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## **Declaration**

I, Karen Johana Hagen Hammer, 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.....

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Signature.....

Date.....



## **Abstract**

Roma, the largest minority in Europe, continue to face poverty and segregation in their host countries. As a result, Norway amongst other Western European countries, has witnessed a large influx of Roma travelers over the past years. Roma migrate to Norway in search for better opportunities and stay for short periods at a time. The increasing visibility of Roma in the streets of Oslo has sparked a lot of public debate often portraying them as a problem and a challenge to the welfare state. This study has been carried out to examine the historical, social, economic and cultural forces behind Roma traveler's migration and livelihoods in Oslo. The study aims to understand Roma experiences of migration through a social-constructivist approach, by looking at society and challenges through the lens of Roma's interpretations. Over the past years, Norway has implemented various political strategies to limit Roma migration and their scope of maneuver. However, although Roma experience constraining environments Roma often seek opportunities where others see closed doors and find tactical ways to survive. In light of these structural constraints and opportunities Roma face, this study uses the structuration theory to explain the interplay between Roma and their environment. More specifically, this study uses the theory of culture and agency to explain the outcomes and challenges that arise when Roma culture meets the host culture. Also, the concepts of tactics and strategies are used to explain what Roma resort to do and what they are able to do within Norwegian society. Moreover, within the intersection between Roma culture and the host culture, this study aims to explore the scope for Roma to practice their own culture within the human rights framework.

This study shows that the issue of Roma migration and livelihoods in Norway does not take place in a social and political vacuum; rather there are structural forces that enable and constrain Roma through this process. We argue that changes are slowly taking place in the practice of Roma culture, changes that are setting up a new conditioning structure with new possibilities for Roma maneuver.



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## List of Abbreviations

CRC	-	Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
EC	-	European Council
EEA	-	European Economic Agreement
EFTA	-	European Free Trade Agreement
ERRC	-	European Roma Rights Center
EU	-	European Union
EUROSTAT	-	Directorate General of the European Commission
FAFO	-	Institute for Labor and Social Research
FRA	-	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GATA	-	Street Magazine, Non-profit organization
JUSBUSS	-	Legal aid clinic run by law students
NAV	-	Norwegian Labor and Welfare Organization
NELM	-	New Economics of Labor Migration theory
NGO	-	Non-governmental Organization
NOVA	-	Norwegian Social Research
NPO	-	Non-profit Organization
UDI	-	The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	-	World Bank
RED	-	The Race Equality Directive
SSB	-	Statistics Norway



## Glossary of terms

Bulibasha	- head of the family
Dimenezeu	- God
Caldarari	- coppersmiths
Caramidari	- brick makers
Corturari	- tent-dwellers
Gadjo	- non-Roma
Gypsy	- name for Roma
Lingurari	- spoon makers
Neam	- family name/clan
Polenta	- solid cream corn flour
Porajmos	- the Gypsy Holocaust
Roma (sing. Rom)	- Roma plural
Romi	- plural for roma (women)
Romani	- Roma language
Roma Romanisat	- also known as Romanized Roma
Tsigani	- name for Roma
țuică	- traditional Romanian alcoholic drink
Ursari	- bear tamers
Romaniya	- gypsy law
Kris	- Roma court
Krisitorya	- Group of judges in the Roma Court
Vlach Roma	- Roma for the region of Wallachia



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# Chapter 1

## 1. Introduction

Roma, also known as gypsies, is the largest ethnic minority group in Europe. Throughout history, they have been subject to discrimination, segregation, persecution and extermination. They are also criticized for their cultural practices and lifestyle, which often clash with Western values and practices and the human rights framework. As a result of their difficult history and challenges, Roma continue to struggle today. For example, in Romania and Bulgaria Roma live in ghettos with poor facilities and living conditions, and lack employment opportunities (O’Nions 2007, Johansen 2010, Johansen 2013). However, their living conditions in Western European cities are not any better. It is common to find Roma begging or performing in the streets, gathered for hours in parks and sleeping, cooking and cleaning themselves in public or in crowded camps with poor facilities.

With the creation of the European Economic Agreement (EEA), which Norway is a part of, there has been an increased migration of European citizens, including Roma to Western Europe. This increased mobility across borders permits Roma to travel in the search for better opportunities for themselves and their families. Since 2006, there has been an influx of Roma migrants to Norway due to poverty in their home countries. This has triggered negative sentiments among the majority population and government. Although Roma come to Norway in search for better opportunities, they continue to face social and economic difficulties.

The European Union together with the European Roma Right Center have established numerous aid and inclusion programs as part of a strategy to promote improve living conditions for Roma throughout Europe. As part of these programs, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway are committed to transfer money to a fund that is designated to benefit economic and social integration and reduce poverty in sixteen countries in Central and Southern Europe. One of the key areas of support is social inclusion and Roma rights protection in their home countries

(EEA Grants 2014). In the case of Romania, the EEA-grants have allocated €135 million for the Roma cause, in which €17 million have been granted to support Roma inclusion alone over a period of five years (EEA Grants 2014). Despite the significant funding towards improving the situation for Roma, the impact remains limited and as a result Roma continue to migrate to Western Europe.

The opinions about the Roma situation in Europe are divided. Media often report the concern of citizens about the unpleasant scene in the streets, and the general idea that areas occupied by Roma are linked to crime, bad sanitation and noise. This media coverage is rife in Norway as well, and portrays an image of Roma as beggars, thieves and drug dealers. Recently, the Norwegian government has intended to ban begging nationally. However, their plan to ban begging nationally was rejected by the supporting parties of the government. As of today, it is up to each municipality to decide to ban begging. In the past, as a temporary action Oslo municipality banned street music performance in certain areas of the city. Although begging is not forbidden in Oslo, one can still see the police and private guards ushering Roma beggars from public spaces. In addition, Oslo municipality has decided not to provide funds to expand the capacity of public shelters, arguing that these shelters are not for EEA-citizens and that any European citizen who wishes to live in Norway must provide for themselves and their families (Slettholm 2014a).

On the other hand, there are organizations like Folk er Folk (People are People), Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the Church City Mission that offer income opportunities, free courses, shelters, food, clothes and shower facilities to Roma travelers in Oslo. These organizations often condemn the destitute situation of Roma and work for their defense. To them, the response of the Norwegian government illustrates processes of discrimination and containment towards Roma migrants in Norway and even human rights violations (Red Cross 2014, Interview with JusBuss 2014, Church City Mission 2014, Salvation Army, 2011). These organizations draw the direction of the public debate towards the necessity to focus on Roma rights and inclusion.

## **1.1 Problem statement**

Even though the issue of Roma migrants is more visible in Norway due to political and public debates, there has been little attention given to Roma experiences of migration. The public debate has failed to frame and legitimize the social, economic, historical and cultural background of Roma, and continue to represent them as powerless victims, or as perpetrators of crime. We understand that Roma are a diverse group with a rich historical and cultural background, which should be included in order to have a more balanced debate. Therefore, we focus on how Roma respond to societal restrictions as their maneuver in society is limited: what they can do and what they resort to do in order to survive and in response to constraints and opportunities in the society.

This research examines the interactions that take place between Roma migrants, and the host country, and what these interactions have to say for Roma and their culture. We focus on Roma experiences of migration and life in Norway, as their life stories provide an insight of their motivations, practices, strategies and tactics in response to constraints and opportunities in Norway.

## **1.2 Objectives and Research Questions**

Objective 1) We examine Roma's motivations to leave Romania and to migrate to Norway.

RQ1) What are Roma's main reasons for leaving Romania?

RQ2) What purposes do Roma have when coming to Norway?

Objective 2) We examine the social, political and economic structures that surround Roma migrants in Norway and how they respond to them.

RQ3) What are the challenges and possibilities Roma encounter in Norway?

Objective 3) We examine Roma strategies and tactics when they decide to migrate and when they live in Norway.

RQ4) How do Roma respond to the societal constraints and opportunities presented to them?

Objective 4) We study the interplay between Roma culture and Roma's actions, and the interplay between Roma culture and their host society.

RQ5) What are the most prevalent elements of Roma culture that contribute to shape their life decisions?

RQ 6) What are the results from the interaction between Roma culture and the host society?

### **1.3 Motivations**

We often see that poverty reduction policies, human rights instruments as well as many social studies and programs on poverty, depict the social vulnerability of Roma. Roma are often seen, as marginalized people that lack autonomy and direction in their lives and that are vulnerable to social exclusion and other hazards. Based on this approach, policy intervention is justified and carried out ignoring the abilities of individuals to adapt, respond to adversity and to be actively involved in their own development.

The ongoing discussion on Roma migrants in Oslo, portrays them as victims of social exclusion and as passive recipients of government aid or charity programs. The fact that Roma are a minority group that have had large challenges of integration throughout history, has sparked our curiosity as to why this group is facing such difficulties in particular. This research attempts to address how Roma find ways to respond to societal restrictions making use of their surroundings in various ways under tough conditions.

It is also necessary to have a study that includes Roma stories of migration, as it is useful to have a comprehensive view on Roma's actions and decisions on wanting to migrate, stay or leave Norway. We value the importance of human agency and the specific social, historical, economic and cultural situation of Roma and recognize the need for empowerment as an approach to poverty reduction and development.

## 1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. This introductory chapter, **Chapter 1** presents the problem and the scope of the thesis. In **Chapter 2** we present a theoretical framework with the theories that explain and challenge the existing knowledge on the Roma debate. We will explain the social *constructivist approach* and the interplay between *agency and structure*. Consequently, we will present the relevant theory of agency and structure in *migration, culture* and the exercise of *human rights*. Lastly, we will present the concepts of *strategies and tactics* that are applicable to interpret Roma interactions.

**Chapter 3** provides a topical background to the case of Roma migrants in Oslo. In this chapter we will outline who Roma people are and what the main historical, social and cultural features of this minority group in Europe are. We will also explore the development of minority rights for Roma and the consequences of the establishment of the EEA for Roma migrants, especially in Romania and Norway.

**Chapter 4** presents the methodological approach, the data collection process, as well as the ethical considerations and challenges met in the study.

In **Chapter 5** we present and interpret the findings simultaneously. First, we will present each finding followed by a discussion in the light of the theory presented in Chapter 2. At last, **Chapter 6** will provide an answer to the research questions as well as a summary of the findings and suggestions and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

In this chapter, we will present the theoretical and conceptual framework that will guide the discussion in the analysis. We focus on the dialectics of agency and structure, not seeing them as separate entities unaffected by the other, but rather as a duality, interchanging and evolving over time. Thus, we choose a middle ground stance in the structuration theory debate. Within the structuration theory, we develop the theory of culture, migration, human rights and agency. To explain our findings we will also use Michel de Certeau's (1984) concepts of strategies of the strong and tactics of the weak. Finally, we will explain how all the concepts and theories relate to one another.

#### **2.1 The dialectics of Agency and Structure**

We use the structuration theory for our thesis because it allows us to understand Roma as active individuals, as people that are conscious in their choices. Structuration theory implies an inter-changing relationship, in which people actively interpret, negotiate and influence structures, while structures influence them in return. The theory of agency and structure has been widely discussed by many scholars to explain phenomena in social science. Scholars like Anthony Giddens, Margaret Archer, Amartya Sen and Colin Hay among others have developed the theory of structuration. These scholars view on the topic rest on their epistemological and ontological understanding of the world around them.

Anthony Giddens (2008) recognizes agency as the ability for individuals to decide what they are doing and why, at the same time the individual acts within a social context that in turn influences them. To Amartya Sen (1985), 'human agency' represents people's ability to act on behalf of their goals, weighing possibilities in shaping their own destiny and not passively living for purposes of others.

Robert Merton (1938) understands structure as the regulatory norms and moral imperatives that determine individual action. Margaret Archer (1996) understands structure as the culture, which shapes people and in turn, people remake culture based on their own interpretation. In other words, Archer analyzes the interactions between culture and people's actions. Both Giddens and Archer present an individual-centered view of the interaction between structure and agency; giving more preference to the role of the individual compared to the structure it is a part of (Marsh 2010).

According to Bakewell (2010:2) "understanding the relationship between agency and structure remains one of the most deep-seated problems within social sciences, which has persisted over decades." A first strand of the literature reveals a binary relationship between agency and structure, where both individuals and structure are opposites and one prevails over the other. The binary approach includes two positions; the structuralists and the ideationalists. Structuralists give more importance to structure in shaping preferences and actions of individuals. Classical Marxism and materialists like Colin Hay and Robert Merton are a part of the structuralists' position, as they focus on the material and historical factors in shaping individual's lives (Marsh 2010). In contrast, ideationalists such as Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum focus on the actor and individual preference in shaping outcomes and surroundings (Marsh 2010).

A second strand of literature explains a dialectic relationship between structure and agency, that they are interrelated and iterative. A dialectic approach does not view agency and structure as opposites, but rather stress the relationship between them. Anthony Giddens, Margaret Archer and Colin Hay are prominent social scientists that develop the dialectic relationship between agency and structure further. They explain that structure and agency complement each other and are not opposite terms. The dialectic position is going to be the focus of our thesis, as it provides a useful, middle ground stance between agency and structure. We chose the dialectic approach, as it emphasizes on interactions and relationships, and helps us understand how agency and structure affect each other.

Giddens goes further to elaborate the structuration theory. Structuration theory explains that structures constrain and enable individuals, but at the same time individuals interpret structures and in doing so change them. Giddens recognizes that individuals are purposive actors who know what they are doing and why; each individual acts within a social context that in turn influences them. Giddens defines agency as the capability of knowledgeable actors to mobilize resources in order to make a difference or to transform the previous state of affairs (Giddens 1984). He defines structures as rules and resources that are integrated in the institutional expression of social systems (ibid). To Giddens, structures are major aspects of transformation, which can influence social change. In this sense, structures can or cannot lead to social change.

Hay's (Marsh 2010) dialectic approach develops Giddens's structuration theory further. Like Giddens, this approach focuses on the interaction between strategic actors and their contexts. He sees individuals as 'conscious, reflexive and strategic'. Individuals shape structures while structures shape individuals, who in turn reproduce and transform them. To him, an individual's strategic action not only changes the structure, which the actor finds himself, but at the same time, his action contributes to his own experience and worldview. In this dialectic position, structure has no independent power without the interpretation of individuals.

The dialectic structuration debate is fruitful in understanding human agency, more importantly agency of Roma. As Sabina Alkire (2005) argues, it is important to involve Roma participation so they can be active in shaping development processes. She argues further that poverty reduction stresses the need for empowerment at the individual level. By including human agency to the debate, we are recognizing Roma self-determination, autonomy, and self-direction of Roma. By focusing on Roma agency one is adding perspectives, needs and wants of Roma to the debate. The involvement of Roma agency is an element useful to add to the debate, because it can add depth to understanding their situation.

## 2.2 Migration Theory

There is no single theory that explains the complexity of migration. There are many theories that explain migration, but the main approaches on international migration we use in this study are compiled and described by Russell King. In his work, he presents a thorough overview of the development of migration theory throughout the past decades. King highlights the Push-pull theory, the Historical-structural models, Systems and networks, and The New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM). All these theories explain that there are forces, structures, conditions and individuals that need to be in place for migration to occur (King 2012).

In the neoclassical model, King explains that migration results from the uneven distribution of labor and capital in different countries. The result is that workers move from low-wage to high-wage countries changing the dynamics of labor and migration. In this theory, individual's cost-benefit decision is crucial for migration to take place.

The historical-structural model sees migration as macro-structural forces historically formed, which are exploitative in nature. According to this model, segmented labor markets, political and economic dependency are some of the causes of international migration (King 2012).

Meanwhile the systems and network model explains migration as a circular, multi-causal and interdependent phenomena that regulates and modifies itself. In this model, personal and social networks constitute the link between micro and macro structures of migration. It connects individuals to social structures and helps to predict future patterns and channels of migration (King 2012).

Finally, NELM combines family decision-making with neoclassical theory. For NELM, migration decisions are not individual decisions but joint decisions taken within the household. These decisions are made to diversify and reduce risks and

are taken depending on the destination, the motivations, goals and aspirations of the people who migrate (King 2012).

The structuration theory has helped to develop migration theory. For example, Oliver Bakewell (2010) explores the relationship between agency and structure and incorporates it into migration theory. However, it has been challenging to achieve a balance in migration theory due to focusing solely on migrants or too much on structural forces of migration. Bakewell presents a critical realist approach to deal with the agency and structure impasse within migration theory (ibid). To Bakewell, the discussion has reached a dead end, and he believes that a critical approach may offer a more fruitful discussion. From a critical realist perspective, that analyzes structure and agency in migration studies, structures become real when they influence individuals in profound ways. As a response, individuals react to structures imposed on them according to their interests. If the structures satisfy their interests they will follow it, and if the structure conflicts with their interests they will try to weaken the effects of the structure. Moreover, he argues that agency and structure is particularly important in migration studies, because the “agency of migrants continue to play a significant role in shaping migration theory and in shaping the policy responses to people’s movement” (Bakewell 2010:2).

Much of migration theory follows the assumption that migrants have a choice over their decisions to move. As such, Bakewell makes an important distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration. The main distinction between the two lies between the will of the individual. However, voluntary migration does not mean that voluntary migration is completely based on the migrant’s will. Economic and social forces often shape voluntary migration where the individual has a degree of choice to change locations, but there are different economic and social reasons that strongly influence this decision. On the other hand, involuntary migration includes refugees, and is considered beyond the scope of migration theory. Bakewell also explains that the legal status and the treatment of states towards migrants differ greatly between voluntary and forced migrants. The latter group will often have more rights under international law, hence more protection, benefits and public sympathy (Bakewell 2010).

Russell King (2012) explains that the division between voluntary and involuntary migration is too simplistic in practice. For King, the theoretical distinction between involuntary migration and voluntary migration neglects the fact that internal economic and political difficulties force people to leave. Even though voluntary migration might not comply with the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees requirements (well-founded fear of persecution due to race, religion or political beliefs), it certainly has elements that are involuntary to the migrant.

Bakewell seeks to create a general fundamental theory to make sense of the universal human experience of migration. Migration occurs in different forms across space, time and societies, and the act of moving residence has significance, be it, at economic, social, cultural, political and environmental levels in all societies (Bakewell 2010). Bakewell understands that individuals are capable of exerting control over and transforming their social relations. To him, social structures are “outcomes of agency, but emerge and exercise their own causal powers beyond and independently of the agency that produced them” (Bakewell 2010:9).

Bakewell agrees with structuration theory in that social actors influence social structures, but he criticizes structuration theory for failing to see that social structures shape the context for social actors in the future. Bakewell sees agency and structure as a dualism in which regulations set the conditioning context for the actors to maneuver. On the contrary, Margaret Archer (1996) argues that social structure pre-exists the individual and Anthony Giddens (1984) argues that society exists because there are people constantly interpreting and transforming it. They see the relationship between agency and structure as a duality in which they are complimentary forces and both interact. Bakewell criticizes contemporary structuration theory for its emphasis on agency, giving migrants too much power over their decision to move, and overlooking structural conditions like labor markets, government policies and host cultures (Bakewell 2010).

To Bakewell (2010), international migration is shaped by both legislation (structure) and by the decision-making migrants (agency). He says that

structuration theory can be useful in analyzing the social dynamics between the migrant labor system and households to explain migration. Consequently, households will take the opportunity to migrate if they feel that this is the best solution. This can also be understood in the case of Roma, because their migration is based on the EEA-legislation (structure) allowing free movement between borders, but also based on their decisions (agency) as they plan when and where to go. In this study, we use Bakewell's theory to explain how personal conditions of the migrant and the regulations facilitate or restrict migration. Bakewell's work helps us to analyze how the structure enables and constrains Roma migration.

In addition, Ionela Vlase and Malina Voicu (2013) study the patterns of the Roma migrant population. They add elements of religion, subgroup identity (*neams*), and gender to explain key elements of Roma migration. They go further to criticize Bakewell, because to them what is crucial for the decision to migrate is dependent on the migrant's evaluation of the situation. Vlase and Voicu are against the idea that migration policies dominate migration decisions in Europe today. They also emphasize the individual's capability to explain how Roma make their decisions to move.

All these approaches are useful for our research objectives, as they include both the decision-making process of Roma migrants, structural constraints, and how Roma respond to these structural influences.

### **2.3 Culture and Agency**

Margaret Archer (1996) presents a realist approach to the structuration debate through her work. Her approach is realist, because she studies social change as a structural context. The morphogenetic approach is the basis to understand social change in Archer's theory. As such, Archer identifies different ingredients for social change, such as structure, culture, and agency and how they interrelate (Porpora 2013). She suggests an analytical dualism between agency and structure recognizing that they operate over different periods (Bakewell 2010). In this approach, culture is a body of concepts and ideas, and is the conditioning premise

as it pre-exists the individual. To her, only if ideas have holders through the experience of individuals they can have any effect on agency. In other words, only when actors give culture meaning through interpretation, culture can have an effect on individuals (Archer 1996).

Therefore, Archer thinks that culture is not homogenous and it can be subject to many interpretations through the lens of individuals. To her, there is a structural conditioning context in which action happens. Individuals are influenced by structure, but can affect outcomes by using their abilities and through negotiating with other individuals. As a result, the structural conditions are either changed or stay the same. This process continues over and over again. Archer uses her idea of *morphogenesis* to explain cultural change, and the dynamics between actors and structure that shape culture over time (Archer 1996).

The morphogenetic approach begins with structural and cultural conditioning. Over time, individuals will interact and interpret these structural and cultural preconditions that they will modify or sustain. Individuals interpret and interact based on their personal motivations, interests, and their social position. For Archer *morphogenesis* is a process of interpretation, interaction and elaboration between individuals and culture. The following figure represents the *morphogenesis* process according to Archer.

**Figure 1. Morphogenesis**

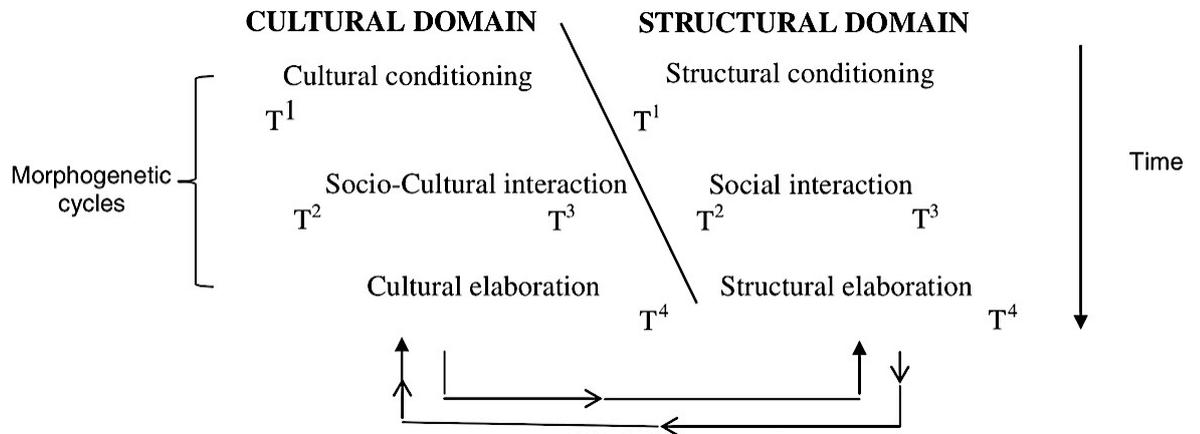


Figure 1- Morphogenesis with structure and culture together.

From Archer (1995:323)

Archer's theory of culture and agency is applicable to our study of Roma migrants. We will use Archer's theory of *morphogenesis* to explain the dynamics of Roma culture, structure and agency. Her theory can guide the understanding how Roma interpret the world around them and give it meaning according to what they value the most. Moreover, Archer's ideas on *morphogenesis* can help explore how Roma are influenced by structural conditions, and help to probe deeper into how Roma culture is altered or sustained. Archer's morphogenetic approach helps situate the importance of Roma narrative history by explaining Roma experiences in time and place (Porpora 2013). Archer's theory can help the discussion on the direction and survival of Roma culture in present time.

## 2.4 Human Rights and Agency

A person's agency is highly connected to the exercise of human rights and freedoms (Sen 1985, Griffin 2008, Bakewell 2010, Nussbaum 2011). Amartya Sen (1985) claims that a good life is linked to a life of freedom. A person's genuine choices, resulting in achievements, are dependent on his or her capability to achieve these goals. According to Sen (ibid) the primary feature of well-being should be seen in terms of what a person can be and what a person can do. To

Sen (1985), a person's well-being is connected to what he or she achieves in life. He says further that a person's agency role goes beyond a person's well-being and involves concepts of autonomy and personal freedom. Sen considers that a person who enjoys full personal freedom and autonomy can have the potential to decide what is best for him or her (Sen 1985). To Sen, personal freedoms and autonomy should be protected. Human rights allow the protection of these personal freedoms and autonomy, and it allows individuals to achieve their goals. Human rights are a tool that protects the capabilities of individuals and determines the scope of their actions.

The Universal Declaration of Human rights established in 1948, protects personal freedoms, dignity and equality for all human beings. Based on these principals the United Nations General Assembly has articulated many other conventions on human rights to cover more specific human rights that target different groups of people and social phenomena (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948). In the case of Roma, as a group that has been widely stigmatized, the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination from 1969 (ICERD) is applicable. This Convention intends to eliminate any exclusion or restriction based on race or national or ethnic origin that can affect the enjoyment of human rights (ICERD 1969). Norway signed and ratified ICERD by 1970. The ratification of ICERD means that member states ought to not engage in any practice of any racial discrimination, to remove laws and regulations that have discriminatory effects and the state should encourage integration movements and discourage racial division (ibid).

This is important for the debate of Roma in Norway, because it helps identify to what extent Norway is complying with its obligations to protect and fulfill human rights of Roma. The importance of this compliance rests on the principle that all individuals should enjoy personal freedom and autonomy.

Amartya Sen's theory of agency and well-being, trigger important questions of fundamental human rights as capabilities. This makes a distinction between what Roma actually want to do and what they do. As such, we will explore what capabilities Roma have within Norwegian society that enable or constrain them.

James Griffin's (2008) theory supports these ideas and explains the importance of agency in determining human rights further.

James Griffin also develops the theory of structuration in the human rights theory. He claims that the notion of agency should determine the content of human rights. In order for a person to enjoy the capabilities of making decisions for him or herself human rights need to be secured for every person. Likewise, agency requires autonomy or the ability to form a conception of a good life, freedom from interference and constraint in pursuing this life (Griffin 2008).

Roma are considered a minority group in Europe, which means that they have special human rights instruments that apply to them. The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992) have developed rights for minorities further. This convention is an international human rights instrument that has developed from economic, social and cultural rights. These rights intend to maintain traditions and cultural practices for minorities and for member states that have complied with this declaration and similar conventions to protect and fulfill ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identities of minorities.<sup>1</sup>

Norway has also adopted this declaration, which means that it should protect national minorities. This declaration in Norway is applicable for Norwegian Roma, but not for Roma travelers. However, it sets the basis for the debate on the protection of cultural rights versus human rights of Roma, as the largest European minority.

Helen O'Nions (2007) calls for minority rights protection in international law and autonomy and freedom of Roma to practice cultural customs and traditions. For

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<sup>1</sup> The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities promotes the principles stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR 1976) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR 1976). ICESCR develops labor rights and social security, right to health and education, protection of cultural expression and the right to development. ICCPR promotes political freedom, freedom of religion and freedom of speech. The Declaration on the Rights of Minorities is the core of Minority Rights, and is inspired by Article 27 in the ICCPR. Article 27 states that minorities should not be denied the right to enjoy their own cultural, practice their own religion or language. Norway has ratified all the conventions above.

her the discrimination of an individual or a group denies agency and self-determination. O’Nions work can guide us more on the discussion on Roma worldviews, because it places importance on the protection of their cultural practices within the current human rights framework. When traditional practices meet human rights several questions arise on whether the tradition and culture of minorities should prevail or should adapt to fundamental human rights (Oprea 2005). We further discuss that although Roma are victims of human rights violations, at the same time their practices may be violating human rights. We discuss some cultural practices that can conflict with the human rights framework.

## **2.5 Strategies and Tactics**

In order to understand Roma actions in Norway, and how they maneuver their actions, it is necessary to understand the different strategies and tactics Roma choose. Roma’s strategies and tactics are connected to their capabilities, that is, what they are able to do and what they want to do.

In “The practices of everyday life”, Michel de Certeau (1984) defines and links strategies and tactics. To him, powerful institutions produce strategies while tactics are created by individuals to act in an environment. For de Certeau governments and institutional bodies produce the structure and rules in which people live. In opposition to these regulating structures, individuals move tactically to respond to control by rules and plans by the state (ibid). De Certeau’s work shows how people resist to repressive aspects of modern society in creative ways. For him, strategies suppose control while tactics suppose a response to that control in order to achieve adaptation or resistance. The distinction de Certeau makes between strategies and tactics shows the power relations in everyday situations, describing tactics not as a subordinate force to strategies, but as an opposed force to it. In this sense, de Certeau sees human action as a liberating and emancipating force against structures.

De Certeau sees the strategies and tactics dialectic as two opposing forces. Strategies are the actions of the powerful, which emerge where an institution

establish with a dominant position. Tactics, on the other hand, are the arts of the weak and take place within the discursive space offered by strategies. By its nature tactics are opportunistic and spontaneous and they are a product of contingency (de Certeau 1984).

We choose Certeau's theory as he criticizes the state as excessive, overly centralizing and homogenizing. He also represents people as agile and resourceful. His approach offers a counter balance against the strategies and gives people's action and ideas, a place to survive and thrive. We believe that these survival elements are well located in the Roma's particular traditions and culture. Moreover, his work helps us understand the power relations that exist between the governing and the governed, between the "powerful" and the "weak", and between control and freedom. Strategies are confined to those with power and tactics are reserved for the powerless (de Certeau 1984). However, we do not understand the powerless as helpless, but as creative in the way that they choose different strategies and tactics to respond to control.

We argue that de Certeau's ideas on strategies and tactics are applicable to the case of Roma migrants in Norway, in the way that Roma exercise creative and clever actions towards the powerful structures surrounding them. That is not to say that Roma are powerless, indeed Roma are tactical and strategic in finding ways to overcome powerful strategies imposed by the Norwegian state. This theory helps us to understand how Roma find ways to interact, adapt, resist and cope in the host society and within their own kinship society. We also discuss how Roma make use of the resources available to them, and how they create different parameters for their lives.

Thomas Acton's theory (1974) explains Roma reactions to outside pressure of conformity. He proposes strategies to explain how non-dominant groups interact with dominant groups. Acton suggests the following Romani strategies, which we think are useful in understanding Roma reactions to pressure of conformity by their environment. Even though Acton's theory is from 1974, his study is one of the first studies conducted on Roma integration in post-war Europe, and in this sense it is interesting because it is a large study and it supports our findings.

Acton proposes the following adaptation strategies that Roma have in their everyday lives. A first strategy is what Acton calls “conservative”, and consists of Roma having restrictive values resisting lifestyle change and preserving their cultural values. Secondly, a “cultural adaptation” strategy suggests a view that outside cultural influences are seen as beneficial rather than a threat towards their own culture. A third strategy is what Acton calls “cultural disintegration” in which Roma feel hopeless due to their destitute situation and do not see any possibility of change and behave indifferently. And finally a “passing” strategy consists of Roma hiding their cultural identity in order to have access and treatment as the rest of the society (Acton 1974, Gabor and Buzzanell 2012, Smith and Greenfields 2013).

We have chosen Acton’s theory not to categorize Roma into clear-cut compartments of specific actions or behavior in one specific context. Instead, we understand that Roma exercise all of these strategies in their daily lives depending on their context-specific situation they are facing and according to the people they interact with. Moreover, these are not the only strategies Roma can pursue as there could be more strategies that explain Roma behavior. However, Acton’s four typologies are useful to exemplify some of the main Roma strategies. We understand that the typologies can display different types of action according to what Roma feel in a particular situation, prompting different reactions accordingly. In this way, these strategies can be seen as dynamic and complimentary, rather than mutually exclusive and static. One way to understand these strategies is to picture a Rom in different circumstances, in which he or she acts according to what suits best in that situation. In some contexts, the individual might prefer to conceal their Roma identity and go with a *passing* strategy, for example to avoid further discrimination in the job market. In other situations, perhaps in dealing with his or her kinship ties, the same individual might prefer to have a more conservative nature. Likewise, the same individual can incorporate cultural elements from the host culture like the language to integrate better, showing more *cultural adaptation*.

These theories developed by Acton and de Certeau can tell us something about Roma travelers’ interactions in Norway. Moreover, these theories can help

understand that Roma have developed tactics over time in order to respond to different pressures of conformity in different situations. At the same time, both authors can explain something about inward and outward cultural change, the social position, power relations and everyday life of Roma.

## **2.6 Linking the Concepts**

The structuration theory places the individual in a socio-structural context affected by existing human rights regulations, the interpretations of actors, and cultural constructions and expressions. Individuals and structure interact dependently of one another, and the outcomes of their interplay vary based on individual's actions and interpretations of the environment surrounding them. Individuals respond different producing different strategies and tactics. These responses can result in the transformation of the structures by individuals influencing them, or in long-term structures that remain more or less constant. However, the structure can also change and influence the individuals. In this way, the interplay will continue in a cycle of strategic and tactical responses to structural conditions.

The way all these concepts interact helps the understanding of Roma in a socio-, historical and cultural context. Roma are not acting independently of structures rather they act according to their interpretation of internal and external cultural practices and values. Human rights and migration policy can also be seen as structures that affect Roma's actions and decisions. Roma's responses to their environment might result in a change of regulations, policies and their own culture. There might be many other concepts that illuminate the Roma discussion, but we have chosen these specific concepts and theories, because they serve the purpose of the objectives and research questions in this research.

## Chapter 3

### 3. Historical Background and Roma Today

In this chapter, we present the historical background of the research. We will describe who Roma are, and what is their current social, economic, political, cultural and legal situation in Europe. We will include the consequences for Roma following the breakdown of communism and the transition to a market economy in Eastern Europe. Finally, we will present the effects of the establishment of the EEA, and the Romanian and Norwegian social and political landscape surrounding Roma.

#### 3.1 Who are Roma?

Roma are a multi-ethnic group that originated in Rajasthan, northwest India, and is characterized by their language, their culture and lifestyle (McCormick 2005). Roma have a hierarchical social organization based on the family institution. They also divide themselves in clans, or *neams*, that are distinct divisions for their traditional occupations, ethnic diversity and origin. This division resulted in very different cultural expressions, traditions, customs and languages, and has importance for the way Roma identify with belonging to a certain family or group (Johansen 2010). The importance of Roma belonging to a certain group is linked to kinship ties that determine social relations and positions such as marriage, occupation, specific cultural practices and language. Moreover, kinship ties are important for Roma as they ensure the continuity of the family bloodline.

Some linguistic studies point to the Indian origin of Roma communities (Liegeois and Gheorghe 1995). However, there are some other suggestions of Middle Eastern and African components in their language (Engebriksen 2012). Although language studies point towards the territory known as India today as the place of Roma origin, the *Romani* language and Roma culture has been cultivated and refined in Europe throughout the centuries. During the migration process the

Roma diaspora mixed with European and other groups (Johansen 2010). Those called Roma are in reality many different people, tribes and clans.

Roma groups began to come to Europe from the east in the fifteenth century due to conflicts, invasion and wars in old Persia and the northwest India (Kendrick 1993). Some theories point towards Roma escaping from conquerors and change of subsistence conditions due to climate (Johansen 2010). Having to travel made them lack permanent land of their own, which can explain their nomadic lifestyle. As they were travelling from one country to another, they developed different adaptation skills and in some cases they were absorbed into host cultures. Traveler groups are believed to have taken up this lifestyle out of necessity (ibid). While some of the Roma groups became sedentary as they integrated to local communities, others were mostly tolerated as migrant or seasonal workers only, thus developing a special pattern of migration (Ehmann 2008). This flexibility of adapting to the local environment meant that Roma would take on a diversity of occupations depending on the local demand. For example, most of them had skills in trade, craftwork and agriculture (Liegeois and Gheorghe 1995).

It is widely agreed upon that the Roma arrived in Europe around 1250. The arrival of Roma to Norway is estimated around 1540. They arrived in 1407 to Germany, in 1501 in Eastern Europe and in 1512 to Scandinavia (Liegeois and Gheorghe 1995). Each of these groups developed different adaptations in the language and culture to the local region. One of these groups, known as *Vlach Roma*, arrived to the region of Wallachia, Romania. Although they were traded as slaves for the Austro-Hungarian Empire, *Vlach Roma* cultivated the *Romani* language and culture as is known today in Europe (Engebrigtsen and Lidén 2012). *Vlach Roma* were highly economically valuable to the Empire, and the reason why they remained as slaves was due to the economic value they possessed. Despite the abolishment of slavery later on the *Vlach Roma* continued to be highly dependent on powerful groups in society (Hancock 1987). In the search for opportunities, *Vlach Roma* travelled to Western Europe in the nineteenth century. Some chose to settle down, while others travelled from one country to another and continued a nomadic lifestyle.

There are several terms that refer to this ethnic group. The term *gypsy* has been developed in the western world and it is used to represent a powerful discourse on what it means to be Roma. It is used to describe a large number of ethnic diverse groups and it has been linked to myths of bohemian-like travelers. *Tsigani* is a term developed in Eastern Europe. It is a term often referring to a person with a bad reputation, often belonging to an ethnic category. *Tsigani* and *gypsy* have been used with negative connotations throughout history, and that is why Roma prefer to distance themselves from those terms. Roma is a term widely used by scholars, researchers and official reports to refer to this ethnic minority, because it is the most politically correct term to refer to Roma, and Roma tend to prefer this term as well. Interestingly, the Roma research community argues that the term *gypsy* should be brought back into the discourse instead of insisting on using the term Roma. This could perhaps be to demystify the term as it has negative associations (Engebrigtsen 2007, Johansen 2013).

Another term that is useful to understand the definition of *Roma* is the word *gadjo*. *Gadjo*, or non-Roma, is used by Roma to refer to their opposites, people who do not belong to their ethnic minority and are morally separate from Roma due to years of social and economic segregation and domination (Stewart 1997).

### **3.2 The plight of Roma**

Roma groups were originally welcomed in Europe due to the various skills they could offer, but the impression of them turned negative as they were seen as intruders and as a threat to the local communities (Johansen 2013). All over Europe, Roma were suspected of living a bohemian life, and were labeled as dirty, thieves and cheaters (ibid). As bohemians, Roma were historically a nomadic group who developed as musicians and traders. In fact, music became an important cultural expression for Roma and was influenced by the folk music of the countries where they were settled in. Music has continued to play an important role in Roma culture to this day. *Gypsy* music has been widely influential to various music styles across Europe (Johansen 2010). They were treated badly as they were considered to be outsiders, spies, carriers of disease,

and pagans. Citizens and governments neglected Roma and their culture through their enslavement, expulsion and mass killings (Liegeois 1994). Local authorities and the church took measures against them through numerous exclusion policies. In France and Italy during the sixteenth and seventeenth century anti-Roma bans were imposed. In Germany, the parliament accused Roma of being spies of the Turks and ordered the extermination of adult Roma males. Also, in Switzerland and The Netherlands bounties were offered and gypsy hunts were allowed (Liegeois 1994). Other states such as Spain and Romania followed a policy of containment using them as slaves, obligating them to find a trade and a master, thus limiting their mobility. Families were split up and sold at auctions or given away as gifts (Liegeois and Gheorghe 1995).

In the twentieth century, the Nazis attempted extermination of Roma for racial reasons (Liegeois and Gheorghe 1995). Roma were persecuted and killed on racial grounds as they represented a contradiction to the purity of the race and the Aryan ideal. The goal was to get rid of Roma people in every Nazi occupied country to clean it from “racial inferiority” (Hancock 2007). The Nazi regime believed that Roma’s racial inferiority, accounted for their extreme poverty and nomadic lifestyle. As well as other ethnic groups, Roma were forced into concentration camps, abused in "medical" experiments, shot or mass murdered (ibid). The Nazi Gypsy Holocaust, also known as the *porajmos*, resulted in the death of more than half a million Roma in Nazi occupied countries (Liegeois and Gheorghe 1995).

With the end of the war and under the communist block, Roma property was confiscated in communist European countries and they were forced to become permanent citizens, becoming easy to control, thus making use of their workforce. The containment policies took a more humanistic approach moving towards an assimilation process. Its goal was to absorb Roma groups into European societies. Roma were assimilated into programs that intended to incorporate them in the society as they were now seen as a group with social and psychological difficulties (Liegeois and Gheorghe 1995). They were indeed included as a workforce, and included as beneficiaries of the welfare social services like health, housing and education (Engebrigtsen and Lidén 2012, Bošnjak and Acton 2013).

These social programs often included sub-standard housing in the outskirts of Eastern European cities, which led to further isolation of Roma (Ruzicka 2012). The situation deteriorated for both Roma and non-Roma after the disintegration of the Soviet block, the independence of nations and the transition to a market economy. Those who were employed by the state lost their jobs, and there was less demand for those who worked with traditional occupations. Consequently, citizens had to seek income opportunities by themselves in the market instead of relying on the state, a situation that proved to be especially difficult for Roma because they were more vulnerable (O’Nions 2007). With the political and social commotion in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s, the general situation for Roma deteriorated, which forced Roma to establish themselves elsewhere as merchants, musicians and beggars (Johansen 2010, Bošnjak and Acton 2013).

The effect of the privatization of state-owned companies and the restructuring of the economy that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall hit Roma in urban areas hard, as they lost their jobs as unqualified workers and were unable to find new stable jobs (Ruzicka 2012). Roma living in urban settings were affected by the rising cost of land, higher rent and a higher cost of living. Rural areas were also affected, but the impact of the changed economy on urban areas was greater (ibid).

### **3.3 Roma reach Norway**

In Norway, Roma travelers can be traced back to the 1500s. From this time, Roma have traveled back and forth between Norway and Eastern Europe, due to different exclusion and assimilation regulations. In 1860, Norway adopted a law that enabled free movement of people without documents and therefore there were no formal barriers for travelers to come to Norway. Roma established in Norway, but they kept contact with their relatives abroad, embracing a nomadic lifestyle and avoiding assimilation practices (Karoli 2009).

In 1922, the justice department decided to extradite all Roma who did not have the legal documentation to prove that they were born in Norway. The Roma who

could prove their Norwegian citizenship were not affected by these practices. During the Second World War, Norwegian authorities under the control of the Nazi regime sent most Roma to concentration camps. The survivors after the war tried to re-enter Norway, but their entrance was denied. Only ten years after the end of the war, the first Norwegian Roma family was allowed to return to Norway (Karoli 2009).

In the 1960s the Norwegian Roma were considered a problem and they were seen as a group that needed to be helped and coordinated. The Norwegian Roma, who settled in camps in Oslo, were given media attention and evoked public concern. At the public level, the Norwegian authorities used the press actively to change the attitude of the majority of the population towards Roma and their position in Norwegian society. As a result, the government exposed a series of solutions for the Norwegian Roma like permanent residency, work and education, so that the group was to become less dependent on the welfare state (Engebrigtsen and Lidén 2012).

As compensation for years of abuse, in 1999 Roma were granted the status of national minority in Norway. Their new status helped to distinguish between the Norwegian Roma and Roma travelers, which are not considered a national minority group in Norway. Even though Norwegian Roma are not included in our study, their treatment in Norway depicts a dark history in the relationship between this ethnic group and the state. The history of Norwegian Roma serves to unravel longstanding stereotypical perceptions of Roma, which are recreated in the present.

### **3.4 The establishment of the EEA**

In the 1990s European institutions evolved and with it numerous legal instruments relevant to Roma. The Maastricht Treaty (1992) established the European Union single market to guarantee the free movement of goods, capital, people and services. Also, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights (1999) indicates the right of citizens of Member States to freely move and freely establish their residence in Member States. Later on The European Directive 2004/38/EC (2004) introduces the right of nationals of EU/EEA/EFTA countries to freely move and establish their residence on the territory of the European Union.

These treaties not only established a single market, but it also took a more humanist approach on discrimination on ethnicity grounds. Both the Maastricht (1992) and the Amsterdam (1997) treaties were inspired and incorporated the principles of freedom, democracy, non-discrimination and individual rights (Sobotka and Vermeersch 2012). With the creation of the Council of Europe followed the European Convention of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights. This process aimed to ensure the protection of human rights for all Europeans. The Directive 2000/43/EC (2000) is also known as the Race Equality Directive (RED), which prohibits racial discrimination in employment, education, healthcare and access to goods and services in all EU member states, and is today enforceable in European courts (Goldston 2006).

The developments in the European institutions has been of relevance for Roma migration and agency, because not only are they free to move and establish around EU countries, but for the first time they have access to legal instruments through the European bodies.

In 1994 the Council of Europe approved the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. This convention (1994) commanded the respect of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities, as well as the preservation and development of their identity. This status as a national minority was given to Roma in countries, such as Romania (1996), Norway (1999) and

Germany (1997) (CEDIME-SE 2001, Engebrigtsen 2003, Minority Rights Group International 2014).

In practice, the recognition of Roma as a minority group gives them access to government funding of different programs, and underlines their political organization, participation and possibility of legal representation and resolution (Engebrigtsen 2003). It is important to note that state members at a national level have implemented these European directives and policies. However, it has been in the hands of each respective state to follow them up and develop more local practices according to the situation and needs of Roma. The existence of these European legal instruments aims to protect Roma, does not guarantee their effectiveness in practice (Goldston 2010).

Minority rights do not necessarily guarantee the safeguard of minorities, because there are practical barriers to the litigation and the application of European policies on the behalf of Roma at a local level (Sobotka and Vermeersch 2012). Firstly, Roma might lack awareness on their rights. Secondly, even when aware of their rights, legal aid might not be available or perceived to be too costly and bureaucratic, often discouraging the interest of Roma. Also, lawyers are often reluctant to take on cases regarding Roma, because courts neglect the validity of proof of statistics or and on the claim of discrimination. And lastly, the challenge lies in the general bias of judges, police and lawyers (Goldston 2010). Therefore, it goes to show that although legal mechanisms to protect Roma rights exist, there are many factors preventing its effectiveness in Europe.

Sobotka and Vermeersch (2012) argue that although human rights have been important for setting the plight of Roma on the European agenda and developing a human rights legal framework, in practice human rights should be connected to policies of social inclusion at a local level, and tailored to the needs of Roma. Minority rights alone do not provide all the needed resources for inclusion of Roma, and therefore social inclusion instruments have to be developed by states. For example, when member states develop social inclusion programs in housing, education, health and information, it is important that policies are evaluated at the community level to assess the particular needs of each area.

### **3.5 Situating Roma in Oslo**

Norway and Romania have political and economic ties as members of the EU. Their citizens can move freely in their respective territories, but also Norway is one of the biggest donors for development funds to Romania.

Considering the Norwegian laws' alignment to the European legislation, EU/EEA/EFTA citizens are allowed to travel and establish their residence anywhere on Norwegian territory. They can live and work in Norway without applying for a residence permit, but must register with the police if they stay for more than three months (UDI 2014a). The registration entails rights and obligations for residents in Norway. However, Roma from Romania and other Eastern European countries do not register, as they typically stay for short time periods. Also the fact that ethnicity is not required or registered makes difficult to estimate the exact number of Roma in Norway (UDI 2014b).

In addition, Norway allocated more than € 306 million in the period between 2009-2014 through programs in Romania. Part of that money goes to promote Roma social inclusion as well as healthcare, housing, education, and to fight poverty and unemployment (EEA Grants 2014). Within the EU, the idea has been to solve the Roma poverty issues through the EEA-grants. Despite large contributions allocated to Roma, their living conditions are still poor (ERRC 2014). There is a fear that the intended money to promote social inclusion of Roma, has not always reached its intended plan (Johansen 2013).

Romania's entrance into the EU established obligations for the country to follow up issues of corruption and report transparency. However, corruption remains a problem (Transparency International 2014). As a result of their conditions in their home country and the new legislation, Roma decide to migrate to Western Europe, including Norway (Salvation Army 2011).

The Roma traveler population in Norway has increased in the last six years and they have difficult living conditions. Roma travelers lack housing; they are often

seen sleeping in the streets or in shelters offered in the city. They are unemployed, and they rely on begging, trash collection, and music performances to get by. Recently the media has addressed numerous cases in which Roma are involved such as the ban on begging, music performance, theft, and illegal pharmaceutical drug dealing. According to Oslo police, Roma are overrepresented in theft statistics in public places. The police also report that there has been a steady increase of organized pickpocket theft over the last years (Hirsti 2012). All of these issues combined, trigger the Norwegian politics and public opinion in response to Roma travelers, to find solutions on what to do with the increasing flow of Roma travelers.

Today in Norway, the Oslo City Council is evaluating the implementation on a local ban on begging. The Progress Party wants a total ban, whereas the Labor Party proposes restrictions on time and place between the spring and summer months, in and near public transportation and outside shopping malls and in residential areas. According to the City Council, a ban on begging is necessary as a measure to stop human trafficking and exploitation of poor migrants from Eastern Europe (Glomnes and Tjernshaugen 2014). Oslo Mayor Fabian Stang says the ban comes as a result of increased crime in the city, since crime rates grew in relation with the increase amount of beggars (Mellingsæter 2013). Reporters Molteberg and Tjernshaugen (2014) show a recent survey in which 66 % of Norwegians want to forbid begging in their respective municipalities. Begging has become a controversial topic, as it is associated to criminal activities especially amongst Roma travelers.

The Norwegian media shows the crisis in the capacity of shelters for homeless people in Oslo. Members of the Progress party in Norway argue that in order to solve this shelter crisis it is important to distinguish between the different groups of people with different rights (Slettholm 2014a). Roma travelers that come from Eastern Europe do not qualify for shelter as they are supposed to take care of themselves if they want to come to Norway.

JusBuss, a Norwegian NGO specialized in legal assistance, claim that a ban on begging is a poor strategy to fight poverty and crime, and that it breaks with

human rights agreements that Norway is committed to follow. They fear that the ban will target only Roma people and will discriminate them (Interview with JusBuss 2014). The number of municipalities that choose to implement or reject this ban is still up for question. As of today the municipalities of Arendal and Lillesand are the only ones that have implemented the ban (Sellevold and Sundsdal 2014).

## Chapter 4

### 4. Research Strategy and Methods

In the following chapter, we will present the methodology we have chosen for our research. We begin by presenting our research approach, before moving on to present the methods for data collection and analysis used during our study. Lastly, we will present ethical issues taken into consideration during our research, and challenges that we came across during our study. We will explain the research tools that worked well and aspects of the research that did not work as intended.

#### 4.1 Social Constructivism

In our research, we use the *social constructivist* approach. According to Bryman (2008) meanings and facts are socially constructed and constantly changing. This means that the object of study is dependent on the observer's perceptions. Therefore, the object of study influence and is influenced by the observer. Hence, a social constructivist position centers on Roma peoples' socially constructed interpretations of reality. Thus, reality is not given, out there independently, but constantly altering and reinforced by the people who give it meaning. There is much said about the reality for Roma, their situation and way of living from the outside. A social constructivist position enables a view from the inside, a way of understanding how Roma interpret the world around them, giving importance to their experiences, thoughts and descriptions.

We are aware of the implications of our role as researchers in affecting the object of the study. A social constructivist approach means that as researchers we are individuals involved in creating and interpreting a reality. We are actively influencing and shaping ideas about the world, and in turn the subjects of research are influencing our view.

## **4.2 Why use a Qualitative Strategy?**

In our research, we are interested in finding out the unique stories, meanings, concepts and descriptions of the world according to Roma. To understand Roma livelihoods and actions, it was therefore important to choose an approach that enabled to learn the meanings and descriptions from their point of view (Berg and Lune 2012). We had given a quantitative approach thought in the beginning of our research, but we soon realized that its application would not have been able to embrace all the nuances and intricacies of the Roma phenomena. We even thought about combining qualitative and quantitative research strategies, but we understood that there was not enough time to pursue such an endeavor and also it did not serve the purpose of our study. We are simply not interested in the statistics, the counts and measure of phenomena of Roma. Instead, we are interested in the nuances of their stories.

Moreover, we want to explore the meanings and descriptions that Roma give to their situation, actions and daily lives. We choose a qualitative approach as our research strategy, because we are not interested in finding out correlations and predictions, but more interested in analyzing the interactions between Roma and their host society. In addition, a qualitative approach will enable us to understand the contrast between what Roma want to do on a daily basis and what the surrounding structures allow Roma to do. Moreover, choosing a qualitative strategy means that one cannot generalize to Roma as a homogeneous group, because we are interested in the details of migration stories of Roma that vary from person to person.

### **4.2.1 A Case Study on Roma Travelers in Oslo**

The opening of EU and EEA borders between 2004-2007 to include Eastern-European and Baltic countries, combined with the financial crisis in 2008 triggered an influx of migrants to Norway. Roma migrants have become increasingly visible in the public space the last eight years as beggars, flower and magazine sellers and street musicians. The increase of Roma travelers to Norway

and the Roma debate in the media caught our interest as a contemporary development issue.

We chose to focus our study on Roma travelers in Oslo. It was necessary for us to limit our study to one area in Norway. A case study is to give a systematic and holistic description and explanation to a setting, phenomena, single subject or an event. A case study is an approach involving the study of a complex phenomenon and is “a method involving systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how the subject operates or functions” (Berg and Lune 2012:325).

Through a case on Roma travelers in Oslo we probe deeper into this group to understand how they operate and function in their daily activities and what motivates them. Moreover, by concentrating on one group of travelers we “aim to uncover interactions characteristic to this phenomena...capturing various nuances, patterns, and more latent elements that other research approaches might overlook” (Berg and Lune 2012:327). Consequently, we were not interested in studying Roma travelers from different cities, rather we wanted to limit our study to one group in one particular place. Our objective is not to generalize Roma as a single ethnic group; rather it is to show some of the stories of Roma travelers.

### **4.3 Data Collection**

In the following, we outline the way our research was carried out in Oslo during the summer/autumn of 2014. Our study is based on a qualitative approach, and our data collection is based on semi-structured interviews with Roma respondents. Some observation has also taken place. The use of secondary data has been necessary to gain insight into the field of Roma history and migration. We have used triangulation by relying on different documents, articles and books in order to gain a deeper knowledge on Roma migrants, and to avoid bias in the study. Triangulation leads to more precision in the study, because the different sources

we have used complement each other, leading to greater validity and reliability of the study (Berg and Lune 2012).

### **4.3.1 Gatekeeper**

Gaining access to Roma travelers was difficult for us as outsiders. In the beginning, we thought about conducting interviews with Roma on the streets, and complementing the interviews by staying with them during their daily activities. As young non-Roma women, not being familiar with street codes, we were apprehensive of gaining access to the Roma community without a gatekeeper. In order to make our research possible and gain entry into the Roma community in Oslo, we needed a gatekeeper who could get us in contact with Roma respondents. A gatekeeper is someone who is in the position to grant or deny access to a research setting (Berg and Lune 2012). Their function is to protect the respondents and to be a bridge-builder between the parts involved (ibid). We knew that we had to find a gatekeeper who would not compromise our academic freedom, and someone who Roma trusted and acting as a mediator between us as researchers, and them, as respondents.

Gaining entry into various settings can be tricky endeavor, as we soon came to realize in contacting two separate leaders of organizations working closely with Roma. Gaining entry into various settings involves negotiating the terms for access (Berg and Lune 2012). With one potential gatekeeper, we discussed about agreeing on the “truth” and about the importance to raise public awareness about Roma. In the exchange for access to Roma respondents, we were asked to write an editorial piece in a street magazine, which content and angle were to be discussed. Luckily, in the end we were able to negotiate with the leader of a local magazine. He is a highly visible individual who holds a position of respect and trust among Roma. Our gatekeeper is a well-connected figure to Roma migrants as he is in charge of supplying the magazine to Roma who sell it for some profit. Not only did he make contact with Roma possible, but also he became an interesting and prominent figure to interview and discuss larger socio-structural issues of Roma in Romania and Norway. Our gatekeeper is an educated Roma who wants to

improve the rights and conditions for Roma at government level in Romania and Norway.

Initially the gatekeeper experienced some skepticism to our motives and our research. Perhaps because of his personal advocacy in defense of Roma, he questioned our purpose and asked about the practical use of the study. This was a way to establish trust with us, and as the time passed during our fieldwork throughout the summer, he was ever more helpful and at ease with us. It felt safe using him as a gatekeeper, because we did not have to roam the streets in search of interview objects, but we conducted all the interviews at his office. In addition, he would bring to us the persons we needed to interview according to the characteristics of our sample. The fact that he was our gatekeeper influenced the research in both enabling and constraining ways. He let us have access to the Roma community connected to his magazine, but he chose the respondents according to our parameters. This has a big impact on the sampling for our research, because it can cause a bias in the interpretation of data. For example, all of the respondents could know each other meaning that respondents could share experiences and information about the interview and prepare answers in advance. Although our gatekeeper made the contact possible, he could have influenced our respondents by telling them what to say and not to say.

As Roma are skeptical towards authorities and persons on the outside of their community, it is hard to imagine how we would have been able to do the interviews without our gatekeeper. Having in mind that Roma are skeptical towards non-Roma, their stories could be affected by the way Roma perceive outsiders. Consequently, Roma can choose to convey a part of their life stories presenting a selective truth. When Roma present their storytelling it is important to be aware that Roma might be presenting an image of themselves only for the purpose of the interview. The role they chose to undertake within the interview setting is also important data to observe, as this role might be a strategy in itself.

### 4.3.2 Sampling

In the early phase of our study, still writing on our proposal, we met with researcher Ada Engebrigtsen from the Norwegian Social Research, NOVA. We discussed the topic and presented an overview of the sampling dilemmas and challenges. Engebrigtsen has worked on Roma related topics for over twenty years, thus she had various inputs and information about Roma history, migration and current situation in Oslo. Initially we thought to compare a group of Norwegian Roma to Roma travelers visiting Oslo sporadically. Engebrigtsen kindly advised us to focus on Roma travelers as a comparison could complicate our study. It was important, she said, to narrow the topic down as much as possible. A comparison could be possible, but many in the Norwegian Roma community had gone through hard times, many have lost custody of their children, experienced a lot of internal disputes making the access to this community much harder. She advised us to focus on Roma travelers, as they are a more contemporary issue considering the debate in the media, and also a group that is more accessible to us.

Our meeting with Engebrigtsen provided us with valuable information. For instance, she elaborated on Roma *neams*, which are clan systems comparable to the caste system in India. Within the Roma community these clans, which one is born into, indicate a certain family belonging linked to a specific profession e.g. *caramidari* (brick makers), *ursari* (bear tamers), *caldarari* (copper and brass blacksmith), *rudari* (tree cutter), *lautari* (musicians), *fierari* (iron blacksmith), *grastari* (horse dealers), *boldeni* (flower seller), *argintari* (jewelry makers) and *roma romanisat* (Romanized Roma) (Johansen 2013). Roma who are more integrated belong to the last *neam*. Based on this information our sampling strategy was to have Roma respondents from different *neams*, in order ensure diversity in the story telling, and to ensure richness in our data material.

We decided to interview ten respondents, five women and five men all of them over the age of 18. We thought it was important to sample according to gender, as there can be variations between the meanings and descriptions for men and women. We are aware that there are gender challenges within the Roma

community; therefore we chose to include the same amount of women and men. We also wanted to sample according to age to include old and young respondents. This was done to ensure variation among the respondents and to see if we could find trends relating to generation change (Berg and Lune 2012). We decided to use the term old to talk about those respondents who were older than thirty-five years old in order to include Roma lifestyle in the analysis. Roma are exposed to a lot of hardship that makes their health condition deteriorate faster. Also, Roma are given responsibilities and duties within their families from childhood, which makes them mentally mature from an early age.

To us there could be interesting differences between the younger and older generations of Roma. Therefore, our strategy was to sample according to different *neams*, gender and age to minimize bias in our representation of Roma migrants. Engebriksen (Engebriksen 2014) agreed that it was a good sampling strategy to include variations in the population. Also we found out that almost all the travelers in Oslo are from Romanian origin, and it was hard to find Roma from other countries.

Since our fieldwork relies on qualitative methods, we needed access to Roma's rich and textured descriptions and experiences of their stories, migration, lives in Norway and future plans. It was not necessary to have a specific size for the sample, as a quantitative approach requires. In recruiting respondents we used a *non-probability sampling* approach in recruiting Roma respondents in order to avoid respondents from the same *neam*. *Non-probability sampling* helped us identify patterns and trends among Roma. We chose this approach, as it is not a probability-based method in order to avoid the problems that follow in dealing with a population that travels a lot. Our research is not concerned with representativeness; rather it focuses on understanding in-depth stories.

Within *non-random sampling* we chose *purposive sampling*. This means that our sampling is based on certain attributes that we wanted to study according to age, gender and *neam*. A purposive sampling enables us to study the richness of experiences of a small number of respondents from the Roma community, but we are aware that this sampling strategy can lead to bias. This is because choosing the

sample according to certain criteria can lead to overlooking other important indicators (Berg and Lune 2012).

### **4.3.3 Interviews**

We developed semi-structured interviews, with different open topics, which allowed some room for improvising during the interview. Semi-structured interviews create a loose and informal setting, making the interview more conversation-like compared to a more structured interview with detailed questions. In order to avoid rigid sentences and questions, the interview guide was divided into themes and sub-themes creating a naturally flowing conversation. An informal interview setting enabled the planning of certain topics, allowing the conversation to flow according to the responses of the respondents (Berg and Lune 2012). The interview guide served as a checklist throughout the interview. Through our interview we collected demographic information such as age, religion, education, origin and *neams*, and broader topics such as decisions, strategies, awareness of institutions, social and economic structures, resources, work, income, daily activities, Roma customs and Roma law, discrimination experiences, and social interactions.

During the interview there were many interesting stories that were respondent-driven, and that enabled us to probe deeper into areas of the Roma community. We explored the world from Roma' perspectives and carefully watching the wording of the questions. The idea was to make Roma respondents talk about their unique stories and elaborate on different issues.

We used a pilot interview to see what questions, themes and wording worked. During our pilot interview we realized that certain questions did not make sense, others were too sensitive, and some words like the word 'tradition' had a different meaning to Roma. We therefore had to come up with other ways of explaining or approaching an issue that the respondents could understand by improving the interview guide.

Our translator, of Romanian origin, proved to be of valuable help during the interview setting. Often he would paraphrase and explain to the respondents at great length so that they would understand the theme or questions asked to them. We could foresee difficulties in gaining a level of trust with Roma and getting them to open up and give honest answers to our questions. The hostility and fear Roma experience every day could affect the communication between us. Therefore, our translator became an important tool in making our respondents feel more relaxed.

All of the interviews were conducted in Romanian. Even though they are Roma and some of them speak the gypsy language *Romani*, all of them speak Romanian. The interpreter<sup>2</sup> helped to translate all of the questions and was familiar with many of the stories the respondents were telling and could therefore empathize with them. That is not to say that the interview setting was relaxed at all times. We found ourselves emotionally affected by some stories that were really tough and sad. There were times where the situation became tense and difficult, but our translator helped release the tension. We made an effort to make our respondents more comfortable with the interview setting by providing drinks and food. The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and their length was about an hour.

Later the interviews were transcribed word for word into separate documents. The transcription was conducted in two stages. First, we transcribed the English fragments of each interview literally from the recorded interviews. Secondly, we translated and transcribed the remaining sections in Romanian. Word by word translation and transcription was necessary to make sure that no essence and meaning was lost from the respondents' descriptions.

We are aware that the translators can add their personal interpretations of the topics involved not reflecting the respondent's ideas through this process. We used two translators, due to time limitations, and length of the interviews, and also

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<sup>2</sup> The Romanian interpreter is a young male from Romania who has lived and worked in Norway for over ten years and is well integrated. He has no special education as an interpreter, but he was useful to us because he grew up in Romania. He is not of Roma origin, but he is very familiar with the Roma population in his home country.

to cross-check the accuracy of the first translation. The second translator would also help to add and identify new or lost meanings in the interviews. Cross checking translation leads to more trustworthiness of the data and it ensures that the information is as close as possible to the original meaning.

#### **4.3.4 Observation**

During our fieldwork we used observation at different services offered to Roma by different organizations, and also at the street level to observe some of Roma's daily activities in Oslo. At times we observed our respondents without participating with them. Other times, we gained inside access to certain organizations. For reasons of confidentiality, some data from observation at these organizations cannot be revealed in this study. However, the information gained through this observation helped us as researchers to broaden our understanding of the structural conditions that surround Roma in Oslo. Thus, observation is not our tangible data rather its purpose is to complement our understanding as researchers. We participated as volunteers in one shelter for homeless people. We also gained access to a shelter for women and we visited the facilities where language classes and sewing classes take place. When we were at this facility we were able to see the equipment for the services they use. This type of observation was not necessarily to gain information from respondents; moreover it was to see what services they have access to. At street level, we were observing from afar not having any contact or participation with them. We sat for some time in the downtown area in Oslo just observing a group of Roma interacting with each other and other people. Another time we visited a cafeteria for homeless people where they have the opportunity to have daily meals, have a shower and use the restrooms.

#### **4.3.5 Secondary data**

In our study on Roma migrants we rely on secondary data such as pamphlets, magazines, newspaper articles, journals and books on the subject of Roma migration, history and contemporary issues of the situation of Roma in Norway and Europe. We rely on information from different experts and researches on the

field of Roma migration at FAFO and NOVA, and several NGOs working closely with Roma such as the Red Cross, The Church City Mission, The Salvation Army and the Health Center for Paperless Migrants. The use of secondary sources is to complement to our data collection material, to validate our findings and to gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of Roma travelers in Oslo. Secondary data has been useful in framing the research question, discussing difficult issues with experts and following the public debate on Roma travelers.

#### **4.3.6 Ethics**

Ethical considerations are important during research. It was important for us to gain trust with the respondents by ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. We started each interview by informing the respondents about our study, that it was voluntary and that they could back out at any time. Informed consent is fundamental in all research, to make sure that the respondents are well informed and not duped (Berg and Lune 2012). We were concerned with the fact that we had preconceived ideas about Roma, and we knew that we had to balance our stance not to affect the results of the research. As researchers, we entered the fieldwork with a neutral stance, aware that value-laden preconceptions of Roma would not serve our research well. A neutral stance, which is not always easy, but desirable, is crucial in research to ensure the approach of a research problem in an unbiased way (Berg and Lune 2012). We understand that as researchers, we are affected by preconceptions and judgments that exist in society, but we try to have a neutral approach throughout the study.

During the interviews with experts, researchers, and NGO workers, the respondents were informed about our research topic in advance, so that they could be prepared before our meeting. We informed them about confidentiality so they could choose whether their statements were to be anonymous or not. Consequently, as many issues of Roma are sensitive several respondents chose to be anonymous, while others were more open and did not mind us using their name.

We faced ethical challenges in dealing with a potential gatekeeper as we discussed earlier. We felt that moving ahead with this gatekeeper could compromise our research integrity. Additionally we were considering not giving any incentive to the respondents, but later we decided to pay them for each interview. We decided to pay each respondent 100 kroner per interview as it is a common practice in research. We thought that it was fair to pay that amount for a one-hour interview. We did not pay them for their information, but for their time, because time with us meant less time for them to earn their livelihoods. Compensating Roma travelers for the interview could pose different dilemmas in future research. It could perhaps make them more collaborative or more demanding in compensation for interviews with them in the future.

#### **4.4 Analysis**

The next task after transcribing the interview was to code the material. The information was coded according to these broad subjects: decisions, resources, network and family, challenges, interactions, information and traditions, because we found trends in our interviews that supported these categories. The information was color coded according to subject, and we spent a great amount of time going through all the interviews color-coding sentences according to their topics. This proved to be very time-consuming, but nonetheless very fruitful for organizing information into categories that were similar.

When all the information was color-coded we could then create seven different documents within each subject. Then we started with the task of interpreting the texts. In the seven broad categories we now had to find sub-categories within each theme that was going to help us find the relevant information to our research question. Not all the information provided in the interviews was relevant to our research topic. We had to interpret our findings, like a huge filter, being clear as to what was the original objective of our research study.

In analyzing our findings it was important for us never to assume the analytic relevance of demographic variables until the data and theory showed it to be

relevant (Berg and Lune 2012). Our coding took three different steps from *descriptive coding*, preceding on to coding by *topic*, and finally *analytic coding* (Berg and Lune 2012).

## Chapter 5

### 5. Findings and discussion

The following chapter presents the findings and the discussion that follows. In the analysis we are going to use the theoretical framework that we present in chapter 2. We choose to divide this chapter into four parts. First, we present our socio-demographic findings. Then we present our main findings based on our objectives and research questions. We are going to discuss and analyze the findings on Roma decisions to migrate and the constraints they face in doing so. We are also going to discuss the structures that constrain and enable Roma in Norway, and what strategies and tactics they develop to meet these challenges. Finally, we are going to explore the effect of Roma culture on shaping Roma agency. Lastly, we discuss the challenges that arise when Roma culture intersects with the host culture.

#### 5.1 Socio-Demographic Information

We present our socio-demographic table below, which reflects some basic characteristics of our respondents. This information provides a source to explore further issues related to age, gender, religion, *neams*. Our sample is composed of ten respondents, five men and five women, half of them categorized as young and half of them categorized as old. There is a prevalence of Roma who belong to the *roma romanisat neam*, and four of them are from the *neams caramidari, ursari* and *caldarari*. Marriage is a prevalent status among the respondents. There are only two respondents who are single, who have never been married, and the remaining have been or are married. The common practice amongst Roma is to marry at a young age through informal ceremonies, and often there is no documentation to prove their marriage (Johansen 2010). Most of our respondents have children and the average number of children is three. Only three respondents have no children, and these are the youngest in our sample. The following table shows that all of our respondents have a low level of education. Our respondents mainly come from three different regions in Romania- Muntenya, Oltenia and Gorj, and all of them belong to the orthodox religion. Half of the respondents

report that it is their first visit to Norway and the other half have visited Norway on several occasions. When it comes to their stay in Norway, five of the respondents reported staying in Norway for less than three months, and the other five over three months. In regards to having visited other countries, only three respondents said that they had not been to any other countries except for Norway.

**Figure 2 - Socio-Demographic Information**

ID	Gender	Age (Years)	Education	Marital status	Neam	Children	Visits to Norway	City of origin	Religion	Time in Norway (Months)	Other countries Visited
1	M	54	6	Married	Romanized	3	7	Gorj, Targu Carbunesti	Orthodox	7	Iceland, Italy, cities in Norway, America, Germany, Portugal
2	M	18	5	Single	Caramidari	0	1	Targu-Jiu	Orthodox	3	France, America, Denmark, Belgium, Portugal
3	M	37	8	Married	Romanized	1	Several	Braila	Orthodox	3	No
4	F	19	2	Separated	Ursari	0	1	Valcea	Orthodox	5	No
5	F	50	0	Married	Romanized	5	2	Valcea, Oltenia	Orthodox	1	Germany
6	F	60	5	Widow	Caldarari	10	1	-	Orthodox	2 weeks	No
7	M	46	8	Divorced	Romanized	1	2	Craiova, Oltenia	Orthodox	1 week	Italy
8	M	20	2	Divorced	Caramidari	0	1	Targu-Jiu	Orthodox	1	Portugal
9	F	24	9	Single	Romanized	1	2	-	Orthodox	24	Stockholm, Sweden
10	F	29	4	Married	Romanized	3	1	Valcea	Orthodox	1	Bulgaria, Russia

## 5.2 The Respondents

To present the findings we have chosen six respondents to illustrate our main objectives in the research. The reason why we have chosen these respondents is because their stories represent the most important trends in the study. However, we occasionally refer to other respondents when we want to illustrate an important

trend. In the following section, we will present each character's background, personality and the way they presented their stories. We choose these respondents' backgrounds so that the reader can have a better understanding of who they are. In order to maintain anonymity the respondents' names have been changed.

### **Roger**

Roger is the youngest of the respondents, age 19, but his life experience is broad. He is single and used to live with his mother and uncles back in southwest Romania. He has traveled a lot, but now he is in Oslo alone. He followed his uncle's suggestion to travel to Norway to make some money to help the family. His father lives in Portugal and his mother is begging in Sweden. They decided to leave Romania after a tragedy hit his family. Roger is an open, confident and energetic teenager who is very talkative. He is cute, charming and cheeky. He wants to marry, but it is not the time for that and therefore he rejected many marriage proposals. Due to his enthusiastic nature, Roger often got distracted during the interview giving detailed information about a topic. He seems friendly, well connected and creative in his pursuit for money. Roger has had to grow up fast to take care of himself and his family from a young age, but he still reflects a child in many ways.

### **Marco**

Marco is in his 50s and is from a city in the southwest of Romania. He resembles a brave person unafraid to speak his mind. He is a world traveler, but he keeps Romania really close to his heart. His life experience together with six years of education influences how articulated and informed his ideas are. His ideas express knowledge of other cultures and other values, and the legal system. He has been in different cities in Norway many times before across a period of eleven years, and has many good sentiments about Norway, being open to outside influences. He is married and is a father of three and grandfather of two, who he lovingly takes care of. He is a caring father whose main mission is to provide well-being to his family. For this reason, his determination and ambition in life is strong. He is a

multi-skilled person who is flexible when it comes to jobs, and has worked in many different sectors from agriculture to construction. He also speaks several languages and feels that he does not need to learn more, holding onto his own culture. He is a very talkative, energetic, festive and has a social personality. In the interview setting, he was very relaxed and open. He had coffee and talked more than any other respondent. Marco stands out in the crowd for all his knowledge he has accumulated and his personal achievements. He was a well-known athlete in a local team in Romania and was in the army.

### **Bruno**

Bruno is 37 years old. He is married and has one child. He is from a city close to the Danube River. He has completed his mandatory education in Romania, which is 8 years. He was confident in his answers, but reluctant to give more information than what was asked of him, perhaps revealing distrust towards *gadjo*. Bruno is a man of few words, but when he speaks he takes his time to elaborate his answers. Thus, he came across as a bit reserved and more careful. He has visited Norway several times. He is an independent, funny, creative and resourceful person who is willing to sacrifice himself for his family. He seems to have mixed emotions about being in Norway, because he misses home. He has the personality and instinct to survive in any urban setting. As well as Marco, Bruno has learned many skills throughout his life and he is eager to learn languages. Bruno is an emotionally, physically and brave man, and he does not care what people think about him. He does not give much thought to Roma culture and tradition, but follows his own way. He makes use of what is accessible to him, and has a positive outlook on his life in Norway.

### **Joanna**

Joanna is one of the youngest respondents only 19 years old, and is from a city in the heart of Romania. Despite her age, she carries a lot of life stories. Pressured by her family, she got married when she was 14 years old, and she has been to jail and is now divorced from her husband. The fact that she got married so early is one of the obstacles to having more education. Although she has little education,

she is smart and willing to learn. Her brave and courageous nature comes forward when she proudly speaks about how she left Romania for the first time and how she gets by in Oslo alone. Joanna is opinionated and she portrays a rebellious character. We can see by the way she speaks and dresses that she wants to break with Roma traditions, because she grew up with Romanians and feels more liberated. She avoids contact with Roma, and in this way, she gives the impression of trying to conceal her Roma identity. She is the only respondent who wore tight pants and a tight shirt, jewelry and make-up. Despite her petite figure she has a very confident personality and has experienced a lot for her age. She is independent and is motivated to go back to school to learn more languages, get her driver's license, and is eager to learn new skills. In the interview setting, Joanna seemed skeptical at first, but as time passed she seemed more relaxed, comfortable and was laughing more, but was eager to finish the interview to get back to her business.

### **Margaret**

Margaret is 50 years old, has five children, eleven grandchildren and is from a region at the center of Romania. She is married, but her husband is in Romania taking care of the kids and she is courageously alone in Norway. Margaret has very traditional opinions on marriage and roles of women and men, and this can be seen in the way she dresses, speaks and behaves revealing a conservative nature. She has a lot of respect for her own clan and has really strong and positive opinions about her people. In the interview setting, she was not so willing to collaborate. She did not seem comfortable during the interview and displayed distrust. Having a large family, with 3 daughters-in-law, and many kids living under the same roof, has made her overly concerned about how much money she can get. She is only middle-aged, but she appears much older, and looks tired.

### **Alexander**

Alexander is just twenty years old, but has the spirit and experience of an older person. He is a good-looking man with a strong physique, tattoos and scars. However, he does not look intimidating. He has been married before, but is

currently single because he thinks his wife failed in her duties. Now he is on his own in Norway, but his brothers, like him, are in other European countries making a living to support their father and sister back in Romania. He currently has no children, as he wants to prioritize his financial responsibilities, but one day he wants to have a big family, and he dreams about being a boss. He is from the southwest of Romania, and this is his first time in Norway. He has not traveled so much before, but he is very skillful and has experience in construction. He has a history of rebellion, problems with the law as well as tragic events in his life, but he seems reflective and wants a change and a better future. In the interview setting, he was relaxed and open, but he showed a lot of sadness and regret about his past. Based on his shady past he seemed tense and not so open when speaking about criminal activities. His strategy is to stay alone and in this way he avoids being associated with other Roma and the stigma that follows. However, he is a very likeable person who gets along with non-Roma.

### **5.3 Decision to Migrate**

Central to our analysis is the dialectics of agency and structure in the structuration theory, which we understand as a duality where there is a constant and changing interplay between the individuals and the structure. This dialectic relationship implies that structure and agency are interrelated and iterative (Giddens 1984). Furthermore, structuration theory explains that structures constrain and enable individuals, but at the same time individuals interpret their structural surroundings and in doing so change them (Marsh 2010).

The structuration theory has been widely developed in migration studies, although most theories in migration put more attention in the structure. The push-pull model for example, describes migration as a phenomena “*driven by push factors operating from the region or country of origin (poverty, unemployment, landlessness, political repression, low social status, etc.), and pull factors operating from the place or country of destination (better income and job prospects, better education and welfare systems, land to settle, good environmental and living conditions, political freedom etc.)*” (King 2012:13).

Other theories such as the historical-structural models and the mobility transition model also emphasize on macro-structural forces (King 2012).

As a result, in the emphasis on structures, the migrants are not taken into account or are represented as people with little power. The process of migration does not only come as a result of the macro-structural factors. The personal, family and cultural forces of the migrants are also part of the analysis.

Vlase and Voicu (2013) indicate that migrants express their agency in their capability to earn a livelihood in host countries. Moreover, migrants have the capability to assess their possibilities according to the structural conditions and according to their aims. This approach in migration studies is useful to explain the migration process of Roma as it is valuable to describe the macro structures surrounding Roma migration, and at the same time explain that they are strategic actors who actively interpret and decide what they are doing and why.

### **5.3.1 Push and pull factors**

In communist Romania, migration diminished due to the restrictive migration policies that the government applied. In post-communist Romania with the political and economic instability that followed, some Romanians decided to leave the country. But it was not until the twenty-first century that migration from Romania considerably increased.

Following the accession of Romania to the EU in 2007, when nationals were granted the right to move and work in the EU, it was estimated that more than 3 million Romanians had left the country in search of stability by 2010 (OECD 2012). According to a Eurostat (2013), Bulgaria (49%) and Romania (42%) have the highest shares of persons being at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Poverty in Romania increased as a consequence to a decline in economic output. The transition to a market economy found a weakened labor market, low wages and pensions, and poverty mostly in the rural areas (Ringold 2000). Today, Romania's poorest are farmers and unemployed rural households that have inadequate social services and poor sanitation facilities.

Romania has proved to be a particularly challenging country for Roma and the conditions there has been a motivating factor for their migration. According to a study conducted by Milosheva-Krushe et al. (2013), Roma settlements in Romania, lack access to public services and the facilities are often unsafe and crowded. Also, UNDP (2011) established that usually Roma do not own a house or a piece of land, compared to their non-Roma neighbors. Most Roma families live in deprived communities, with poverty rates four times higher than the national average (Milosheva-Krushe et al. 2013). The financial constraints Roma face due to unemployment correspondingly affects their access to education, health treatment, food and clothing. There have been various funding programs intended to improve Roma conditions implemented by the government and international organizations. However, Roma have experienced little community development, and continue to leave their country in the search for better opportunities.

The rate of Roma unemployment is much higher than for non-Roma in Romania (Milosheva-Krushe et al. 2013). A survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Human Rights (2012) shows that the unemployment rate in Romania is close to 30 % for Roma, while for non-Roma it is close to 12 %. Lack of education, discrimination in the access to the labor market and lack of demand of traditional occupations are the main reasons for the high unemployment rate among Roma (Council of Europe 2012). The traditional Roma occupations such as brick makers, metalworkers, and craft makers are not demanded in Romania. Romania had a big brick industry in the nineteenth century. When the brick industry collapsed, Roma decided to work in agriculture or in temporary activities such as, iron sales or paper sales. The lack of job opportunities in Romania represents the primary push factor for migration of Roma and the basis for the acceptance of inferior occupations abroad. Since 1989, one can see indicators of waves of Roma migration towards Western European (Johansen 2010).

Throughout interviews, respondents provided insights of their family's traditional occupations and the impracticality of having these skills in the Romanian context today. Marco explained his occupation and hopeless situation in Romania, which made him leave:

*My main job is brick maker; I was making bricks for citizens, for houses, for buildings, for enterprises. I was selling them to the enterprises. I was making it with soil and I was burning it on coal or wood. But what can we do in Romania now? Haven't you also left Romania by poverty? (Asked to translator) (ID 1).*

Due to the lack of demand for their traditional skills, Roma have limited sources of income, as there is no need for their specialized work. Therefore, Roma have to find opportunities elsewhere. Those with more possibilities are traders or work with the land, but families with children, old or sick members, have less possibilities to earn an income. Roma respondents with children reported that one source of income in Romania is child allowance. Child state allowance is a benefit, paid for all children until they reach the age of 18. The allowance equals to 200 *lei* per month (about 55 USD) for children younger than two years old and to 42 *lei* per month (about 15 USD) for those older than two years. This benefit, as well as childcare, is a part of Romania's social assistance benefits to create incentives for parents to work (European Union 2014).

Alexander's family buys and sells clothes in Romania. The lack of job opportunities causes a lot of competition in the Romanian streets between different groups of Roma. This competition may lead to conflicts between Roma, and may be another obstacle to make a livelihood. Alexander explains a conflict between people from different cities in Romania. He accuses other groups of stealing from people, ruining his reputation and possibility to do business. He further explains:

*There are people that come from the outskirts of the city and they do bad stuff. They are giving us big problems, really. We are selling, we are staying in the park, and they come in groups, like 20 guys, and steal from people. The gypsies are discussing with them every day to stop stealing. Yes, bro. From Valcea. They got us into problems, bro. We cannot stay here at all. We cannot earn money from this (ID 8).*

Along with the lack of job opportunities and inadequate sources of income, poor housing conditions and health difficulties of family members are critical when

deciding whether or not to migrate. Roma respondents helped us understand their hard living conditions in Romania and what made them decide to come to Norway. Marco explained how his relative's health condition and the lack of opportunities for medical treatment made him decide to leave to Romania:

*I have a child that has a tumor on his heel, because of an accident and the doctors amputated his leg. So I have to make money to buy the medicine, which I can't find in Romania. I can find it in Italy or Germany in the black market, because the Ministry of Health of Romania removed the medicine because it was too expensive. So I have to buy it on the black market. That is why I came here to Norway. To earn €1000, to buy him 50 vials of the medicine. A vial costs €20, bought from the black market without a receipt. We do not have any other possibilities in Romania, because they closed all of them. Now all of the possibilities are for the middle high class. For the low class there is nothing left. We tight and tight and tight the belt until we cannot stand it anymore. That is why we left Romania (ID 1).*

When Alexander's mother died he got into trouble and ended up in jail. While he was in jail his house was stripped of belongings. He explains:

*I was in jail and when I came back home I didn't find windows. I didn't find anything. Nor beds or home. So I said: I should go out of Romania to make some money, so that I could build my house, my wall (ID 8).*

The lack of job opportunities and personal struggles are factors that have influenced individuals' decisions to move from Romania. To cope with the social and economic difficulties, Roma choose different strategies to migrate. In fact, migration theory describes that migrants have the choice over their decision to move, as this type of migration is a voluntary process (Bakewell 2010). Moreover, King (2012) analyzes the structural forces promoting migration in areas of origin; the socio-economic structural factors enabling it in the destination; and consideration of the motivations, goals and aspirations of the people who migrate. Hence, migration is a three-fold process: it is determined by the situation at the home country, the situation in the host country and by the personal aims to migrate.

In line with the classical push-pull migration model, the macro structures of the host country are another great motivational force that makes Roma migration possible. In this regard, Norway as a host country is seen as a land of opportunity, as explained by the lack of economic opportunities in Romania. Marco romanticizes his ideas on Norway and explains his motivation to come as follows:

*No country compares to Norway. It is one of the most beautiful countries in the world, a touristic country. It doesn't know what crisis is, and I am surprised that it takes care of its junkies, giving them money so that they don't have to live on the streets. You don't see this in Romania. I decided to come to Norway, seeing Italy's and all of Europe's crisis (ID 1).*

Lack of income opportunities in Romania and information of better possibilities in Norway helped Alexander decide to travel:

*People explained to us. They said: you can earn money in Norway. Go, because you can earn money in Norway, by begging and so. And you will earn money there (ID 8).*

### **5.3.2 The Aims**

The largest motivational factor for Roma to leave their home country is the lack of money their families have. Roma are typically a kinship society. This means that Roma are a family-based society in which the family bond is first and foremost (Engebrigtsen 2011). Each Roma family has tight bonds and they help each other, and they get together if they have to solve a problem. As in most families, in Roma families, parents, siblings and in-laws will help each other with what they have like a stranger never will do. Each Roma family is an economic unit, which means that most of the economic activities of family members are included in the family income (Engebrigtsen 2007). In this regard, Bruno explains his aspirations to help his family in the following quote:

*I decided to move to Norway to make money for the child. To support the others as well. The winter is tough, so this means “having will” for the family. So the family will live better. I am staying in Norway for two months at most. About so, two months (ID 3).*

Roma who decide to leave in search for better income opportunities will send money back to their families in Romania. This is not a new development. In fact, an effect of international labor migration is that a part of the income earned by migrants can be sent back to their home country. This income is known as remittances and it is used to cover food, clothing, education expenses or in some cases to invest in a property or business.

There are more than 230 million international migrants and over 700 million internal migrants worldwide impacted by migration and therefore remittances take place. In 2013, remittances flows to low-income countries were estimated at around USD 414 billion, making them three times larger than the official development assistance (World Bank 2013). Romanians abroad sent about USD 3.6 billion to their home country in 2013, having an impact on Romania’s macroeconomic development. In Romania, net remittances make a substantial contribution to balancing a negative current account. Without remittances, the current account deficit in Romania would have been 55% higher (Comini and Faes-Cannito 2010).

The fact that many Roma send remittances back home to help their families shows that they have a strategy. Related to structuration theory, agency reflects the capacity of actors to reveal their position, create strategies and take action to achieve their desires (Bakewell 2012). If we see Roma’s decisions, we understand that their main goal is to travel and work abroad to send money back to their family members in Romania. Joanna explains why she decided to come to Norway as follows:

*And firstly I came with a purpose: to make a living, to be able to support my family, and to be able to do something with my life (ID 4).*

Due to the tight family bonds, the migration process comprises decisions of who migrates, where to go, for how long, etc. These decisions are taken within the core of Roma household, and guide the tasks of different members of the family. King (2012) explains that when a family unit contemplates migration, the household seeks to minimize the economic risks. By deciding who migrates, where to go and what to do, they are diversifying their earnings and resources into a strategic plan. Joanna says that her parents are old and no longer traveling. Therefore, all their ten children provide for them. This decision means that the family maximizes its earnings and reduces the risk of their old parents being in tough conditions abroad. She explains:

*They are back home. They are no longer traveling for about 10 years. My father is 63 and my mother is 64. Now it is us, the children. We are 12 children. Sometimes we are sending a few things from what we are doing here. Everyone has his own road, because we all left the country. I speak with my brothers and sisters, and they are doing better. All of them are in France. It is everyone for themselves (ID 4).*

Even though this is not the case for everybody, this respondent considers it more profitable and less risky to be by herself, and the strategy of being alone brings more benefits to her and her old parents. And even those who decide to stay have different tasks. This is supported by the NELM theory, which explains that households are rational units and make use of a utility maximizing rationale (King 2012). In this way, each member of the household has a task and a role to play in the migration process (Bakewell 2010). Roma households composed with a married couple with or without children, and the parents of the man, seek to maximize their opportunities by diversifying the destination of migration. In this way, it is common to see members of Roma families spread out in different countries in Europe. By doing this they diversify risks, roles and benefits for their families. Thus, each family decides who is fit to travel and who should stay to take care of the household. Bruno explains his family's plan to split up and move abroad to maximize their opportunities as follows:

*My wife is in Italy. My brothers and sisters are in Italy and are married there. My mother and father are back home. I help them with money. The child is with my parents (ID3).*

### **5.3.3 Migration Network**

For Arango (2004) migration networks are important elements in migration studies. In fact, networks benefit the understanding of individual choices of migration. These networks are personal connections (family, friends or acquaintances) that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants (King 2012). These networks are an important source of information that facilitates migration as they help to lower travel costs and risks (ibid).

As such, we understand that the information and contacts that are exchanged through the networks are based on individual perceptions. Migrants and former migrants describe their experiences to the potential travelers, helping to reduce the risks of migration. Potential travelers evaluate the information and decide whether to travel or not based on their aims. Therefore, individuals are capable of using and having control over their social relations and have the ability to transform their situation using these networks (Sewell 1992).

The interviews helped us examine the importance of networks and how in using these social relations Roma understand and decide for themselves what is best for their situation. In fact, Roma travelers were very motivated to migrate to Norway as they have heard positive experiences from other Roma migrants in their network. Marco explained how he received information about Norway through his network:

*I came here from Romania. I went home from Italy and I heard from people that have been for a long time, 11-12 years that in Norway you can gain some money with bottles or begging, so I came here as well (ID 1).*

Non-criminal networks also play an important role in the mobility of migrants across borders and facilitate the creation of opportunities for migrants. In addition to information, networks facilitate the exchange of mutual aid and assistance

(Light and Bhachu 2004). Many respondents reported having access to transportation to Norway, because they knew someone or travelled in-group with other Roma. Most respondents came to Norway by car. Bruno heard about opportunities in Norway from his connections and exchanged help for his transportation with them. He reported:

*I heard from Norway from some guys who were here before. They have helped their families. And they also needed a driver, because we came by car. I did not pay anything because they needed a driver (ID 3).*

Through word of mouth, Roma build connections and networks that enable them to exchange experiences and services. Networks also work as a source for financing the cost of migration. Some Roma have debt, since they borrow money to travel to Norway as a way to finance their migration. Furthermore, migrant networks facilitate access to the different opportunities and facilitate movement (Light and Bhachu 2004). Margaret explained how her connections helped her to finance her travel to Norway:

*Sometimes to survive, you have the luck to find people who have more financial options and that can bring you here on credit. Because at home you don't have the money to come here whenever you want (ID 5).*

We understand Roma migration as a process influenced by macro- and micro structures. At the macro level Roma experience hard socio-economic conditions in Romania and they see a land full of opportunities in Norway, where they can earn a sufficient income to support their families. At the micro level, helping family through remittances and personal goals play a significant role in the decision to migrate. During the process, Roma and their families decide different strategies to carry through with migration, depending on who is best fit to leave and minimizing the risk to travel. To assess the risks and make an informed decision, Roma rely on information about the host country, transportation and financial opportunities delivered by their networks. When planning to migrate Roma make a long-term strategy that includes the places they want to go, the

duration of stay, who is going and who is staying. Once they get to the destination, they develop different tactics to adjust to a more short-term strategy as a response to the conditions they encounter in a new place. Roma make these plans according to the resources they have at hand; this includes their broader network, previous experience, information and money.

The way Roma respond to societal structures will produce different strategic outcomes. From the moment of departure, Roma weigh their options on where to travel in order to have income opportunities. Roma decide to come to Norway although pushed by involuntary and voluntary factors in their home countries. However, they decide and plan their migration through their networks, and choose to come to Norway over another country for example. Roma will strategically migrate where it is most beneficial for them. In our study, we came across an older Roma woman who told us that it was good in Norway, but that she might go back to Germany because they give more childcare there. This shows that Roma weigh their income opportunities, and migrate where it is best for them to stay. Thus, when Roma decide to migrate they are weighing their options strategically and their decisions are likely to change according to their situation and perceived options at the time. If life becomes harder in Norway with more imposed restrictions and barriers, Roma may find it better to seek more opportunities elsewhere. If there are better income opportunities in another European country, Roma may perhaps leave Norway to find more income and live a life with less societal restrictions and where they are likely to find assistance. As such, Roma respond tactically and strategically according to societal restrictions, opportunities and according to their aims.

#### **5.4 The Interplay of Agency and Structure - developing tactics and strategies**

As stated earlier, one of our objectives is to examine the social, political and economic structures that surround Roma migrants in Norway and how they respond to them. Thus, we examine the interplay between Roma migrants and the structures surrounding them in Oslo. In this part, we aim to explore the constraints and potentials Roma migrants face in Norway when trying to reach their aims,

and to present Roma's strategies for achieving these aims. As such, we see Roma's strategies as an outcome of the interplay between Roma agency and their surrounding social, economic and political structure in Norway. We show how the structural forces surrounding Roma influence their daily lives, decisions and goals and drive them to develop different tactics in response to constraining and enabling societal conditions in Oslo. In understanding Roma's responses to societal structures, it is important to consider the ongoing Roma debate and political climate in Norway.

#### **5.4.1 Roma livelihoods in Oslo**

In order to understand Roma actions and their strategies for survival in dealing with societal structures in Oslo, we are interested in knowing what Roma do on a daily basis. We wanted to find out what activities Roma get involved in, how they earn an income and what services they use. Through our interviews with Roma respondents we discovered that Roma rely on many activities to make a living. For the most part, Roma beg, but they also sell magazines, collect bottles and cigarette packs. They also sell flowers, jewelry, electronic parts and prescription drugs. Although the respondents did not explicitly say that they steal, they pointed out that it is a common practice amongst Roma travelers due to their tough circumstances. However, the respondents say that they would avoid it if they could.

We also noticed that Roma are aware of and make use of the services provided to them such as shelters, meals, sanitation facilities, medical help, and language and skill courses. However, there are constraints at the political level in Norway that challenge their daily activities. Nonetheless, Roma find strategies to overcome these constraints and find alternative ways to survive.

#### **5.4.2 Political Climate and Media Debate**

As in the rest of Europe, the media debate on Roma migration to Norway has been given large attention, and for the most part it has been negative (Johansen 2013, Engebretsen 2012). 'The foreign beggars' and 'rom people', as they are

often referred to in the media, have triggered a large reaction of outrage, condemnation and compassion in Norway (Engebrigtsen 2012). The increasing arrival of Roma migrants to Oslo shows that the situation for the Roma minority is a challenge that persists in all corners of Europe. It is largely the destitute Roma migrants' arrival to Norway from Romania, which has brought attention to the Roma minority here (Johansen 2013). The ongoing Roma debate over the last eight years has sought to criminalize Roma (Johansen 2013, Engebrigtsen 2012). The public opinion continues to speak about the increasing crime amongst Roma, and that they are involved in organized crime and human trafficking (National Criminal Investigation Service Norway 2012). This reflects a part of hate speech and discrimination discourse that is rife in Europe today portraying Roma as a threat (Matache 2014).

Despite these propositions, there is no evidence that these behaviors are true for Roma migrants (Engebrigtsen 2012, Johansen 2013). With the influx of Roma migrants to Oslo from particularly the summer of 2012, the Roma debate became more antagonistic. It shifted towards a discussion of the expulsion of Roma and a ban on begging entered the political scene (Johansen 2013). Arguments for the expulsion and ban on music street performances<sup>3</sup> and begging, flourished as politicians were preparing for the upcoming parliamentary election in September 2013 as they were trying to win public opinion (ibid.).

The public opinion in Norway has for the most part been negative and aggressive towards Roma. There exists a great deal of myths on this population. Some of the myths that have prevailed in the Norwegian public realm, center around the ideas that Roma are not really poor, come to trick locals, earn a lot of money exploiting children and adults through begging and for human trafficking (Engebrigtsen 2012). The biased public opinion towards Roma in Norway must be seen in connection with the myths on Roma that have prevailed since the 1600s and with the move towards conservative governments in Europe. The results of a study on myths of Roma conducted in Belgium show that beggars' income is far below the

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<sup>3</sup> The police enforced a ban on playing music in the downtown Oslo this summer, from 21.mai until 1.august, between 8-17 hours, due to complaints about the noise from office workers (Osloby 2014).

poverty line; and it does not give any extra benefit to beg with children. Furthermore, they do not find any connection between begging and organized crime and human trafficking, as begging is not a profitable and nor an appealing activity for traffickers (Adriaenssens and Hendrickx 2011).

In our study we did not find evidence either that supports these myths around begging. In fact, we found Roma to be very protective of their children and they do not bring them to Norway. They fear that the authorities take their children away from them, as one of the respondents explained to us: *“I would never bring my children here, because here in this country they will take your kids and put them in an orphanage. I would rather be poor for the rest of my life than to lose my kids”* (ID 10). Secondly, we did not find evidence that supports begging as a profitable activity for Roma. Moreover, begging is an activity that covers daily expenses and allows them to send some money back home, but begging is not an activity that can take Roma out of long-term poverty. However, for the third myth we found slightly different results.

We came across one case of human trafficking as one informant explained to us: *“I was sold. My parents and friends found out about it and they found them (traffickers), and the government put me under social protection”* (ID 9). We also found evidence of illegal distribution of cigarettes and prescription drugs. The evidence does not prove a correlation or causation between begging and organized crime or human trafficking, but it points to the existence of the phenomenon that can be an area for further study.

Following the political development in Europe, Norway has witnessed a shift towards a conservative right-wing government. The political climate towards Roma migrants was already negative before the election in 2013, as several political parties expressed their condemnation and outrage over Roma beggars. A study by Norway Barometer in the summer of 2013 showed that 61 percent of the country’s politicians were positively inclined towards a ban on begging (Johansen, 2013). Only the Christian Party, the Socialist Left Party and the Liberal party have been against a ban on begging. Although politicians’ opinions would vary from region to region, and city to city, it became evident that

criminalizing Roma through the ban on begging debate had entered the political scene and was not going to fade any time soon (ibid).

### 5.4.3 Moving towards a ban on begging



**Figure 3 - Begging in Oslo**

The current Norwegian right-wing government has opened for a national ban on begging from the summer of 2015 in their respective political programs. However, the sitting government comprised of both the Conservative and the Progress Party is dependent on smaller parties' support to get a majority in parliament for implementing a ban nationally. Initially, the Central Party had agreed to support the government in its initiative for a national ban. However, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2015, the Central Party changed its position and announced that it will not back the government's plan to ban begging nationally (Rønning 2015). Although the Norwegian government has not been able to get a backing for a national ban, local municipalities can choose to implement the ban or not, and so far only Arendal municipality has chosen to make begging illegal (Kagge and Tjernshaugen 2014). When the newspaper Aftenposten asked the Minister of

Justice, Anders Anundsen from the Progress Party, whether a ban on begging could harm the most vulnerable people, his response was as follows:

*There has been a very big change in who is begging in Norway. In many cases there are well-organized criminals who have this as a sort of profession. The begging is also more aggressive now than before. These conditions make it important to implement a ban on begging. It is also an important signal to those who come to Norway to beg during the summer season that they should not continue to do so (Glomnes and Tjernshaugen 2014).*

The quote above illustrates the tough stance the current government has taken towards begging. Oslo municipality is dependent on backing from the Labor party in implementing a ban on begging. So far, the Labor Party has issued a suggestion for a ban within Circle 2 (which indicates the inner area of Oslo), on and next to all public transport, and outside shopping centers and private houses between May 1<sup>st</sup> and Oct 1<sup>st</sup> (Oslo Municipality 2014). It is uncertain if Oslo municipality will implement a partial or total ban on begging as the city board is highly divided in this matter. The sentiments for a local ban in the municipalities are not entirely in favor; until now Drammen is the only large municipality with city status in which the local politicians are in favor of a ban (Tjernshaugen and Melgård 2014). By March 2015, the municipalities of Lillesand and Arendal have implemented a ban on begging (Brønmo 2015).

#### **5.4.4 A ban on the freedom of speech?**

The political action towards a ban on begging can be seen as a movement in restricting Roma, although it aims to restrict all begging, there is an underlying fear amongst several NGOs that the ban will only target Roma. According to JusBuss the ban on begging is a ban on asking for help and goes against the human rights of individuals. Moreover, such a ban could be used selectively only against Roma and not other groups (JusBuss 2014). Furthermore, the Church City Mission worries about the possible effect a ban might have: “The ban on begging is discriminating. It targets only Roma, and not Norwegians. It is to criminalize

only Roma. If they do not want begging, they should support our work” (Church City Mission 2014). Both JusBuss and the Church City Mission fear that a ban on begging will discriminate Roma and will only cause more harm. Also, Jon Wessel-Aas, a prominent lawyer and human rights expert, claims not only that the ban is a breach on the freedom of speech and is discriminatory, but that it conflicts with the Norwegian Constitution and is a breach with international commitments Norway is bound by (Fladberg and Prestegård 2015).

The motivation on the ban on begging, as pronounced by the Minister of Justice in the quotation above, is to make Norway a less attractive destination for beggars. It is a regulation that will attempt to constrain what Roma can and cannot do in Norway. As such, the ban is a regulation that will restrict Roma movement and livelihood while in Norway if it comes into force in Oslo, because Roma rely heavily on this activity. All the respondents we interviewed and their families rely on begging as one of the main sources of income.

The problem of the ban on begging is that it denies freedom and empowerment to Roma. It is a top-down approach denying the participation of individuals and their opinions. Sabina Alkire (2005) argues that it is important to involve the agency of individuals so that they can be active in shaping development processes. She emphasizes further that poverty reduction and social change need to begin with the empowerment at the individual level. Human agency refers to people’s ability to get involved and given the opportunity in shaping their own future (Alkire 2005). According to Amartya Sen (1985), a person’s well-being is the outcome of what he or she achieves in life, and a person’s ability to choose freely to do one thing over another. To Sen human agency is important as it recognizes people as responsible individuals. It is important that a person carefully judges and chooses what is best for him or herself, rather than decisions placed on them by others (ibid). Therefore, human agency is a useful tool to explain the actions of Roma, especially concerning the debate on begging and other constraining forces that Roma experience in Norway. Hence, we argue that a ban on begging is restrictive on Roma agency, but at the same time Roma will choose different solutions in response to the ban. Roma will choose different solutions according to what they

see best fit for them, thus showing a response to the constraining forces in Norway.

A problem with the ban on begging is also at a philosophical level. An enforcement of a ban on begging, conflicts with the fundamental freedom of speech of an individual. In different countries where a ban on begging has been enforced, it has been appealed and lifted by the Supreme Court considering it a violation of the Constitution and against the freedom of speech of the individual. The Supreme Court in the United States of America considers that asking for money is considered as speech practice and is protected by the First Amendment (Liptak 2014). According to Craig Ducat, a verbal request for help that carries no harm of any type and is done in a peaceful manner should be legal (Ducat 2013). Likewise, the Supreme Court of Austria says that a general ban on begging without exemptions (such as obtrusive, aggressive and begging with minors) is against human right conventions (The Austrian Times 2011). It is also difficult to understand the practical definition of such a ban. Would it criminalize the beggar asking for help, or the person wanting to give help, or both? A ban on begging is ultimately denying people the freedom to choose for themselves what they want to do. As such, a ban is denying self-determination and freedom to people, denying them of the capability to choose what they want to achieve in life. Ultimately, a ban is denying a person to ask for help.

James Griffin's (2008) ideas on agency determining human rights is relevant when considering freedom of speech for every person. A ban on begging is a direct interference in a person's ability to achieve a good life. Our informant Marco illustrated the problem of making begging illegal in the following passage:

*I heard about it (ban on begging) in Romania and Portugal, but no government or state can force a Norwegian to not put a hand in his pocket and give some money to someone. They cannot obligate him not to give money, it is not the government giving that money, it's a citizen out of pity (ID 1).*

His response confirms that a ban on begging has practical challenges in defining who it targets- the beggar or the giver, and that it goes against fundamental freedoms of humans, and ultimately human agency.

#### **5.4.5 Roma reactions to a potential ban on begging**

When interviewing Roma respondents about the possibility of a ban on begging, nine out of ten had heard about the discussion on making begging illegal. This supports the argument that Roma are informed on the debate happening around them. In light of a possible ban Margaret speaks with disappointment:

*I heard something about it. Roma have already started to complain. They have also heard about this. A little. But they are not sure. We know it by word-of-mouth. Old fashioned (ID 5).*

Early in the research an expert explained to us that Roma do not follow the public Roma debate, because they do not read newspapers or watch television. However, nearly all of the respondents knew about the overall discussion on the regulation of begging. Their awareness of the debate shows an interaction between Roma and their environment. When we asked about their thoughts around a possible ban on begging, they expressed concern on the difficulty to apply such a ban, as it will affect a lot of people negatively. Margaret explains how the ban will affect Roma as follows:

*They will not let us beg anymore. We are not working, with all our struggle and suffering. We suffer a lot in order to gain something, you don't know what we will gain, because maybe there are days when you are not doing anything, not even for food, maybe you would be better working the land, but at least you gain something (from begging). It would be easier because you work 6-7 hours and you rest 3 hours. But we are searching for bottles day and night, we go begging so that we could earn 400 NOK to send it home (ID 5).*

This implies that a possible ban on begging will create more difficulties than solutions for Roma, because these regulations are limiting Roma's actions and their ways to earn a livelihood. With ever more restraining regulations Roma will respond in finding new ways to earn a livelihood in more tactical ways. More restricting regulations are likely to cause more harsh responses resulting in a downward spiral for both sides. The ban on begging conflicts with Roma's ability to achieve their aims and it pushes them to create more tactical ways to achieve their goals.

In the same way that Giddens and Marsh explain, we believe that the ban on begging will affect Roma and in turn they will interpret and react against it. Roma have different tactics in dealing with constraining societal structures. Roma tactics are outcomes of the interplay between Roma agency and structure. According to Giddens (1984) the notions of agency and structure are interdependent; where individuals are affected by constraints, but in turn interpret and change them. He uses a coin analogy to symbolize the relationship between agency and structure, in which only one can be studied by holding the other constant (Marsh 2010). However, this is only in analytical terms. Marsh (2010) elaborates on this point and argues that in order for a structure to affect an individual or vice versa, one action must take place first.

In light of our interpretation of Acton's typologies of strategies, every Roma is likely to react differently to a ban on begging depending on their aims, interpretation of such a ban, and the situation and possibilities in any given moment. Our main findings illustrate that a ban on begging will have different possible outcomes: continue begging, leave the country or move to other economic activities. We argue that Roma have strategies to cope with such restraints and find inventive ways around a possible restriction be it, on begging, music and sleeping in public places. This will probably lead Roma to continue with their daily activities, but in a more hidden way. Our data suggest that a first outcome is that Roma will continue begging in a secret fashion and will trigger the start of new activities to compensate for lost income.

According to our findings, a second outcome will be that Roma will choose to travel to other places. Marco and other three Roma respondents told us that they would leave the country if a ban is implemented. Marco explained: “*If they ban things in Norway, I will go back to Italy, where I worked*” (ID 1). Thirdly, our findings show that a possible outcome of a ban on begging is that Roma will pursue other activities instead and create a feeling of apathy and hopelessness. Consequently, Roma will be pushed to find opportunities in other economic activities. The three outcomes above show that a possible ban on begging will have several outcomes for Roma, that is, continuing to beg in a more hidden fashion, leaving the country or continuing with other activities like selling magazines. The different Roma reactions explained above would vary from individual to individual, or even from family to family depending on their resources, information and aims. These reactions develop into strategies, as suggested by Acton (1974) in order for Roma to achieve their aims as a response to societal constraints.

A possible ban on begging will make life more difficult for Roma since this is a way for Roma to earn a living, consequently challenging their freedom. However, it will trigger Roma to find inventive ways to earn a living. The word ‘inventive’ is important in this concern, because it implies other ways of making a livelihood, or going around the system and continue begging in a more hidden fashion. If a ban is implemented and Roma find ways to continue with the same practice, the ban will not have the intended effect. Consequently, Roma’s responses to these constraints will affect the overall success of such a ban.

If the intention of a ban on begging is to prevent organized crime and human trafficking, as the Norwegian government has argued, the effect might be the opposite. In finding new tactical ways to overcome restrictions Roma might go elsewhere, might continue begging in a hidden way or compensate their previous earning activities with other more profitable, risky or even resort to more criminal activities.

The Norwegian government has previously banned other activities. In 2009, Norway criminalized prostitution to combat human trafficking and to discourage

people's attitudes towards prostitution (Konstad and Haugen 2014). However, an important report shows that prostitution is still occurring in a more hidden way, prostitutes have less security and overall the ban has not reached its intended goal (Bjørndahl 2012). The report shows that violence against prostitutes has increased since the ban was introduced. It shows that the market for prostitution is still there, but the market has changed. Now it operates in a more hidden way offering less safety for the prostitutes. This shows that even though governments try to suppress certain activities through restriction and control the activity will not necessarily disappear; individuals affected by the restriction will find ways around it. Similarly, in the long term, a restriction on the ban on begging can lead to a downward spiral of ever more harsh structural responses and individuals finding new ways to survive.

#### **5.4.6 Resources**

Roma in Norway find services through the Church City Mission, the Salvation Army, Red Cross and the Health Center for Paperless Migrants. The Church City Mission provides English and sewing courses where they make different products to sell, and where they can use washing machines to wash their clothes. The idea is to empower Roma through the idea of self-help services. The Red Cross and the Church City Mission provide shelters for homeless people. The Red Cross provides shelter for men only, and the Church City Mission provides a shelter for women and men over 60 years of age (Church City Mission 2014). The Salvation Army provides shower services, meals and information to homeless persons. The Health Center for Paperless Migrants offers medical assistance to predominantly asylum seekers and refugees, but they do not deny help to Roma if they come there to ask for help (Help Center for Paperless Migrants 2014). Also, the Oslo Emergency Unit provides emergency medical assistance to all Roma, as they are European citizens. The services provided by the different organizations above, show that Roma have access to different resources in Norway.

These resources are enabling structures that Roma choose to use or not depending on their life strategies, and in weighing the usefulness of such programs. As such, Roma will respond to the various resources offered to them with different tactics

according to what they want to achieve. Marco explained to us the services he has access to and uses frequently:

*There is the cafeteria for drug addicts, where Romanians go each Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, at 4 o'clock p.m. They get meals, razor blades, underwear and a shower. And we have a place to sleep for 15 kr per night in Tøyen. I sleep there every night (ID 1).*

A problem, however, is that these organizations have capacity problems since a growing amount of people are in need of their services. There is also a funding problem and lack of a political will to provide incentives for the shelters and other humanitarian services for homeless people. In an article posted by Aftenposten during the spring of 2014, several NGOs expressed their concern over a lack of funding for their work on shelters for homeless people, such as providing shelters for EEA-migrants (Arneberg 2014). They are concerned that a lack of funding means that they have to cut even more in their services and that many people will have to sleep on the street during the winter. In response to this, a representative for the City Council, Øystein Eriksen Søreide replies:

*I do not see it as Oslo municipality's task to provide conditions for EEA-citizens to stay in Oslo indefinitely, when in reality they have no opportunity to find work (Slettholm 2014a).*

The quote above illustrates an explicit stance the Norwegian government has concerning the growing number of EEA-migrants coming to Norway. The lack of funding for welfare services to migrants, supports our argument that the current government is making Norway a less attractive destination for EEA-migrants including Roma. As with the ban on begging, a lack of financial support for shelters is an additional constraining force that Roma experience in Norway.

#### 5.4.7 Falling in between the system

Roma have many traditional skills, be it, bricklaying, jewelry making, handicrafts and food making, and they have more contemporary skills such as selling clothes, recycling and selling and repairing electronics. Roma have developed these skills as a means to adapting to different conditions over time. Many respondents told us about their skills, about their family occupations and that they would like to have work if they were able to. Marco told us about his desire to work in Norway: *“If I find a job in Norway I will move here indefinitely with all my family. I would move here with all my heart”* (ID 1).

Roma fall in between the system finding it hard to find suitable work. Another problem faced by Roma is not knowing the language and that there are many others competing for jobs. As Romanian citizens, Roma do not require a job permit, but need to register at the police station as permanent residents if they want to stay for more than three months. Registering oneself in Norway also requires a place of residence, and as Roma are living on the streets and do not have a permanent address and stay for short periods at a time, it makes finding work difficult. Paper work and bureaucracy is a challenge to Roma, as many of them have not completed secondary education and illiteracy is rife among them. Bruno explained that the process of obtaining a resident permit is an obstacle to move to Norway: *“If we can do the papers, yes (I will move to Norway), but I think it is harder”* (ID 3). The illegal job market is another resource that Roma can use to earn a living. In one of his previous visits to Norway, Marco reported working as follows:

*For an Irish boss, without a contract. I worked three days this year. That’s all, without a contract, paving streets in Drammen. They come to Brugata station where we drink coffee, and they pick the people they need. 500 kroner for the entire day, 12 hours* (ID 1).

This phenomenon is known as social dumping. Social dumping is in many ways a result of migration as it consists of employing cheap labor and in some cases

avoiding regulations (Friberg and Eldring 2013). The phenomenon has been widely studied in Norway, as it has been an increasing problem for the past 15 years. Social dumping is mostly found in cleaning, car washing, transport and building (Bostock and Sandelson 2014). Social dumping is an example of alternative ways for people who are outside of the system to earn a livelihood. This unregulated job market is attractive to individuals that do not have many other options. We believe that Roma are not indifferent to these opportunities as they make use of what is accessible to them.

Roma respondents we spoke to are inventive in making use of the situation available to them in some way or another. Although Roma face restrictions and constraints, they also seek opportunities where others see closed doors. Roma constantly find tactics to respond to repression and constraints. They seize opportunities, accept the offerings of the moment and move vigilantly. As such, we believe Roma responses are not examples of the clear cut typologies of strategies Acton (1974) proposes, instead they are dynamic responses that vary from individual to individual and from one situation to another. As de Certeau (1984) suggests these tactics Roma develop show that they are not weak even when their autonomy is challenged.

#### **5.4.8 Tactics and strategies**

Our data reveals that respondents choose between different activities to earn a livelihood. Depending on their tactics, these activities consist of selling magazines, bottles, flowers and cigarettes, performing street art and begging. They also get involved in illegal activities such as theft and prescription drug dealing as a way to earn an income. The respondents told us about the various ways to make a living as follows:

*Roger: I work here and there so I can send money. On Saturdays when I go around clubs, I collect one bag of bottles and then I sell it. I go to these electronic bins, and I sell magazines. My friend brings me sometimes a carton of cigarettes and I sell it. I don't want to talk so much about this, I don't want to have problems, because one package of Marlboro is 120*

*kroner. I sell it for 50 kroner, and it is original, it's not contraband it's original Marlboro (ID 2).*

*Marco: I am selling bottles all day. My mother is begging (ID 1).*

*Bruno: Well, until 12:00, I gather plastic bottles; afterwards I dress up as an action figure. I put a mask and I stay there. The people are taking pictures with me. Some of them are offering money, others don't (ID 3).*

*Joanna: Here we are selling magazines and we are begging (ID 4).*

*Margaret: Sometimes I sell flowers when people get out and go to the clubs. Sometimes I find bottles and cigarette packs on the street and sell them (ID 5).*

*Alexander: I run to get bottles and stuff. I sleep in the park. I wake up and collect bottles. That's all. And if I find a job, I will go to work. Sometimes others tell me let's go and steal something. I'll give you 300 kroner, 400 kroner (ID 8).*

Although respondents did not say that they were involved in prescription drug dealing directly, they talked about it as a common practice among Roma, as one respondent explained to us: *"If only there wouldn't be so many gypsies that do bad things. Here, in Grønland, things are very bad. They are selling Xanax; they are selling that to the drug addicts. Roma became pharmaceutical traders overnight. They became perverted. "* (ID 7).

Roma respondents choose different places to sleep adjusting to their circumstances, be it on the street, forest, in cars or in shelters. In the following, the respondents explained to us the challenges that come with finding somewhere to sleep:

*Roger: I sleep there in Birkelund and when I wake up, there is a fountain and I wash my face and brush my teeth, get dressed and I go on the tram number 12 and I collect bottles (ID 2).*

*Margaret: We sleep wherever we can. At the Salvation Army the people help us and we take a bath there from time to time. When I have to go to sleep, I lie wherever I can (ID 5).*

*Joanna: I have never slept during the night since I came here, because I walk around. In order to make money I walk around with the magazines, begging and I do everything else I can do. So I sleep during the day, until 3, 4, 5 in the morning. I am sleeping outside. At Mac's (MacDonald's). Sometimes, when I meet the other gypsy ladies here that do not have a car, I sleep with them. When I do not, I sleep alone. Or at any park I can find. But I do not want the police to see me (ID 4).*

*Bruno: Now I am sleeping in the forest (ID 3).*

A common belief is that Roma come to Western European countries to exploit the welfare system by using the social services. Thomas Acton (1997) also makes reference to this phenomenon as many negative headlines by the media point to a link between Roma travelers and their claiming of social security benefits in Western Europe since the 1990s. The same has been claimed in Norway as critics say that selling magazines is not a real job, and they warn that it is an easy way for beggars to get access to the Norwegian welfare system (Glomnes and Solberg Susegg 2012). We did not find evidence that Roma come to Norway to receive benefits from the welfare system. In fact we found evidence that Roma are not familiar or have the resources to even pursue such a task. The Norwegian legislation<sup>4</sup> offers an emergency help through NAV for EEA-citizens for up to 90 days from their arrival (JusBuss 2014). This emergency help is given by NAV, but the EEA-citizens need to apply for this help. In the case of Roma this has not been possible as they sometimes are paperless, do not possess a permanent residence and they are skeptical towards institutions. Also the legislation is problematic, because its interpretation is not clear as to whom it applies to.

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<sup>4</sup> See Emergency help legislation at §2 section 1.2.1.1. <https://www.regjeringen.no/nb/aktuelt/eos-borgere-og-registreringsbevis/id731932/>

In our findings we did not find a trend to confirm that Roma exploit social services. Those respondents who knew about social services did not use it. In regards to this, Bruno explained his knowledge on the matter as follows:

*I haven't applied to NAV, because I spoke with someone about it and I need a passport. And I do not have a passport, only a Romanian ID card (ID 3).*

However, we found a special case of one young Roma girl who received help from the social services for being a victim of human trafficking for a year and a half. She is alone in Norway, but is waiting to be reunited with her child. She was hesitant to give details about her experience, but she explained that the Norwegian state has provided her protection, she feels safe and likes her life in Norway now (ID 9).

Several of the respondents told us that they have started language courses at the Church City Mission. Bruno told us that this is part of his plan to get a job. He explained: *"I have started them (English classes) last week. This is actually what I want. After languages, I plan to get a job"* (ID 3). The Roma can also choose to go to the emergency unit or go to the Health Center for Paperless Migrants to get medical assistance. Several of our respondents told us that they have been to the emergency unit in Oslo, but we did not find evidence that they know about the latter. Marco told us the following about his positive experiences at the emergency unit:

*I know that if I get sick I can go near Brugata. If they don't speak Romanian language, they get us a translator and everything. They explain things to us. Yes, I was with my mother, 3 times. We took her to the hospital. She was very respected. We were respected as much as Norwegians (ID 1).*

However, Alexander was not so happy with his experience at the emergency unit. He explained the following to us:

*I hurt my leg here, in the park, and I've been carrying along with it for 2 weeks... Nothing, bro. They put me on hold there until the evening until I yelled. I said: look here, I have a bandage. I was staying there with the leg on the chair. I was rubbing it and crying, bro, and I screamed. I went to them and nothing happened (emergency unit) (ID 8).*

The examples above show that Roma are informed and make use of the services provided to them in Oslo, be it, medical, sanitation, shelter and food. Another trend we came across during the interviews and that is shown through media coverage is that Roma also receive resources from civilians (Johnsen 2014). Such help can be a place to sleep for the night, food, shower and income opportunities. Joanna told us that she sometimes gets help from civilians. She said: *"I eat by Mac's (McDonalds). I eat kebab, and in some cases they are offering stuff for free" (ID 4)*. Roger also explained how he receives help from a civilian: *"I have a friend where I go to, where I shower sometimes, but he is on vacation and I didn't shower in 3 days, so that is why I am going there. He called me and I he asked me if I have money and he sent me 100 kroner, because he cares about me a lot" (ID 2)*. Another respondent explained how she receives help from a café worker as follows:

*I get a bottle of water from the bar. A girl gives it to me. There was a girl and I ask her for water, I showed her that I am thirsty and that I need to drink water. She gave me water in a bottle. And she took me to the shower place (Salvation Army). I took a shower and that's all. And I left" (ID 6).*

These findings illustrate that Roma live a life on the edge, and in order to survive they make tactical decisions and choose the best resources available to them. Roma are affected by surrounding constraints and possibilities in Norway. However, they still manage to make use of their capabilities to decide what is best for them. This, in turn, shows that daily practices of Roma are tactics to overcome restrictive structures. Tactics are calculated actions that express resistance towards the system, and they explain how repressed people find an autonomous place to fight imposed forces. As such, individuals can create possibilities by carefully moving and seizing opportunities that a moment offers leading to the development

of short term plans. Living a tactical life implies a life full of unexpected events, constantly on the move and brings a lot of creativity in making use of resources available to them (de Certeau et al. 1980).

Michel de Certeau's (1984) ideas on strategies and tactics are useful in understanding Roma's tactical ways of survival. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau writes about the repressive system in which people live, where those in power impose rules on the weak. His theme is on resistance; how the weak can make use of the strong to rise up and resist to structural power through autonomy and self-determination. De Certeau is concerned with how the weak find ways to deal with constraints that are imposed on them. He explains how tactics of the weak are indeed strong indicators of resistance fighting constructed norms of society. Tactical people decide their actions based on different interests and desires for themselves creating diverse outcomes. To de Certeau a strategy is "the calculation (or manipulation) of power relations that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power can be isolated" (1984:36). He connects the ownership of place, power and will over the invisible other to the powerful structures. In contrast to strategies are tactics, which de Certeau (1984) defines as calculated actions with the absence of autonomy. A tactic requires an imposed framework by a powerful force, and maneuvering vigilantly through society while not having the option of planned strategies. Roma fit this description above as they are tactical people, resourceful and take the offerings of the moment.

As such, Roma have different tactics to get food, shelter and money in their street life in Oslo. Roger told us eagerly about his way to make a living in the following:

*I go to these electronic bins. I go there, I am careful so I am not seen and I find sometimes more mobile phones even laptops. And you sell them for 500-600 NOK. I swear I found one day a Galaxy 4 and I said "God what is this?". I decoded it when I found it and I sent it home. There wasn't even a scratch on it. When I am in Romania I do this, I fix mobile phones. I have those screwdrivers and my friends come to me to fix their phones. I fix the displays or whatever is wrong with it. I found a Motorola, the last model. I*

*found around 35 mobiles. I found laptops and I sent them home. And cameras (ID 2).*

It is not clear how Roma who recycle electronic waste send it back to Romania, but it is likely that they rely on their networks to make this possible. This is perhaps an area for further exploration as the waste collection and recycling market is a growing lucrative opportunity for Roma and other groups. He continued to explain his tactics on generating income by collecting bottles:

*One day I made 700 NOK. You know how I did it? I went through a trash bin, I am not ashamed to say it, and I found two bags of bottles and I collected two more bags myself and I sold them and made 700 NOK (ID 2).*

Bruno who makes a living dressing up as an action figure told us how he tactically earns a living as follows:

*Well, until 12:00, I gather plastic bottles; afterwards I dress up as an action figure. I put a mask. I only stay. The people are taking pictures with me. Some of them are offering money, others don't. I have tried with the magazines as well, but less people buy it. For the moment, wearing the costume gives me the most money. You cannot say exactly how much you earn in a day. 200, 300, 500, 100 NOK, it depends. It's ok. If the allowance in Romania is about 100 NOK per month ... for one day it is ok (ID 3).*

Margaret told us another inventive way of making a living. She shows, in the following quote, how resourceful Roma can be in finding resources in other peoples' garbage:

*Sometimes I sell flowers. When people get out and go to the clubs, I found bottles on the street. Sometimes they leave empty packs of cigarettes and I have collected up to 10.000 empty packs of cigarettes. And a lady paid very well for it. I think she said she was from Italy. I don't remember it very well. She paid 1,60 NOK per pack. There were a lot of packs. Many of us*

*started to collect them, not just me. Some of us gathered 60, others 100, others 80 (ID 5).*

Our findings indicate that Roma have several ways of coping, having mostly short term plans and know where to go to get help. There are many constraints Roma face in Oslo, but there are also situations that enable them. In our findings, our respondents told us about their daily life in Oslo as a continuous struggle, but also stories of hope and desires. Our impression is that Roma do not have a long term plan, rather they have short term, day-to-day plans to make a living. Thus, even when Roma have short term goals, they exercise control over their decisions, making use of possibilities offered to them, but also interpreting and dealing with constraints in society. Therefore we find Roma responding to societal restriction in different ways; in spontaneous tactical ways and in more permanently cultural reflected ways.

Although de Certeau insists that tactical people is in no position to establish their own strategies as seemingly the weak, we argue that Roma are strategic as well as tactical (de Certeau 1984). With the tactics, Roma respond to the institutions of the host society, sometimes resisting them and sometimes adapting to them. Roma are strategic in the way they have their own discursive space with their own rules and cultural practices. Following Archer's ideas on culture, Roma culture needs to be accounted for as a structure and a predetermined system, in which Roma are constantly generating, recreating and responding to cultural elements.

Roma practices have tactical elements, in the way they display creative responses to the challenges and opportunities they encounter in Oslo, but also Roma practices have elements of strategy being the creators of strategic practices within their group and that influence their tactical decisions. Roma have cultural rules and practices that intend to control and organize individuals within their own group; these rules set the limits and differentiate them from other Roma groups and *gadjo*. This has a close relation to cultural elements such as self-image, gender roles, Roma law, etc.

In this way, Roma tactics are everyday practices through clever ways of discovering ways to do things creating a place to live within the structure. Roma also produce strategies that guide their lives in parallel to the host society, placing them outside the mainstream society. As travelers, they respond to a system imposed on them, and maneuver with creativity, and as members of the Roma group they impose and create social and political rules, roles and practices on themselves and other members of the group. This complements Ada Engebriksen main argument in which Roma are simultaneously a part of mainstream society and at the same time are part of their own separate Roma social group, which are different from one another and from the society they live in (Engebriksen 2011).

Roma's social organization, cultural practices and discourse, guide both their tactical responses in the host society and their own group, and at the same time guide their strategic institutions and rules that separate them from the host society institutions. Therefore, Roma are seemingly weak as opposed to powerful institutions surrounding them, but appear strong nonetheless as they create their own powerful cultural sphere of their own. We understand Roma as both tactical and strategic in responding to different context and different situations.

#### **5.4.9 Street life and antagonism**

We argue that there is a structural conditioning in which Roma people act, conditions that are constantly changing and moving because individuals interpret and give them meaning and respond to them. Anthony Giddens's (1984) structuration theory supports this argument as he argues that actors interpret and transform societies. We will below give examples of some tactics Roma use to survive in the streets of Oslo. These tactics differ slightly from person to person, and show inventiveness to adapt to different situations.

Another finding we came across is the competition for resources. Roma compete with other groups for resources on the street, which can be other foreigners, other Roma, drug addicts and drug sellers. Since the financial crisis of 2008, many Europeans have come to Norway in search of better opportunities, and West- and North African migrants and refugees are more visible in the streets of Oslo now

than before. In addition, many migrants have come from Eastern- and Southern Europe to Norway to seek a better life, and have had difficulty finding work (Jakobsen 2014).

Roma also compete with drug addicts in the sale of street magazines. A representative for =Oslo, which is a street magazine sold by drug addicts, says that Roma follow other rules in regards to their magazine sales and that they are persistent in approaching people through their sales giving them a bad reputation. The manager for =Oslo, Camilla Svingen, explains how Roma's sale persistency affects their sales negatively as follows: "All of a sudden this magazine shows up, and then they go around selling to people, something we have worked hard for that our sales people should not do" (Eggesvik 2012). Håkon Grov, a drug addict, explains that he has noticed the effects of a new Roma street magazine after it entered the market as follows: "It affects us and I do not like it. I do not think they will be able to sell much" (Eggesvik 2012).

The competition for buyers of street magazines has escalated over the years, as there are many more street magazines in production now than before for Roma to sell, creating more antagonism amongst Roma and between other street magazines. Today there are five Roma street magazines in production (Slettholm 2014b). Also it has been revealed that there is a 'war' between Roma street magazines as the leaders of the street magazine, *Gatenytt*, and former employees at the street magazine *Folk er folk* explains about disagreements about money management in the following: "I do not know where the money goes, but after a while there was a lot of money coming in and less money going for specific assistance on the street. New tents were not bought in this year, and other assistance to Roma disappeared" (Slettholm 2014b). This results in more competition for resources; jobs, places to sleep, food, income, places to beg, to wash, a bed in a shelter, a warm meal or a shower at an NGO.

Since we are interested in understanding the hardships Roma experience in Oslo, we asked them about their challenges in their daily lives. Roger told us:

*But now it doesn't go so good, now if I make 500 NOK in two days it is very good. There is more competition. I walk so much that my feet hurt so bad and a car almost hit me. Some days I only eat bread (ID 2).*

Margaret explained to us about her life on the street in the following: *“I am always moving. Many times when I talk to someone, I fall asleep. I am unwashed, untidy and tired”* (ID 5). As such, the street becomes a battlefield where Roma try to find tactics to survive. We understand the competition for resources as constraints within the structure of society in which Roma find themselves. Daily life is a constant struggle to find means to earn a living, be it, selling magazines, begging, playing music, selling flowers or selling electronic parts. Hence, we argue that Roma are tactical in their survival strategies, constantly negotiating and adapting to the constraints of society. The constraints Roma experience varies from challenges at a government level, at the street level through antagonism and competition, and also by the unfriendly treatment from locals, police and security guards.

Most of the Roma we spoke to see Norway as a land of opportunity using the Romanian expression ‘there is no forest without bad trees’ meaning that no perfect place exists and that one can find good and bad situations and people in every single place. It is an idiom used by Roma to describe that a place can have positive and negative sides. Hence, Roma use it to describe their life in Norway. Many of the Roma respondents we spoke to have an outlook on life that good and bad people and situations exist everywhere. Half of the respondents have visited Norway earlier, and half said it was their first time. All of the respondents found out about Norway as a ‘land of opportunity’ by word-of-mouth from other Roma.



**Figure 4 - Interaction with Norwegians**

When talking about Roma impressions on Norwegian people, Marco and Roger remarked that *“Norwegians are welcoming and friendly”* (ID 1) and that *“Norwegians are very nice people and they are treating us nice”* (ID 2). According to some Roma, Norway is a good place to live, but that is not to say that life for Roma in Norway is easy. The relationship Roma have to *gadjo*, Norwegians vary. Most of the respondents told us they think Norwegians are friendly and that Norway is a good place to be. Seven of the respondents told us that Norway is a nice country; but that some Norwegians are good and some are bad. Even though Roger has a general impression that Norwegians are good people, he further explained to us about his experience with some Norwegians as follows:

*Some Norwegians say bad words. They say “hey you go, you, go”, “you Romanian bitch!” I swear they do that. Some people I see that are Norwegians say, “fuck Romania, fuck gypsies”* (ID 2).

Alexander confirms this ill treatment below:

*Some look at me funny and some avoid me. I swear to you that when I walk on the street people avoid me. May I die if I lie to you, you go in the metro or bus and they part their bags so that you will not steal from them (ID 8).*

In addition, many of the respondents told us about ill treatment from especially security guards, other Roma, *blacks* (informants' term for Africans), Norwegians and others. Several of the respondents said that when they are out on the streets begging, "*blacks spit in our glass*" (ID 6, ID 8, ID3). We came across stories of tension between Roma and other foreign groups. The competition for resources on the street means that many different foreign groups meet to fight for the same resources. One example of this is in the illegal drug market. The growing illegal pharmaceutical market is causing problems and tensions on the street. Some Roma think that the pharmaceutical market developed overnight and they feel that it is affecting them negatively, because they think that they become targets for the police which to a bad reputation for Roma in general.

An article by Andreas Slettholm (2014c) in *Aftenposten* explains how selling pharmaceutical prescription drugs have become a recent trend amongst Romanian Roma citizens in Oslo. Slettholm explains that there have been ten cases of Romanian citizens who have been charged for possession and distribution of pharmaceutical drugs over the last year. He further explained a case where a Romanian lady in her 50s was selling Xanax<sup>5</sup> which she sells for a 100 percent profit. Although she knows that getting involved in this activity is bad and dangerous, she continues to do so because she needs the money. He explains her story further: "Romanian "Elena" has been in Norway since February. In the beginning, she was begging, selling street magazines and recycling bottles, but the market was becoming more competitive." Apart from Nigerians, Romanian Roma have become the most prominent actors within drug trafficking (ibid).

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<sup>5</sup> Xanax is the trade name of the psychoactive drug called Alprazolam. It is very addictive and causes physical dependence and its use is associated to the abuse of alcohol and other substances. The medical use of Xanax is to treat anxiety disorders.

As a response to conflicts with others, Roma told us that they prefer to stay alone as a tactic to avoid problems with other Roma, foreigners and police. This supports our argument that Roma are tactical individuals that find ways to overcome difficulty, and create spaces for autonomous action (de Certeau 1984). As such, Bruno explained why he prefers to stay alone as such: *“I usually go alone. I work better alone”* (ID 3). Several of the respondents said that they prefer to stay alone when going to earn a livelihood, but they prefer to get together over a meal and during the nighttime. Joanna explained: *“Sometimes when I catch the other gypsy ladies here that do not have a car I sleep with them. When I do not, I sleep alone”* (ID 4). Alexander explained why he thinks it is better to stay alone in the following:

*I have a park where I stay separated. It is a lot better alone, because if you are three guys and you're walking, the police can stop you and take you...it's a hassle. The police are thinking that you are going to steal* (ID 8).

Hence, being alone comes a tactic to avoid police targeting them. Regarding the interaction with police, Alexander further explained: *“As long as you are nice they leave you alone. They don't bother us. I didn't have a problem with them”* (ID 8). However, other respondents told us that they do not have a positive relationship with the police, because the police hassle and usher them off the street. Marco told us about his experience with police in the following quote:

*And if they [police] catch me drinking țuică on the street or something, they arrest me immediately. Or if I sleep under the bridge, they give me a 5000 NOK fine just because I sleep under the bridge* (ID 1).

The statement above shows that although police are enforcing the law when it comes to drinking and sleeping in public spaces, our respondent interprets it subjectively as a personal attack. This brings up the question of the fear of police targeting Roma selectively. In the research, we did not find evidence that police

target Roma specifically, but we found indicators that some Roma feel like a target for the police. Joanna explained her opinion on the Norwegian police as follows:

*It depends on the person. It depends if one steals, if one does bad things, stuff like that. But other than that, when we have a problem, something that we need to do, the police comes. If we have a problem, we call them. And, they are coming. They do not treat us differently (ID 4).*

It seems that most of the time Roma have trouble with security guards more than with the police. We realized that sometimes when talking about the relationship to police, Roma answered about security guards thinking they were police. Ada I. Engebrigtsen found similar findings in her research on street beggars in Oslo, that police tend to leave Roma alone, while the security guards chase Roma from public places (Engebrigtsen 2012). We tried to contact a representative for a private security company, but the person informed us they could not disclose these matters due to confidentiality.

Despite different forms of street antagonism and constraints, Roma try to find better opportunities while in Norway. When individuals seize opportunities and make the best out of their situation, they are constantly weighing for and against structural conditions, negotiating and deciding for themselves what tactics to use. The use of different tactics will rely on the approach and understanding they have to a matter of concern. These approaches could be based on feelings of restriction, adaptation, concealment or even indifference, feelings that are inter-changing depending on the situation.

However, the use of tactics results in a limited influence on the structures surrounding individuals. This is because structures set the boundaries for maneuver, and individuals respond by moving around it. In this way, individuals might not have a large direct effect on changing their environment, but by opposing institutions they are creating new conditions and outcomes in the structures indirectly. One way to see this is through the incidents of Roma settlements in different camps around the Oslo area. These camps were set up

without permission. In the beginning, Roma camps were dismantled, but Roma came back or found new places to establish their camp again, or they sought refuge in churches and streets (VG 2012). In this way, Roma discover ways around the rules and find new places to stay until they are told by authorities to leave again. This continues in a vicious circle for both the Roma and the authorities. This shows that the interplay comes in both directions; structures influence individual's action, but individuals also have an effect on structure, although limited.

## **5.5 Culture and Agency**

In this section, we intend to explore the effect of Roma culture on shaping Roma agency. We look for the most prevalent elements of Roma culture that contribute to influence Roma life decisions and actions in society. In addition, we want to explore the social interaction between individuals and their culture, more specifically, Roma culture and the host culture. Through this interaction there is going to be a structural elaboration or outcome, which is going to set a new structural conditioning. According to Margaret S. Archer (1996) people are ultimately affected by the culture that surrounds them, while culture is in turn altered. Individuals continuously interpret, negotiate and transform the culture where they live. We argue that individuals are influenced by their culture, but at the same time individuals can change culture through their actions using their capabilities and judgment to produce new meanings and negotiate with others. Archer calls this idea of cultural dynamics *morphogenesis*. Using Archer's theory of *morphogenesis* we want to explore Roma cultural dynamics and the role of Roma exercising their agency. We want to explore elements of Roma culture and their effect on Roma agency.

Margaret S. Archer's (1996) ideas on culture and agency are important to understand the interaction and relationship between Roma culture, Roma agency and popular culture. Archer's ideas are useful to understand the effect of culture on Roma agency, the interplay between them and their outcomes. Archer's theory on cultural structure and cultural agency explains social stability, *morphostasis*,

and social change, *morphogenesis*. As such, the morphogenetic approach explains the interplay between structure and agency, and provides a backdrop to understand human history and the dynamics of social structures (Archer 2010). In her theory, culture pre-dates individuals, that is, there has to be a structural conditioning for individuals to act to promote their interests. Furthermore, individuals can affect different outcomes of structural context as they interpret and negotiate with other individuals. These outcomes mean that social structures, such as culture, produce different outcomes based on individuals' interpretations and interests.

Agency is a cultural phenomenon that emphasizes the historical trajectories of human experience (Archer 2010). Roma agency reflects their historical heritage setting their moral values that guide their actions. That is not to say that Roma are passive recipients of this cultural pre-conditioning. Roma are active individuals, and can choose to reject or confirm their cultural features depending on whether they find it beneficial or not. People's choices are context and situation specific, which means that they rely on a personal evaluation of the context depending on what they want to achieve. As such, the cultural dynamics of Roma is not only an outcome of cultural heritage, but their actions are also an outcome of the interplay between Roma culture and their surrounding structures and their aims (Acton 1974). Through social interaction between Roma and non-Roma the outcomes could be many as the existence of motivations and actions of individuals. In some situations actions could be more Roma tradition-oriented and in other situations actions could be more mainstream-oriented.

In our study, we identified some elements of Roma culture that we believe explain cultural transformation that is setting a new cultural pre-conditioning for Roma in dealing with inside and outside influences. The different cultural interpretations depend on factors such as age, *neam*, gender, religion, the legal system and self-image. Based on these cultural elements and according to their aims, Roma will perform their actions.

### 5.5.1 New Ideas and Old Values

In our findings, we can see different trends depending on the age of the respondents. We discovered that some young Roma prefer to break with their culture, values and practices, while old Roma prefer to hold on to their cultural traditions. Our first finding shows that most of our respondents are trying to integrate in some way or another. Initially we thought that the factor of belonging to a certain *neam* could be an important factor in explaining how culture shapes agency. However, it was not evident in our research that *neams* play an important role in showing whether Roma assimilate or not. Perhaps this was not as evident since our sample did not include enough variation on *neams*.

However, our findings discovered that the age of the respondents plays an important role in shaping decisions. The new generation is moving towards integration in some areas, more than their older counter parts. For instance, Joanna, who was wearing tight-fitting clothes different from what is considered traditional Roma clothing, explained to us that she liked to wear them, but for a traditional Roma girl this is inappropriate clothing. She explained: “*With our people a girl is not allowed to walk in pants, to walk like this*” (ID 4). Despite Roma traditions in her family, she freely chooses to decide for herself how to dress. For Roma, gender roles are very important. The traditional role for a woman is to respect and honor her family by doing her duties and respecting a certain dress code (Engebrigtsen 2007). Joanna, a young Roma girl, does not have a very positive idea about the experience of marriage due to early involvement in criminal activity with her husband’s family. She explained her thoughts about her marriage in the following:

*I have been married, but I am not married anymore. I am not married since about a year and a half ago. I simply broke up with him, because I did not like that guy. With our people, your father marries you off. He was 11 and a half and I was 12. It was I who ended it. It was also the fact that he forced me to bring money and stuff like that. They were teaching me to steal and this is why I backed out. I went to jail. I have been in jail for two years and one month, because I was the one holding the biggest blame even though I*

*did not even enter the house. It was a robbery. Actually, all I did was playing there. I didn't even think that I would go to jail or something. I simply was there with the gypsy ladies with what they have taught me. This is why I left them (ID 4).*

Marriage is one of the most important traditions of Roma culture. As Roma is a kinship society, marriage becomes a prominent agreement between the families, as it is a fundamental institution in Roma society. Usually parents arrange marriage for their children at an early age. In a kinship society, it is important to control women and their virginity and that women marry within their own ethnic group to ensure purity. For Roma, marriage is supposed to be a lasting institution (Engebrigtsen 2007). Margaret, an old Roma lady, explained to us when speaking about her daughter-in-law that the typical role for a Roma woman is to be obedient and virtuous:

*First of all, she has to behave herself in the family. She must not speak badly in the house, to the other ones in the family or to the children, to the little ones. She must not curse, because, the gypsies curse a lot. If you break the vow, it's not good. She should not talk with her brother-in-laws about what is going on, and then, little by little, she has to learn to wash the clothes, to cook, so that she could get used to housework. She has to learn that for herself. Because if she does not learn it for herself, when she will grow up, maybe she will get bored, and start to look to other guys (ID 5).*

Hence, we can see a gap between the older generations of Roma, who think that there should be more strict family roles. In contrast, the younger generations decide which role they want to play and make different decisions on marriage based on their preference. This is also true for Alexander and Roger, two young Roma males who said that they want to marry, but not so young. Alexander told us the following:

*I want to get married, to make a good family. But when I have everything done. When I have my house, my money, and do not have to steal for my*

*child, then I will have children. Because others make 15.000 children and they do not have anything to bring home. They get debts and they steal. So when I have money and all the things, I will live like a boss. And I will have children, I'll make a beautiful family. I will have my own house. Just like you Romanians. Did not you see? You do not get married until you have money in the bank (speaking to translator). And I don't want my children to maintain the Roma tradition. Never (ID 8).*

The quote above shows that the young Roma place less importance on marriage at an early age than older Roma do, and want to break with negative associations of Roma culture. As explained later, this phenomenon is not exclusive to Roma, but it is common for third generation immigrants. In contrast, older Roma have different views on marriage and family as Margaret explains below:

*Roma get married when they are more or less 15 years old. These are our rules, because we pretend to find virgin girls. If they get older we cannot control them. In this way, the child will start his family and raise it in the way we raised our own family. We love our kids. We, the Romi, have many, many kids. There was a time, more than 30 years ago, when we (the Romi women) never went to abortion. We made all the children God was giving us. And we were raising them with whatever we could. Now Romi are more democratic (ID 5).*

Marriage was not the only topic where young and old Roma' perceptions differ. They also have different ideas on the services provided to them by Norwegian NGOs. Young Roma respondents were more inclined to learn English and Norwegian and take part in skills courses. Two young respondents were already taking part in English courses at the Church City Mission, and two more explained that they are willing to start Norwegian classes. Others were not aware of the courses offered to them, but nonetheless showed interest in participating in them so that they more easily can find a job and get out of the street. Roger was eager to find a job, to do everything so he could save money to buy a house, and told us, *"I would like to learn English"* (ID 2). Likewise, Joanna explained why

she wants to participate, *“I really want to learn English. That will be great. I want to learn it, because I didn’t find anything like these classes until now”* (ID 4).

Regarding the integration programs, we found that older Roma respondents were not so interested in language and skill classes for various reasons such as lack of time and interest. Marco told us that his time could be better used earning money rather than attending these classes (ID 1). An older Roma woman also told us she is not so interested (ID 6).

The young respondents were already taking English courses, and several others considered it as a possibility. Taking language courses is a way to integrate into Norwegian society, and by showing interest and willingness to join language courses, Roma are weighing their options and see it as beneficial to them in regards to finding work and having a good life. As the older Roma respondents were not so interested in learning new languages, they are weighing their situation in a cost benefit consideration, placing more importance on time. It seems that the younger Roma are seeking to integrate more breaking with cultural norms in wanting to learn more languages other than their own, while older Roma respondents would be more reluctant to use their time and resources in learning new languages.

We argue that there are changes in elements of Roma culture and we see elements of change happening now such as marriage, dress code and a willingness to learn a new language between the older and younger generations of Roma. Younger Roma make decisions according to their preferences that are different to their older counterparts. They are moving towards popular culture postponing marriage, dressing more openly and wanting to learn language to integrate more into the Norwegian culture. Postponing marriage shows cultural change, but it is not exclusive to Roma. A study by Statistics Norway (SSB) shows that there is a tendency for third generation immigrants in Norway to postpone marriage due to higher education (Henriksen 2010).

Several of the younger respondents chose to postpone marriage for different reasons. Thus, these respondents weigh their options strategically wanting more

possibilities for themselves and freedom at a younger age. Joanna decided to divorce her husband at an early age and Alexander and Roger wanted to postpone marriage, because they felt that they are too young to marry. Also, another young Roma respondent (ID 9) divorced her husband but was already planning to get married to her new partner. All these examples, show that Roma are strategic in marital decisions especially the younger Roma respondents showing willingness and decisive power to break with more conservative marital norms.

When looking at a change between generations of Roma, it seems that younger Roma are producing other outcomes towards their structural conditionings than their older counterparts. This might be to avoid negative labeling and to blend into the culture of the host society while at the same time balancing family pressure on keeping traditions. Perhaps younger Roma understand that to integrate into Norwegian society, it is necessary to learn a language that the majority population understands. Likewise, postponing marriage and choosing a freer dress code is a move towards integration and better opportunities if that is what they desire. This explains how Roma individuals are taking a leading role in cultural transformation.

### **5.5.2 Roma self-image**

In our findings, self-image is a reoccurring topic amongst our Roma respondents expressed in different ways. Roma are proud of who they are, their heritage and culture. We argue that pride is an important element of Roma culture in shaping Roma agency. We understand Roma pride as survival strategy developed over time to cope with stressful situations and antagonism. We asked all of our respondents what it means to be Roma and what characterizes Roma culture. On this topic, Marco told us proudly:

*I do not mind if I am called a gypsy, no. I do not like it if you call me hey, you, the lame one!, because I am not a lame person. Or hey you, the blind one. But if they call me by my ethnicity, I feel proud. It is the same thing as if I would call Norwegians: Hey, you Norwegian! He should not be upset.*

*Or, hey you, Swedish or German. That is their origin. And I am proud I am Roma (ID 1).*

The statement above shows proudness of his Roma ethnicity. We argue that a strong positive self-image enables Roma to cope with resisting societal structures surrounding them. Additionally, Bruno told us: *“I am really satisfied with myself. I am actually really proud about being Roma”* (ID 3). Roger elaborated about his self-image as follows: *“I look like I am stupid but I am very smart. I have a lot of knowledge I know more than people than are older than me”* (ID 2).

In addition, the findings point towards how Roma identify themselves with elements of their culture. Marco informed us on his Roma origin and customs in the following quote:

*Oh. Music, folk dance, our dance. Food beating. The oriental dance, like in Turkey. All instruments. Music is very special. We, like the gypsies, as an origin, we come from Indo-Spanish nation. Since the time of Hannibal Barca. He emigrated to Europe, and with the Hungarians and Attila the Hun, we became nomadic people. Because we moved from nation to nation, and every time we saw things go well in that place... because we are attracted to water and forest places. This is our custom. The fire, the water and the warmth. We do not need anything else. To eat, to drink, to have fun. We do not need fortunes, we do not need a pension to live 100 years. It's better to be 50, but happy. Because we know we will die, because Jesus died, and he was God's son. This is our custom. We eat, we drink, we have fun and we travel from country to country. And where we see that it's good for us to stay, where there is water, warmth and wood, we establish there. Just like in Romania (ID 1).*

Marco displays knowledge of the origin of Roma with a description of the history he is familiar with. He understands and agrees with the way Roma live and feels proud about it. Through his proud depiction of Roma culture he refers to elements

such as music, dance, food and a nomadic lifestyle. Equally proud, Alexander explained further what he characterizes as being typical Roma in the following:

*A Rom has a beautiful life and he has fun with his children and makes a beautiful life at home. The ones that have money, rich people, that is what they do. He pays musicians, he drinks, he has fun, he gathers with his neighbors and his friends. And the best food that I eat, bro, is the barbeque, the polenta, and to prepare me a sheep stew (ID 8).*

Likewise, a younger Roma woman explained some interesting aspects of Roma traditions, and illustrated what makes them so special. She explains that Roma are very civilized and unique, and that non-Roma define them negatively as *tsigani* although she does not understand the reasons behind it, because to her Roma culture and people are very beautiful and good. To her, being Roma is solely a good thing and is associated with being good, civilized, respectful, helpful and supportive (ID 10). This ideal behavior shows a positive self-image and explains Roma identity to some extent in which they construct a self-image to distance themselves from the idea of negative stereotypes placed on them by others.

Our impression of Roma is that they are a very proud people. Several respondents explained the importance of traditional food, dance and music. The respondents feel proud of their origin and heritage, and characterize themselves as civilized and good people. Throughout history *gadjo* have defined Roma in a negative way, as dirty and uncivilized people (Johansen 2010, 2013; Engebrigtsen 2007, 2012; Liegeois and George 1995). Michael Stewart (1997) explains the historical development of Roma self-image in opposition to those who dominated them. His work is based on fieldwork of Roma in Hungary. His explanation is useful in understanding how Roma have developed a strong cultural resilience as a response to *gadjo*'s negative definitions of them. Roma have continuously been segregated in Eastern Europe, labeled and defined by others. Therefore, Roma defined themselves in opposition to the non-Roma, as pure, respectable people opposed to the dirty *gadjos* (ibid).

Roma have developed a positive self-image as a cultural resilience mechanism, which has allowed them to fight back and cope with discrimination, antagonism, segregation and forced assimilation over centuries. As such, their self-image is an

outcome of the cultural interplay that shows that Roma do not want to be seen as victims. All the respondents show that although they have experienced difficult situations, negative labeling and discrimination, they overcome them by developing a positive self-image. In light of Michel de Certeau's (1984) ideas on tactics, pride can be seen as a tool to help them overcome stigma, repression and hostility. Pride was a visible topic in our findings with reference to food preferences, culture and self-image of what constitutes Roma identity.

### **5.5.3 Gender Roles**

Gender is another important topic in our findings. Gender shapes Roma agency because it sets a cultural framework and it shows what a person can do according to certain roles. Roma have a patriarchal culture, with clan structures, and a strict gender division. This ultimately shapes Roma agency subconsciously or consciously, because what a woman and man can and cannot do is rooted in Roma minds from childhood. Hence, gender roles are hard to alter, because they are deeply rooted in culture. In our research, we did not find any data on gender from male participants. For us it seemed implicit that men do not talk about the topic with outsiders. The fact that we, as researchers, are young *gadjo* women, gave us a low status compared to them. Thus, perhaps they might have seen it as unnecessary to talk about the topic with us. In a patriarchal society, men are the head of the family. This implies that there are different freedoms for men and women, but also amongst younger male and female Roma. In general, women have less freedom than men in traditional societies. The role of men is to protect and control women and maintain honor in the family (Engebriksen 2007).

Only female respondents reported on the importance of gender in Roma culture, especially depicting women and men's different roles in Roma society. Sexuality, procreation and marriage form the foundation of Roma culture. Although these practices are widely followed by Roma, they are cultural taboos that are not open for discussion. Women are the ones who make sure that Roma laws regarding sexuality, procreation and family are produced and reproduced through teaching new generations of their importance (Weyrauch 1997).

The fact that only female respondents talked about gender roles, may be a sign that they feel the need to express their feelings about these differences, because they are the subjects of the topic and in charge of teaching it to their children. Voicu and Vlase (2013) found similar findings in their work on Roma migration, that women do not like to talk about gender topics when other family members are around, but they still portray their dissatisfaction about the gender topic silently although they prefer not to talk about it.

For Roma, a woman is considered pure when still a virgin before puberty, because through menstruation and childbirth females turn impure. These rules are quite strict and shape what women can and cannot do (Weyrauch and Bell 1993). Women are expected to show respect and obedience to men. This is especially true for younger Roma women, as they have to gain respect from their husbands and male relatives (Engebriksen 2007). Women will follow these rules seeking to fulfill expectations about her behavior.

Bošnjak and Acton's (2013) study present views on the qualities Roma men and women should have. In their study, qualities of the bride were that of obedience to the husband, diligence, smartness, being able to take care of the household and children, and cook. Qualities of the groom were that they are freer than their female counterparts, and can have sexual experience before marriage. These gender differences became evident in our study, as the expectations for men and women differ as well as their ascribed qualities. We found similar qualities expected for men and women in our study as several of the female respondents had strong opinions on gender roles. For instance, Joanna explained to us that it is harder to be a woman in Roma society:

*A Rom man is nicer than a Rom woman. For example, the man stays home while the woman walks around desperately. Not all Roma are bad. There are some who are walking around together with their wives. It is not that good to be a woman either. It is something normal. We are used to it, with our law. We came to this country to be able to work and earn some honest money, but it is easier for a man (ID 4).*

In the quote above the respondent illustrates that Roma patriarchal society has clear gender roles. When she was talking about gender issues within the Roma community, her frustration became visible. According to her, men have more freedom within Roma culture. Margaret further explains the difference between Roma women and Romanian women in the quote below:

*The woman has to respect her man more, to iron the clothes, to respect him because with the woman, in the gypsy's culture, there are others traditions, compared to Romanians. So if the Romanian woman washes the dishes, the husband also has to wash them. For us, it is not like that. For us, it is different. Very, very different. For example, I got a 15-year-old daughter-in-law. She has to learn to respect her husband so that she can teach this in the future the same way. Because if she does not learn it now, then it will be too late. She has to speak well about him, to not curse to him, to respect him, speak with nice words. If she does not love him and if she has another guy, she can get in trouble. So the man has the right to fall in love with another girl. Yes, he has the right. Because he is a man. He shakes his hat, but the woman remains with a cheek stain. It is not a very nice story. Even if he is married he cannot have wives, but he can have partners (ID 5).*

Similarly, the quote above illustrates the importance of women's roles of obedience and duty in Roma culture. Margaret thinks it is fine that a man can have many women, but a woman must be virtuous. Clearly, Margaret's answer supports the existence that there is division of gender roles within Roma culture, and that a man is much freer than that of a woman. It also explains issues of equality as she compares Roma gender roles to Romanian gender roles. Likewise, other female Roma women explained similar opinions on strict gender roles by saying that in Roma families, men are more respected than women. Also the female respondents explained that men have more freedom to do as they please, while women are more restricted with their roles as married women and mothers (ID 9, ID 4, ID 5). Roma women acknowledge that there are differences in gender roles and within Roma law in Roma society.

All our findings on gender show that gender roles affect decisions and actions, as it sets a cultural preconditioning. The culture one belongs to will ultimately shape one's values and beliefs, guiding human action. Women and male action are constrained by the Roma rules on gender roles. These rules offer a strict guidance on what women are allowed to do in Roma society. This can involve mobility, dress code, manners, speaking, and interaction.

Culture is important when discussing Roma's adaptation in host countries and their own culture. By holding on to strict gender roles Roma are holding on to their cultural beliefs making it harder to adapt to the culture in Norway. Individuals can have an inward orientation and resist lifestyle changes in regards to gender as we noticed that several of our female respondents were resisting cultural change by holding on to their traditional gender roles. By keeping traditional gender roles, Roma men and women are maintaining a conservative culture that clashes with the idea of gender equality in Norway. But we also saw a move towards change in the newer generation of Roma. Traditional gender roles are changing as women are earning an income, supporting their family as breadwinners and becoming more independent through their changing role (Bošnjak and Acton 2013). There are extensive cases in which immigrant men, including Roma men, are being challenged as breadwinners as women are taking on jobs and becoming more independent (ibid.). Our study supports this finding, as all of the female respondents were earning an income in various ways to support their family. We even found a case of a female respondent earning a livelihood in Oslo, while her husband was at home taking care of their child (ID 10).

Other Roma travelers in Scandinavia remark their opinions on gender equality experience in this culture. According to Voicu and Vlase's (2013) study on Roma migrants in Sweden an expression stated by Roma women appeared. The expression 'out there women come first!' stated by respondents in their study means that women are more respected as persons and are less targeted by domestic violence in host societies. One respondent describes Swedes and Sweden in the following way: "...very generous and compassionate. And one

more thing, there a woman comes first, children second and then dogs...you don't see them fighting in the streets or hear him talking to him loudly, couples walk together and take children with them" (Voicu and Vlase 2013:9). The passage above shows different cultural views on gender roles and how they interact with the host society's idea on gender creating possible clashes between them.

Despite finding strict gender role trends in our research, we found that all the female respondents were earning an income, therefore challenging the position of traditional gender roles in Roma society. In patriarchal societies, women are often associated with getting ready for marriage and childbearing, and men are seen as the providers of the family. Bošnjak and Acton (2013) believe that these traditional ascribed gender roles are quite simplistic. Although these traditional gender roles are taking place within the Roma culture, it is important to acknowledge that Roma societies are going through change. Although, in some Roma communities strict gender roles exist with conservative values practiced, one must also consider that in other Roma communities these traditional gender roles are slowly being challenged according to different contexts (Bošnjak and Acton 2013).

A way to challenge strict gender roles and promote empowerment for women can be through education and economic independence. Education and income opportunities for women are an important way in which Roma women can be empowered and have agency of their own. Our study revealed that Roma women were engaged in several income opportunities and this contributes to empowerment. If a Roma woman is not entirely dependent on her spouse or family to make a living, she is also freer to choose over the direction of her life. Getting younger Roma to continue education is a challenge in the Roma community as school dropouts are high. Further education of Roma would help them integrate and compete with others for skilled work. However, it is no easy fix as Roma face structural discrimination at many levels in society, but education is a way to break with cultural Roma norms in which Roma girls are expected to marry young and bear children.

NGOs have a special role in promoting agency for Roma girls and women. Providing skills and educational courses are a productive way for women to get involved in their communities and become more independent, creating women centers for empowerment similar to the City Church Mission centers. These centers can help them cope with family responsibilities through empowerment of women through education, economic support, skill learning such as agricultural production, hairdressing, restoration, textile transformation, secretarial duties, technology/computer, microcredit management, entrepreneurship, literacy and any other areas they are interested in. The centers can also host workshops and presentations of different topics such as right awareness, contraception and family planning, gender violence, child development, goal achievement, etc.

#### **5.5.4 Moral Values and Religion**

Roma are religious people. All our respondents reported believing in God, being Orthodox Christians and praying on a constant basis. The Salvation Army's emergency program in the spring of 2011 gave Roma in Oslo the possibility to gather and participate in a church service every night. The response was positive as many Roma showed interest in the praying session. "To the Norwegian volunteers it was somewhat unusual, and very heartwarming, to see the entire congregation get down on their knees and pray" (Salvation Army 2011:17).

Religion is a part of Roma's belief system and it is important because it illustrates the way they understand the world and themselves. Praying and attending church are actions that are in compliance with the moral regulation system Roma have. Moreover, this belief system is part of the structure that shapes Roma agency. Moreover religion is a sphere in which Roma find consistency, continuity and meaning. In that way, religion separates them from others and guide their life processes (Stewart 1997, Engebriksen 2007).

During the interview, a female respondent started crying on her tough situation in Romania. She said: "I am Orthodox. I believe in God. And we call it *Dimenezau* in Romania. I keep asking him for help and I pray to God" (ID6). Their faith in God, help them cope with the limitations they meet on a daily basis and help them

share hard experiences and ideas with others. A strong faith is important to Roma and explains a form of cultural resilience as religion enables them to deal with adversity and stressful situations. Religion is a resource Roma have, useful to find meanings, comfort and in gaining control.

Roma conduct themselves following Orthodox moral values according to which they should show compassion for others regardless of who they are. Roma typically follow the religion of their home country. In Romania the Orthodox Church, is the country's most important religious denomination. In addition, the Orthodox Church has actively shaped attitudes and lifestyles in Romania throughout history. Turcescu and Stan (2005) explain how sexuality is one area where the Orthodox Church defines acceptable and unacceptable sexual behavior. In Romania, this conservative mentality rejects homosexuality, prostitutes, abortion, contraception and family planning, while it supports a patriarchal organization, which tolerates adulterous husbands and expects loyal wives. Also, Orthodox theologians and priests praise the virtue of these traditional positions and reject any modernization of Romanian orthodox values regarding family and sexuality (ibid). We found that the respondents usually pray to God and display their main beliefs and values. They pray for their children, their health and difficulties in life (ID 9).

The values of the orthodox religion are evident when Margaret explains how taking an abortion some years ago was not an option for her. She says:

*We, the Romi, have many many kids. There was a time, more than 30 years ago, when we never went to have an abortion. We had all the children God was giving us. And we were raising them with whatever we could. Yes, but now the Romi are more democratic (ID 1).*

The quote above shows that the orthodox religion has had an influence on decisions regarding family planning. The quote also illustrates a change of the impact these religious values have on Roma, making the family planning topic more secular now, as abortion is more acceptable today than it was decades ago.

### 5.5.5 The Roma legal system

The Roma legal system is related to their morality and regulation system. This legal system is based on consensus and honor and it sets the rules for Roma life. The fact that Roma lack a nation of their own, makes it hard to understand how the legal culture is formed and how it operates. In a modern state there are courts, and sanctions that are easily identified and maintain order in society. In the Roma culture, the features of the law are not as defined, but rather they are based on traditions and customs. As Roma law is unwritten, it has coexisted for hundreds of years parallel to state laws where Roma have resided. Moreover, Roma culture intends to separate and conceal Roma life from the dominant culture (Barnes 2003). Therefore the main role of Roma law and culture is to separate and distinguish membership, values and activities. This unwritten law contains principles, different from the written law of states, which determine order and govern individuals according to their gender or social position in the group. The Roma law defines daily interaction, obligations and rights that greatly differ between men and women.

Roma law is often criticized for violating human rights and personal freedoms. Barnes (2003) in her review of the book *Gypsy Law* by Walter Weyrauch examines issues dealing with the coexistence of Roma law and other western legislations. First Barnes points out that Roma law tends to ignore the legal processes of providing evidence and fairer judgment, which differs from western law, where the due process is fundamental to protect the individual (ibid). Barnes continues arguing that Roma law does not contemplate the principle of legal equality, which means that Roma law is applied according to circumstances, cases and people. As such, the community and families may choose to ease or omit certain rules within their private circle if there is a need to protect their group from unwanted attention or social stigma (ibid).

Roma law guide families in negotiating with other families to help them solve conflicts. In this sense, the Roma legal system includes an autonomous court, the *kris*, with judges, the *krisnitorya* and severe punishments (Heinschink and Teichmann 2002). In a Roma court there are four judges, all of which are men,

and have no formal qualifications, but are agreed upon and invited by the parties involved in the conflict. Women can attend the *kris*, but they cannot participate in it in any way. The resolution of conflicts is not based on judgment but rather, it is consensus driven by the *krisnitorya* (ibid).

Bruno explained to us that he prefers to follow the state law system, because he wants to have good relations with the authorities so that he can live a life without concern. In this way, he tactically chooses to stick to the state law as opposed to the Roma law, because he does not identify with the latter as it gives him negative associations. He explained the Roma law, *romaniya* in the following:

*There are some specific laws. There are Roma people that have specific laws. These laws are different, the gypsy law. For example, if they judge a gypsy, if he is under trial, he can be forced to pay money, depending on what exactly he has done or what he is doing at the moment. For example, if a girl has made a mistake and she went to sleep with another guy, then the parents have to pay...If one Roma man from the community is stealing from another, or is stealing, he will be judged not just by the police or the official forces, he will be judged also ... there are some Roma judges. They gather in one house, and they will judge him about his facts and he will have to pay and he will have to pay back, but they usually pay in money or gold. For Roma, gypsy law is more important than state law...Actually, in the case of stealing there is an actual law for everybody, which would put a thief in prison. There they will execute his punishment in prison, but after he gets out, or in the time he is in prison, the family will pay for him too by the gypsy law. With the gypsy law no matter what, you must keep your promise (ID3).*

We argue that Roma legal traditions and their culture in general, show the extent of their capability, their freedoms and opportunities. In other words, their legal and moral rules shape their actions. Moreover, their legal system sets the conditions in their society and moral standards that cannot be negotiated. Rules regarding marriage, family hierarchy and values are the foundation of their culture

and therefore are hard to change. Roma see their law as pure, strong and permanent, and it is something they do not question or negotiate with outsiders. Therefore, it prevails over state law because Roma consider it stronger. On the other hand, the state recognizes Roma culture, but do not recognize their unwritten law, as it may appear to be irrational and it violates freedoms. These opposing views on legal systems create confrontations between cultures (Barnes 2003).

The assimilation process of Roma seems to be harder when Roma are confronted with the rules and norms of the popular culture of the host country they live or visit. It is believed that their long history of persecution have contributed to strengthen their culture and their moral system. For Ada Engebrigtsen (2007) Roma have always shown resistance to adaptation, but have adapted when it has been necessary. This has helped to maintain Roma key institutions and ultimately preserving culture. In this sense, Roma try to keep cultural independence from the popular mainstream culture, which has helped its survival. The strong legal culture of Roma is a result of being exposed to pressure of assimilation of popular culture and state institutions for centuries. Preserving this legal culture has been a way to fight back against what they consider as external threats. According to Weyrauch and Bell (1993) the Roma legal system has not only developed over time to protect Roma people from internal and external threats, but it also served as a way to organize their society. To them, gypsy law has evolved to protect Roma from the host society and host legal system.

## **5.6 The challenges of Roma culture intersecting with host cultures**

This section deals with all the dilemmas that arise with cultural intersection, that is, the challenges that lie between Roma's right to practice their culture and meeting the expectations of host societies and international regulation. In discussing dilemmas that come from cultural intersection, it is important to remember that Roma are not a homogeneous group, rather they act and behave according to their position in their group, gender, age and family belonging. Since Roma are a heterogeneous group, it is harder to generalize and to talk about Roma

as a group with a single aim.

Often policies of assimilation and integration have treated Roma as a whole group and excluded their opinions from the debate. Also, they have ignored that Roma have a cultural pre-conditioning that sets the premise for what Roma can or cannot do within their group. It is also vital to the analysis to recognize that Roma have a different mental construct of concepts and ideas of the world than mainstream society. In addition, cultural practices cannot be seen in isolation from social, historical and economic conditions. When all these aspects are included in the analysis where Roma cultural practices meet mainstream culture, it provides a more fruitful discussion. If Roma are treated with hostility because of their cultural practices, they are likely to follow a downward spiral, which can lead to more segregation and hidden practices, enforcing these same cultural practices.

Minority rights are an instrument that intends to protect minority groups like Roma and their culture. The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992) states that states have a duty to protect ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity, of minorities. This is a legal instrument that has good intentions, but in practice it ignores the link between cultural nuances and historical, social and economic structures and motivations of individual Roma.

In the discussion of minority rights we argue that Roma individual's self-determination, aims, culture and historical, social and economic conditions should be included in the analysis. In order to secure the effectiveness of minority rights, Roma should be actively involved in shaping its content. As shown before in our findings, there is a shift in cultural practices within the Roma community that indicate that younger Roma generations decide to separate themselves from traditional practices, while older Roma have a more conservative approach holding on to traditional practices. This shows that Roma are actively deciding which cultural practices they want to follow. The debate on the content of minority rights should include Roma's views, opinions and experiences on the cultural practices they want to follow, taking into consideration gender, age and social status in the group.

Our general findings on culture and agency show that self-image, Roma law, gender, religion and age are the main cultural elements that affect Roma when making decisions and living their daily lives. That is not say that other cultural elements do not play a big role in shaping Roma decisions. Through interaction with Roma agency, these cultural elements produce different outcomes resulting in cultural transformation creating a new cultural conditioning. One can already see signs of change from the younger Roma generation as a part of their life plan to adapt and to develop to host societies. This might be an important move towards cultural elaboration and transformation on their own hands.

Important to the protection of Roma self-determination to practice their own culture is the debate on the compliance with human rights. Some Roma groups in Europe maintain traditional practices such as early customary marriage, lack of family planning, keeping their children out of school and gender inequality that belong to the core of Roma culture. In the case of customary marriage, it is argued that it ensures the purity of girls, while for others, Roma early marriage appears to be a case of women's subjugated position and abuse (Oprea 2005). However, this traditional practice is not exclusive to Roma. UNICEF (2001) encounter that the phenomenon of child and early marriage is common in many African and Asian cultures.

Bošnjak and Acton's (2013) study the complex historical, social and cultural circumstances regarding early marriage prevalent in the Roma community and its connection to children's rights. From a human rights perspective, they explore how early marital customs collide with children's rights, and they question the effectiveness of human rights within the Roma community. At the same time, they explore the origins of this traditional custom. First of all it is believed that early marriage has existed since the Roma origin in India. This tradition continued to be exercised over centuries as Roma reached Europe. In securing political and financial ties between families, female chastity became important. By marrying their daughters young, Roma families could avoid unwanted male attention and sexual exploitation (ibid). Marrying early also has socio-economic considerations as it brings a financial gain through dowry, and is also a way to alleviate the control and responsibility that comes with female chastity (Roman 2013).

Having been under constant threat from outsiders, the Roma family provides clear rules towards what is acceptable behavior for men and women, but also provides them with a sense of security. However, this Roma tradition collides with state regulation. In Norway, it is possible to marry under the age of 18 with the parents' consent, but it is illegal to marry under the age of 16 (Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion 2014), while in Roma communities early arranged marriage and having children before the age of 18 is still occurring (Bošnjak and Acton 2013). Moreover, in Europe around 2% of Roma girls between the ages of 10-15 are traditionally married, and around 16% of Roma girls and boys between the ages 16-17 years are legally or traditionally married (FRA 2013).

We understand that Roma's construction of the concept of childhood differs from mainstream society, which explains why Roma treat youngsters as grownups. For Roma, young boys and girls are viewed as adults, and are given autonomy from an early age, while in host societies they are regarded as minors (Bošnjak and Acton 2013). In addition, young females are considered fertile, ready for marriage and having children, while young males are considered ready to become providers of their families (*ibid*). It is also a Roma founded value to honor family duties and the elders will on deciding family continuity. Moreover, it is considered offensive for young Roma to disobey the will of the elderly (Bošnjak and Acton 2013).

In our study, Joanna married at the age of 14 whilst Alexander also married under the age of 18, although they are both divorced today. Before the age of 18, Roger's family was actively searching for a spouse for him, but their plans did not succeed. Their stories of early marriage bear an example of the difference between Roma rules and values and norms and values of mainstream society where very few women and men marry before the age of 18. In the case of Alexander and Roger they explicitly said that they do not want to get married and have children young, because they wanted to experience other things in life before marriage. An interesting finding in Bošnjak and Acton (2013) centers around the young respondents' personal opinions when asked about the appropriate age for a girl to get married. Their opinions and practices on marriage turn out to be different. Although women think that the appropriate age to get married is

between 18 and 21, in reality they had been married off much younger themselves. This finding is also present in our study where the young Roma respondents wish to decide to marry later, but in reality have experienced early arranged marriages.

From a human rights perspective, early marriage conflicts with the rights of children. Early marriage of Romani girls is related to early pregnancy and the risks that follow. It is also related to educational dropout, the right to choose a spouse freely, and to choose when to marry and have children. International treaties and conventions, and action programs state and protect the issue of early marriage, for example the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956), the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1962), the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Resolution 1468 (2005) on Forced marriages and child marriages (FRA 2013, UNICEF 2001). These international instruments cover the issues of age, consent, equality and rights of young men and women.

Early marriage is linked to several other rights violations, like the right to education, gender equality and right to development. Early marriage creates an obstacle for school attendance for Romani girls and boys, therefore it conflicts with the right to education, Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is regarded as a fundamental human right (Bošnjak and Acton 2013). Only 6 % of married Roma women between the ages of 16–17 years were in the education system compared to 36 % of single Roma women of the same group (FRA 2013). According to UNICEF (2001) traditional societies, like Roma, do not see the importance of children's education, because in their eyes it is pointless to invest in education when their main role is to marry and have a family of their own. As such, early marriage ends the possibility for Romani children to pursue an education (Bošnjak and Acton 2013).

For them, their socially constructed views on what constitutes gender roles, but also the importance of education in life, differs from mainstream society and creates barriers to pursue an education for young Roma. Roma value education differently than the majority of the population, and have different concerns, and they give more importance to other challenges due to poverty and discrimination. Roma are known for rejecting the idea that education is important for their children. If social and economic structural conditions are added to this analysis then this view becomes more substantial.

Roma lack equal opportunities to access education and job opportunities in their home countries. From a rational point of view, Roma find it more beneficial to stay out of school, because they believe that either way they are going to have difficulties of accessing a job (Bošnjak and Acton 2013). Due to poverty, some Roma children do not have access to school supplies and education. Also, Roma experiences of segregation in the classrooms add to the belief that education is not worth pursuing (Roman 2013). Amartya Sen explains that educational decisions are made according to the value we give education, in terms of its cost-benefit and improving future opportunities (Sen 1999). As a result of their cultural construction of education and social and economic structural conditions, Roma find that it is more beneficial to focus on family issues and earning a livelihood. Statistics from FRA (2013) supports this pattern as it shows that 58 % of Roma women and 54 % of Roma men drop out of school before the age of 16.

Despite the educational dropout situation, in our findings we can see a change in regards to young Roma's values and views on the importance of education. Four out of five young Roma respondents expressed their wishes to pursue an education, and showed a desire to overcome their social condition through education. This shows a movement towards breaking out of socially constructed and established views on the value of education. Through education Roma want to overcome their social condition and want better opportunities for themselves.

Early marriage is linked to early childbearing and a high fertility rate amongst Roma women. There are many social, economic and cultural arguments that explain this situation. Firstly, Roma have a low level of education, which means

that they might have a lower incentive to postpone childbearing. Secondly, as being highly segregated in their home countries, Roma have limited access to health care and information, and in this way they are unable to control their fertility. Moreover, their religious beliefs set rules for family planning, in which the use of contraception and abortion is not acceptable, making them more prone to high birth rates. Judit Durst's (2002) study on fertility and childbearing practices among poor Roma women in Hungary shows that Roma women are having children before the age of 16. Also, it is argued that a low level of education and poverty are the driving force behind having a large number of children at an early age (Roman 2013). In the Roma culture, the role of the woman is associated with childbearing, and this cultural rule is expected to be fulfilled as soon as possible.

For the reasons explained above it is problematic promoting Roma cultural freedom when some of their traditional practices are colliding with fundamental human rights. It is simplistic to argue for minority cultural rights protection when some cultural customs clearly breach international human rights protection of the individual. Anna Diamantopoulou, EU Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner explains the clash between cultural practices and human rights in the following:

*But there will be changes too if Roma ideals and principles are to develop hand-in-hand with European - indeed global - concepts of fundamental human rights...When fundamental human rights and certain past traditions collide...it is the traditions that must adapt and the human principles that must prevail (Oprea 2005).*

Above, Diamantopoulou refers to change in Roma culture and the importance of incorporating human rights principles in the practice of Roma traditions. More importantly that Roma traditions need to adapt to human rights principles, because Roma cultural practices should not conflict with the individual rights. While this statement is true, it is also very problematic as it only contemplates the state law embracing human rights standards, and not the context of Roma culture

(Oprea 2005). Roma culture is not practiced in a vacuum; it is exercised within a social and economic context of many actors from different cultural backgrounds within a host society. Also, Roma should not be categorized as one homogeneous entity as they usually are portrayed through public opinion; instead they should be considered as a diaspora constituting a mix of individuals with different individualities (Tremlett 2009).

Perhaps the debate on the Roma compliance to human rights should include the idea of diversity amongst Roma in order to validate and balance the discussion. This interaction between different cultures, practices and values might trigger different responses including change. Those responses should start with Roma themselves and should guide the discussion. Also, there are many socio-economic and historical structures that cannot be ignored in the discussion, as these forces have and still are largely influencing Roma today. At the same time, the debate should acknowledge the different social constructions and ideas that Roma have on the world. As their culture is not static and not homogenous, the discussion about minority rights protection should encourage Roma participation from many different groups. This is to know their views on cultural practices and what actual change is taking place.

## Chapter 6

### 6. Conclusion

This study set out to research Roma's experiences of migration and the tactics they use to respond to structural forces in Norway. We wanted to study Roma's motivations to leave Romania and move to Norway, as well as to examine the social, political, and economic systems that surround Roma migrants, and how they respond to them using strategies and tactics. Finally, we wanted to examine the interplay between Roma culture and the host society. Through Roma's stories of migration and the challenges they face on a daily basis, we were able to shed light on the discussion on the ongoing Roma debate in Norway from a Roma perspective. Following that most of the Roma migrants in Oslo are of Romanian origin, it was necessary to focus on structural issues in Romania that contribute to migration. In the research, historical, social and economic elements surrounding Roma were addressed in order to get a deeper understanding of their current situation. For the analysis we chose to use the dialectic approach offered through the structuration theory to understand the interplay between individuals and their surroundings. More importantly, the theory of *morphogenesis* is used to explain possible cultural transformation.

#### 6.1 Summary of findings

There has been an increasing influx of Roma to Norway over the last years, following a pattern of migration of Roma from Eastern to Western European countries over the last decade. The push for migration has largely been facilitated by the EEA-legislation of the open border policy. The main reasons for Roma to leave Romania are difficult conditions due to unemployment, lack of demand for their skills, poor housing, little support from the authorities and health issues. The purpose for Roma migration to Norway is a hope to earn a livelihood and to be able to send remittances back home in order to improve their living conditions.

However, when Roma reach Norway they face challenges on an everyday basis. They still struggle to find employment and to make a living; they are homeless and find constraints imposed from the Norwegian government. Roma resort to earn a living through selling magazines, flowers and cigarettes, collecting waste, begging and having sporadic short term, low-wage jobs in the black market. Although it was not explicitly stated, Roma often made reference to the criminal act of theft as a common practice to earn a living when they are in need. Due to their homelessness, they live in the streets, forests, cars, and camps or in shelters. In addition, Roma deal with antagonisms between other Roma and foreign groups, drug addicts, police, security guards, and also they face discrimination by some Norwegians. The increasing amount of Roma in the streets have triggered negative reactions towards them as their presence is often linked to crime and poor sanitary conditions. The Roma debate has reached the political level as authorities aim to find solutions to the influx of Roma. In particular, the government has imposed a temporary ban on street music performances and a local ban on begging, restricting their chances to earn a livelihood through begging.

Roma are also offered help and services through NGOs, and from civilians and their own networks. We discovered that Roma respond to constraints and opportunities in inventive and resourceful ways, often finding tactics to move around the system. Roma are inventive in making use of the situation available to them in some way or another. Although Roma face restrictions and constraints, they also seek opportunities where others see closed doors. Additionally, each individual develops a strategy according to their own perception and evaluation of their specific wants and needs. Specifically, Roma decide whether to use the services offered to them in Oslo. Roma prefer to stay alone and always on the move in order to avoid unwanted attention from police and private guards. In regards to the ban on begging, Roma will react by leaving the country, pursuing other activities that compensate for the income loss, or continue to beg in a more hidden way.

Roma's actions are also determined by cultural elements that are setting the pre-conditioning guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behavior. We found that

the most prevalent elements of Roma culture that shape their decisions are gender, Roma law, religion, self-image and age. These cultural elements should be understood through the lens of socially constructed meanings that Roma give to them, that differ from mainstream social constructions. We also noticed that the cultural conditioning is changing through the intersection between Roma culture and the host culture. This transformation is taking place within the newer generation of Roma, who are breaking with more customary values and behaviors, placing more importance on their own wants and needs. These changes can be seen through postponing child marriage and childbearing, wanting to return to school, having a more mainstream dress code and women's economic independence as well as a more equal division of gender roles.

## **6.2 Concluding remarks**

Based on our findings we conclude that there are multiple challenges facing Roma travelers in Norway. Although several of the bans imposed have had idealistic intentions, in practice their outcomes are unproductive and many fear that they will target Roma selectively. The imposed bans also prove to be inefficient, as Roma will find ways to get around the system. As a result of structural restrictions placed on Roma from the government level, begging is likely to continue in a more hidden way, and Roma are likely to perform other activities including illegal ones to earn a livelihood. It is naive to think that bans will stop migration patterns as other macro structural forces are in place allowing migration such as poverty, unemployment, and political social exclusion.

EEA-grants have not been sufficient in meeting Roma challenges, because over the years millions of euros have been transferred solely for the Roma cause without substantial change. In order to have a more effective solution towards the improvement of Roma livelihoods in their home countries we call for a more including approach involving Roma. Moreover, it is important to fight corruption and aim for transparency in Romania. In addition, the social inclusion programs and the Roma rights protection in Romania need development at a local level taking into account the local population's needs and views on the matter. In

dealing with Roma migrants in Oslo it is hard to find solutions, however, the idea of including programs that promote self-help is convenient to help Roma in the way the Church City Mission is doing it.

When Roma migrate to Norway they bring cultural practices and a lifestyle which often collide with the norms and values of the mainstream society. When this collision happens many questions arise. The first is the right for Roma to exercise their culture, but it is equally important that their cultural practices respect personal freedoms. The fact that early child marriage, childbearing and school dropout is a widespread phenomenon throughout the Roma community, calls for the need for Roma cultural practices to adapt to human rights principles as they set important standards for cultural behavior. Secondly, if Roma cultural practices do not follow human rights guidelines what is the effectiveness of this instrument? What do they matter if not reinforced by Roma themselves? In order to make the human rights framework more effective, the assessment of human rights guidelines should take into account the historical, social and economic background of such cultural practices. In addition, it is important to understand the social construction behind the ideas that motivate Roma cultural practices that greatly differ from that of mainstream society.

### **6.3 Future Research**

Our study might have contributed to a better understanding of Roma's situation in Oslo by including their stories, needs, wants and responses to constraints. In order to find solutions to Roma's long lasting destitute situation in Europe there is still a long way to go on research in this subject. We call for more research on the field of Roma cultural adaptation in order to understand why social inclusion is a particular challenge for this ethnic minority. Moreover, there could be future research on legal pluralism; how Roma norms interact with the state law and what are the challenges and outcomes resulting from this interaction. Also, for future research, we suggest the study of the role of kinship ties and *neams* as an element affecting Roma culture, and how belonging to a certain clan shapes their actions. Furthermore, we think that it will be fruitful to study the existence of organized crime and human trafficking within the Roma community. Lastly, it could be

interesting to probe deeper into the area of waste collection and recycling market, as it is a growing lucrative opportunity for Roma and other groups.

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# Appendix

## Interview guide for field research

### Interview Guide

#### Demographic Information

Code

Age

Gender

Marital status

No. of children/Age

Neam

Religion

Education years

Country of origin

#### A. Background Information

1. Can you tell us about your life in your home country?

-Livelihood

-Family and network

-Relationships with people (Non Roma) & authorities

-Do you receive and State or NGO's support?

2. What made you decide to come to Norway?

-First time here? How long stay?

-Other European countries

#### B. Life in Norway

3. Describe your average day in Oslo

-What do you do for a living?

- Family doing same? Who is providing?

-Temporary job?

- Health

#### C. Interactions

4. How do you feel about your present situation in Norway?

- How do you feel about Gadjó in Norway?
- How do people treat you?
- Awareness on Roma debate
- What plans/thoughts on ban on music and begging
- NGO projects?

5. How do you feel about the Norwegian state?

- EEA rights?
- Police
- Preferred areas
- Public transport

D. Meaning of life

- What is a good life to you?
- Happy with life in Norway?
- There are many misunderstandings of Roma culture, what do you think represents Roma?
- Important to teach Roma traditions to children?
- Possible to practice Roma culture in Norway?

E. Future

- Plans in months/5 years?



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