). The participatory observation, interviews and literature study was useful to get a comprehensive picture of the context, such as laws and regulations, but also to get an overview of the help offered by NGOs.

#### **4.4 Data analysis**

I used a narrative content analysis where I examined and interpreted the data by identifying common themes and codes based on the respondents' behaviour and meanings (Berg & Lune, 2012). I began the process of data analysis by coding each transcribed interview with descriptive codes in order to reduce the data, as illustrated in figure 5. Second, I gathered the descriptive codes in a table, to find similarities and differences between the respondents, as illustrated in figure 6. Third, I gathered the descriptive codes, organised overall categories with clusters and created analytic codes, as illustrated in figure 7. When coding the material, I have used both an inductive and deductive approach through directed and conventional content analysis (Berg & Lune, 2012). With a directed content analysis, I applied codes based on themes and concepts relevant to the research questions and theoretical background. I used codes derived from the livelihoods framework such as 'social capital', 'strategies and tactics' and conceptual codes such as 'spaces of welcome'. Through a conventional content analysis, I made new codes that derived from trends in the data, for example 'feelings of financial insecurity', 'feelings of isolation' and 'experiences of social rejections'.

wanted to do that but, I think also to my son, because he do not have any family here, he has a father and a mother, it me, so why I do this bad thing because he is a very small boy only six years old, maybe if I die it is not good for him. Life is not good to me in Norway.	Living for her son – he is important to her
Silence	Context: silence
What challenges do you have? What is difficult?	
Me I don't have any challenge, what to challenge, there is none, Norway when you are rejected you don't challenge anyone, anyone listen you, anyone give ... when I hear Norwegian people, Christian people, the people here, they have humanity so hard that before but no it is different there are not any, in my myself all and individual sometimes for women, because I was a woman almost I live 15 years without nothing in Norway that's how is thinking and how its look what is the woman, that question I ask to myself, so who, abbaah, I don't who challenge, but I challenge myself OK to live, and then to forget my situation and then I challenge myself not any people.	Experience of not being seen by Norwegian people
You cant to challenge anyone, nobody listening to you.	
How do you challenge yourself?	
For an example yes I have this bad situation and everything is closed everything is bad for me, but ok, maybe its happened tomorrow sometimes you go down and then you come up, when you live, and when you say ok maybe life changes tomorrow and then after tomorrow, when you think that you live and then you challenge yourself, when you think bad things, why I challenge, why I do this one, I want to die, yes you do it anytime if you do not have a family.	Live perception going up and down
When you challenge yourself maybe the life will change after tomorrow.	A little bit of hope...

Figure 5 - Stage one of the data analysis - coding the transcribed material.

Informant 2 M 38_K_9_S	Informant 3 M30_K_13_F	Informant 4 M30_K_8_S	Informant 5 M37_K_9_B	Informant 6 W34_E_10_S	Informant 7 E31_W_6_C	Informant 8 W39_E_15_S	Informant 9 W22_E_7_S	Informant 10 W60_E_18_S
Grew up in the mountains in Iran, responsibility for his siblings. Active, wanted to work when he came here. Earning little money, working a lot (while waiting for asylum reply). Using the library to learn Norwegian. Working in restaurants. Little	First his father in Norway, then his family followed. His family have residence in Denmark. Police arresting him for 24 hours because he have no documents. Afraid of being deported if living in mota. Afraid of becoming a criminal, if he did	Grew up in a refugee camp. Without family in Norway. Doing nothing in Denmark. Doing nothing in isolation. Unproportional relationship with his young brother helping him. A refugee guide, a women, helping him. Mood	Serious health issue because of an accident in his home country. No family. Sitting at Home. Live in motak. Recieve money from the motak (890 2w). Feeling of not having anything. Envy her companions in the political organization but travelling	Politically active in organization. Important to her – her PC and telephone. No family. Sitting at Home. Live in motak. Recieve money from the motak (890 2w). Missing her family in home country. Politically active in social media organization against her government	Keeps herself busy with children picking up at daycare, volunteer in kindergarten and church, and a women's groups. Living for her son – he is important to her. Experience of not being seen by the Norwegian people. A little bit of hope	A son living in Norway. Depression and Caos. Every day is similar. Suicidal. Living for her son – he is important to her. Experience of not being seen by the Norwegian people. Life perception going up and down. A little bit of hope	Kan ikke gjenet humvil i hverdagen. Føllesom hun har gjort noe kriminelt. Positive to have a job. Dark time in reception centers. Have tried to get a job, but nobody will let her friends	Lives with her sister. Worked for 10 years as a cleaner paying tax. Pre 2011, 10. Working in a church community, gives little bit of hope. Think, cries and cannot sleep, 10. Some Norwegian (old)

Figure 6 - Stage two of the data analysis - gather descriptive codes into one document to find similar categories.

ANALYTIC CODES	CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTIVE CODES
	Shelter and food	
	Asylum center	
Strategy vs. tactics	Deciding not to live in reception centers vs. deciding to live in reception centers	Being registered, (receiving money), but not living there. Only going to the asylum center if something important. A lot of stress when visiting the asylum center [14] vs. Live in motak because she has no work (after sleeping in the street) [6]. Moved to a reception center in Trondheim, wanted to stay in Oslo but ... unhappy for that.
Feeling of being undignified	Financial support	When in reception center, she needed glasses they took 100 each month from her repayments 3-10. Receiving three 800 every second week. Heren registered in asylum Centre [7] - through living with boyfriend - children. Cannot by healthy food, because she do not have enough money [7]. Cannot by the clothes she want, because she have to ask her boyfriend. [7]. Receive money from the motak (890 2w) [6].
Feeling of chaos, stress and passivity	Experiences in reception centers	Difficult to live with the little money from the reception centers. [12]. Thoughts on asylum center: Stomach, rejected - bad [18]. Reception Center as a prison, dehumanized [12]. Live in motak[6] start to cry when we talk about it. Every day is the same in motak. [6]

Figure 7 - Stage three of the data analysis - find analytic codes to interpret the respondents' narratives.

## 4.5 Ethical considerations

The study was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) before I entered the field. I also contacted the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH), who forwarded me to previous ethical statements on similar research projects. These statements were used to make ethical assessments. According to NESH's (2016) guidelines, research ethics should be assessed according to the participant by obtaining an informed consent and confidentiality. Ethics should also be assessed according to the society and how research can be misused after it is published.

A consent is informed, free and explicit if the respondent has sufficient information, there is no pressure to participate and a clear consent is given (NESH, 2016). I ensured an informed consent with an information sheet that illustrated and explained the research questions, the purpose of the research, what participation involved and how the data would be used. For the information sheet see appendix 2. I provided the information sheet both in English and Norwegian, depending on what language the respondent spoke. I did not find it necessary to provide the information sheet in their mother tongue because all the respondents had sufficient language skills to communicate. Migrants may get a hope that participating in research will help their situation, their asylum case or give them something in return (Jacobsen, 2015). To prevent misunderstandings and ensure a free consent, I was clear on my role as a researcher. I explained that I did not have any contact with UDI and that their participation would not influence their asylum case, but rather shed light on rejected asylum seekers' situation. I obtained oral consents and the interviews were done in formal and private meeting rooms, ensuring the respondents confidentiality and anonymity.

An important ethical principle in research is to do no harm to the participant (Bryman, 2012). Rejected asylum seekers live unstable and insecure lives. Many faced a dangerous travel to Norway and now risk deportation. Participating in research may expose the respondent to negative feelings, emotionally exhaustive interviews and a "re-traumatisation" (Brunovskis, 2010, p. 60). Having the lifeworld of rejected asylum seekers as a research topic resulted in many emotional interviews. The respondents trusted me with their stories and feelings. There were difficult situations when the respondents began to cry or talked about suicide attempts. I had to balance the role as comforting, while also being a researcher. In these situations, I supported the respondents by letting them know how strong I thought they were and told them that we could pause or cancel the interview anytime. I was very sensitive to their reactions and constantly evaluated if and when I could ask difficult questions, for instance on labour exploitation or experiences in asylum reception centres. Because of ethical

considerations, I did not always ask the questions that I would have liked to ask, but the respondents' well-being and to do no harm were my first priorities. To prevent a re-traumatization, I did not question the respondents on experiences from their country of origin or the application process in Norway. Because I took these precautions, I believe I prevented the interviews from becoming like the asylum process interviews where the asylum seeker must explain their reason for applying (Jacobsen, 2015).

When researching a marginalised group in the society it is important to avoid unfounded generalisations which could lead to stigma of this group (NSD, 2017). Since rejected asylum seekers and irregular migration is a highly politicised field, there is a need to be extra conscious on how results are presented (Jacobsen, 2015). The findings of this study should not in any way be held against rejected asylum seekers as a group, but rather prevent their vulnerable lives from being neglected by the state. I anonymized the data material by using fake names and changing or removing indirect personal information such as country of origin, city of residence and age (NSD, 2017).

#### **4.6 Challenges and limitations**

A limitation to this narrative research design is that the data collection is based on single interviews. Irregular migrants' experiences change over time because of their insecure situation with unstable jobs, moving and deportation. Research on irregular migrants should therefore be done over a longer time frame (Khosravi, 2010). When supplementing interviews, participatory observation can lead to a broader and deeper understanding of their lives, but also build more trust in order to get honest narratives and descriptions (Jacobsen, 2015). I could not do several interviews with the respondents because of the limited time and resources. The respondent's unstable lives were an additional factor that made it difficult to repeat the interviews. Since the data collection consists of single interviews and I did not attempt to follow the respondents for a longer period, the findings may be misinterpreted and thus can reduce the trustworthiness of this study.

Another limitation to this study is the lack of variety in the sampling frame. Different contexts and backgrounds of the sampling frame can reveal more perspectives on the respondents lives, however a too incoherent sampling can lead to difficulties finding similar patterns (Johannessen et al., 2008). Through a snowball and opportunistic sampling, I managed to widen the respondents background, from including only men to also including women. However, a limitation is that all respondents who were women came from the same region, while all men came from the same but different region. Perhaps, the data could have revealed more differences if women and men arriving from both regions participated. In

addition, the biased time frame used in the different sampling locations may have influenced the findings. I expanded the sampling location to increase the variety of the respondents' background criteria. However, I was not able to equally explore the local context in every city. Because of the limited time frame, I spent less time in Stavanger and Trondheim than I did in Oslo. Spending less time in Stavanger and Trondheim might have impacted the richness of the data from these regions. I did not have as much time to establish trust as I had with the respondents in Oslo, whom I spent more time with.

A challenge has been the use of gatekeepers in Trondheim and Stavanger. I only had a couple of days in these locations and therefore had to use gatekeepers to access respondents. Without a gatekeeper, it would be difficult to arrange interviews and establish trust in such short time. A strength was that the gatekeepers already had established trust with the respondents. The gatekeepers' approval of me might have been important to the respondent when deciding to participate in the study. Nevertheless, gatekeepers may have their own intentions and motivations. They can try to influence with whom and how the data is collected (Bryman, 2012). The gatekeeper in Trondheim might have had motivations for helping me. As an employee of an NGO assisting rejected asylum seekers, she could have possible intentions to promote a certain theme. However, I did not find this as a significant challenge because I asked for interviews with people based on specific criteria. In Stavanger, I was aware that the gatekeeper might have had political intentions since he mobilised to legalize the right to work for rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay. Two of the respondents, with whom he arranged for me to meet, were his employees. On the other hand, I did the interviews without his presence and without any influence on the questions asked or interview length. I also interviewed him to get to know his political intentions and background better. I do not believe the gatekeepers' possible intentions have influenced the findings. Rather, I believe the gatekeepers, and the trust they had obtained from the respondents, were crucial for me to be able to interview them. Thus, it was the use of gatekeepers that made it possible for me to expand the sample location and increase variety.

A limitation to this study is language barriers. The interviews were not conducted in the respondents' mother tongues and language barriers therefore impacted their ability to express themselves. The respondents were not able to tell the richest narratives as possible because of their restricted vocabulary. I could have used a translator. However, including another person could make it more difficult to obtain trust since I would depend on the translator's ability to gain trust from the respondent. Secondly, I have translated most interviews from Norwegian to English. There is an increased risk of misinterpreting the content and meaning in the translation process.

## **4.7 Reliability, validity and trustworthiness**

To evaluate the quality of a social study one can assess the validity and the reliability. The validity measure if a study is representable to a larger group of people, while the reliability measure if the same study can be repeated with the same results (Bryman, 2012). I interpret the narratives of relatively few respondents with single interviews, thus the findings of this study are not representable to a larger group of people, nor can I be completely sure that I have interpreted their narratives correctly. Interviews with more respondents could have permitted me to make greater generalizations. With repeated interviews, I could have checked my interpretations with the respondents and therefore ensured greater reliability. On the other hand, I interviewed respondents from three different cities, in a confidential interview setting. I could ask follow-up questions and see their reactions. Thus, the results of this study present an insight into the worlds of rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay, although the reliability and validity is not ensured.

An additional way to assess the quality of a study is to reflect upon the trustworthiness: the credibility and transferability (Bryman, 2012). The credibility depends on including several perspectives of the social reality studied and can be improved by triangulating: using multiple data collection techniques (Berg & Lune 2012; Bryman 2012). Given the limited amount of time and resources, I tried as best as I could to triangulate using several data collection methods: semi-structured interviews, some participant observation and a literature study. However, I was not able to triangulate the interviews by challenging my interpretations or to follow the respondents in their everyday lives. Therefore, these narratives are partly incomplete. I sought to ensure transferability in the study by providing thick and in-depth data descriptions, such as to frequently use quotes from the interviews and include a contextual background, so readers themselves can evaluate if the findings can be transferred to other social environments (Bryman, 2012).

### **4.7.1 My positioning to the field**

The trustworthiness of a study can be assessed by confirmability. Confirmability is to not let personal values influence the findings (Bryman, 2012). However, it is impossible for me to be completely objective in a social study because I interpret the respondents' worlds based on my background. In place of confirmability, I find reflexivity important. Reflexivity is to reflect upon how my own cultural, political and social context have influenced the study (Bryman, 2012). I am a female student from a middle-class family in Norway. I have never experienced a life so insecure as the respondents. This might have been an advantage for me



as I had as little pre-understanding as possible and thus could be more open to the respondents' experiences (Johannessen et al. 2008). On the contrary, I have earlier worked as a volunteer in a reception centre. There, I got to know many people seeking asylum. Having already observed pieces of the life as an asylum seeker might have influenced my preunderstanding of their situation.

As a Norwegian citizen, I am entitled to rights that the respondents are excluded from. This might have created a distance between me and the respondents, thus influenced what narratives they told me. As a woman, I might have had easier access to interviews with other women. While writing this thesis I worked part-time for the Norwegian Refugee Council, an organisation present in regions such as Africa and the Middle East. There, I have learned about the complexity in refugee law and asylum policy. I have learned that the reality in countries where many rejected asylum seekers origin from consists of drought, poverty, unemployment, violence and insecurity. This might have influenced the framing of this study and could have biased what questions I asked and how I interpreted the data. I naturally sympathize with the respondents and their fear for returning to their countries of origin. My emotional point of departure is that rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay are vulnerable people in a very difficult situation.

## **5.0 Analysis and Discussion**

In this section, I present the main findings and discuss how rejected asylum seekers make do. First, I present the respondents' background. Then, the main findings are structured into five categories: financial income and work, housing and food, healthcare, illegality and safety and social relations. In the discussion section, I analyse with the help of the livelihoods framework how the respondents make do. I look at what resources they have used and discuss what constraints and possibilities the context, institutions and organisations pose. I also look at what strategies and resources are used to make do, and ultimately, the outcome of their struggle.

### **5.1 The respondents' backgrounds**

All the respondents of this study are rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay. Half of the respondents are women and half of them men. The women originate from Africa, while the men from Asia. The majority of the respondents are single without children. Only two are married or have a partner, while three people have children. Six people have close family members living in Norway. The lowest amount of time spent in the country is five years and the longest is 18 years. Seven respondents have lived longer than eight years in Norway. Because of ethical considerations I did not ask the respondents if they could risk deportation or if they were non-returnable. In addition, I did not ask any of the respondents directly about their reasons for living in Norway. Yet, based on the narratives my impression was that returning to their countries of origin was not perceived as an option, either because of family reasons or fear for their lives. The interviews with Amare and Jamila were done in English, while the rest were done in Norwegian. The background information is collated in figure 8.

Name*	Gender	Age	Civil status	Region of origin	Years in Norway	Family members in Norway
'Abbas'	M	Late 30's	Married, children	Asia	5	Yes
'Hamza'	M	Late 30's	Single	Asia	9	No
'Amir'	M	Early 30's	Single	Asia	13	Yes
'Rashad'	M	Early 30's	Single	Asia	8	No
'Yusuf'	M	Late 30's	Single	Asia	9	Yes
'Amare'	F	Early 30's	single	Africa	10	No
'Ode'	F	Early 30's	Boyfriend, children	Africa	6	Yes
'Jamila'	F	Early 40's	Single, children	Africa	15	Yes
'Chipo'	F	Early 20's	Single	Africa	7	No
'Ebele'	F	Late 60's	Single	Africa	18	Yes

*Figure 8 – Socio-demographic information \*Names were changed to keep anonymity.*

When I present the main findings, I mainly use quotes from seven out of the ten respondents. This is because these respondents represent major trends in the main findings, but also differences. Some respondents had more to say than others, therefore I quote the interviews with the richest and most descriptive narratives. In the following paragraphs, I present parts of the respondents' background stories, to better understand who they are. The respondents are not solely rejected asylum seekers, but mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, siblings, employees, political activists and volunteers.

**Hamza** grew up in a village with a big family. Later, he worked in a big city and then left the country. Hamza came to Norway without any close family or relatives. He first lived in a decentralized asylum reception centre, but moved away to find work. Hamza describes himself as an active person and very eager to learn Norwegian. "When I was working, I brought with me a dictionary and a children's book I had borrowed in the library. I also bought a Norwegian audiobook that I could listen to every day." Almost ten years after he arrived in Norway, he spends his days volunteering with many different tasks for several organisations. He talks about himself as a creative person with many different skills and work experiences.

**Amir** grew up in Asia with his large family, with whom he is very close. While he received vocational education in his country of origin, his father worked in Norway. Amir left the country with his family 13 years ago, and has since then lived in Norway. He told me that he could not get residence papers, because the Norwegian Government believed he was older than 18 years when he arrived in Norway. He depends on his family, whom all have residence papers. In the interview, Amir repeatedly talked about how much he cares for his family and

how grateful he is to have them. Several times he expressed concerns on how difficult the lives are for other rejected asylum seekers who do not have a family to rely on.

**Rashad** grew up in a refugee camp in Asia. He has no family in Norway and is registered at a refugee centre without living there. He visits the reception centre when he has an important meeting or when he receives mail. Rather, he sleeps at his friends' places from day to day. He talked about being a very active person when he first arrived in Norway. He was eager to play football and work out. However, eight years later, his daily life is influenced by emotional stress, anxiety, passivity and social isolation.

**Yusuf** came to Norway nine years ago and lives with a family member. For some years, he had a formal job in Norway where he paid taxes and worked hard. Today he does not dare to participate in the informal job market, because he is afraid of doing something illegal. Despite a difficult health condition, he is actively engaged in volunteer work. He told me that helping other people is what gives his life meaning. In the interview, he emphasized several times how much other rejected asylum seekers struggle to make do. Yusuf also talked about how he spends much time at home on the couch because he is afraid of being deported by the police.

**Amare** is in her mid-30's and has no family in Norway. For many years, she worked as a cleaner in Oslo. Throughout the ten years Amare has been in Norway, she has lived in several cities; she has lived in asylum reception centres, rented her own apartment and lived on the streets. She is a strong politically active woman, who is not afraid to speak up. Throughout the interview, she emphasized the difficult political situation in her country and the injustice, attacks and stealing she had experienced in Norway.

**Jamila** arrived in Norway 15 years ago, when she was almost 25 years old. She lived in an asylum reception centre, before she moved to Oslo with a friend. She worked as a cleaner for over five years, thus she participated in the legal job market and paid taxes. While working she met her ex-boyfriend and had a child. Today she does not live with her ex-boyfriend and only visits her child a couple of days a week. She does not have any work and relies on a Norwegian family that supports her with housing and food. "For me it is important to live my life with my son and to change this bad life."

**Ebele** has been in Norway for the longest time of all the respondents. For many years, she worked as a cleaner and could rent her own apartment. Today, she lives with a family member whom she has residence papers and who cleans the house in return. Ebele is in her late 60's and told me that her body is not as it used to be. Her sight has deteriorated and her muscles ache. Despite her physical challenges, she earns some money by cleaning for people she knows.

## **5.2 Main findings**

Through single qualitative interviews with ten rejected asylum seekers, I have found that all but one respondent obtains the life necessities housing and food by staying with friends or family. One respondent lived in an asylum centre at the time of the interview, while two were registered at an asylum centre, though did not live there in practice. The respondents experience housing in asylum reception centres as stressful, passivating and devaluating. They told me that the small allowance received when residing in asylum centres is not enough to make do. Rather, they make do thanks to gifts and some limited financial income from doing services for their network. The respondents who live in Oslo receive healthcare at the health centre for undocumented migrants, while the respondents who live outside of Oslo have more arbitrary access to health services. Their everyday struggles to make do is also influenced by how they experience safety, several respondents talked about a fear of deportation or detention. In their social lives they meet rejections, but also friendships. In this chapter, I present the main findings by drawing upon narratives from the respondents, on how they make do and their everyday life experiences of this struggle.

### **5.2.1 Work and financial income**

Financial income and work impact how a person make do and how they experience the everyday life. Until 2011, the tax department issued tax cards to rejected asylum seekers. This occurred because the department was not aware of the legal status of the asylum seekers, since this is administered by immigration offices (Skille, Ekroll & Fjørtoft, 2011). Since many of the respondents have lived in Norway longer than eight years, they experienced to have a formal job and pay taxes. Before 2011, six respondents accessed food and housing through the legal job market. The respondents worked in sectors such as cleaning, restaurants, bakery, shops and car dealerships. Common to the respondents who had worked before 2011, was that they had felt appreciated and respected. Despite experiences of receiving too low salary, they could afford food, clothing and housing. However, when the state discovered this ‘miscommunication’ between the tax department and the immigration offices, tax cards were no longer issued to rejected asylum seekers (Skille, Ekroll & Fjørtoft, 2011). All the respondents talked about difficulties finding steady and formal work today. Eight respondents told me they earn or have earned some money doing small informal services such as cleaning or painting for people in their social network. However, the financial income from these services is too little to be able to provide for themselves with housing and food.

When the respondents had a steady job, they were happy and experienced ‘normal lives’ with rented apartments and respectful colleagues. Jamila moved from an asylum

reception centre to work in Oslo. In this period, she also met her husband and had a child. “In Oslo, I was with my husband, pregnant and working. That time I was OK, I had a house and a normal life”. Ebele had a meaningful job and managed to rent an apartment while working. “Everybody respected me and I did a good job. To me the job was important, so I worked hard, and everybody liked me, I felt very happy, everybody respected me, but suddenly everything disappeared”.

Like Jamila, Hamza moved from an asylum reception centre to Oslo in order to find work. He was happy when he worked, but he also experienced being taken advantage of and was paid too little. He therefore changed work several times.

The pay was low, from ten in the morning to eleven in the night I worked for only 10,000 Norwegian kroner each month. That's nearly 13 hours a day. When I got to know more people and they asked me how much I earned, I understood that it was very little, so I had to change the job. I started working in a restaurant, I was happy those days, but it was a lot of work and little money.

Again, he quit the job, and began looking for a new one. “I didn't want to work as a slave. I started working at a shop. It was a nice boss, a Norwegian man. I worked there until 2011.”

After work permits were no longer issued to rejected asylum seekers, the respondents lost their jobs. In addition, they lost their financial income, an everyday activity and a stabilizing factor in life. Amare felt respected and happy when she worked as a cleaner. When she lost her job, she could no longer afford to rent an apartment and therefore ended up living on the streets. “I did not have a working permit, so they called me and said, ‘it is difficult, but we like you, as long as we like you, you can work 50 percent’.” But Amare did not manage to renew the working permit because she had no residence papers.

The job they were calling me saying ‘please, we don't want to lose you and you are 100 percent positive, smiling, respectful and you want to work, we need you’. They gave me like two months or three to fix it, but it didn't happen, so later they said, ‘OK we will never employ a full-time employee, only a substitute until you fix the working permit’.

Amare told me how she felt appreciated and respected in her work. They gave her a party when she had to resign.

They threw a small party for me with postcard, flowers and cake, and they said - until you come back. I had a contract, so they only brought a substitute, no permanent worker, but most important was not the contract, but that they said they liked me.

Her employer wanted to keep her, but because of the lacking residence papers, Amare did not manage to renew the working permit and eventually she was fired by her employer. “They took away the working permit. That was why the work stopped”. Losing the income from work affected her access to housing. “After the job stopped, in 2011 or in the beginning of

2012, I don't know something like this, it got very difficult". She could not find a place to sleep and at last started sleeping outside. Later, Amare moved into an asylum reception centre.

After 2011, the respondents could not find work because few people would hire rejected asylum seekers without residence papers and work permits. Jamila said, "we don't have a permit to work, so nobody pick you when you ask. I have tried. This is law. Law say don't work". Another respondent, Chipu, tried to get a job, but experienced that nobody would hire her because of the illegal aspect.

Nobody wants to help. For example, if I ask around for a job, like at the hairdresser, the church or somebody I know, nobody wants to help me because I don't have papers. Nobody wants to. They say it is illegal.

I asked her what she felt when this happened. "It hurts a lot. I just want to work and take care of myself," she answered.

Despite the difficulties to find steady work, eight respondents had done small services, such as cleaning, cooking or reparations, for someone in their social network. The informal work was done for friends and acquaintances from their ethnic group, neighbours or family. Two respondents also talked about working several days a week for a company called PLOG AS. This is a company that mediate work for rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay. The respondents received either money, gifts or housing and food in return for informal services. Ebele talked about how the income was not enough, but that it was better than to wait for money from the government. Helping people in the social network was not only done for the income, but also for the social relation, the friendships, the possibility of learning Norwegian and to do something. As Jamila told me, "when you are not working, when you are not doing anything, it affects your life, your mind and your health."

Six of the respondents experienced a respectful work relation and even friendships through informal services. "I help some old people, I help them a little bit, yes they are very good and very humane, very generous. I like them and I respect them, they respect me.", Ebele said. She also receives some money in return. "I help like two or three people, and I earn some money you know, they are very good." Hamza often helps his social network with small services and receive shelter, money or gifts in return. "Sometimes, I help other people [...] For example I help them with painting, electronic work and they buy me gifts." He experienced these relations as something more than solely work relations, as friendships.

I worked for a person who, when I worked there, let me sleep over and eat food at his place. We were together, drinking and enjoying ourselves while working. He was a good and nice man.

Hamza told me how much a special gift meant to him.

I wanted a good cell phone because I did not have a cell phone with camera. He said 'OK, after the job, I will give you a small gift' and he gave me an iPhone. That is the best gift I have ever gotten in Norway.

Ode, a mother of small children, reached out to several old women in the street where she lives. Now, she helps them with different tasks in the home. She does not only receive money in return, but also Norwegian skills and friendships.

I have three old ladies whom I support, when I have the time. They are very old, so I go to them to clean and do this and that, one time a week, because if they speak Norwegian I can learn a lot. I met them in the street. I told them where I was from and that I do not have residence permit. One of the ladies she is like a mother and like a grandmother to my children, we have a lot of contact.

On the other hand, to work for people in their social network is not solely based on friendships and mutual respect. Two respondents were exploited and treated badly when they did informal services. Amare decided to work in a family for housing and food in return, but was exploited.

I was so affected by sleeping outside, and sometimes when it was worst, I asked some people to help me find a sleeping place, so I worked for them, like cleaning the house and cooking food, just to get a sleeping place. They use you. And like shit they are seeing you, like not human, like a slave.

Rashad also experienced being taken advantage of as a rejected asylum seeker. "A lot of people ask me to work for them, but I can't do it, I can't. People ask me to work for them because they want to exploit me since I don't have residence papers." Because of the exploitation and lower payments in the informal market, he chose not to work.

If people see that you don't have papers and you can work for them for less money, that's of course to take advantage of people. I don't want this, even though I'm very bad off economically, it doesn't matter that I don't have any money, I won't give up.

Three of the respondents decided not to work because they were afraid of the consequences of working illegally, such as punishment, damage to their asylum case and to cause trouble for other people. Instead, their family members supported them. Ode was afraid of the consequences if the police found out about her working: "I cannot try to get a job, because if you do not have residence papers you cannot work, if I work they can punish me because it is illegal. That is not good." Amir does not work because he is afraid to cause trouble for his brother.

My brother has a company, but I cannot work there, I do not want to be a problem. Sometimes, if I go and help them, I just eat some food, he [Amir's brother] says 'what should I say if there is a control?' Maybe they'll have to close. He says, 'if you get papers, I will give you a job'. I would never work for my brother, because it would be a problem if the police came.



### **Gifts from friends and family**

In addition to being paid for informal services, the respondents talked about receiving gifts such as money, hygienic articles or food from family and friends. Sometimes, the respondents did not want to accept the gifts, but felt as they had no choice other than to accept it. They told me they would not have managed without these gifts. Amare experienced getting financial support from a kind man she knew.

I know this Norwegian man, from Oslo, and one Christmas he called me. He asked me where did you go, every Christmas you are coming to us. I said sorry I am no longer in Oslo. I said I am in a reception centre. He said no you are a Norwegian, you stayed a long time with us, you integrate, he feels so bad, do you have money he asked. I said no. They are giving me 890 kroner. He said what are you eating with that, what are you going to dress? And later I told him I was sleeping outside, he feels so bad, why don't you come to me so you can sleep on the couch, you made a mistake sleeping in the bus and street. He is a good guy, really, I will never forget him. And later, he sent me 3,000 kroner, at least for you to eat something.

Rashad gets help from his friends and family. "I know some people who help me with a little food, and I get some money from my family every month" His family have residence in another country in Europe. "I don't want to, but I have no choice. What can you do when you have no right to work?".

### **5.2.2 Housing and food**

The main trend regarding housing was that the respondents did not reside in asylum reception centres at the moment of the interviews. However, nearly all the respondents had experienced living in a reception centre before. Common to all the respondents, except one who had lived with his parents the whole time, was that they had changed residence situations several times throughout their stay in Norway. They talked about a set of experiences from renting their own apartments to living on the streets. Only one of the respondents lived in an asylum reception centre today. Two more were registered at a centre, but in practice lived elsewhere. Half of the respondents lived with family members such as parents, siblings or spouses. Two respondents lived with Norwegian families, while the other two slept at friend's places on a day to day basis.

I present the respondents' current and previous experiences regarding five different ways to access housing and food. These five are: in asylum reception centres, within their own family, living with a Norwegian family, living with friends or lastly, to not access housing by living on the streets. All the respondents who had lived in asylum reception centres talked about stress, chaos and not having enough money to buy enough food. The respondents who lived with family or friends talked about eating sufficient food and how they could serve themselves from the refrigerator.

## Negative experiences of asylum reception centres

The Norwegian state offers all rejected asylum seekers housing and financial support in reception centres. A trend throughout the interviews was that the respondents talked about reception centres as chaotic, stressful, decentralized and a place where you remain passive. Respondents who did not live in reception centres were eager to tell me how difficult it was for other people to live in these centres. Hamza compared the reception centre to “a prison, with an open door”. He told me, “there was a small room, no TV, bad internet and very far away from the city”. Amare is the only one of the respondents who lived in an asylum reception centre at the moment of the interview. After living on the streets of Oslo, she contacted the UDI to find shelter.

Now in *mottak* [reception centre], day and night is the same, people are coming and going, coming and going, you can't do what you want, you don't have any opportunity to use your life to go to school or go to work and your life is damaged as a woman. I don't have anything to make me eager to live here, no children, no life, no nothing. Even though it is a difficult situation, I still stay, why? Because I cannot go home.

Rashad is registered at the asylum reception centre, but does not live there because he finds it to stressful and difficult.

I have my things there, but I shower at a sport studio and wash my clothes where my friends live. If I receive post, I go there, but never if there's nothing important. I would choose to live on the streets and never sleep at the reception centre, because I know how dangerous it is to me, to my health, I get so stressed. Sometimes I go there for an hour, and when I am back I feel a lot of stress. That is why I think that if I live there, it will be very, very dangerous.

Rejected asylum seekers who reside in asylum reception centres receive around 1,800 NOK each month (UDI, 2017c). However, the respondents talked about how the allowance was not enough to buy food and personal articles. I asked Hamza what he thought about the amount of money he received when he lived in an asylum reception centre. He answered that it was not enough to cover his food expenses, even though he bought the cheapest food brand.

It's not enough. If you buy all your food as first price, it's still not enough. You cannot live with 1800 a month. The reception centre was not in the city, so you had to buy a bus ticket 50 kroner each way. How many times can you go to the city to buy food then?

Ode could not buy enough healthy food.

I want to buy fish, but I cannot. For example, I want cod liver oil, but I do not have enough money, if I live in Norway it's so cold, you need healthy food, but I cannot buy it.

She also feels sorry she cannot buy things for her children. “If I go to the playground, they have a lot of things and people have an income, but I do not have enough money, I cannot buy anything for my children and that is very sad.”

The different reasons provided by the respondents for leaving the asylum reception centres are to escape the passivity in reception centres, the locations far away from city centres and far away from the job market. Jamila told me,

At that time there was work permits, so I wanted to survive myself. I didn't want to sit and say, 'give me money'. I was young. But there was not much work where the *asylmottaket* [asylum reception centre] was, so I searched where it was best, and my friend from *asylmottaket* moved before me to Oslo. She had one small room, she called me and I lived with her and we shared that house.

Hamza decided to leave the asylum system two times. The first time to find a job and the second time to live with his friends. He experienced passivity in the reception centre.

I was an active person and I wanted to work, but I could not find work in that area[where the asylum centre was located], I visited many places and even though I did not know much Norwegian I tried to find a job. But, I did not get any job. That was why I left the system and began working in Oslo.

After a while he returned to live in an asylum reception centre. Hamza wanted to contribute as a volunteer at the reception centre, but he was rejected, and thus left the centre.

I told them 'I speak some Norwegian, I can help the ones from my region with the language'. They said 'no, we cannot use you as an interpreter', I said 'I can teach them the alphabet in a classroom', they said 'no'. So, I went looking for other opportunities.

### **Depending on their family**

Rejected asylum seekers are not obliged to live in asylum reception centres. If they reside elsewhere they will not receive an allowance from the state. To reside elsewhere is something that nine out of ten respondents have chosen. Half of the respondents rely on their family members such as parents, siblings or husbands for housing, food and financial support. They all expressed gratefulness for the support from the family members; some also did favours such as cleaning in return. On the other hand, the respondents expressed sadness about their role in the family, especially when comparing themselves to siblings with legal residence. In addition, a common pattern was to experience passivity and isolation at home.

Ebele rely on her sister and cleans her house in return. “I am very lucky to live with my sister, I can take what I need from her”. Amir depends on the help from his family to receive housing, food and money. “If I go to the city I must ask my father or brother to give me 50, no 60 - 70 kroner to buy a ticket.” Amir fears the consequence of not receiving help

from his family. Yusuf talks about how lucky he is to live with his brother but also how difficult it is to him as an older brother to rely on his younger brother.

My brother helps me, he is a student. It is very difficult for me to not have an income. For example, I have debt that I cannot pay. I am older than him, I should help him and not the other way around, he is a student. But I cannot help him, so he must help me.

Amir also compared himself to his brother and other people with residence:

Why do I come from the same country as my brother, but we don't have the same passport? (...) If I go with my brother on a Saturday, for example to the city, we go to a party, and my brother tells me if the security guard at the bar asks about my ID, I have to tell him that I left it at home, I get angry, I want to do everything. Why can other people go out and I not?

Respondents supported by their family talked about passivity and isolation in the home. Amir:

“What should I do at home, watch TV, internet, I am spending a lot of time at the internet, taking sleeping pills, I don't go out much and I think a lot, but it's not good when I think a lot.” In addition, Yusuf talked about experiencing passivity and isolation:

Every night I'm just sitting on the couch at home, on the internet, watching TV or reading a book. I don't have any other option because I have no work permit and I am afraid that the police will catch me, I am scared.

This also influences his appetite: “I don't like to eat, I am just sitting at home and thinking, I just eat a little bit, and drink water or tea”.

### **Depending on a Norwegian family**

Another option mentioned by the respondents was to make do by living with a Norwegian family. Jamila lost the house she had rented with the assistance from social services. She then lived on the street for a short time. Through her connections in a church community, she met a Norwegian family who now support her with housing and food.

I know this guy who work with asylum people, so I told him about the situation, I think he announced in church and asked people ‘please there is one woman, she has these problems give her one room’. One family said OK we take care, so I went with this family. I live with them.

There she feels welcomed receiving both housing and food.

This family is a very good family, when they have food they say welcome and eat, this is like your house, yes we have different culture and different food, sometimes like I don't eat pork, what I want I can take there, milk or bread or eggs, I take that.

To make do, Jamila depends on this family and her friends. She does not have any job.

I don't have one kroner, nobody helps me, I don't have any income. [...] I have clothes from before when I was working, I also have many good friends who buy me gifts and sometimes people give me money for food.

However, this help is not enough. For example, she cannot afford basic hygiene supplements as sanitary products.

Nobody thinks about women's problems [...] when my menstruation come, what should I do? In our culture, they have a dress, so I cut that one small and use it. This is messy. But we do not have any kroner.

### **Visiting friends from day to day**

The respondents who do not have family members in Norway, rather depend on their friends, than residing in asylum reception centres. When Hamza moved back to the asylum centre for the second time, he got an offer from his friends. "I talked to some friends in the Oslo area, who told me, 'if they give you 1800 kroner a month, we can pay you, come live with us, you don't have to buy food or clothes'." Hamza left the asylum reception centre and the financial support he received there. Rather, he went to live with his friends, whom he met when he worked in a political organisation. Today, he calls them family, "but we are not close family, rather we come from the same area in the Middle East". He gets some food to eat and a roof over his head, but change residence from day to day.

I eat at their place, when they make food there is something extra and they put it in the refrigerator. When I am in their home, I can eat with them, for example today I am going to call them and if they do not have any guests and they are available, I tell them that if they want a guest I will come to their place.

For over one year, he has stayed at his friends' places, with no permanent housing. He worries how long this situation can last.

I invite myself. Even though they say I am welcome and that I shouldn't call, just come over, they say that, but it is not a good feeling. How many days can you stay with other people? I stay two or three days [...] I am telling myself that I don't need to worry, that I am a guest at their place, but how many years can I be a guest?

It is a very unstable situation, but Hamza wants to live like this. "It's very difficult, but I think it's better than living in a reception centre".

Rashad is registered at an asylum reception centre, but does not want to spend time there. "It's completely chaos, so I don't live there, I get so stressed." He therefore sleeps at his friends' places instead. "I got an offer from two or three friends, I can stay one place for two days, and the next for two days." There he washes his clothes, eat, sleep and drink coffee. He receives some money from his family, whom have residence in another European country. I asked Rashad how a typical day is to him. He answered. "I do nothing, only drink coffee and sometimes work out. I am just sitting at home and waiting."

## **Living on the street**

Although none of the respondents lived on the street when I interviewed them, two people had experienced this earlier. Amare began sleeping outside when she lost her job. With no place to sleep, she slept in public places or took the bus to keep herself warm.

Until night maybe I stayed in the tram station or bus terminal, but sometimes when it is very cold outside, they close you know, so I take the bus, going up and down. I took the bus 31, because it's going for a long journey and I did not have a place to sleep. When I fell asleep and the driver came to say, 'ah you forgot the place?' I could not say 'no', so I said, 'yeah I forgot, sorry, thank you'.

Then she left the bus. She also tried to sleep in dormitories for homeless people.

Sometimes also, like in 'Gamlebyen' there is a place where Romanian they are sleeping, in a church, I have been even there, you can't get it, all the Romanian want one night to get a sleeping place, then I go stand there and you get like Lotto, and then if no luck you go back, this is a difficult life.

Today, she has physical marks from sleeping outside.

My face, before it was clean, but you know, sometimes it is swelling here. I got sick, my face and damaged skin is from sleeping outside, last time I was going to a doctor she told me stress, not eating proper, and lack of sleep, all of this because I was sleeping outside.

Eventually, she saw no other alternative than to live in an asylum reception centre. She could not decide the location of the centre, and UDI only offered housing far away from Oslo. "I stayed for a long time in Oslo, working in the society. They shouldn't make me go somewhere else", she said.

Jamila spent a shorter time in the street. She lost her apartment financed by social services. "The house owner said 'when NAV does not pay, you have to leave my house'", without work she was left to live on the streets. She contacted several friends, but as it was holiday time so she could not find a place to spend the night. Therefore, she asked the police for shelter.

I was outside, so where should I go? I said to the police 'I have nowhere to sleep', so they gave me a mattress, a blanket and a very bad room (...) like an arrest room, then I slept two days or three days at the police station.

When she could not sleep more nights at the station, she went to find shelter in the hospital "I saw one big sofa and I slept in the sofa." In the daytime, she strolled around in the street or went to walk nearby a lake. A couple of days later, she contacted a Norwegian man she had met in a meeting for rejected asylum seekers. Eventually, she could live with a Norwegian family.

### 5.2.3 Healthcare

The respondents talked about a variety of health-related issues: heart disease, muscle-pain, stress and problems of sleeping. According to Norwegian law, rejected asylum seekers have the right to emergency healthcare, but not to a regular general practitioner (Stortinget, 2017a). Yusuf and Hamza told me they both had received life-saving healthcare from the state. However, Yusuf told me how he lost the state health support after he received his final rejection of the asylum application.

After an operation, I needed physiotherapy and medicines. A nurse helped me because I was in a wheelchair, but then I got my final rejection, they called me and said we cannot help you anymore because you have a final rejection. I lost all help, for one year I had a lot of problems. Then I found the health centre, a friend said they could help me. For one year, I was only at home in a wheelchair.

He now receives the medicines and healthcare that he needs at the health centre in Oslo. Six respondents had access to healthcare through the health centre for undocumented migrants in Oslo. Amir accessed medicine in a creative way, through his family:

I use medicine to sleep and my dad he has a general practitioner, so he talks with them on the phone and says exactly the same as me, 'I cannot sleep', so the doctor writes for my sister and my sister give me.

Out of the respondents who lived in Trondheim and Stavanger, two received healthcare from employees in the state sector, while three respondents did not know how to access a general practitioner. Ebele was frustrated because she paid taxes to the Norwegian Government when she had a formal job, but now she could not get medical care in return. She had a lot of muscle pain.

I have worked and paid taxes for ten years, so it is difficult. For example, if I am sick I can only pay myself, but I have nothing, I want to go to the doctor, but I cannot. I do not have money. It is difficult. I have a lot of pain.

Yet, she had received healthcare before. "Four years ago, I visited a doctor, but it was the doctor of my sister". Her sister has a residence permit. I informed her about the health centre in Oslo, but she told me it was difficult to travel such a long way. Chipso, a 22-year-old respondent, did not know what to do if she needed a general practitioner. I asked her what she would do if she needed healthcare and she answered: "Nothing, we're not allowed to go to hospitals. I don't have an ID-number, but if I'm sick I can talk to [name of the 'mother' in the Norwegian family she lives with] and they can find something that helps."

Different from the ones who lived outside of Oslo and did not have access to a doctor, Jamila knew a doctor from a church community that she got help from. Jamila said, "my doctor she is a very good person". She was even sent by the doctor to visit the healthcare

centre for irregular migrants in Oslo. To conclude, the respondents living in Oslo had better access to healthcare, than rejected asylum seekers living in other parts of Norway.

#### **5.2.4 Illegality and safety**

The respondents talked about feeling like criminals, as Chipu told me: “We live in Norway, but we have no rights. We have not done anything criminal, but it almost feels like.” Hamza also felt like he was a criminal: “They say you are an illegal in the country, but I don't want to do anything illegal. I cannot even remember crossing the street on red light. I follow all the rules here.”

A reoccurring theme in the interviews where a fear of deportation and detention because of their legal status and how this influenced their everyday lives. Amir had been arrested earlier. Now he spent most of his time inside and feared going out.

I am just at home, I don't dare to go outside, because if I go outside I am afraid that the police will ask about my name and to document my identity, I don't have an identity card, so the police will take me, and I will have to go to jail for 24 hours. Then after 24 hours they let me out again. We haven't done anything wrong. What should I do?

To Yusuf the fear of deportation was with him almost every day. “I don't know what to expect when I leave the house, because I have no residence papers or ID”. He felt this uncertainty both at home and outside.

Every time I'm in the metro or walking in the street I'm scared that a person will ask me what I'm doing and ask for my ID. Perhaps the police will deport me. I don't know. (...) Right now, when I am talking with you I'm scared of the police. If I am at home, I cannot sleep, I look out of the window to check if the police are coming. When I'm in the centre or when I went to meet you [the interviewer], I was scared and very stressed.

#### **5.2.5 Social relations**

The respondents talked about friendships, but also experiences of social rejections.

To Rashad it was a meaningful friendship that gave him hope:

There is this lady, from the Red Cross. She is very good and works as a refugee guide. She helps me do activities, because if not, I don't have anything to do. Nothing. Just sitting at home and waiting. She has helped me so much, I will never forget her. (...) We talk about how my life is, why I'm stressed. She listens to me and helps me. To me, she is hope.

Comparing himself to others who were worse off than him, gave him hope and strength.



Sometimes I meet ladies from Ethiopia and Eritrea [without residence papers] and when I talk to them about how long they have lived here and they tell me, '12 years, 17 years, 15 years', then I grow stronger, I learn to be patient.

At the same time, respondents talked about being rejected when people found out about their situation as refused asylum seekers.

Yusuf was expelled from a café because of his legal status.

I was with a friend in a coffee shop, drinking coffee and talking. Then a person at the other table told the owner of the restaurant that they are undocumented people. The owner said 'why do you come here? You are criminals. That's not good. Don't come here' (...) If people know I'm a person without [residence] papers they don't want contact with me, everybody think that people without papers are criminals.

It often came to Yusuf's mind what other people were thinking about him:

In the street people look at undocumented people as criminals (...) if I am just sitting at the metro, or somewhere else, I am thinking: what if they understand that I don't have residence papers? Nobody want contact with me, everybody is thinking that undocumented people are criminals.

Hamza experienced social rejections when friends from his volunteer work blocked him on Facebook, after they found out about his legal status.

One night we were all together at a party and talked. One suggested that we presented ourselves to the others, so we could get to know each other better. Everybody presented themselves and I was the last person to do that. I said, 'everybody knows me, I don't have to present myself.' They asked me 'who are you, where do you work, do you have a driver's license.' Normal questions. I told them the truth: that I don't have anywhere to live and that I'm an undocumented person living in limbo. The day after, four people from the party had blocked me on Facebook.

Many of the social relations that the respondents talked about occurred in arenas of volunteer work or informal work. Six of the respondents talked about doing volunteer work, instead or in addition to informal work. Two of the respondents had asked their asylum reception centre to volunteer there, one was refused to volunteer, while the other was allowed. The respondents volunteered in NGOs, political organisations, church communities, kinder gardens and the health centre. Many had several volunteer jobs. Hamza said,

first I didn't know that I could work as a volunteer in Norway, but then I talked to a priest who told me that if I wanted to participate in the society I could apply to be a volunteer at the Red Cross. I applied and now I am working as a volunteer in five different places.

He also told me,

before I started working as a volunteer I felt that my life did not have any value in Norway, because I did not have a job. I was not active in the community. A lot of things in the community pushed me out. But now I got a volunteer job. I have no rights here, but I can be here and help other people.

Ode, a 30-year-old mother of two children, volunteered in three different arenas and felt good about volunteering:

If I hadn't had a volunteer job, I wouldn't have been in contact with other people and that would be very difficult. It is very good for me to visit other places. If I am sitting at home, that's very bad.

### **5.2.6 Summary of main findings**

Before 2011, six respondents ensured life necessities through formal work and had good experiences with their jobs. However, after 2011 the respondents could no longer work and therefore they rather acquire housing and food through their own family or friends. Only one respondent lives in an asylum reception centre. In addition, eight out of the respondents do informal jobs for people in their network. This results in respectful relations, but also in exploitation. Through volunteer work the respondents find friendships that gives them hope. The respondents in Oslo access healthcare at the health centre for irregular migrants, while the respondents outside of Oslo receive healthcare from 'kind' doctors or do not receive general healthcare at all. The respondents talked about isolating themselves because they feel unsafe and fear deportation or detention. Several respondents talked about social rejections and how they felt people looked at them as criminals. As one of my respondents stated, "we have not done anything criminal, but it almost feels like".

### **5.3 Discussion**

I use the livelihoods framework to analyse how rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay obtain the necessities of life including healthcare, housing, food, safety and social relations. I also analyse what institutions and organisations rejected asylum seekers say they must negotiate with to make do and what constraints and possibilities these institutions and organisations represent. This section begins by presenting the resources used to make do; human, economic and social capitals, and discuss what capitals were most important to rejected asylum seekers. Then, I look at how the respondents understand institutions and organisations surrounding them in terms of constraints and possibilities. I present how the respondents use creative tactics and strategies to get by. I explore how the outcome of their situation is experienced in terms of well-being and ill-being. Lastly, I summarize my discussion and implement the findings into Scoones' (2015) figure of the livelihoods framework. See figure 9 on page 63 for an overview of the discussion.

#### **5.3.1 Livelihood resources**

##### **Human and economic capital**

The respondents use human capital to make do. Human capital, such as adequate mental and physical health, influences how the respondents make a living and if they can work. For instance, Rashad wants to work, but he cannot because of his mental health. He said, "I have tried sometimes, but I cannot actually, I cannot because my life is so difficult, I have a lot of stress and then you can't work". Another respondent, Yusuf, explained how he stayed inside for one year because of strong physical pain, nightmares and depression. This shows how lack of human capital influences the respondents' ability to work. Today, Yusuf receives medicines from the health centre in Oslo and can volunteer despite his physical challenges. He said, "usually, I have a lot of pain. I use strong medicines, but despite my problems I go to my volunteer job to help." Because he receives medicines from the health centre he did not have as much pain as he had before. His human capital, in terms of health situation, is improved and he can do volunteer work. Hence, respondents can improve their human capital, by receiving healthcare.

Economic capital was once an important resource to rejected asylum seekers. Before 2011, the respondents received tax-cards and could find work easily without depending on their social network. The financial income was used to rent apartments and to buy food, medicine and clothes. Some rejected asylum seekers in Norway even bought their own apartments (Mak & Calderon, 2017). However, in 2011 rejected asylum seekers lost their

work permits and their formal jobs. The changing context made it difficult to find a new one. “When I had a work permit I could find a job at once, but now if they find out that I don’t have residence papers, I cannot continue. Before nobody asked me if I had a residence permit,” Ebele told me. When the respondents asked around for work in shops or restaurants nobody would hire them. Therefore, the respondents rely less on economic capital to make do today.

On the other hand, in asylum reception centres the economic capital is still important. The allowance received is used to buy food, medicines and hygienic articles. But, the small amount is not enough to buy even the cheapest food brand. The respondents who have stayed in asylum reception centres talked about depending on additional cash or gifts from their social network to make do. Ebele told me that when she lived in an asylum reception centre, she did not have enough money to cover her needs. Rather, she received gift from her friends. “I know many Norwegian friends who were very nice, they gave me some food and a toothbrush and toothpaste, without them I wouldn't have managed.” The respondents do possess some economic capital, but it is not the capital that they ultimately rely on, rather it is the social capital.

### **Social capital**

The respondents’ social capital consists of networks and relations that lead to opportunities allowing them to acquire life necessities (Meeteren et al., 2009). For instance, all of them talked about the importance of friends. For some it is a family member taking care of them, while for others it is a kind friend giving them a gift. The networks were varied, differing from family members such as parents, siblings or boyfriends to ethnic, political and religious communities. Social relations are also made with individuals in the street, at asylum reception centres or through volunteering with NGOs. I asked Rashad how he got to know his friends: “It’s mainly foreigners, through the mosque, through volunteer work, on the street, at a cafe, or playing football.” His answer illustrates the variety of the respondents’ networks. Despite the variety of networks, all the respondents experienced that the social capital presented opportunities from them to get by.

In place of economic capital, all the respondents rely in different ways and to different extents on their social networks to make do. Access to housing outside of asylum reception centres, informal jobs, gifts and even healthcare depends on knowing ‘somebody’. For instance, nine out of ten respondents rely on family or friends for housing and food. The respondents told me about doing informal services for their friends and receiving gifts such as money, telephones or hygienic articles in return. They also received information about where they could find the health centre in Oslo or NGOs offering social support. Thus, the social

network allows the respondents to improve their livelihoods. However, social capital is not vital to survive. The respondents do have an opportunity to make do in asylum reception centres instead of living on the streets, such as Amare chose. On the other hand, Amare talked about receiving money from her Norwegian friend to supplement her small allowance. Hence, social networks were ultimately the most important resource to obtain life necessities and improve livelihoods.

Social capital influences how the respondents make do, but it also gives meaning to their lives (Scoones, 2015). To Rashad, a meaningful friendship with a refugee guide from an NGO gives him hope. She helps him out in material ways with money, but also to be active and to talk about his feelings. “To me, she is hope,” he told me. Social relations were also meaningful to Rashad when he could spend time with other people in the same situation as him. He finds strength when he compares himself to others who have lived in Norway for much longer time than him. Ebele and Ode find meaning in social relations when they help elderly people with informal services. “I like them. I respect them and they respect me,” Ebele told me. Hamza also enjoyed doing informal services for a friend of him. “We were together, drinking and enjoying ourselves.” Thus, meaningful social relations increase the respondents’ well-being.

On the other hand, social relations can be based on asymmetrical power relations and exploitation. Earlier studies have found that people without residence papers are especially vulnerable to exploitation and long working hours because of their illegal status (Myhrvold & Småstuen, 2017). Both Amare and Rashad experienced exploitation. Amare, when working like a ‘slave’ for shelter and food, and Rashad, when working unpaid for a company. They both felt they were taken advantage of because of their vulnerable situation as rejected asylum seekers. As Rashad said: “If people understand that you don't have papers and that you are willing to work for them for less money, that's of course to take advantage.” He decided not to work, because he did not want to be taken advantage of. Social relations leading to exploitation could lead to a decreased well-being and influence the strategies or tactics chosen to make do, such as not take on informal work.

### **5.3.2 Institutional and organisational influences**

Overlapping institutions and organisations pose constraints and possibilities to rejected asylum seekers (Scoones, 2015). This study reveals only parts of the institutions and organisations that surround them. As presented in chapter four, rejected asylum seekers live in a context where state policies aim to restrict immigration and limits their social rights. On the other

hand, Norway is obliged by human rights institutions to cover fundamental needs of non-citizens. However, the findings of this study show that the fundamental rights offered from the state is not enough to cover the needs of the respondents. Rather, the respondents improve their livelihoods through organisations. In addition, they experience informal institutions of illegality that challenge their social relations and feeling of safety.

Access to rights and resources are often influenced by institutions such as authorities and citizenship (Scoones, 2015). The Norwegian state restricts social rights; however, the state must also ensure fundamental human rights to non-citizens. Following Arendt (1951) and Agamben (1998), one could argue that the state's sovereignty, such as the authority to exclude non-citizens, decreases the human rights of rejected asylum seekers. An example of this was when the Norwegian state in 2004 decided to not support rejected asylum seekers with shelter (Kjærre, 2015). On the other hand, Stenum (2002) and Cholewinsky (2005) oppose Arendt's and Agamben's complete rejection of human rights. They refer to international treaties and resolutions that give non-citizens social rights in emergencies. For instance, the Norwegian state could not continue to let rejected asylum seekers live on the streets (Kjærre, 2015). Today Amare can live in an asylum reception centre, instead of being homeless. Also, when Hamza were life threatening ill, he received healthcare from the state. Therefore, formal institutions of 'emergency rights', such as shelter or life-saving healthcare, can present possibilities to rejected asylum seekers.

On the other hand, the rights offered by the state are not enough to cover the respondents' basic life necessities. For instance, the state offers shelter in asylum reception centres and a small allowance for food. Yet, the accommodation is experienced as very stressful by the respondents and the allowance does not cover enough food. To Rashad, living in an asylum reception centre made him depressed and reduced his well-being. He told me: "I would choose to live on the streets and never sleep at the reception centre, because I know how dangerous it is to me, to my health." Yusuf also experienced how state institutions limited his life. When his asylum application was rejected, he lost health support from the state. Without medical care, he was physically unable to leave the house and was therefore isolated at home. This shock influenced his livelihoods in terms of human capital: health and his ability to work. Living isolated at home also reduced his well-being. He needed basic healthcare but could not access it from the state. It was not before he heard about the health centre that he received healthcare. Jamila expressed this feeling of not having her social rights ensured by the state. "Norway say they have women rights, but when you take a closer look they don't do anything for women. When my menstruation come, what should I do? I don't have any kroner". Thus, the state does not help them to improve their livelihoods.

### **“I don’t get any help from the Norwegian state”**

Rather, organisations present opportunities for rejected asylum seekers to cover life necessities and improve their livelihoods. The Red Cross and the City Church Mission mediate access to general healthcare, even though law restricts access to health services. For instance, Yusuf and Hamza did not receive any follow up healthcare from the state after they received lifesaving healthcare. It was thanks to the health centre that they received the necessary medicines after their treatment. All the respondents who lived in Oslo talked about receiving help at the health centre for undocumented migrants. As Rashad said: “I don’t get any help from the Norwegian state, but from Red Cross (...) I get some money, food and healthcare, that is important. The Red Cross takes care of me”.

A consequence of state institutions that restrict access to general healthcare is that rejected asylum seekers living outside of Oslo face more challenges when they intend to consult a doctor. In the same way as the findings of Øien and Sønsterudbråten in 2011, this study found that access to healthcare differs among rejected asylum seekers. In Oslo, the respondents received information from their social network on where to find the health centre. However, the findings of this study show that respondents who lived outside of Oslo met more challenges to access general healthcare. Two respondents in Stavanger said that they had no clue on where to find help. Hence, rejected asylum seekers who live in Oslo can easier access their right to healthcare, then the ones who live in other cities.

Because legal institutions deny rejected asylum seekers the right to work in Norway, they face challenges when looking for work – they cannot find a steady job. But, there exists an organisation that gives rejected asylum seekers an opportunity to work. The company Plog As. This company, run by a man named Viste, mediates work between different employers and rejected asylum seekers that cannot be deported from Norway. Viste (personal communication) told me that around 12 to 13 employers hire rejected-asylum seekers through him. “Everybody have a good heart and do this from ideal reasons, but the payments are low. Somebody have ‘parted’ motives, it’s both cheap labour and a good deed”. He explained that some rejected asylum seekers, already on the inside of the informal labour sector, wanted to formalize their work by working through him. Some had experienced not receiving the salary they were promised. Others had no work experience from before and were searching for a job. Two respondents were working for him a couple of days a week, while earning some money and finding hope in the work: “Here they are very good people”, one of them told me. “Now I

can work a little, that gives me hope you know, but before it was very difficult (...) today, I have a little bit of hope. Only a little. Because I work here, and that might change something”.

According to North (in Scoones, 2015, p.46), organisations are “the players”, while institutions are the “rules of the game”. However, based on the findings of this study I argue that the organisations are not only players, they also challenge the rules of the game. Organisations challenge institutions that constrain rejected asylum seekers livelihoods, by providing access to work and healthcare. In practice, rejected asylum seekers access basic rights through organised human agency, that is organisations and their strategies. Hence, rejected asylum seekers and organisations are not ‘victims’ of the structures living ‘bare lives’, as Agamben (1998) argue, but active agents challenging structures.

### **“I’m not a criminal, I’m an undocumented person”**

The respondents experienced both formal and informal institutions of illegality. These institutions reduced their feeling of safety and their self-image. Institutions of illegality is a consequence of ‘migrant illegality’ - their juridical status as illegal. It is constructed by law and socio-policy, as a result of state sovereignty (de Genova, 2002). Illegality and citizenships are used by nation-states to discipline its people through exclusion or inclusion (de Genova, 2002; Agamben, 1998). However, institutions of illegality also shape migrants’ way of being-in-the-world- in terms of time, space, sociality and self (Willen, 2007). Illegality constrains the respondents because they fear deportation, detention and experience social rejections. These constraints can influence how they make do.

The respondents experience illegality in their everyday lives through lack of identification documents, leading to a fear of detention and deportation. For instance, Amir does not have personal identification papers (ID) and thus spends most of his time at home. He fears detention when he walks in the city without ID. Yusuf fears deportation almost every day: at home, when he volunteers and in the city when he takes public transportation. Illegality shape the respondents’ way of being-in-the-world in terms of places they visit and by decreasing their well-being. Both Amir and Yusuf feel constantly stressed. Their freedom of movement is reduced because of this uncertainty. However, the two respondents react differently. To Amir, illegality leads him to mostly isolate himself at home, while Yusuf defeats his fears and take public transportation almost every day to work as a volunteer.

Formal and informal institutions of illegality are understood in different ways by the respondents. For Jamila fear of deportation is not a constraint at all. Jamila told me that she is not afraid of the police. She contacted them when she needed a place to sleep, instead of sleeping outside. For Jamila, the police represented possibilities to housing, while for Yusuf



and Amir the police represented a challenge with possible detention and deportation. This could be explained by differences in return agreement between Norway and the countries of origin. Amir and Yusuf origin form another state than Jamila. Perhaps the Norwegian state cannot deport Jamila and therefore she does not fear deportation. On the other hand, Jamila did meet constraints because of her illegal status. For instance, she could not find work. Thus, illegality constrain the respondents' everyday lives, although they do experience it in different ways.

Illegality manifests in informal institutions that can be expressed through norms, behaviour and interaction between individuals and groups (Leftwich & Sen, 2010). For instance, Yusuf experienced social rejections when he was expelled from a café because of his legal status. Hamza experienced rejections when he was blocked on Facebook by friends. According to Halpern (2005, p.10), social capital consists “of norms, values and expectancies that are shared by group members”, but also “sanctions” among them. These social rejections can be understood as sanctions based on norms in society that one should not reside without papers and that rejected asylum seekers are criminals. These understandings influence the respondents' way of being-in-the-world. It influences how they feel about them self and how they think that other people perceive them. Yusuf told me that he often thinks about how other people look at him as a criminal. “Nobody wants contact with me, everybody thinks that undocumented people are criminals.” He therefore isolates himself at home:

I don't like to be at parties because when I am in a group of people everybody talks about traveling, buying a car, apartment or a house, I have no opportunities, so I get sad. Therefore, I am sitting at home, I don't like to be with people.

Amir, Yusuf and Hamza experience what de Genova (2002, p. 427) names “spaces of non-existence”: social spaces where people are invisible, excluded and subjugated because of illegality. Because of law making rejected asylum seekers' residence illegal, they are invisible when they have no identity documents and therefore isolate themselves at home. The respondents are excluded or subjugated when put in detention, thrown out of cafes and blocked on Facebook. They are also subjugated through their constant fear of deportation.

From a livelihoods perspective, spaces of non-existence and illegality can be understood as ‘stress’, a pressure over a longer period, that influences how rejected asylum seekers make do (Morse & McNamara, 2013). Illegality and stress leads to instability and can make people follow short term plans instead of long term plans (de Genova 2002). For instance, Amir and

Yusuf reacted to institutions of illegality by isolating themselves at home. This isolation could have limited their long-term opportunities such as to expand their social network and increase their social capital. Choosing not to take informal jobs, such as Yusuf and Amir did, influence their economic capital. This illustrates how institutions of illegality constrains the livelihoods of rejected asylum seekers, in particular the resources used to make do and the outcome.

On the other hand, the respondents challenge the context and institutions surrounding them. They take public transportation despite their fear for deportation and they volunteer despite social rejections. In addition, they told me how they do not violate any laws. Earlier studies show that a reaction to illegality is to act as exemplary inhabitants and to not violate any laws (Bendixsen, 2015). This was also a finding in the present study. Hamza chose to act as a law-abiding inhabitant. “They say you are an illegal in the country, but I don't want to do anything illegal.” He did not even cross the street on red light, as he told me. Yusuf and Amir chose to not take on informal work. They were afraid informal jobs would hurt their asylum case, or cause trouble for their family. “If I work in the informal market, I am afraid the police will take me and send me away - that is not good. I do not want to be a problem to the society or my case”, Yusuf said. Thus, the respondents use their agency to challenge institutions of illegality by deciding to not do anything illegal. As Yusuf said: “I’m not a criminal, I’m an undocumented person”.

On the other hand, with institutions of illegality leading to social rejections and restricting access to work and social services, there is a possibility that rejected asylum seekers turn to criminal activities worse than informal work. For instance, Amir was afraid that he would have to resort to illegal measures to manage without his family. “If I didn’t have my mother and father to give me money, what should I do? I might do many illegal things.” However, since the respondents have access to social capital, such as their family and friends, they have an option to illegal measures in order to make do.

### **5.3.3 Strategies and tactics**

The respondents adapt or resist to the context by using tactics in their everyday lives. Parts of the context rejected asylum seekers live in consists of the Norwegian Government employing strategies to limit immigration with deportations and few social rights, thus posing constraints on the respondents. Therefore, through tactics the respondents depend on and take advantage of short-term opportunities to obtain the necessities of live (de Certeau, 1984). As Jamila said, “I live without a plan”. For instance, the respondents adapt to the context using tactics, such as to buy the cheapest brand of food they can find to make do with the little

allowance they receive from the state. They make do despite the constraints posed on them by the state.

The respondents also resist the state's strategies through creative tactics, according to the theory of de Certeau (1984). They resist state strategies by living outside of asylum reception centres and rather rely on friends and family. In their everyday lives, they solve problems of acquiring life necessities by using tactics. Rashad talked about creative solutions to his unstable residence, such as to shower in a gym when he did not have anywhere else to stay. Amir used creative tactics to access medicines. He made his siblings or parents pretend they had his symptoms when meeting the doctor. Later the family members gave the medicine to him. Thus, instead of adapting to the context where rejected asylum seekers have no right to public general healthcare, he used creative tactics to access medicines. With tactics, the respondents use their agency and challenge the context by turning constraints into opportunities.

At the same time, the respondents do not solely use short-term tactics to get by, they also use strategies. Five respondents talked about positive relations, feeling of respect and hope when doing informal services for their network. Six respondents spoke about positive experiences of volunteer work. Thus, within the context of laws and policies that exclude rejected asylum seekers from work and social services, the respondents challenge the context by creating "spaces of welcome" (Willen, 2014, p.86). These are spaces where they feel safe, welcome and meaningful. For instance, when Hamza started working as a volunteer, he finally felt his life had a meaning.

Before I started working as a volunteer I felt that my life didn't have any value in Norway because I didn't have a job. I was not active in the community. A lot of things in the community pushed me out. But now I got a volunteer job. I have no rights here, but I can be here and help other people.

Volunteering gives him a feeling of belonging to the society:

Even though the society or the government do not accept me, I feel like I am part of the society here, yes, I feel a lot better here than I do in my home country. Actually, I feel like Norway is my home country.

Like Hamza, Yusuf also enjoyed volunteering and had several different volunteer jobs. Helping others and contributing to the society was important to him.

I am thinking that all people have a responsibility in the society. I, as a person living in Norway have a responsibility to help the community. I have this possibility through volunteer work. Volunteer work helped me back to the society and contact with people. I like helping people, Yusuf said.

In their spaces of welcome, their volunteer work, Hamza and Yusuf keep their “moral commitments” such as to help other people and to be active in the community (Willen, 2014, p.86). Other respondents create spaces of welcome by doing informal work, such as Ode and Ebele. They find respect and friendships when working for elderly people. The respondents use their agency to make strategies to increase their well-being. They also expand their social capital through volunteer or informal work by finding new social connections that they can rely on. Thus, when the respondents decide to volunteer or work they employ strategies such as to become included in the society and increase their well-being and social capital. They challenge the strategies of the state to exclude them, by including themselves in society.

#### **5.3.4 Livelihood outcome**

One of many ways of measuring a livelihood outcome is through a subjective well-being or ill-being (Scoones, 2015). Well-being is “the experience of good quality of life” and include both material, social and psychological experiences, while ill-being is experienced as a bad quality of life (Chambers, 1997, p. 1748). Well-being influence peoples’ motivations and the livelihood strategies or tactics, thus can lead to an improved or continuous poverty situation (Scoones, 2015). Earlier studies show that there is a correlation between positive social relations and well-being (Halpern, 2005). This study found that the respondent’s strategies to take on informal or volunteer work improved their livelihood outcomes. They expanded their resources, such as social capital, and improved their well-being. Except for some incidents of social rejections and labour exploitation, the respondents mostly talked about positive human relations when volunteering and working. Thus, their livelihood outcomes were influenced by well-being thanks to their social capital.

However, when studying livelihood outcomes, it is important to assess the livelihood vulnerability. This is because a secure or insecure livelihood can influence the amount of well-being possessed (Chambers, 1997; Myhrvold & Småstuen, 2017). Chambers (1997, p. 1748) refer to a secure livelihood as when “rights, physical safety and reliable access to resources, food and income, and basic services” are ensured. The context influences the respondents’ outcome in a negative way by restricting access to necessary services and work. One of the most common vulnerabilities among urban poor people lacking legal status are informal wage-employment with difficult working conditions and a risk of sudden unemployment (Meikle, 2002). In this study, only two respondents talked about continuous employment with a company. The remaining respondents had unsecure jobs and depended on their social networks. Because of the constraints posed on them, the respondents did not feel safe nor did they have access to enough resources or rights such as healthcare. They depended

on other people by using short term tactics. According to the findings of this study, rejected asylum seekers livelihoods are vulnerable and insecure. This can decrease their well-being.

In addition to feelings of well-being the respondents expressed feelings of ill-being such as insecurity, isolation, stress, exclusion and depression. Jamila felt that the stress impacting her body contributed to her ill-being: “Sometimes I’m in the library. I sit there without nothing. When I read, it does not pick my mind, because my mind is full of stress. So, I just sit there without nothing”. Rashad told me how he used to be active, but all the stress lead to inactivity:

I do like to be active. The problem is that if you are stressed you cannot do anything. For example, I am a member of a gym. Sometimes, I go there and shower but I do not work out because I am so stressed. When I first came to Norway I was very active, I used to do a lot of workout, I enjoyed this time because I was not stressed, but today, I don't know. I feel very tired.

He isolated himself: “I am just sitting at home and waiting. (...) I think I spend most time drinking coffee, actually”. I asked him who he drink coffee with and he answered: “It depends how I feel, if I am stressed, even though I have good friends, I spend the time alone.” Several respondents talked about trouble falling asleep, night terrors and use of sleeping pills. To six of the respondents, the ill-being went as far as to suicidal thoughts or even attempts. “I think a lot about why life is like this, we are not human beings, we are like dead people and this life is hell,” one of the respondents told me. The respondent pointed to the wrist saying, “perhaps I should kill myself (...) but then I think about my family, not today, maybe next time.” Other Scandinavian studies have found that nine out of ten irregular migrants need psychological help, and describe their lives as influenced by fear, dependency, powerlessness and loneliness (Øien & Sønsterudbråten, 2011; Myhrvold & Småstuen, 2017). Thus, the vulnerable livelihoods of rejected asylum seekers are characterised by an outcome of ill-being.

### **5.3.5 Rejected asylum seekers’ livelihoods**

The context rejected asylum seekers live in is shaped by both formal and informal institutions and organisation. To remain sovereign, the Norwegian state implements certain policies to regulate immigration such as to deport people without legal residence and restrict access to social services. Simultaneously, the state is bound by human rights obligations, and therefore offer a minimum of social services such as residence in asylum reception centres and lifesaving healthcare. The social services offered is restricted to a bare minimum, with the intention of making it less attractive to live in Norway as a rejected asylum seeker.

This context is experienced by rejected asylum seekers through institutions and organisations. Institutions of illegality present constraints with deportability and social rejections.

The situation without residence papers also makes it more difficult to make do because they have no formal work permit. In practice, organisations, that run the health centre in Oslo or offer the possibility to do volunteer work, present opportunities to improve the livelihoods of rejected asylum seekers. A consequence of legal institutions posing constraints and non-governmental organisations posing possibilities, is therefore an arbitrary fulfilment of human rights, depending on where in Norway organisations operate or what resources the rejected asylum seeker possess. For instance, the respondents who live outside of Oslo meet more difficulties to access healthcare.

Most of the respondents make do by living outside of asylum reception centres and without financial assistance from the state. In place of economic capital, they rely on their social capital to live with family or friends. The respondents have additional livelihood sources, such as to receive gifts from the social network or to do informal work. They use creative tactics to get by without having a long-term plan for life. This results in a vulnerable and insecure livelihood, that leads to ill-being such as stress and depression. However, the respondents also use strategies to participate in the society through volunteer work or informal work. In these social interactions, they find hope and well-being. See figure 9 for a visual summary of the main findings and discussion.

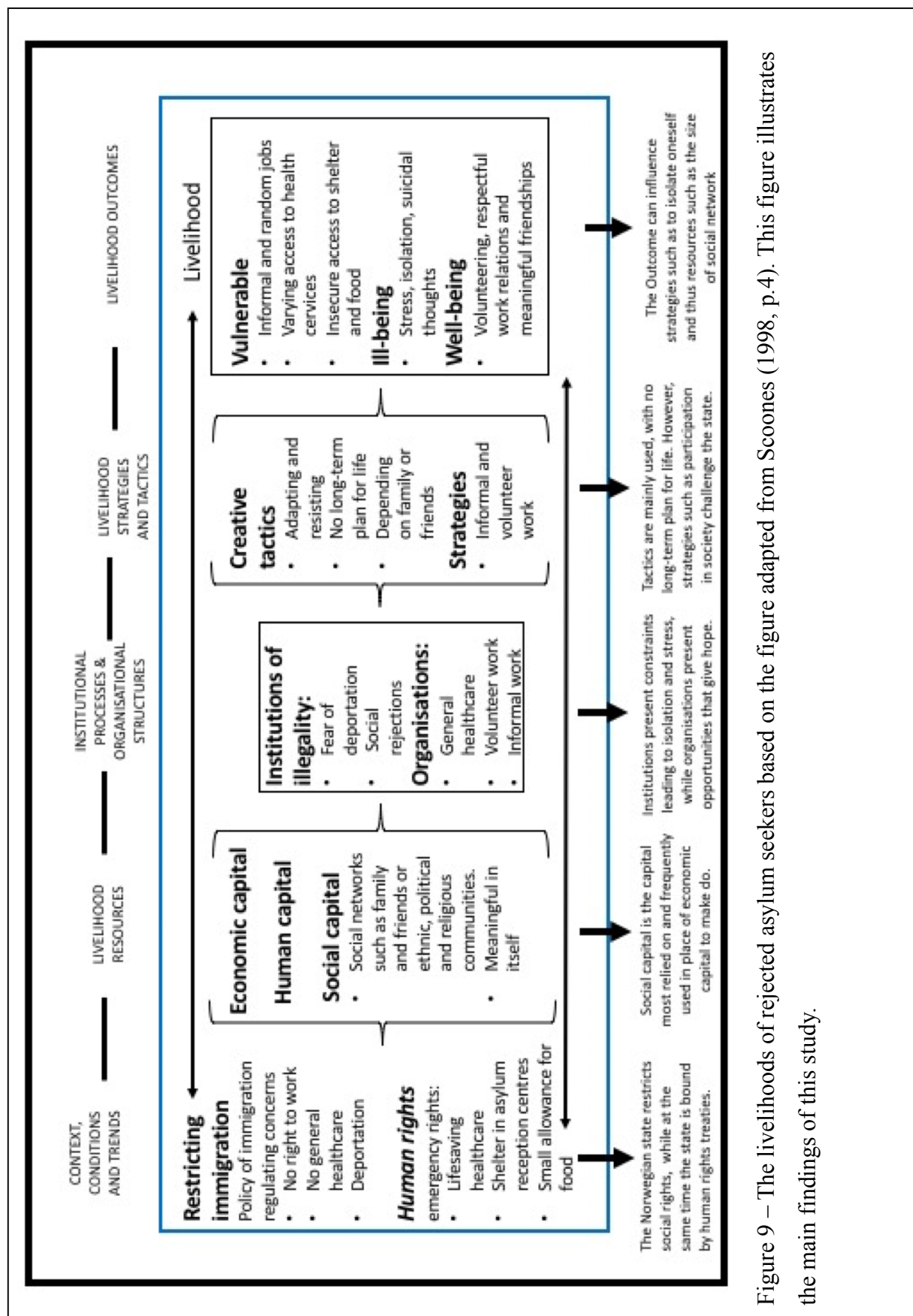


Figure 9 – The livelihoods of rejected asylum seekers based on the figure adapted from Scoones (1998, p.4). This figure illustrates the main findings of this study.

## 6.0 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay obtain the necessities of life including healthcare, housing, food, safety and social relations. It also sought to explore what constraints and possibilities the surrounding institutions and organisations pose to them. To answer the research questions, I used a qualitative method and interpreted the narratives of ten people with rejected asylum applications. I framed the study from a livelihoods perspective and described rejected asylum seekers socio-political and juridical context based on a literature study. The lives of rejected asylum seekers are explored through their own experiences. This study has looked at how rejected asylum seekers make do by using a livelihoods framework to analyse the context, institutions and organisations surrounding them. The livelihood resources, strategies and tactics used and the outcome of their struggles are also discussed.

When collecting the data, I asked follow-up questions and saw spontaneous reactions from the respondents. This helped me get richer narratives than I would have with a quantitative study. However, because of the limited time frame, I was not able to challenge my analysis with continuous interviews or to collect richer narratives by following them in their everyday lives. The reliability of the study is influenced by not being able to triangulate as much as I wanted. I interviewed ten respondents from two different regions, both women and men and with some differences in age. Thus, the data reflects a variety among the respondents. On the other hand, because rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay are a heterogeneous group, I cannot generalize without doing continuous interviews with an increased number of respondents.

### 6.1 Summary of findings

Rejected asylum seekers make do in a context where institutions such as state policies and law constrain their possibilities to work and to access social rights. Institutions ensure fundamental rights, such as shelter in asylum centres and lifesaving healthcare. However, the findings of this study show that the housing offered by the state is experienced by the respondents as stressful and not enough to cover their life necessities. All but one of the respondents make do by living in other places than asylum reception centres. Instead of economic capital, they use their social network such as family and friends to cover their needs for housing, food and even healthcare. In addition, they take on informal work to receive either money, gifts or housing and food in return. Rejected asylum seekers live in a context where the Norwegian state excludes them from the society. The respondents use creative tactics and strategies to obtain life necessities, though without any long-term plans for life.



The institutions and organisations that surround them pose constraints and possibilities. Institutions of illegality constrain the respondents' feelings of safety because they fear deportation and detention. Institutions of illegality also lead to social rejections that constrain their opportunities to find work and can lead to social isolation. The respondents challenge the context excluding them, by participating in the society through volunteer and informal work. Organisations offer possibilities to improve access to shelter, food, social relations and healthcare through informal work or at the health centre in Oslo. The access to the different life necessities varies among the respondents and where in the country they live. Their lives are filled with ill-being in terms of depression and stress because of the vulnerable livelihoods and the many constraints posed on rejected asylum seekers. However, through meaningful social relations they also find hope and well-being.

To conclude, rejected asylum seekers, with a protracted stay, use their resources such as social capital to employ strategies and tactics to obtain the life necessities healthcare, housing, food, safety and social relations. The outcome of this livelihood struggle is a life influenced by well-being and ill-being. Meanwhile, the outcome, the social capital and the strategies and tactics they use to make do is constrained by institutions such as illegality, but also organisations enabling them to access life necessities.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

The findings of this study show that rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay live vulnerable lives with a livelihood prone to stress and shocks. They live a life with much ill-being, but also well-being. Common to the respondents' narratives were that activities and respectful social relations made them happier. The respondents told me that they wanted to work in order to be active and to provide for themselves. However, working as a volunteer is no way to support oneself or a family. When working in the informal labour market they are prone to exploitation. The Norwegian state does not benefit from an informal labour market where workers do not pay taxes and can easily be forced into criminality. In addition, can the Norwegian state be acquainted with conditions similar to modern slavery, as Amare experienced, without acting upon it? Therefore, I urge the Norwegian Parliament to change the law and fulfil the human right to work for rejected asylum seekers with a protracted stay. This could prevent exploitation in the informal labour market and improve their access to life necessities.

Another finding of this study is the arbitrary access to healthcare that depends on social and economic capital or depends on where in Norway rejected asylum seekers live. The

right to healthcare should also include rejected asylum seekers living outside of Oslo, independent of their economic or social capital. Almost seventy-year-old Ebele had no idea where to get treatment for her muscle pain without any money, while the respondents in Oslo expressed gratefulness for the health centre. I therefore urge the Norwegian Parliament to ensure the human right to health for rejected asylum seekers by changing the law. I also urge NGOs to expand their health services to other cities outside of Oslo. All rejected asylum seekers must be entitled to general healthcare.

Most of the respondents have lived in Norway for longer than five years, at the longest for up to 18 years. None of them expressed intentions of returning to their country of origin. This brings me back to Yemane, the Eritrean man whom I presented in the introduction. Yemane lived 24 years in asylum reception centres and eventually died there (Berglund & Haugsbø, 2016). Jamila, one of my respondents told me, “everyone dies. I don’t know when my turn will be, today or tomorrow, but here I am still”. The Norwegian Parliament should follow the recommendations of this study. If not, rejected asylum seekers will continue to live with a vulnerable livelihood and with their human rights violated, for indefinite future.

### **6.3 Future research**

This study has contributed to increase knowledge on rejected asylum seekers everyday lives, in particular how they acquire life necessities in Norway. However, the findings are limited and based on single interviews. There is a need to explore the different aspects of how rejected asylum seekers make do more in depth. For instance, eight out of ten respondents talked about doing informal work. Two had experienced exploitation, but because of ethical considerations I did not explore or follow up on this subject. Future studies should spend more time with respondents to establish sufficient trust in order to reveal conditions of exploitation and how this is understood and felt by rejected asylum seekers. To prevent people from being treated like slaves, there is a need to do further studies on how people without residence papers are exploited.

Because rejected asylum seekers are a heterogeneous group. There is a need to interview even more rejected asylum seekers to find out about the different situations they live in and the various ways they make do. Nine out of ten respondents in this study were rejected asylum seekers who get by through living with family and friends outside of asylum reception centres. They all had a social network to rely on, though to various extents. I therefore find it important for further studies to explore the livelihoods of rejected asylum who do not have as much social capital as the respondents in the present study had. Rejected asylum seekers with little social capital might reside in asylum reception centres. The

respondents of this study talked about how difficult it was to make do by solely living on the allowance from the state. I therefore encourage further studies to explore how rejected asylum seekers who live in asylum reception centres get by. Do they have so little money for food that they go through life hungry? And how does living in asylum reception centres affects their well-being? Rejected asylum seekers without social capital, who do not live in asylum reception centres, may be especially vulnerable to trafficking and crime. Do they stay in Norway, or do they travel to other countries? Thus, how rejected asylum seekers make do is a field of study that needs to be further explored.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Interview guide

### Intervjuguide for irregulære migranter

*Introduksjon: Fortell om studien, samtykke, hvordan informasjonen vil bli brukt, spør om tillatelse til lydopptaker og mulige spørsmål.*

#### ***Personalia***

1. kodenavn, alder, kjønn, opprinnelsesland, sivil status, familiemedlemmer i Norge eller andre land, utdanning, tid i Norge

#### ***Hverdag***

1. Kan du beskrive en typisk dag for deg?  
Deltar du på noen aktiviteter? Hvilke? Hvordan føles det?  
Hva gjorde du i dag? Hva skal du i morgen?  
Hvordan har du det/føler du deg etter en sånn «typisk» dag?
2. Hva er viktig for deg? Hva motiverer deg i hverdagen?
3. Hvordan påvirker det å ikke ha oppholdstillatelse hverdagen din?

#### ***Sosialt liv***

4. Hvordan møter du andre mennesker? Hvordan har du blitt kjent med dem?
5. Hva gjør dere når dere er sammen?
6. Hvordan har du lært deg norsk?

#### ***Husly og mat***

7. Hvordan/med hvem bor du?
8. Er det noen som forsørger deg? Hvem? ELLER Er det noen du forsørger?
9. Har du nok mat, klær og husly? Hvordan påvirker det hverdagen din?
10. Hvordan får du tak i mat, klær og husly? Hva gjør du for å klare deg økonomisk?

#### ***Arbeid og økonomi***

11. Har du jobb? Hva gjorde du for å få jobben? Hva synes du om jobben din?

Eller Har du hatt arbeid før i Norge? Hva gjorde du for å få den jobben?

12. Forsøker du å finne arbeid? Hva gjør du for å finne arbeid?
13. Hvordan påvirker det deg å ikke få lov til å jobbe i Norge?

### ***Utfordringer***

14. Hvilke utfordringer har du i hverdagen? Hva gjør du når du møter denne utfordringen?
15. Hvis du trenger hjelp, får du hjelp av noen da? Hvem da? Hvordan?
16. Har livet ditt endret seg etter at du fikk avslag på asylsøknaden? Hvordan?

### ***Begrensninger og Trygghet***

17. Føler du deg trygg? Hva gjør du for å føle deg mer trygg?
18. Hvordan behandler mennesker deg i samfunnet? Har du opplevd diskriminering? Hvordan påvirker det deg?
19. Er du redd for å bli stoppet av politiet på gaten? Hvordan påvirker det deg?
20. Er det noen steder du liker å oppsøke? Hvor da? Hvorfor?
21. Er det noen steder du ikke liker å oppsøke? Hvor da? Hvorfor?

### ***Muligheter***

22. Hva tenker du om din situasjon i Norge?
23. Hva tenker du om fremtiden din?
24. Hva gjør du for å bedre din livssituasjon? Evt. Hva kunne gjort din situasjon bedre?

### ***Avslutning***

*Oppsummere hovedpunkter fra intervjuet.*

1. Er det noe mer du har lyst til å fortelle meg?
1. Hva tenker du er viktigst at jeg får frem i oppgaven min, slik at andre kan lese om det?
2. Har du noen spørsmål?
3. Hvordan synes du dette intervjuet var?

Takk for at du har tatt deg tid!





## Appendix 2: Information sheet

### Vil du være med på et forskningsprosjekt?

#### *"Papirløs i Norge – Opplevelser med levekår og arbeid"*

I min masteroppgave vil jeg se på hvordan mennesker uten oppholdstillatelse opplever sin hverdag – spesielt på områder som levekår, arbeid og utdanning.



Spørsmål jeg vil svare på:

1. Hvilke utfordringer og muligheter har papirløse?
2. Hvordan opplever de sin situasjon?
3. Hva gjør de for å klare seg i denne limbo-situasjonen?

#### Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?



I intervjuet vil vi snakke om dine opplevelser i hverdagen, om arbeid og utdanning, hvilke utfordringer du har i hverdagen, og hva som er viktig for deg.

Selve intervjuet kan ta en time eller mer. Avhengig av hvor mye du ønsker å snakke om.

Jeg ønsker å bruke en lydopptaker under intervjuet. Dette er for at jeg skal kunne referere så nøyte som mulig det du forteller. Det er bare jeg som vil

ha tilgang til lydopptaket. Dersom du ikke vil at jeg skal bruke lydopptaker vil jeg bare ta notater.

#### Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?



Publikasjon er anonym. Navn eller bilde av deg vil ikke publiseres, og du vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjonen av min masteroppgave. Rådata oppbevares konfidensielt.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes 15.12.2017. Jeg vil da makulere alle notater jeg har og slette alle lydopptak.

**Det er frivillig å delta i studien**, og du kan når som helst trekke deg uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg bli slettet.

Å delta på dette prosjektet vil ikke ha betydning for utfallet din asylsøknad, men det vil bidra til mer fokus på situasjonen for papirløse i Norge.

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål, ta kontakt med:

**Eline Anker** tlf. 95759736. Epost: [eline.anker@nmbu.no](mailto:eline.anker@nmbu.no)

**Veileder:** William Derman tlf. 67231324. Epost: [bill.derman@nmbu.no](mailto:bill.derman@nmbu.no)

Studien er en del av min masteroppgave ved Norges Miljø og Biovitenskapelige Universitet og er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, NSD - Norsk senter for forskningsdata



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