



# **THE PURSUIT OF A BETTER LIFE:**

## **- Young North African migrants bouncing between asylum systems and life on the street**

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Global Refugee Studies

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*"The boys need nothing. They come, they sleep, they smoke and they go."*  
(Algerian boy)

## Map of North Africa and Southern Europe



All the informants used for the thesis originate from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

## **Acknowledgement**

We would like to thank and acknowledge the people who have influenced and made possible the completion of this thesis. The thesis is drawn from research conducted at the asylum centre, Centre Gribskov. Our deepest gratitude goes to our informants from the centre; the seven North African boys who are the heart of our research. We hope that we have portrayed a picture of them and their situation that is in line with their own understandings.

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## Abstract

More and more young North African migrants show up in asylum systems in Northern Europe. What differentiates these minors from other unaccompanied minor asylum seekers is that they do not flee war or other disasters and they do not stay in the asylum system long enough for their cases to be processed. Instead, they bounce back and forth between the irregular market and the European asylum systems. They exhibit a different - often aggressive and criminal - behaviour than the rest of the youths, and the Danish social authorities do not know how to help them or what to do with them. Since it is a relatively new group to show up in the Danish asylum system, the Red Cross has little work experience with these boys. Although this type of asylum seeker seems to pose a difficult issue in various Northern European countries, there exists very little research. This thesis is therefore intended to feed into the limited knowledge and literature about young North African migrants.

In the thesis, we explore the life stories of seven North African unaccompanied minors in the Danish asylum system. We analyse their stories from different perspectives and as a result we answer the research question: *Who is the group of North African youths with street-oriented behaviour from Centre Gribbskov? What coping mechanisms and migration strategies are connected to this group of individuals?*

Firstly, we examine the North African boys' life stories through their identity narratives and the way that they portray themselves in relation to their situation and others. The issues of identity, belonging and categorisation are explored mainly through theoretical concepts posited by Nira Yuval-Davis, Liisa Malkki, Marianne Gullestad and Howard S. Becker. Hereafter, we take a look at the behaviour that the boys exhibit and the methods that they use to cope with their situation. To unfold these issues, we mainly draw upon Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman's theories on stress and coping mechanisms. Furthermore, we add a dimension which draws on the theoretical components of Gresham Matza and David Sykes' theory on techniques of neutralisation which helps us to shed light on the boys' justifications of their criminal behaviour. Finally, we zoom out and examine the central reasons for the North African boys' migration. Additionally, we investigate how they use the

European asylum systems, and we explain what networks the boys make use of and how they do this. Our main theorists in this section are Stephen Castles and Mark Miller, Hans Lucht and Emma Herman.

One of the more important findings in the thesis is the fact that the boys all come from harsh and challenging backgrounds. They portray a feeling of being outcasts and often feel that their surroundings label them with negative markings. Moreover, the boys draw on various personal, social, material and cultural resources and use emotion-focused coping strategies such as avoidance, distancing, escape and positive reappraisals in order to cope with their emotions and manage their stressful situation. They use both the asylum system and the irregular market as a way of survival, but they do not all seem to have residence permits as an end goal. They chase the European dream and a place to feel free, but they all have difficulties actually making specific future plans.

**Key words:** North Africa, unaccompanied minor, asylum seeker, identity, labelling, belonging, coping and migration.

## Reader's guide

This guide provides a short overview of the signs and systems used in the thesis.

- All the names of the informants are pseudonyms.
- When referring to other chapters or subheadings in the text, we refer to the headline numbers.
- 'Single quotation marks' are used to indicate the use of theoretical and methodological concepts.
- "Double quotation marks" are used for two things: firstly for quotations, and secondly for underlining the meaning of a single word.
- "*Quotes*" from informants or theorists are written in quotation marks and in italic font. When a quote exceeds three lines, it is placed in separate passages, but otherwise quotes are placed within the text.
- [Square brackets] are used in quotes to help explain the context in which the quote was given.
- (Ref L:2) The **L** within the reference refers to the line number.
- .(Ref). or (Ref). When a reference refers back to a whole section, we put a full stop before the reference. When a reference only refers back to one sentence, there is no full stop before it.
- All references within the text and bibliography are written in accordance with the Harvard referencing system.
- Footnotes contain additional information on background knowledge that may be of interest and benefit to the reader. The most important theorists used in the thesis all have a small description of their role and position in the field.
- The appendixes are divided into an open section and an anonymised section. The ones that are part of the open section can be found in the back of the thesis. The ones that are part of the anonymised section are attached on a CD. An overview of the different sections of the appendix can be found in the table of contents. The letters or names in brackets **(XX)** shown after the name of the appendix is the abbreviation that we have used in the references.



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**Appendix 18:** Interview guide for the interview with a Red Cross professional representative on December 11<sup>th</sup> 2013

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**Audio file 2:** Interview with two Red Cross employees on October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013 part 2

**Audio file 3:** Interview with Wasi on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2013

**Audio file 4:** Interview with Emir on November 20<sup>th</sup> 2013

**Audio file 5:** Interview with Red Cross professional representative on December 11<sup>th</sup> 2013

**Audio file 6:** Drømmen om Europa

# 1. Introduction

The migration pictures that characterise the world of today are for the most part the pictures of people hanging on to overcrowded boats, trying to cross from one part of the world to another, or the pictures of bodies squeezed tight in-between goods or holding on tight to the undercarriage of a truck, with only one thought running through their minds; the dream of making it to Europe. Every week, hundreds of irregular migrants risk their lives in search of a better life in Europe (Ureta 2011:52).

We live in an “age of migration” (Castles & Miller 2009). Due to *“transport and communication revolutions, deregulation of the neo-liberal global market as well as the growing numbers of local wars and natural disasters (...)”* (Yuval-Davis 2013:54), more and more people are able to leave their country of origin in search of better opportunities. They may leave involuntarily or of their own choice, and they may seek out legal or illegal measures in order to reach their goals. Some seek help through refugee and asylum legislation, others seek legal ways such as work permits, and others again resort to smugglers’ routes and clandestine labour (Yuval-Davis 2013:55).

There is a distinction between migrants and refugees. Whereas a refugee is a person who has been forced to flee her or his country of origin due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution (UNHCR 2010:14), a migrant is a person who has made a conscious choice to leave her or his country of origin in order to improve future prospects, most often as a consequence of an economic situation (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis 2012:215). However, it is important to understand that the distinction made between economic and asylum types of migration is not as clear-cut as it sometimes seems. The line between irregular and regular migration is not always clear. Due to the difficulties of entering “Fortress Europe”<sup>1</sup> by legal means, many people need to balance between the clandestine and the legal system.

One group of people who balance between the irregular and the regular system are young unaccompanied North African migrants, and they are the focus of this thesis. They have left their countries of origin and have journeyed to Europe by plane, boat or under trucks in order to search for a better future. A majority of them come from

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<sup>1</sup> Fortress Europe refers to a critique of the EU in the sense that it has become a fortress in which asylum seekers and economic migrants are unwelcome (EU Jargon 2014).

non-existent or broken families and have often lived on the street for many years. These boys have alternated between the irregular job market, mostly in the southern parts of Europe, and the European asylum systems. Many of them are also involved in criminal activities. There are no exact statistics on how many young North African migrants roam the streets of Europe clandestinely, but an estimated guess is that there are more than 200,000 (Staff L:1063). More and more of them appear in the asylum systems, most recently in Northern Europe.

This thesis derives from an interest in the lack of knowledge of who these young North African migrants are, and how and why they want to leave their countries of origin and take drastic measures in the pursuit of a better life. Inspired by our studies in Global Refugee studies, we have been drawn to the novelty of this group in the migration field. Thus, young North African migrants appearing, disappearing and reappearing in the Danish asylum system is a new phenomenon that has only been seen in the last three to four years (Staff L:43). Within the field of migration and asylum policies regarding unaccompanied minors, there has been much research and debate, but this area is still to be investigated much more thoroughly. Knowing more about who these North African minors are, where they come from, what they do and what their aspirations are could help further the asylum systems' response to the group.

In Denmark, it has recently been decided to gather all North African youths who exhibit what is referred to as "street-oriented behaviour" at the Red Cross asylum Centre Gribskov (Staff L:110). The Red Cross has expressed their interest in understanding this group better, and this combined with our desire to find out more is what has been the driving force for the research.

## **1.1 Research questions**

The aim of the thesis is to shed light on the group of North African minors, which we will do through the following research questions:

***Who is the group of North African youths with street-oriented behaviour from Centre Gribskov? What coping mechanisms and migration strategies are connected to this group of individuals?***

In order to answer these research questions, we have constructed three sub-questions that both form the necessary steps towards a thorough response and are used as a structure in the thesis:

- Chapter 3: What societal and psychological factors characterise this group of individuals?
- Chapter 4: How do these boys behave and what methods do they use to cope with their situation?
- Chapter 5: Which migration strategies do they have and in relation hereto, how do they use their social networks?

In the following chapter, we will explain how we have conducted our research.

## **2. Methodology**

In this section, we will explain the methodological considerations that were present in the making of the thesis. First we will describe our methodological approach to the thesis, thus explaining the way that we have gathered our data material and the steps taken towards the actual examination of this material. Next, we will explicate the process of coding and analysis. In the last part, we will unfold the methodological reflections that we have had.

### **2.1 Methodological approach to the field**

#### **Data collection**

The thesis is based on an empirical data collection of interviews. Our primary data is collected through interviews with North African youths who live at the asylum centre Gribskov. Our secondary data derives from interviews with Red Cross employees who have knowledge of and experience with working with this specific group of boys.

The interviews in the thesis have been carried out with the help of interview guides; respectively a guide to interviews with the North African boys and a guide to the employees. Both types of interview guides have been conducted in a semi-structured way (see appendix 1,2). The advantage of this type of interview structure is that it has allowed us to be explorative and open towards what the informants had to tell us, as well as make it possible to pose clarifying questions (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:159). A further advantage is that prior to the interviews we did not know what kind of information the informants would provide us with. This allowed us to structure the path of the conversation through the themes that emerged during the interviews and our responses to what the boys said.

#### **Theory of science**

Our scientific theoretical approach in this thesis is inspired by phenomenology, hermeneutics and constructivism.

Our overall position of the thesis is inspired by the constructivist approach in the sense that we approach the world and people as changeable. People reproduce knowledge and interpretations of the world in a constant interaction through which certain actions and opinions are considered natural while others are considered socially unacceptable (Juul & Pedersen 2012:188).

We use different scientific theoretical approaches on the different stages of the thesis. The phase of data collection is to a high degree based on phenomenology and thus the study of phenomena understood from the informant's own perspective (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:44). A phenomenological method requires an open approach with as much uninterpreted descriptions of a person's life story which can function as the basis on which the researchers can lay theoretical concepts and interpretations (Juul & Pedersen 2012:104). In this thesis, the focus of the interviews has been to understand the world and the immediate reality as portrayed by the North African boys. Thus, with a phenomenological glance we have collected as much information on their subjective experiences as they were able to or willing to give. We believe that the phenomenological approach has been the best method to use at this exact stage of the process, because it has allowed us to get as close to the boys' understandings of their lives as possible.

However, in the process of coding and analysing the material we have mostly been influenced by a hermeneutic approach. The purpose of interpretation is to form a valid understanding of the meaning of what the boys say (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:68). Understanding knowledge is created by going back and forth between part and whole; in order to understand the unity it is necessary to understand the parts, and only in understanding the unity are you able to understand the parts (Juul & Pedersen 2012:145). Thus, in accordance with the 'hermeneutic circle' the different parts of our empirical data have been interpreted on their own while at the same time regarding the entirety of the material. This process will be outlined further in section 2.2.

In the thesis we use various theoretical concepts. We do this in order to shed light on different aspects of the North African boys' lives. With different theoretical concepts we can get a step closer to understanding what is at play regarding their life choices and their behaviour. The theories are thus used to supplement each other, but also to open up to new aspects that one theory alone may not be able to grasp. It has been important for us that the theories are not incompatible with regards to their scientific theoretical basis. Therefore, we have tried to find theories that would help enlighten our research questions, but at the same time move within the same scientific sphere. Thus, all the theories that we have applied on our data can be said to have an interactionist basis and therefore correspond well with each other.



## **Pre-understandings**

The hermeneutic approach calls for a researcher to consider and clarify her/his pre-understandings in order to understand how they can influence the interpretation of the data. Our pre-understandings derive from our experience as volunteers, our initial research into the field and our general assumptions on the lives of asylum seeking minors in Denmark. The pre-understandings have been part of our work process and have thereby influenced the outcome of the analysis. However, the pre-understandings do not necessarily influence our research in a negative direction as long as we are explicit about them.

Our experiences as volunteers in the Youth Network in the Danish Refugee Council working with unaccompanied asylum seekers in Denmark have meant that we have had a certain way of thinking when it comes to this group. The fact that we volunteer at a Red Cross asylum centre has meant that we have gained easier access to informants. In our early research phase, we had an informal interview with the centre manager at Centre Vipperød in order to expand our knowledge of the field and better understand where the need for further research lay. By talking to the centre manager about the North African boys we obtained an initial picture of them, which to some extent influenced the themes that we chose to focus on in our interview guides.

## **Working in a difficult field**

To study and interview people who are living on the edge between legality and illegality is always difficult and is associated with much uncertainty and underreported figures. It follows that the North African boys are balancing on the edge of legality in several respects; their presence in Denmark varies from regular to irregular since they bounce between the asylum system and life on the street, and their behavior and actions when they are in Denmark also vary from legal to illegal. Looking into the field of unaccompanied North African boys with illegal behavior and involvement in the criminal environment is obviously difficult. On top of this comes the fact that these boys have had both harsh and devastating experiences throughout their short lives which have scarred them. Most of them have been in several interrogation situations, where they have been asked about their actions and the intentions of their travels, and what they want to achieve in their intended final destination. As a result of this, a situation where a researcher asks similar

questions may cause the boys to reject any involvement in the interview or not to engage in the conversation. We will return to this last issue later in the section.

It is not the aim of this thesis to examine whether or not the information given by the boys in the interviews is the only version of their life stories. We are well aware that the boys may have told us another version of their reality, than the ones they portray in other situations. We have decided to follow the boys' own perspectives and therefore we primarily work with the stories portrayed by the boys in the specific interview situations. We will return and comment further on this issue in section 2.3.

### **Selection of informants**

We have used Red Cross as our gatekeeper. We have done this because most of the North African boys that come to Denmark do not have any permanent contact with the authorities. The closest you can get to an established contact in Denmark is when the boys are registered in the Danish asylum system. The employees at Centre Gribskov have therefore had a big influence on whom we have had access to interview. They have helped us by presenting us and our project to the boys. By demystifying a potential interview, they have given the boys the opportunity to think about whether or not they would want to participate in an interview, and this turned out to have a good impact on the boys. The employees' daily contact with the boys and their knowledge about the boys and their situation gave them far better conditions to determine whether an interview was possible or not.

We already knew one of the boys from his time at Centre Vipperød through our volunteering job. The fact that we had already initiated previous contact made it easier for us to interview him. This turned out to be an advantage after the interview as he assured the other boys that we were harmless and he therefore acted as an important gatekeeper.

The fact that we are both women may have had an impact on whether or not the boys wanted to talk to us as it became clear that we attracted significant attention every time we were at the centre, which was mentioned by Red Cross staff.

In total, we have collected seven interviews with boys from Centre Gribskov and one interview with two Red Cross employees who work at Centre Gribskov. Furthermore, we have conducted an interview with the centre manager of Centre Vipperød as well as an interview with a professional representative in the Red Cross

in order to expand our background knowledge. The names of the boys will remain anonymous in the thesis. This is primarily due to the fact that their application for asylum is still undergoing.

### **The interview guides**

The interview guides are structured around different themes, which are connected to our sub-questions. Before interviewing the boys we wanted to have a better sense of what overall themes would be relevant to focus on in the interview guide. As mentioned before we interviewed the centre manager of Centre Vipperød, and after this interview we made an initial interview guide structured in themes, based on this information and our preliminary research questions. On this basis we interviewed two Red Cross employees and they provided us with inspiration for further issues and themes. In-between the interviews with the boys, we went over the interview guide again and rearranged or amended some of the questions where we thought it necessary.

In the interview guide to the boys we have been aware that the questions should not remind them too much of an interrogation situation with the police or the Immigration Service, and therefore some of the questions have a little pre-introduction or are very informal in their approach, as for example: *“If you had to interview a boy like yourself what would you ask him? What would be interesting to know?”* (Appendix 2). Initially we began with questions that were based on a personal level like, *“How will you describe yourself? What kind of guy are you?”*. However, we found that the boys had a hard time opening up and talking about themselves, and we therefore changed the order of the questions so that the interview guide started with some relatively concrete questions on what life was like before their arrival in Denmark. Only later did we begin asking more personal questions.

### **The interview situation**

We made an effort in making the interviews as informal as possible. We brought soda and snacks and tried to arrange to sit in a cosy room. We wanted to encourage the boys to realise and recognise that they are the specialists of their own lives, and that we were interested in knowing what it is like to be them. Furthermore, we wanted to avoid the boys getting tired of being asked questions about their

migration routes or their lives in general. We began each interview with a small introduction (see appendix 2). We tried to make sure that the interpreter made a complete translation of the introduction as it laid the foundation for a successful interview, where we reassured the boys that the information given would not be presented to any authorities. We wanted the boys to know that the interview should first and foremost generate information about what it is like to be in their shoes, and to understand their subjective world.

To facilitate the boys' thoughts and reflections on the questions, we mostly responded with open instructions such as, "*Can you tell us a bit about yourself?*" and follow-up questions such as, "*And how did you feel about this?*" It was important to us that the boys felt that we could understand them and their difficult situation, and we indicated this with responses such as "*I understand...*" as well as non-verbal nodding.

### **Outside the interview situation**

It was our initial intention only to focus on the data that we collected in the actual interview situations, but due to the fact that the boys were rather reluctant and cautious during the interviews we changed tactics. After spending some time at the centre, it soon became evident that the more informal the situations were, the more the boys loosened up and seemed comfortable in our company. After two of our visits at the centre, we travelled back on the train to Copenhagen with some of the boys. During this time, we observed the boys' appearance in the public space and how they behaved towards us. These observations have been added to the written notes on each boy (See e.g. appendix 10). Additionally, we were given the opportunity to attend a resident meeting at Centre Gribskov from which we have also gathered observations (appendix 17). In all of our observations we have paid particular attention to the atmosphere surrounding the boys, the mood of the boys and the group dynamics between the boys.

## 2.2 Processing of data

### Recording, transcription and note taking

Our data collection takes various forms. Following is a list with an overview of our ten interviews:

#### The interviews with the boys:

- Interview with Wasi in English. Recorded and transcribed. (Appendix 10).
- Interview with Emir with help from an Arabic/Danish interpreter. Recorded and transcribed. (Appendix 14).
- Interviews with Yasir, Said, Ali, Yunus and Musa with help from an Arabic/Danish interpreter. Not recorded, but we took notes during the interviews. (Appendixes 11-13,15-16).

#### The interview with the Red Cross employees:

- Interview with the centre manager at Centre Vipperød in Danish. We took notes during the interview. (Appendix 7).
- Interview with two Red Cross employees in Danish. Recorded and transcribed. (Appendix 9).
- Interview with a professional representative in Danish. It is recorded and the audio file is submitted. (Audio file 5).

We did not record five of the interviews with the boys, because we were afraid that they would be too distracted by and uncomfortable with this method. The recording could have influenced what information they were willing to disclose. Furthermore, the use of a recording device could have reminded them too much of an interrogation situation. The Red Cross staff had initially advised us not to use a recorder due to the boys' distrust. As a result, we have mostly been taking notes during the interviews. However, with two of the boys the staff told us that we could have a chance of a recording if we asked the boys in advance and reassured them that the recording was not to be shared with any authority. Thus, two of the interviews have been recorded.

In the interviews which we did not record, we divided the tasks of asking questions and taking notes. One person was in charge of the interview, asking questions in accordance with our interview guide and asking follow-up questions. Meanwhile,

the other person wrote down what was translated by the interpreter. After the interviews, we discussed the ambiance of the interview, observations of the behaviour of the informants and any comments that stood out to us both. The notes and observations were then gathered in clusters based on the themes evident during the interview. The observation notes from the resident meeting at Centre Gribskov can be found in appendix 17.

Transcribing our interviews and rewriting our notes from the interviews and observations prepared our material for coding and analysis. The steps of this process are explained in the following section.

### **Meaning condensation**

Kvale and Brinkmann describe the analytical tool of ‘meaning condensation’ as a way to shorten and specify statements from informants. An analysis through ‘meaning condensation’ includes five steps, which we have followed to some extent. ‘Meaning condensation’ allows researchers to work in a strict and systematic way with the data (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:228). The five steps are a way to make the raw text manageable, filtering out the important statements in the interviews from the unimportant ones and thereby opening the way for a proper coding and analysis of the material in order to answer the research questions. We have also taken into account Auerbach and Silverstein’s procedure on coding in qualitative research, with special notice to their basic steps of coding from raw text to theoretical constructs (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003:35).

The coding process is not a linear movement, but rather goes back and forth between the different steps in accordance with the ‘hermeneutic circle’. It is important to note that in our processing of data, we have been inspired by the above mentioned methods, but have simultaneously constantly adjusted to the material at hand.

#### **a. Reading through the data**

As described by Kvale and Brinkmann, the first step in ‘meaning condensation’ is to read through all of the material in order to have a sense of the entirety (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:228). Having an overview of all the informants and their statements helps to find intersecting ideas and themes which can point to the relevant text. Despite keeping an open mind and letting the data “speak to us”, our

initial research questions and themes from our interview guide to some extent already influenced which parts of the data we found interesting. We made efforts to remind ourselves of this and to be aware of the way we automatically looked at the data, so as to understand what we might be blind to.

### **b. Finding natural meaning units<sup>2</sup>**

This step in the processing of the data is an attempt to cluster what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) call 'natural meaning units' from the informants in accordance with what they say. Here, we have tried to look beyond the questions that we asked in the interviews in order to figure out what seems to be important to the informants. What ideas and meanings are repeated within the interview and what ideas cut across the interviews and are common for some or all the interviews? (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:229).

### **c. Finding central themes**

The different 'natural meaning units' are gathered under 'central themes'. This is done based on the idea that some of these 'natural meaning units' are close or similar to each other. In this step, we gathered similar quotes from all of the informants which seemed to bear significance for them. These quotes were then grouped under a single headline which encompasses their meaning. It is important to remember to be true towards the spoken words (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003:38).

### **d. Finding theoretical constructs**

After discovering the 'central themes', we compared these to our sub-questions in order to figure out if there was a proper correlation between them. Dividing all the 'central themes' into groups belonging to our sub-questions, we came up with three headlines that cover all 'central themes' and the research questions: *Societal and psychological characteristics*, *Coping mechanisms* and *Migration strategies*. These headlines are the foundation for the division of the theory and analysis. Thus, in accordance with the 'hermeneutic approach' we have constructed a new whole from the different parts.

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<sup>2</sup> Auerbach and Silverstein refer to these 'natural meaning units' as 'repeating ideas' (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003:35).

## **2.3 Methodological reflections**

### **Reflections on the use of data quotations in the analysis**

We have been going through all of the material with the research question and sub-questions in mind, but not all of the interviews have produced as much useful material as others. For instance, due to the fact that Wasi's interview lasted longer and that it was recorded as well as the fact that he was more willing to engage with us than some of the other boys, his statements have been used more than the others'. Yasir, on the other hand, was more hesitant in saying anything which may have been caused by the fact that the relationship between him and the interpreter was awkward, and therefore his interview has not been used as much. We are not trying to portray a generalised picture of the boys, but rather depict their individual perspectives of their life stories.

### **Reflections on the use of an interpreter**

We have not used professional interpreters due to the economic expense. The Red Cross staffs have kindly allowed us to use some of the Arabic speaking employees from the asylum centre to translate for us during the interviews. We are aware of the fact that when using an interpreter, you risk losing some of the natural flow and feeling of an interview. This is due to several influencing factors: the interpreter's exact understanding of the question that he has to communicate to the informant, the interpreter's relationship with the informant and the interpreter's own understanding and dissemination of the informant's reply to our questions. This influences how the answers are presented to us and therefore how we present our data material for the reader. Throughout the process it became clear to us how much influence an interpreter has.

Furthermore, we cannot know whether everything has been accurately and directly translated or if something has been left behind. We asked the interpreters to be as precise as possible in their translations, but we experienced that not all answers were directly presented. For example, we experienced a situation where one of the boys spoke to us in a rude way, and this was not translated by the interpreter, simply because he did not want to rephrase the inappropriate words. Another point to note is the fact that the interpreters during the interviews commented on the information given by the informants. There were several instances where the interpreters corrected the age given by the informants or commented on the



chronology of the informant's story of migration. An example of this is when the interpreter used in Musa's interview stresses that Musa is probably older than what he passes himself off as (Musa L:16). The comments from the interpreters are only used when it is considered necessary and when we use them we make clear that the comments derive from the interpreter.

### **Reflections on our note writing**

The notes are mainly written in Danish, with few English or Arabic comments, because the translation was given from Arabic to Danish. It is therefore difficult to pick up direct quotes, because the things that are being said go through both an interpreter's understanding of the statements and the translation itself. In our note writing we have therefore only highlighted sentences with " " when we are more or less certain that the interpreter has translated what the informant has said directly from Arabic. The notes made during the interviews also include statements from the interpreters as well as observations and small clarifying comments for our own use.

The Danish notes are translated into English when used in the analysis, and third person singular is converted into an I-form in order to standardise the expressions of the quotes and to improve the readability. We have been writing the notes out in full sentences and transmuted the quotes that we have made use of in the analysis. We have especially transmuted quotes from Wasi's interview into correct English. By doing this we have made the data more comprehensible.

Notes and transcriptions from the interviews with the boys are used equally and serve as our primary source of data. The interviews with the employees as well as the general observations - from our stays at the centre, the commute from the centre with some of the boys and from the resident meeting - are our secondary source of data. An overview of the different data is listed after the table of contents.

### **Reflections on the validity of the collected data**

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the North African boys' special situation can bring with it critical considerations. Even though we bear in mind that the boys' portrayed life stories can be some out of many versions, there is the risk of wanting to validate the stories. We have found ourselves in situations where we have come to question the validity of the information given by the boys, because it sometimes contradicts other information found in the research phase.

A way to overcome this problem is through Marianne Gullestad's (1996) notion of 'roles' and 'identities'. Gullestad argues that there is an analytical division between the feeling of a basic and continuous experience of the self - the different identities that a human being wants acknowledgement on - and then the different roles that she or he possesses. A 'role' is a set of expectations and norms that call for a certain behaviour in certain situations. Modern people take on many different 'roles' in connection to different contexts, and there is not a 1:1 relationship between 'roles' and 'identities'. Some 'identities' are connected to specific ways of practicing certain 'roles', while other 'identities' are not connected to any 'roles' (Gullestad 1996:25). A person's picture of her or his self is the sum of all the different 'identities' that (s)he undertakes. These are both unique and relational. According to Gullestad, the notion of 'roles' is closely related to the social structures in society, while the 'identities' and the self should be seen in light of what kind of person (s)he is or wants to be. Thus, the fact that there can be varying versions of the boys' life stories shows us that the boys identify themselves with different 'roles' in different contexts. It can also show us that they are capable of responding to the (cultural) expectations of others and even creating connections between contradicting expectations. Margaretha Järvinen (2004) argues that the informant does not construct her or his life story alone but also through the other's perspective. The life story is therefore told through the perspective that the informant believes is understood by the surrounding society (Järvinen in Skytte 2008:260).

The life story is a personal interpretation of situations and is the informant's own understanding of her or his life. The life stories will therefore appear as valid when it comes to the person's own self-understanding. Thus, what we have experienced through the boys' life stories are the stories that create meaning to them.

### **Ethical reflections**

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that there are different ethical dilemmas in a research process that it is necessary to be aware of.

First and foremost, even though we emphasise that the outcome of this thesis cannot be generalised, we might paint a general picture of the boys in some aspects. We refer to the North African boys as one single group with more or less similar characteristics, while knowing that there are probably many other versions of North African boys' migration experiences. When concluding on different analytical points

as if they are pertaining to all North African individuals, there is a risk that we depict a wrongful picture. Thus, the reliability of these conclusions can sometimes be questioned. However, we believe that due to the limited knowledge about young North African migrants, the findings of the thesis will still be a valuable contribution to the understanding of what it is like to be them and to the research on migration in general.

It is also important to note that the way we portray the boys' life stories is determined by our choice of theory. Our theoretical gaze affects what is considered important and what is considered irrelevant, but the outcome of this selection may not be in accordance with the boys' own ideas of what should be emphasised in their narratives.

The same issue is evident when we use observations from the interviews to further analyse the boys' statements. This means that we use implicit forms of statements that are not necessarily complying with the image that the boys try to portray of themselves. The difficulties with including our observations of the boys' behaviour in our analysis are that we may have a different understanding of what their behaviour means. In the thesis we try to paint a picture of the life stories that the boys want to portray and therefore it can be inaccurate to include non-verbal communication and thereby our own interpretations of their behaviour. By using observations that they have not themselves pointed out, we risk betraying the trust that they have bestowed upon us. On the other hand, the observations that we have had might add layers to some of their statements that we would not otherwise have thought of, making our analysis more accurate. There is a fine balance between using what they tell us and what we think they tell us.

In our analysis, we have treated transcriptions and notes equally, as if they were all transcriptions of the boy's spoken words. Although their statements have had to go through different translations and interpretations, we have chosen to regard it all as abiding with the actual expressions. However, we are aware that our findings in the analysis might have been of another kind had we had the opportunity to avoid numerous translations.

Furthermore, due to the difficulties in getting the conversation flowing with the boys, we have had to be aware of what information is actually coming from the boys and what is stemming from the questions that we ask. In our analysis we have had to be clear about which statements come directly from the boys' mind and which

have been “forced” out as a consequence of what they think we - or the interpreter - might want to hear. Here we also have the distinction between ‘roles’ and ‘identities’ in mind (Gullestad 1996:25). Furthermore, the interpreters that we have used for the interviews have had a different role than what interpreters usually have, as previously mentioned. They have been much more personally involved in the conversations, which has sometimes made it complicated to differentiate their own opinions from those of the boys. This is again related to the issue of what we wish to portray in the thesis; the boys’ own interpretation of their life stories.

### **3. An introduction to the field**

In this chapter, we will introduce the reader to the background information that sheds light on where our informants have come from and what their situation is now. This will provide the reader with a basic understanding of the informants before we further analyse their backgrounds and who they are. The chapter will start with an overview of their countries of origin and Southern Europe, and thus the places and situations that they have been in before arriving in Denmark. Hereafter is a short introduction and discussion of the North African boys in an international context. We will define the terms that we use to describe them, as well as give a description of their situation at the asylum centre in which we have met them. We will also focus on the boys in a Danish context and bring into focus the issue of youths disappearing from asylum centres, which was an issue that we uncovered during our initial research phase and in the interview situations. At the end of the chapter, we will give a short introduction to each of our seven informants.

#### **3.1 The geographical and international context**

In this section, we will introduce North Africa as a region in order to understand the conditions that our informants have come from and what they would go back to, should they be forced to or choose to return to their countries of origin. Furthermore, we will discuss the situation in Southern Europe and how this can influence migrants, such as our selected informants, to migrate and move on. We will also characterise the North African boys so as to add further to the possible reasons why they are in their current situation.

##### **An overview of the situation in North Africa**

North Africa consists of eight nations: Sudan, South Sudan, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Western Sahara<sup>3</sup>. These countries are separated from the rest of Africa by the Sahara Desert. Apart from being physically separated from the rest of Africa, the northern nations are also politically and culturally different from the rest of the continent. The North African countries are part of the Arab world as members of the Arab League<sup>4</sup>. Arabic is used as one of the official languages in most

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<sup>3</sup> Western Sahara is occupied by Morocco, see appendix 4.

<sup>4</sup> The Arab League was initiated by Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Saudi Arabia who all signed the agreement in Cairo on March 22, 1945. Since then, more countries have entered the league (ALO 2003).

of the North African countries. Most of the populations in North Africa are either Arabic or Berber and the vast majority is Muslims. North Africa is divided into two smaller regions: Maghreb and Sahara. The Maghreb region consists of the northwestern part of Africa along the Atlas Mountains comprising Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Western Sahara. Egypt, Sudan and South Sudan belong to the Sahara region (MW 2012). The boys who we have interviewed originate from Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco and thus the Maghreb region. For more specific information about Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, see appendix 4. In this thesis, we refer to them as North African boys rather than Maghrebi boys, since this is how the staff at the asylum centre refer to them (Staff L:508).

The entire North African region is currently going through a turbulent and unprecedented moment in history as the people of these regions continue to revolt and demand various rights. The revolutions began in Tunisia in December 2010 and changed the geopolitical, economic and social map of this part of the world. The youths have continuously expressed their hope of gaining better control and influence over matters that concern their lives with emphasis put on accountable and transparent governance. (IFRC 2012). The “Arab Spring”, as these series of revolutions have come to be known as, has come to describe these events with the “(...) *hope for long-delayed political transformation and social and cultural renewal.*” (Lust 2014:67).

In the North African region many people struggle with the high unemployment rates and very low quality and poorly paid jobs which are connected to the lack of democracy and social dialogue, as well as the structural economic problems. Unfortunately, being employed in North Africa does not mean that you escape poverty. A total of 30 % of all employed people still live below the poverty line, and the majority of these people work in the informal sector. Employed people in the region also suffer from poor social protection coverage. (AO 2012). Thus, socioeconomic exclusion is a resulting factor, and not only do the lower classes suffer from the economic and policy failures but also the middle classes too. As Lust states, “(...) *poor education and uncompetitive economies have robbed those between 15 and 35 of their right to dream.*” (Lust 2014:XXV).

This shows that there is still a long way to go before the North African region is no longer under economic duress and political instability. It is unclear what direction the transformations resulting from the “Arab Spring” will take these countries in.

Congruently, although things have changed in the countries from which the North African boys have originated from, there is still a long way to go before they would have a chance of a better life than the one they first left behind.

### **The situation in Southern Europe**

The North African boys that we have interviewed have all managed to leave their countries of origin, cross the Mediterranean and get into Southern Europe, this being Spain or Italy. Most migrants, minors or adults, travelling from North Africa to Europe pass through Spain or Italy for shorter or longer periods of time (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis 2012 L:33). They either stay in asylum centres, work in the irregular market or travel to Northern Europe.

Before the beginning of the financial crisis in 2007, the need for migrants in the southern part of Europe was quite big. With aging populations and the need for cheap labour, or workers who are prepared to work under exploitative conditions, some irregular migrants were able to find jobs more easily through seasonal labour, the domestic service sector and the leisure industry (Yuval-Davis 2013:56). In many ways, some of the underground economies in the Southern European countries are not that advantageous for the migrants, but they do provide a source of income: “(...) *sustaining the migrants as they struggle to gain a foothold in Europe (...)*” (Lucht 2012:262). For the young North African boys, searching for a job and waiting for or trying to get “papers” are two hurdles that they often face. These are the two key elements needed in order to move away from life on the street.

After the beginning of the economic crisis the Southern European nationals have had a difficult time finding labour themselves. As a result of the increasing anti-immigration discourse in Europe (EU Jargon 2014) the ability for irregular migrants to find labour in Southern Europe has become a lot harder. This is one reason why some migrants choose to go to other countries where they might stand a greater chance of finding work and the economic means for survival.

The conditions within the asylum systems in Southern Europe are another factor that influences the migrants’ decision to stay or leave these parts. Seeing that the Southern Europe is the entry point for a large number of migrants and refugees every week, the asylum systems in these countries are strained beyond endurance (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis 2012:79). Therefore, the migrants who enter the asylum system, either voluntarily or forced to do so by the police, face a difficult and

lengthy process, and they are often treated poorly in the asylum centres. These conditions greatly affect migrants' decision of whether or not they wish to stay in these situations.

### **The group of North African boys**

The majority of the boys that we interviewed have lived on the street either in their countries of origin or during their migration in Europe. Some of them have left their family at an early age, and many of them are no longer in contact with any family members. These boys are similar to many other boys who come from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and migrate to Europe. They can be defined as what sociologist Etiemble has coined 'wanderers' and 'runaways'. 'Wanderers' are youths who have been in a street situation in their own country, and 'runaways' have left their family homes (Etiemble in TDH 2009:20). According to a survey made by Terre des hommes<sup>5</sup> minors in street situations in Morocco suffer from mistreatment from the authorities, have no resources necessary for their development and basically live like outcasts (TDH 2009:20). This is most likely the same for the youths living on the street in Algeria and Tunisia.

### **3.2 Overall characteristics of the North African boys**

In the following section, we will present what we define as the group of North African boys. First, we will introduce the following concepts: 'migrant', 'irregular migrant' and 'unaccompanied minor'. This will ensure that the reader has the same understanding of these terms as we do. It is important to understand what characterises a migrant and an unaccompanied minor in order to comprehend how the group of boys is viewed and treated in the system. Hereafter, we will introduce the asylum centre Gribskov and thus the setting in which we have met the boys. This will be followed by a brief discussion of how the North African boys behave in the Danish asylum system and finally we will focus on how and why some of them disappear from the asylum centres.

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<sup>5</sup> Terre des hommes is a Swiss organisation with the aim of helping to build a better future for disadvantaged children and their community.



### **Definition of an irregular migrant**

There are different ways of defining an international migrant. The general explanation is that an *“international migrant is a person who crosses the borders of two countries and lives in a country other than her/his country of citizenship for more than one year.”* (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis 2012:215). However, different countries have different versions of this, such as including all those who have a different citizenship, those who were born in another country, or those who do not have grandparents in the country (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis 2012:215). An international migrant can be either a regular migrant or an irregular migrant (or an illegal migrant or undocumented migrant). In this thesis, we refer to the North African boys’ status as ‘irregular’ (when not being in the asylum system) rather than ‘illegal’, since the latter strongly suggests a conscious breaking of the law.

The definition of irregular migration is defined by the European Migration Network’s Glossary on Migration and Asylum (2010) as: *“(…) the movement of a person to a new place of residence or transit using irregular or illegal means, without valid documents or carrying false documents.”* (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis 2012:9). It is difficult to estimate how many irregular migrants exist, since this area is characterised by lots of unreported numbers. However, in a 2010 report the ICHRP<sup>6</sup> estimates that on a global level there were *“approximately 30 to 40 million irregular migrants, a number that amounts to between 15 and 20 per cent of all international migrants.”* (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis 2012:4). There are different ways that a migrant can enter a country illegally. A migrant can enter a country using own resources, or with the assistance and help of others.

### **Definition of an unaccompanied minor**

According to the Danish Immigration Centre an unaccompanied minor is defined by being a foreign child under the age of 18 years who has travelled to Denmark unaccompanied by parents or other primary caregivers (NiD 2012).

Unaccompanied minors who are allowed to enter the Danish asylum system can be divided into two groups. One group is termed: Spontaneous unaccompanied asylum seekers, who enter the country on their own initiative and whose case is run by the Danish authorities. The other group is the unaccompanied UN quota refugees who

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<sup>6</sup> The International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP) was an organisation working with enhancement of human rights in public policy making.

are hand-picked in UN refugee camps. The group of North African boys belong to the first group.

In 2013, the majority of unaccompanied minors in the Danish asylum system came from ten countries in the Middle East and Africa, and primarily from Afghanistan, Algeria, Syria, Libya, Morocco and Somalia (US 2013b). Most of the unaccompanied minors are boys and over the age of 15 (US 2013a:17).

### **The situation in Centre Gribskov**

In the spring of 2013, the Danish Immigration Service decided to place a small group of young unaccompanied asylum seekers from North Africa at Centre Gribskov, away from the other unaccompanied asylum seekers who are placed at a youth centre in Vipperød. Various North African boys have been at asylum centres in Denmark for years, but this was the first attempt of gathering them in one place. The reason for moving this group of boys was the fact that their behaviour differed significantly from the other youths with violent outbursts, criminal and erratic behaviour, and substance abuse; creating an ominous atmosphere at the centre and complicating the work routines for the staff (Staff L:502). Moreover, these boys do not tend to stay for very long in the asylum system, but rather disappear from the centres, which is again more demanding on the staff and their limited resources and time. Separating these boys from other unaccompanied asylum seekers was meant to relieve the employees at Vipperød and bring peace to the other residents there, as well as working more strategically with the North African boys (Staff L:521).

It was decided that the arrangement at Centre Gribskov was to be a permanent solution to the difficulties encountered when managing the North African boys at Centre Vipperød. However, this permanent solution was to be understood as continuing until 2014 (Appendix 7). Since the completion of our data collection, Centre Gribskov has temporarily opened up for a group of Somali boys as well, but after a short while the group of Somalis diminished while the number of North African boys increased.

### **North African minors in the asylum system**

North African minors in the Danish asylum system have been a strong topic of discussion at the Red Cross for a couple of years (Staff L:151). There has been an increase in the arrival of youths from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia with a large

number of people arriving in 2011 and 2012. A total of 14 minors from these countries arrived in 2010, 45 in 2011 and 92 in 2012 (US 2013a:17). Subsequently, in the first half of 2013, 59 minors had already arrived in Denmark (US 2013b:6). According to the statistics, most of them come from Algeria, then Morocco and Tunisia. However, many of these youths are known to give different versions of their countries of origin (Staff L:311; TDH 2009:20).

The boys who have been moved to Centre Gribskov are often referred to by Red Cross staff as “North African boys with street-oriented behaviour”, because many of them have lived (and still sometimes reside) on the street and differentiate themselves from other asylum seeking minors. These boys often act out violently towards the staff or each other, and a large number of them are involved in criminal activities and/or have a drug abuse (Staff L:240,430). Their involvement in crime has a negative effect on the centre and the local area, and often this results in the responsibility for these minors bouncing between the Red Cross, police, other asylum centres and secured institutions, when they are arrested. These boys have a difficult time adapting to the asylum system because of the rules and regulations that they need to follow (Staff L:109; TDH 2009:38). For example, managing fixed times for meals or school seems to break with their usual ways of living. This, combined with the fact that these boys have been on the move for years, puts them at risk of being highly uneducated. This group of individuals is also referred to as “boomerangs” because many of them disappear from the centres and then reappear later on (Appendix 7).

### **Youths disappearing from asylum centres**

A variable number of minors - of whom North African boys account for a high percentage - disappear within the first weeks or months after their arrival at Danish asylum centres (RK 2013). There is very little knowledge about the minors that disappear. The phenomenon is known at both local and regional levels, but national statistics are non-existent. Thus, sporadic information from several European countries has been shared, but no in-depth investigation into this issue has ever been launched. However, the organisation Terre des hommes has conducted a smaller investigation focusing on four European states, and they stress that

hundreds of children disappear from asylum institutions all over Europe. (TDH 2009:8).

Some of these minors disappear from asylum centres even before they are registered or the decision on whether or not the asylum case should be processed in Denmark has been determined, as in accordance with the Dublin Regulation<sup>7</sup>. Others stay for a while before disappearing voluntarily or leaving under duress. Some of these minors reappear at the asylum centres (Information 2008). These reappearances can be because they are sent back from other countries, after being caught by the police, or because they themselves want to go back into the asylum system. Some appear in the asylum system several times, but register themselves under different names and different countries of origin (TDS 2009:20).

According to the Norwegian Immigration Service: *"The young people of North African origin account for over half of all disappearances, although they constitute only a small percentage of all unaccompanied asylum seekers in Norway."* (Dagsavisen 2010). Terre des hommes states that in Spain and Belgium, Moroccan youths take up a large percentage of the entirety of minors arriving in these two countries (TDH 2009:21). According to the Danish Red Cross staff members, in recent years Denmark has also seen an increasing number of minors originating from North Africa, and most of these disappear for periods at a time or disappear entirely (Staff L:953).

There can be many reasons for why these youths disappear. The country where they disappear from may not have been their intended final destination, and therefore they are only in transit. It may also be because North Africans are often denied asylum, they may disappear because of their fear of being sent back. Some minors are involved in crime and this can cause them to disappear, or perhaps they *"cannot stand life in the institution and the rules and regulations there"*. (TDH 2009:36).

A Belgian director at a centre for unaccompanied minors underlines this as he states that the reason why North African youths - he especially talks about Moroccans - disappear is that they cannot adapt to rules:

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<sup>7</sup> The Dublin Regulation refers to an EU-agreement made to ensure that an application for asylum within the EU is processed in one country only. For further elaboration on the procedure for an asylum process, see appendix 5.

*“They come to Europe to find work (...) It is a catastrophe for the Moroccans, they have a hard time getting here, they leave their families, they walk, wait, take a boat, get beaten, come back... (...) We explain to them that there are rules but they have always been on the move. This is contrary to the way they have lived (...) so they leave” (TDH 2009:38).*

According to Terre des hommes: *“No State is in a position to give accurate figures concerning the number of UFM [unaccompanied foreign minors] present on its territory. The same goes for figures concerning the amount of young people leaving the facilities that took them into care.” (TDH 2009:31).* The reason why this organisation states that it is difficult to give the number of all minors in the country is that some of these youths, and perhaps especially those who are used to living on the street, never actually come into contact with the asylum system. However, there are some statistics that point to the size of the problem. For example, during the period July 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 until June 30<sup>th</sup> 2013, 137 unaccompanied minors disappeared from the Danish youth asylum centres. This is 37 % of all the unaccompanied minors who came into contact with the system. Out of the 137 minors, 32 originated from Morocco or Tunisia. (Audio file 6). However, this number may be higher seeing that many of these youths tell the Immigration Service that they are from another country such as Syria or Iraq.

The many disappearances were also felt during our collection of data. Thus, at the time of our first interviews, in the end of October 2013, there were 22 North African boys at Centre Gribskov. At the time of our last interviews, in the end of November 2013, only four boys remained at the centre. However, in the end of March 2014 the centre houses 15 North African boys. Accordingly, the number of boys at the centre constantly shifts as some of them either disappear or are assessed to be more than 18 years old and thereby need to be placed at a centre for adults.

### **3.3 Short informant profiles**

The following section gives a short outline of our seven informants' backgrounds and the most important issues discussed in the interviews. These will provide the reader with an idea of who the boys are and in what ways they are alike or different from each other. It is important to note that these short reviews are not extensive as the analytical points will only be unfolded and discussed in the analysis sections.

As mentioned in chapter 2, the informants' names have been changed as a way of keeping them anonymous. Appendix 3 provides a more thorough review of the boys' profiles.

### **Wasi**

Wasi tells us he is Berber from Algeria. He was raised trilingual, speaking Berber, Arabic and French. Wasi says that he left Algeria in order to experience new things and learn new skills. He says he comes from an upper middle class family. Wasi explains that he left his home at the age of 11, then apparently returned and left again for good when he was 14. After leaving his family, he went to different North African countries and then travelled in France, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Denmark and Sweden. Wasi tells us that he drinks and smokes hash, but does not do other drugs.

### **Yasir**

Yasir states that he is half Brazilian and half Moroccan. He says that he has been living with his father in Brazil, as well as sailing around the world with him. He does not say anything about whether or not he grew up in Brazil or Morocco. He tells us that he was 14 years old when he left Brazil and went through Colombia and Denmark to Sweden, where he met up with a friend of his father. This, he says, was around 1-1½ years ago. He was raised as an only child and tells us that his father died while Yasir was in Sweden, and so he is no longer in contact with his family. In the beginning, the friend of his father helped him, but after his father died, Yasir went to a Swedish asylum centre. He then left Sweden because he was not allowed to play professional football and went to Denmark. He states that he has never had to live on the street. Yasir dreams of becoming a professional football player and of starting his own family.

### **Said**

Said initially tells us that he is Algerian, but speaks with a Moroccan accent. Said expresses that he has lived a hard life. He left his family at an early age because he felt unwanted, and he began to abuse drugs and alcohol in order to survive. He is no longer in contact with his family. Said talks about having experienced awful things while living on the street, such as beatings and assaults. He left his country of origin

to travel to Spain, and has since travelled further north through Germany to arrive in Denmark. He has been in Denmark for more than seven months. In Spain Said had a caretaker, but in Denmark he had to seek out the asylum system. He finds it difficult and hard to picture the future.

### **Ali**

Ali tells us that he comes from Tunisia and left his place of origin, when he was 15 years old due to family problems and riots in the country. Ali travelled from Tunisia to Italy with the help of a smuggler. In Italy, he met up with some friends who took care of him. Ali emphasises that he wants to avoid people coming from Arab countries and that he sees better opportunities in living in Europe. Ali seems to be quite positive with regards to his situation and not particularly affected by the life he has been living on the street while travelling through Europe. Ali distances himself from crime and substance abuse.

### **Emir**

Emir says that he is from Morocco and believes that he was around 13-14 years old when he left Morocco. At an early age he spent a lot of time on the streets of Morocco selling cigarettes in order to earn money. His parents are divorced and his mother now lives in Oman. He has very little contact with his family. When he grew older he started to travel to some of Morocco's bigger cities. Emir ended up in the city of Tangier, where he tried for two years to get onboard a truck in order to get to Spain. One day he finally made it and hid under a truck without being seen. After two years in Spain, Emir travelled on to Belgium, Germany and ended up in Denmark. Emir appears to be very affected from his life on the street and exudes a sense of sadness and bitterness. He reveals that he is involved in crime and substance abuse.

### **Musa**

Musa tells us that he is from Algeria and is 17 years old, but later in the interview he talks about Morocco as his country of origin. According to Musa, he was around eight years old when he left Morocco, together with his younger brother. They left because of problems which he did not go into further detail about. Musa explains that he has been travelling sporadically through Europe without making any plans

beforehand. Originally, he intended on avoiding Denmark and going to Sweden, as he had heard that Denmark has a very strict asylum system. However, Musa ended up in the Danish asylum system after being caught by the police. Musa has spent most of his life living in a criminal environment, and he reveals that he has been stealing and taking drugs in order to survive. As a result of these actions, he has been imprisoned numerous times. Musa decided to withdraw from the interview when he felt that the questions got too close to feelings or experiences which he does not want to talk about.

### **Yunus**

Yunus explains that he is from Morocco and is 17 years old. He is not clear about why he left Morocco, but he indicates that it was because he wanted to experience new places. He explains that he has been in four or five countries in Europe. His plan was initially to go to Norway, but he was caught by the police in Denmark and decided to apply for asylum here. Yunus discusses his life in a very negative manner, struggling with loneliness. He views himself as a sinner due to his substance abuse and the things he has done while intoxicated, although he emphasises that the things he has done was done out of necessity. Religion seems to be very important to him, and in the future he would like to live as an orthodox Muslim.



## **Theoretical and analytical frameworks**

In the following three chapters we will present three theoretical frameworks which we have called: *Societal and psychological characteristics*; *Coping mechanisms*; and *Migration strategies*. By using these frameworks, we unfold three different aspects of the North African boys' life stories, which all help us to answer our research questions. We present the theoretical frameworks before the analysis, in order for the theory to be fresh in the reader's mind when it is applied to our data material. In chapter 4, we analyse the boys on a psychological level where we try to uncover how they view and portray themselves. In chapter 5, we investigate how they behave in relation to others and what measures they use to manage their own lives. In chapter 6, we broaden our perspective and look at the reasons why and how these boys have ended up in the situation we have met them in. In chapter 7, we link some of the different analytical points across the three theoretical frameworks and conclude on our findings on the basis of our research questions. We furthermore open up to new perspectives that we have come across during our research.

## **4. Societal and psychological characteristics**

### **4.1 Theory: Societal and psychological characteristics**

In this section, we will explain the main theoretical concepts applied in the analysis. The analysis section on *Societal and psychological characteristics* will be used to explain how the North African boys portray themselves to others and how others view them. With the use of theoretical concepts posited by Liisa Malkki, Nira Yuval-Davis, Marianne Gullestad, Howard S. Becker and others, we will analyse how the boys fit into and belong to the global society, both from their point of view and a societal viewpoint. We will investigate how their identity narratives relate to their situation and how the construction of these narratives may be influenced by the way others categorise the boys.

#### 4.1.1 The national order of things

Liisa Malkki<sup>8</sup> (1992;1995) deals with displacement and refugees, but her theories relate to refugees as much as various other types of migrants. She uses the term, 'the national order of things', to describe the way in which nation states are considered to be the organising principle of global society. In this global order, people and place are connected with a naturalised identity, where the concept of 'belonging' is linked to regularised boundaries of space. Many contemporary debates on nationalism, immigration policies, citizenship and challenges to state sovereignty surround the question of who belongs and who does not belong? This question is very relevant to the study of migrants and their place in the world.

In relation to this point of discussion, Nira Yuval-Davis<sup>9</sup> distinguishes between 'belonging' and 'the politics of belonging'. In our thesis, we mainly focus on Yuval-Davis' concept of 'belonging'. According to Yuval-Davis:

*"(...) people can 'belong' in many different ways and to many different objects of attachments. These can vary from a particular person to the whole of humanity, in a concrete or abstract way; belonging can be an act of self-identification or identification by others, in a stable, contested or transient way."* (Yuval-Davis 2006:199).

'Belonging' has to do with the way a person connects and feels attached to other persons, groupings, nations or particular places. This attachment can be caused by a person's own feelings towards these things or by the way that others view and consolidate the relationship between this person and, for instance, a particular grouping. Yuval-Davis further states that 'belonging' concerns three things: 'social locations'<sup>10</sup>; 'ethical and political value systems'<sup>11</sup>; and an individual's 'identifications

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<sup>8</sup> Malkki is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Stanford University.

<sup>9</sup> Yuval-Davis is Professor and Director of the Centre for Research on Migration, Refugees and Belonging based in London.

<sup>10</sup> 'Social locations' refer to an individual's position in a society or culture. The social and economic positions are, for instance, a particular gender, race, class, nation, religion, profession or age group (Yuval-Davis 2006:199).

<sup>11</sup> 'Ethical and political value systems' are what people use to judge their own and others' belonging. They are perspectives and ideologies that help form the boundaries of identity and belonging. (Yuval-Davis 2006:203).

and emotional attachments' to different groupings or places. In our analysis, we will only focus on the latter, because this is what is most evident from the data material. 'Identifications and emotional attachments' concern constructions of 'belonging' and connections or continued commitments to, for example, cultural traditions or groupings. Constructions of 'belonging' can be seen as part of individual or collective 'identity narratives'. These narratives often reflect a duality, because they are made up of people's existing belongings and their yearnings to belong; what they already are and what they want to become. Furthermore, 'emotional attachments' have to do with the sense of feeling based and secure in a particular place. *"Emotions, like perceptions, shift in different times and situations"* (Yuval-Davis 2006:202). For instance, having experienced a traumatic episode relating to a particular grouping might change one's 'identification' with this grouping. Likewise, having migrated from one place to another might cause a growing 'emotional attachment' to one's place of origin or it might cause new 'identification' with the host nation.

'The politics of belonging' deal with the boundaries that separate people into 'us' and 'them' (Yuval-Davis 2006:204). For a long period of time, the modern nation state co-existed with a comparatively unrestricted freedom of movement (Sciortino 2004:24). However, today border control and strict immigration policies are an integral part of most state affairs.

*"This 'dirty business of boundary maintenance' that underlies the politics of belonging is all about potentially meeting other people and deciding whether they stand inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the nation and/or other communities of belonging, whether they are 'us' or 'them'."* (Yuval-Davis 2006:204).

Refugees and migrants constitute a challenge to the 'national order of things' due to their break with their natural place of belonging. They *"challenge the naturalised equation between people, territory, and political community."* (Yuval-Davis 2013:65). Without the borders of nation states, no refugees or migrants would even exist, seeing that there would not be any imagined borderlines of different states to cross. However, as more and more people migrate or are displaced, they become deterritorialised and pose a threat to the harmony of the nation states (Malkki

1992:34). They have broken ties with their place of origin, but are yet to be included in another place of 'belonging', therefore they are outside of the order.

Yuval-Davis states that *"belonging tends to be naturalized"* (Yuval-Davis 2010:266), which denotes that a person belongs to the place in which rights can be claimed as a result of citizenship. Only when enjoying the rights that follow a membership of a particular collectivity, can you truly belong. She further argues that *"belonging assumes boundaries of belonging and is thus exclusive as well as inclusive"* (Yuval-Davis 2010:266), thereby suggesting, in accordance with Malkki, that there is an order to the concept of 'belonging' in which people are either within the order or outside of it. Yuval-Davis argues further that the relationship between citizens and their nation states have been constructed as a permanent relation, but this is being challenged by migration. *"With the growing trend of "people on the move" and the economic and social interdependencies on migration, there is a growing blurring of "insiders – outsiders""* (Yuval-Davis 2013:57).

#### **4.1.2 Identity**

Identity can be constructed *"as transition, always producing itself through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong."* (Probyn and Fortier in Yuval-Davis 2006:202). People are caught within their own desire to belong. The duality between belonging to a place and wanting to belong to a place is often reflected in narratives of identity.

Yuval-Davis describes identities as *"stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are, and who they are not, as well as who and how they would like to/should be"* (Yuval-Davis 2010:266). Identities are hereby reflective narratives of how people would like to be perceived by others and of how they perceive themselves. *"The emotional components of people's construction of themselves and their identities become more central the more threatened and less secure they feel."* (Yuval-Davis 2006:202). On the one hand, people who rarely feel secure - such as refugees and migrants - may hold on to things like cultural or religious traditions or to objects of 'emotional attachment' in order to keep their 'identity narrative' from changing too dramatically. On the other hand, members of a certain grouping or nation might go to extreme lengths in order to keep their 'collective identity narrative' intact if they feel threatened.

Marianne Gullestad<sup>12</sup> (1996) presents an explicit notion when it comes to the difference between 'identities' and 'roles', as explained in chapter 2. A person's 'identities' are developed in the reflection on the 'roles' that (s)he plays and the experiences that these bring. Furthermore, they are formed by acknowledgement of other people and through the cultural values that define "a good human being". (Gullestad 1996:24). Gullestad emphasises that 'identity constructions' are constantly changing and adapting through time and context (Gullestad in Skytte 2008:255). Accordingly, we understand Yuval-Davis' notion of 'identity narratives' and Gullestad's notion of 'identity constructions' as the same, and we will henceforth only use the term 'identity narratives'. 'Identity narratives' not only reveal a person's self-understanding, but also depict the society and the social surroundings in which the person can be found (Gullestad in Skytte 2008:255).

Yuval-Davis differentiates between individual and collective 'identity narratives'. Individual narratives often draw upon a collective identity. 'Collective identity narratives' relate to particular groupings such as ethnic, national, racial, religious or cultural groups, and a 'collective identity' often relates to the individual's and others' perceptions of what being a member of this particular group means (Yuval-Davis 2006:202).

#### **4.1.3 The categorisation and criminalisation of migrants**

The Western world has increasingly been securitising and criminalising the migration issue. Irregular migrants are framed as an issue of security rather than an issue of humanitarianism. Assertions in the political field and media often link irregular migrants with negative stories (Sciortino 2004:17) of terrorism, crime and human smuggling often joined with the rhetoric on crime prevention and punishment. These discourses can lead to prejudice, categorisation and stereotyping. Even if there is no truth to a particular stereotype, it has an effect on the development of attitudes towards these migrants (Fernandez et al. 2009:5). In this way, "*migrant populations are popularly viewed as being clandestine or 'illegal' and therefore more prone to criminal behavior.*" (Angel-Ajani 2003:435). And in accordance with Gullestad, the 'construction of identity' is reflected by other people's attitudes and their categorisation of people (Gullestad in Skytte 2008:255).

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<sup>12</sup> Gullestad was a Norwegian social anthropologist.

The promotion of stereotypes in this manner becomes what Fernandez et al. (2009) refer to as an 'auto-prophecy' in the sense that when certain people are marked as potential criminals, the system will practice more control with these people and the possibility of being singled out by the police increases. Then, when some of these people are caught in a criminal act it sustains the idea that the stereotype is true. The criminal act may only concern being in a country without legal grounds, but as soon as it is deemed "illegal", society has a tendency to consider these people as being "bad people". In this way, irregular or illegal migrants are kept within a discourse of delinquency and non-legitimacy (Fernandez et al. 2009:5).

#### 4.1.4 Labeling theory

As a supplement to the above outlined part, 'labeling theory' can shed light on another dimension within the study of social definitions of deviance and the consequences of such definitions.

In Howard S. Becker's<sup>13</sup> work with the concept of 'labeling' it is the other's subjective definitions of a person's skills and behaviour that create the possibility of 'labeling' the individual as deviant (Becker 2005:29). The following quote explains what Becker means by deviant behaviour:

*"(...) deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender". The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label."* (Rubington & Weinberg 2011:196).

The view on deviant behavior changes over time and furthermore Becker stresses that the judgment about whether something is deviant or not is not always logical, and it *"(...) depends on how other people react to it."* (Becker in Rubington & Weinberg 2011:201). In accordance with Fernandez et al.'s concept of 'auto-prophecy', Becker gives an example in which a person 'labeled' as criminal only needs to commit a single criminal offense, and then this is how the person is perceived by others, *"(...) yet the word carries a number of connotations specifying*

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<sup>13</sup> Becker is an American sociologist who has contributed to the sociology of deviance, sociology of art and sociology of music.

*auxiliary traits characteristics of anyone bearing the label.”* (Becker in Rubington & Weinberg 2011:203).

Once the surrounding society has marked an individual or a group as deviant, there is a risk according to the ‘labeling theory’ that a ‘labeling process’ begins and the negative expectations are internalised and become part of the individual who then acts upon these expectations (Becker 2005:51). If the person identifies with the deviant role, it can be difficult to break out of the role again, and the person can thus take on what Becker terms a ‘deviant career’ (Becker 2005:44).

## **4.2 Analysis: Societal and psychological characteristics**

In the following pages, we will draw on the theoretical concepts that have just been described in order to examine and explain how the North African boys portray themselves in relation to others. The theoretical concepts that are passed on from the theory section are primarily Liisa Malkki’s term the ‘natural order of things’, Nira Yuval-Davis’ notion of ‘belonging’ with special attention to ‘identifications’ and ‘emotional attachments’, and furthermore Yuval-Davis’ and Marianne Gullestad’s thoughts on ‘identities’ and ‘roles’. First, we take a look at how some of the boys feel about their place in their family and society. The second part further analyses this as it deals with the boys’ sense of normality. The third part considers the way that some of the boys portray themselves as either victims of their situation or in charge of their own decisions. The last section revolves around the way that the boys feel categorised or ‘labeled’ by others, and the way that they relate to other Arab people.

### **4.2.1 Outcasts in society**

Two of the seven boys we interviewed mention or indicate that they in some way or another feel that they have been pushed out of the educative support base in their countries of origin. Wasi explains it by saying: *“My father is a French teacher in high school, and my mother is a doctor in psychology. In comparison, I know little. I am the bad person in my family.”* (Wasi L:467). It is clear from this statement that, to a large degree, Wasi views himself in the light of his parents and their professions. The way he views himself and thus his identity is affected by a longing to be like them. Here, we can draw upon Yuval-Davis’ notion of the ‘collective identity narratives’ (Yuval-Davis 2006:202) as we see Wasi’s family as a grouping. We assume that his

parents wanted him to be like them - namely well-educated - so their perception of him (as non-educated) has influenced his own perception of himself.

The feeling of not being able to live up to his parents' expectations of achieving a high level of education may be a reason for why Wasi feels that he no longer belongs with his family. The fact that he says that he is the "bad person" in the family also indicates this sense of being the odd one out and thereby no longer fitting in. By saying: *"I don't go to school and do nothing good. Researcher: But you are still very smart. W: My family doesn't say this. You must do something. It is like this for all Arabs"* (Wasi L:469), Wasi underlines that his family does not acknowledge him because he does not go to school and, in their eyes, he can do no right. The comment: *it is like this for all Arabs*, could also be an attempt to ease criticism of his own parents by saying that this is the case for all Arabs.

Congruently, he connects education with acceptance into the family grouping as well as the Arab society in general. Throughout the interview, it became more and more clear to us how education seems to be very important to Wasi. When he talks about his travels through Europe, he stresses: *"Yes every country I have been in, I went to school"* (Wasi L:35). However, it is not clear to us whether he talks about state authorised schools or schools in asylum centres.

Thus, the upbringing in a family with educated parents has influenced him as a person and his set of values, and he would like to become educated like them. Seeing the respect that his parents have on account of their well-reputed professions may have prompted Wasi's need for people to respect him in the same manner in order for him to feel a sense of self-achievement and self-respect. If other people acknowledge him as someone to be respected, this can be incorporated into his 'identity narrative' (Yuval-Davis 2010:266). On the other hand, the fact that Wasi emphasises the importance of going to school could also indicate that he is well aware of the surrounding society's (and also us as researchers) expectations of him. Here, Gullestad's notion of 'roles' (Gullestad in Skytte 2008:255) is beneficial to apply because certain expectations call for certain behaviours. According to Wasi, it seems that education is the way to achieve success and dignity in life. It is difficult to say whether Wasi believes in the values that he connects with education or if he takes on a 'role' which reflects this understanding. In any case, he attributes education a value from which he navigates.



Said also indicates that his bad relationship with his family is to blame for his choice to live on the street. He says: *"I felt that my family did not want me as a child, and this forced me to choose life on the street."* (Said L:32). The feeling of being unwanted greatly influences how a person looks upon himself. It is relevant to add that Said has had a very hard time living on the streets in Morocco. Said tells us how the feeling of powerlessness sometimes overshadowed everything, and often he did not know what to do or how to manage his situation (Said L:24). We argue that Said lacks a 'sense of belonging' to his country of origin, both to a family and a home, and one could interpret this as a factor that has influenced how he has developed his identity. Said has lost his important 'emotional attachments', both when it comes to relationships and to the sense of feeling secure in a place. Thus, it seems that Said no longer identifies his country of origin with something positive or something that he wants to return to one day.

There are also some boys who have expressed that they feel left outside of the Danish society. With Malkki's term (1995) they have been left outside 'the national order of things' in several ways. Most obvious is the location of the asylum centre which is situated in a remote place. Yunus explains it this way: *"It [the asylum centre] is placed remotely on the countryside, far away from everything. There is no school, you do not get clothes and only very little money. There are many things that are not right, you just sit and wait."* (Yunus L:48). At the end of this quote, Yunus draws attention to the 'national order of things'; namely the fact that the boys lack many of the civil rights that Danish nationals have. For example, asylum seekers in Denmark are only allowed to work while their asylum case is in progress if: the asylum applicant's identity is defined; the asylum seeker has been in the asylum system for at least six months and if (s)he is willing to agree to a voluntary repatriation in case of rejection; and the Immigration Service has decided that the asylum seeker's case should be processed in Denmark. (NiD 2014).

Although unaccompanied minors normally receive education during their time in asylum centres in Denmark, this group of North African boys has not had regular education. This has something to do with the fact that these boys do not fit into the normal asylum system because they struggle to live in fixed frameworks and structures (Staff L:111). Thus, the young North African asylum seekers are kept in a vacuum, having little to do with their time.

Musa also touches upon the question of fitting into society by saying: *"I do not feel that I have really lived. My whole life I have been in and out of jail."* (Musa L:25). This example is rather explicit because jail can be interpreted as the punishment for not fitting into the norms of society and thereby the 'national order of things'. Musa has been on the move for most of his life and in all the countries he has been in, he has become acquainted with imprisonment (Musa L:14). This imprisonment is, most likely, due to criminal behaviour caused by his position as a migrant. Consequently, the North African boys can be seen as people who do not fit into the order, as they are not part of the nation state. This is due to them lacking a residence permit and moreover because some of them are balancing on the edge between legal and illegal behaviour.

### **The connection between being an outcast and loneliness**

The feeling of being an outcast is also linked to the feeling of being alone, which is connected to the dichotomy of belonging or not belonging. Both Yasir and Said are very explicit in their comments on how they do not feel attached to their families anymore. They have no contact with their families (Yasir L:61; Said L:35). This is exemplified as Yasir states: *"I have no one to talk to"* (Yasir L:61), and it can therefore be argued that he feels alone. The feeling of not 'belonging' to any grouping or any place can cause this loneliness. Also, Emir talks about this subject by saying that he always travels alone: *"That is how it is [being alone]. When we get here, we come alone and therefore we continue to be alone."* (Emir L:96). The feeling of being an outcast which it seems that some of the boys have experienced in their countries of origin have perhaps influenced them in such a way that they would rather live with the feeling of loneliness in another country.

On the other hand, for some of the boys it seems important to them to return to their countries of origin at some point in the future, which implies that they to some extent still have an 'emotional attachment' to these places. However, some of the boys explain that they will only go back if they have gained the skills and earned the money that they initially set out to obtain. Wasi denotes this by saying: *"I know that one day I will go back to my country (...)"* (Wasi L:132) and *"Researcher: Do you think most of the boys here want to go back? W: yes, all the boys. The boys go from their countries because they don't have money."* (Wasi L:315). It is hereby evident that for

Wasi it is a dream to one day be able to return, but at the same time he is highly aware of how his economic situation should be in case he returns: *"If I go back to Algeria I must have a lot of money, or I don't go back."* (Wasi L:332). Congruently, he feels an 'emotional attachment' to his country of origin, but in order for him to live there without feeling like an outcast, it is necessary for him to have obtained a certain status.

Some of the other boys underline that they are only interested in going back as visitors rather than returning to stay. Musa says: *"I would love to return to Morocco and see my parents - but only with a residence permit from Denmark in my hand."* (Musa L:63). Ali also touches upon this by stating: *"I will only visit Tunisia, because I can get a good future somewhere else."* (Ali L:37). Ali further states that there is no future in Tunisia (Ali L:60). From these two statements it is evident that the boys believe that the opportunities for a good life lie in Europe and not in the Maghreb.

#### **4.2.2 Normality**

One issue that stands out clearly from the interview with Wasi is his focus on normality. Wasi suggests that boys who have lived and grown up on the streets are not normal. He sees many of these boys as behaving outside of what society would consider the norm. *"The boy he doesn't understand. Sometimes he can't be normal and doesn't know how to be normal."* (Wasi L:596). What Wasi touches upon here is that these boys have grown up on the edges of society, where they have not had the chance to learn how to navigate in society. Most of them have not had strong family relations or any educational system to help them understand established norms and values. According to Gullestad, teachers and parents *"teach children to 'find themselves'"* (Gullestad 2003:52) - that is finding their own identity - by exposing to them a range of values and cultural resources to choose from. It is especially youths who often find their own individual interpretation of values and practices and incorporate them into their identity; these are *"seldom very far from those of their parents"* (Gullestad 2003:53). It can be argued that the reason why Wasi describes the boys as not knowing what normality is, stems from the fact that because the boys have left home at a young age they simply have not had the opportunity to learn what "normal behaviour" is and what expectations there are of youths in a particular society. Wasi explains that some boys have problems and are nervous, which causes them to commit criminal acts. He states that: *"Some boys have*

*problems and need psychology*” (Wasi L:723). Here we assume that what Wasi means by ‘psychology’ is that some of the boys are in need of psychological assistance in order to be normal. Wasi thereby implies that only through the help and guidance of society will these boys be able to function within the norm.

At the resident meeting, Musa also brings up the feeling of being considered to be outside of the normal order. He questions the idea that the boys from Centre Gribkov need to be placed at a special school for asylum seekers rather than in a Danish public school with Danish pupils. This indicates that he feels that a process of “othering” is going on, leaving him and the other boys on the wrong side of the ‘us-them’ fence. Instead of being included in what he defines as the “normal”, he feels that he is being reduced to someone who does not belong. He portrays himself and the other boys as strangers because they cannot be placed in a “*normal school*” (RM L:45). This points to the way he sees himself reflected in the eyes of his surroundings. As Gullestad points out, a person develops her or his sense of self through the perspective of others (Gullestad 2003:52), which can explain why he portrays himself as not being normal because society regards him as a non-Dane, a stranger. Welch and Schuster argue that asylum seekers in their position as social outsiders, in line with Becker’s labeling theory, are often met with suspicion and characterised as menacing strangers that threaten the order (Welch & Schuster 2005:334) and thereby the norms. Thus, Musa conveys his ‘longing to belong’ (Yuval-Davis 2006:202) and be included in the Danish society and to cast aside his role as a social outsider.

Musa includes himself in the group of strangers and thereby places himself outside of normality, whereas Wasi differentiates himself from this: “*Yes I have been in my country with my family you know; I attended school, like a normal boy right.*” (Wasi L:21). Thus, Wasi does not consider himself as existing outside of the norm; rather, he depicts himself as an individual who has followed the expectations of society and taken on the ‘role’ of a student. Here, we see that Wasi equates the act of going to school with normality. As mentioned in section 4.2.1, Wasi’s parents presumably expected him to go to school and this has probably strengthened his understanding that getting an education is the normal thing to do. Furthermore, Wasi explains that it is not possible to know what the other boys want when you see them or speak with them (Wasi L:196) in the sense that they might not follow the rules and

expectations on how to behave in certain situations. He states: “*You know people here are a little* [pointing at his head, indicating that they are crazy]” (Wasi L:199). Specific expectations and norms are set for specific situations and demand certain behaviour (Gullestad 2003:52) and this is what makes it possible for people to take on various ‘roles’ and interact with one another. But what Wasi implies is that these boys do not behave in a way that is considered the norm, they rather exude a ‘deviant behaviour’ (Becker 2011:201), which is regarded as problematic. They can thereby be viewed as social “time bombs” that may attack instead of talk, or steal from your inner pocket while hugging you.

Another observation from the centre can shed light on the ‘longing to belong’ in the Danish society. Many of the boys at Centre Gribskov appear to be very concerned with styling their hair in the right fashion and correcting their clothes before leaving the centre to go to Copenhagen. One of the staff members at one point informed us that many of the boys do not want to use the clothes that the Red Cross provide them with because all the asylum seekers are given the same sets of clothes. Instead they buy - or find other ways of procuring - other clothes, often designer clothes, that might be more accepted by the Danish society (OI L:6). It can be argued that the boys try to conceal their ‘role’ as ‘asylum seekers’ in order to avoid being categorised as a ‘non-Dane’, ‘a stranger’, an ‘other’ when they are away from the centre. Instead, it seems, they want others to acknowledge them as equal parties to the we-group in order to sustain their own self-image.

However, it can also be argued that some of the boys do not care as much about ‘distancing’ themselves from the label ‘asylum seeker’, but rather use the assimilation into the fashion scene as a strategy to increase their potential of earning money through, for example, pick pocketing or ‘dance theft’. If someone recognises and acknowledges that a person is an ‘asylum seeker’, they might choose to avoid getting close to this person due to the prejudices, stereotypes and actual experiences with thefts that follow this ‘label’.

#### **4.2.3 Portraying different identity narratives**

##### **Victim narrative**

During the interview, as Said talks about himself and his situation, he portrays the image of a victim. Both non-verbally and verbally, he expresses a form of

helplessness and exudes no control over his situation. Additionally, he seems isolated, and all this gives us reason to view him as a person with little agency. Said stands out from the group of informants because he clearly does not identify himself as a person with much control over his situation, unlike many of the other boys.

Connected to the victim narrative is Said's feeling of injustice. At the resident meeting, the boys brought up the fact that the playstation at the centre has been taken away from them. Here, Said expresses that the boys have a right to have access to a playstation and that it should not affect the boys that an employee has removed the playstation by mistake or that some of the other boys have broken it (RM L:32). The same feeling of injustice is evident in Emir's interview in which he reveals that he feels that he has been robbed of opportunities in life (Emir L:335). The asylum system has not provided him with the right help and he feels that no alternative to a life in the criminal environment has been given to him (Emir L:345). Overall, both Said and Emir's attitudes point to the argument that it is due to the fault of other people or society that they have ended up in their current situation; they feel that they have been treated unfairly. This is connected to the victim narrative because they in some way portray themselves as "weak" characters and victims of life.

### **Agency narrative**

Some of the other boys portray themselves as being in control over their situation and argue that being in their current situation is as much beneficial as it is difficult. However, they have different ways of portraying this.

Wasi is a good example as he portrays an 'identity narrative' that exudes a high degree of agency (Yuval-Davis 2010:266). Before our interview with Wasi, the Red Cross staff informed us that he would receive an answer to his age assessment<sup>14</sup> on that same afternoon. Due to the fact that he was assessed to be more than 18 years old, he was to be moved to an asylum centre for adults. After the interviews of the day, we had an informal talk with Wasi before heading back to Copenhagen. When we asked Wasi about the centre, he told us that he had asked to be transferred to another centre because he did not like living at Centre Gribskov anymore (Wasi

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<sup>14</sup> For further information on age assessment, see appendix 5.

L:757). The fact that Wasi made a point of asserting himself and suggesting that it was down to his choice of what asylum centre he would move to, shows that he wants to portray himself as an individual who makes his own decisions and is in control of his life. He is quick in navigating among people in order to uphold his 'identity narrative' as a person who makes decisions and promptly comes up with a cover story for his transfer.

Wasi exudes a certain air of confidence, which is visible throughout the interview from statements such as: *"I can be many things you know. I know many things. I can be a writer."* (Wasi L:495) and *"I can speak with everybody. I am good at integration in the society."* (Wasi L:260). These statements suggest that Wasi wants to portray himself as a capable person, as someone who can take charge, is socially competent and is good "citizen material". Wasi gives the impression that he is someone who can be almost anyone or do almost anything that he chooses to do, because he has agency and the power to decide in his own life.

Another boy who also adopts a similar 'identity narrative' is Ali, who stresses that what makes his life meaningful is doing something with his life and having a goal to strive for. When Ali says: *"You have to strive in order to get a job, it does not simply fall into your lap without you doing anything. If you do not cherish your work, you will lose it."* (Ali L:137), it implies that he depicts an 'identity narrative' about how one has to put in a certain amount of effort in order to reach a goal.

Both Wasi and Ali portray themselves in their statements with the saying "if there is a will, there is a way". Thus, they do not succumb to the same role of victimhood as Emir and Said tend to do. Rather they characterise themselves as the opposites, as masters of their own destiny.

It becomes apparent that there is a tendency among Wasi, Ali and Yasir to draw an idealised image of elements from either their past or their current situation. Yasir does so by describing his childhood almost as a fairytale in which he sailed sea around the world with his father. It is clear from the interview that he admired his father and is still mourning his loss (Yasir L:18,64). Yasir only portrays his pre-migration life as something great, and has a more pessimistic view of his post-migration life. Ali, on the other hand, reflects on his migration situation in an idealised manner when he stresses that luck has been on his side and played a

crucial part in his “success” and survival. He is confident that he will succeed in establishing a good life at some point (Ali L:50). The same applies to Wasi’s way of describing life on the street as he describes his situation with optimism and thereby portrays a positive self-image. He explains: “(...) *it is very special in Europe. Whenever you change country you meet a different mentality, different people, different things. It is magic, I like it.*” (Wasi L:138). Rather than focusing on the negative aspect of their situation, both Ali and Wasi want to depict it as something positive, which offers positive challenges that they are able to overcome and cope with.

#### **4.2.4 Ways of categorisations**

##### **Positive identifications**

As mentioned in section 4.2.1, some of the boys express a feeling of loneliness and show no strong ‘emotional attachment’ to any groupings. However, there is a tendency in the interviews that they identify with particular regional or national groups. Wasi exemplifies this: “*Everywhere I go I see Arab people and I know him or I know his friend. So I say you are my friend. It is like one big family in Europe, they are not my real family, but they are like my family.*” (Wasi L:159). Here, Wasi describes an ‘identification’ with other Arabs and equates the relationship to other Arabs with that of a family. Yasir underlines this sense of ‘identification’ with others when stating: “*We [the boys at Centre Gribskov] stick together as one group - as brothers. We help each other. It doesn’t matter what nationality we have.*” (Yasir L:54). This shows that both Yasir and Wasi have a ‘sense of belonging’ to a regional group. Here it can be argued that because the boys are so far away from their countries of origin, they are more inclined to identify with a wider group of people. Due to the fact that these boys have not been included into the Danish society, their ‘emotional attachments’ to North African groups who share their cultural and perhaps religious background, might have grown stronger as they feel the division between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

However, Emir demonstrates a more “national approach” to the identification process by pointing out that there is a special relationship between Moroccans as they hang together in the street, sleep together and in general help each other (Emir L:90). It can be argued that the boys, in various degrees, add to a ‘collective identity narrative’ in which North Africans help each other and stick together (Yuval-Davis



2006:202). This can be seen as a positive form of categorisation where all North African migrants help each other because they can relate to one another and to the struggles and difficulties of living as a migrant. This form of recognition and the need for a certain type of relation may be emphasised when a migrant is far away from her or his place of origin.

In line with Gullestad, the boys must draw upon various combinations of 'identities' and 'roles' in order to be "themselves". With the above argument in mind, this could imply that creating a self-identity is linked to helping one another and sticking together, because there is a need for something that reminds you of established traditions to "*associate with, move among, pick from and combine*" (Gullestad 2003:52).

### **Negative identifications**

A thing that is very striking about the interview with Ali is the way he - unlike Wasi, Yasir and Emir - distances himself from people of Arab descent: "*I didn't want to be in the countries where I ran into many people with Arab backgrounds. Researcher: Why not? A: I don't know, I just always walk in the other direction.*" (Ali L:67). This shows that Ali does not want to be associated with people who are Arabs, even though he himself is Arab. It could point to him feeling categorised in the sense that immigrants in Europe with an Arab or Muslim background are often discriminated against or seen as a threat (Welch & Schuster 2005:343). Wasi accentuates the feeling that being Arab might pose a problem when stating: "*Maybe I am not especially Arab looking (...) I don't have this problem.*" (Wasi L:143). In opposition to Wasi, Ali makes an effort in trying to distance himself from the process of "othering" that might complicate the success of his inclusion into a European society. If people view him as more European or at least not as a part of the 'them'-group, then he might have a greater chance of being included in the 'us'-group (Yuval-Davis 2006:204). This could be a 'role' that he undertakes in the sense that he plays the part of an immigrant willing to assimilate, because this is the behaviour that he believes is expected. "*I enjoy myself when I am going out and enter places where I cannot smell an Arab. I want to get far away from the Arab world. (...) I do not want to mix with the Arab groups.*" (Ali L:90). This statement further accentuates Ali's dissociation, but it could also indicate that the reason for this rejection of solidarity with other Arab people might have something to do with his experiences in his

country of origin or the Arab countries in general. Although he paints a somewhat positive picture of his time in Tunisia, his country of origin, he does mention terror attacks, unemployment and other problems that he faced (Ali L:19,123) which may have caused him to diminish this part of his past; thereby constructing a new 'identity narrative' (Yuval-Davis 2010:266).

In light of this dissociation with other Arabs, Ali takes it one step further and categorises a national group in a very essentialist way when talking about substance abuse and criminal behaviour: *"It is a sort of Moroccan culture. The boys come from Morocco with a substance addiction and a criminal behaviour and they bring this with them wherever they go."* (Ali L:109). In this comment, Ali points to a culturally based behaviour that promotes what we might call deviant actions, such as stealing and taking drugs. On the one hand, he attaches the label of 'drug users' and 'criminals' to a whole nation, thereby placing all Moroccans in the same "box" carrying a negative load. On the other hand, he also strips away the Moroccan boys at Centre Gribskov of any responsibility for their actions; they are not to be individually blamed for their criminal behaviour, but rather the Moroccan culture breeds this conduct.

### **Feeling categorised and labeled by others**

In the interviews, three of the seven boys express a disliking towards the way people sometimes categorise and 'label' them. They indicate that people often mistake them for something that they do not identify with. Furthermore, they point to the feeling of being placed in the same "box" as others, for instance 'labeled' a 'criminal' due to their country of origin or their status as a migrant. Said points clearly to the feeling of being 'labeled': *"Do they just think that we all steal?"* (Said L:66). Said here becomes very indignant towards us for assuming that he steals. This suggests that Said thinks that we believe him to be a thief. He feels that he is being 'labeled' with this negative marker merely due to his social position as a North African migrant. This is in line with Becker's argument that a certain 'label' often carries a number of connotations specifying extra traits of anyone bearing the 'label' (Becker in Rubington & Weinberg 2011:203). This can also be related to Gullestad's notion of the need for recognition and confirmation of a presented identity (Gullestad 1996:25). Said seems to regard himself as a "good person" in his 'identity narrative' in the way he behaves towards the accusation of involvement with crime. But in

order to keep this self-image in the interview situation, he needs recognition and confirmation from us. Therefore, when we ask about this criminal behaviour he feels that his self-image is not acknowledged and he is connected with a deviant behaviour. Thus, we find that there is a discrepancy between Said's portrayed self-image and the way that we perceive this self-image.

Moreover, Said believes that people automatically assume that he - as a North African migrant within the Danish asylum system - and others like him can be considered to be doing something illegal. This speaks to the criminalisation of migrants in which ruling political discourses and media stereotyping feed into people's understandings of migrants as criminals. The media coverage on North African boys in the asylum system, which often links these individuals with 'labels' such as 'dancing thief' or to stories of theft (EB 2012; Politiken 2013), might help explain Said's experience of being 'labeled' a criminal. Thus, prejudice and stereotyping may cause people to consider all North African migrants to be involved in crime. For example, a newspaper article from Berlingske states: *"Many asylum seekers from the turbulent North Africa are not real refugees, but criminals who should be deported quickly"* (Berlingske 2011, own translation). Thereby Said might be an unwilling victim of this stereotyping, which causes people to place him on the same footing as the individuals who actually commit crime. Taking Becker's 'labeling process' into account there is a risk that these negative expectations towards the North African boys make them internalise this deviant behaviour and thus makes them act criminally in accordance with the expectations.

Additionally, the way that Said expresses extreme indignation to the idea of himself as taking part in crimes points to his value system. Accordingly, it seems that to Said, theft is considered a negative value which he does not want to be associated with, and this makes him speak clearly against a negative categorisation of him. Emir also emphasises the feeling of being 'labeled' a criminal in his statement:

*"Sometimes we experience that for instance in Spain there are lots of Algerians, but they are considered Moroccans. That is how people see them, they look at them and say "oh they are probably Moroccans". But they are not always*

*Moroccans, it is all of North Africa and Somalis are there too. It is always as if Moroccans are the usual suspects.”* (Emir L:307).

Emir here explains that people often view Moroccans as being part of a criminal environment. Even though other immigrant nationalities commit crimes as well, Emir states that crime is especially associated with immigrants from Morocco. In this way, Emir calls attention to the issue of criminalising a whole national group. The criminalisation of all Moroccan immigrants can point to an ‘auto-prophecy’ (Fernandez et al. 2009:5) in the sense that because some Moroccans might have been caught within the criminal environment, there is a tendency for the surroundings to view all Moroccans as potential criminals. According to Fernandez et al., immigrants in Spain are in fact being criminalised. Immigrant offenders are over-represented in police and penitentiary statistics, which may influence a negative attitude towards immigrants in the Spanish society (Fernandez et al. 2009:6). Thus, this inherent negativity towards immigrants might be what Emir has experienced.

This tendency can also be found in Denmark. In the interview with the staff members, we were told that some of the residents at the centre one day discussed how the police always “*throws suspicion on them*” (Staff L:480) when they see the boys and always view them as criminals. This correlates with the steps in the ‘auto-prophecy’ where certain individuals have been categorised as potential criminals and therefore, the system starts practising more control (through for instance its police force) with these and other individuals that are marked with the same ‘labels’, such as ‘immigrant’, ‘Arab’ or ‘North African’. Thereby, the chances of being caught in some form of crime or simply being ‘labeled’ a criminal without any truth to it increases for anyone who may fit into these categories. Accordingly, Said and to some extent Emir, oppose the ‘label’ that has been accorded to them because they are being characterised as something they do not identify with. Yunus, however, speaks about how the label ‘criminal’ might be correct, but that it still comes with a set of stereotypes that are incorrect. Thus, Yunus states that he and other boys involved with criminal activity do not steal just for stealing, but rather steal out of necessity (Yunus L:52). He emphasises that his circumstances put him in a position in which he is forced to steal. We will return to this matter later in chapter

5. This can be related to the victimisation which Said and Emir portray in their 'identity narratives'. Thus, Yunus as well depicts himself as a victim of circumstance.

It could be argued that the boys are not initially prone to criminal behaviour, but that they simply act upon the negative expectations of the police or the society, because there are no positive expectations for them to live up to. It indicates a self-perpetuating situation in which the negative attitudes towards these boys manifest themselves within their identity, prompting them to act upon the expectations of others (Becker 2005:57).

Thus, if we follow Becker's notion of the 'labeling process' it can be difficult to break out of this deviant 'role' as a criminal when the boys have started to identify themselves with this 'role' (Becker 2005:55). However, it could also be argued that people view the boys as criminals because they in fact are criminals. In the previous mentioned discussion overheard by the staff members, Wasi emphasises this argument as he indicates that the reason why the police always suspect the boys of being criminals, is because they actually do commit crimes (Staff L:480).

### **4.3 Sum up**

Summing up the chapter on *Societal and psychological characteristics*, we see that various aspects are relevant to consider when trying to understand who the North African boys are and what characterises this group of individuals. As we see in the section 4.2.1, the feeling of being marginalised is embedded in some of the boys. This analytical point feeds into Welch and Schuster's concept of social outsiders and Becker's notion on deviant behaviour, and so does the point about to what extent the boys feel that they are normal and fit into the norm, which is explored in section 4.2.2. Thus, the boys have to navigate within this sphere in order to achieve acknowledgment and be recognised as normal. It is evident that the boys either try to assimilate into Danish society in order to feel less as "others" and/or distance themselves from other asylum seekers.

Another important finding is the notion of loneliness. Most of the boys reveal that they have at some point during their migration phase or in their current situation felt lonely. The boys' feelings of loneliness are in some aspects connected to the lack of 'belonging' which we find is portrayed in their 'identity narratives'.

Moreover, we have found that the boys depict different forms of 'identity narratives'. As mentioned in the section 4.2.3, Wasi and Ali both make use of an 'identity narrative' in which they portray themselves with a high degree of agency. They illustrate a narrative in which they can do whatever they feel like and have the power to decide over their own lives. In some cases, this becomes almost a romantic tale of their lives. On the other hand, other boys depict a victim narrative. Both Said, Emir and Yunus portray an 'identity narrative' that is victim-focused, where a feeling of injustice is evident.

Lastly, in section 4.2.4 we have found that the boys relate to both positive and negative 'identifications'. The positive 'identifications' are represented through the fact that the boys stick together as a group and draw on a 'collective identity narrative' which is important because the boys are far from their original place of belonging. The negative sets of 'identifications' stem, among other things, from their need to distance themselves from their places of origin, which is especially apparent in Ali's case. Most of the boys can relate to an unpleasant feeling of being categorised, 'labeled' and associated with a 'role' that is different from what they want to be associated with. Thus, the 'us/them' distinction becomes visible and the boys sometimes experience that society puts them in a "box" in which they are associated with deviant behaviour.

## 5. Coping mechanisms

### 5.1 Theory: Coping mechanisms

In the following pages, we will make a brief outline of the stress and coping strategy approach which we will apply to our data material in the analysis. Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman, and Dermot Ryan et al.'s theories on stress and coping mechanisms can shed light on and help explain how the boys manage their situation as migrants and as adolescents living on the street. Hereafter, we will explain the theoretical components of Gresham Matza and David Sykes' theory on 'techniques of neutralisation'. This theory will be used to reflect and analyse on the criminal behaviour of the boys and the justifications that they give for their behaviour.

#### 5.1.1 Lazarus and Folkman's model on Stress, Appraisal and Coping

The overall aim with Richard Lazarus<sup>15</sup> and Susan Folkman's<sup>16</sup> (1984) approach on Stress, Appraisal and Coping is to examine people's psychological well-being when it comes to demands that are perceived as stressful, and in connection to this the focus on resources that are linked to these demands. Lazarus and Folkman define stress as *"a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being."* (Lazarus & Folkman 1984:19). The advantages of this psychosocial approach is that it pays attention to the psychological resources as for instance the adaptive coping strategies, but it also pays attention to the social resources as, for instance, supportive personal relationships. In opposition to the medical model<sup>17</sup>, this approach defines personal distress *"(...) as a normal response to major life changes in the absence of access to adequate resources."* (Ryan et al. 2008:3). The psychosocial approach is in this thesis interesting, because it can say something about the demands of migration.

Lazarus and Folkman developed their model on the stress process in 1984. The model contains five components; 1) occurrence of a potentially stressful event; 2)

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<sup>15</sup> Lazarus was a Psychologist and a Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>16</sup> Folkman is a retired Ph.D. Professor of Medicine at University of California Berkeley and Director of the University of California at San Francisco Osher Centre for Integrative Medicine.

<sup>17</sup> The medical model refers to an approach in which it is assumed that people are not responsible for their problems or solutions (Lazarus & Folkman 1984:362).

primary appraisal; 3) secondary appraisal; 4) coping efforts and 5) adaptational outcomes.

In this thesis, we have found components 2-4 to be relevant for our analysis. This is due to the fact that we do not believe that we are in a position to analyse the outcomes of the North African boys' stressful situations because of the limited time that we have spent with them. Following is an explanation to these components:

2) 'Primary appraisal' refers to the situation in which an event or circumstance is evaluated by the person in order to figure out whether the event/circumstance presents a threat and the question, "Am I in trouble?" is asked. The 'primary appraisal' may be understood as either a) irrelevant, b) benign/positive or c) stressful. If stressful, depending on the available coping resources, the stressful event can be understood as a) involving harm or loss, b) presenting a threat or c) presenting a challenge.

3) 'Secondary appraisal' contains a second evaluation, but here the evaluation focuses on the person's resources (both internal and external resources). Here the question, "What can be done about this?" is raised. Here 'the coping options', 'the efficacy expectations' and 'the available resources' are thought through.

4) Lazarus and Folkman work with two-folded 'coping efforts'; either the person can cope with a stressful event in a 'problem-focused' way or in an 'emotion-focused' way. It is important to notice that the coping efforts do not need to be neither conscious (e.g. denial could be seen as a coping strategy) nor effective (e.g. drug abuse could be a way to escape a situation). (Slavin et al. 1991:157).

In the analysis, we will focus on the coping efforts that the North African boys use, and an elaboration on these will therefore follow below.

### **5.1.2 Elaboration on coping efforts**

Lazarus and Folkman define 'coping' as *"(...) constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person."* (Lazarus & Folkman 1984:141).

The distinction between 'emotion-focused' and 'problem-focused coping strategies' lies in how a person perceives her or his chances for changing the situation that causes the stress. The 'problem-focused coping' targets the roots of the problems that cause the stress, whereas the 'emotion-focused coping' aims to change the



emotional reaction that is followed by stress. There is a tendency that people use the 'problem-focused coping' when feeling that there is actually something to do about the situation, while on the other hand people tend to use 'emotion-focused coping' when feeling that they are unable to change their situation (Lazarus & Folkman 1984:150). 'Problem-focused coping efforts' are, for instance, finding out information or learning new skills. 'Emotion-focused coping' include, among other things, 'seeking emotional social support', 'distancing', 'avoidance', 'escape', 'emphasising the positive aspects of the situation' and 'self-blame' (Lazarus & Folkman 1984:319). Lazarus and Folkman stress that any act can have multiple coping functions and their distinction between 'problem-focused' and 'emotion-focused coping' should therefore more be seen as a general guide and should be combined with an examination of the concrete context and the person's overall coping strategy (Lazarus & Folkman 1984:319).

### **Expanding the model**

On the basis of the classic stress theories (Lazarus & Folkman 1984; Berry 1997; Hobfoll 2001), Dermot Ryan et al.<sup>18</sup> (2008) outline a conceptual framework for adaptation among migrants and refugees. First of all they point to the argument that "(...) *resources are central to the 'migrant adaptation' process.*" (Ryan et al. 2008:15). By 'migrant adaption' Ryan et al. refer to "(...) *the process through which individuals seek to satisfy their needs, pursue their goals and manage demands encountered after relocating to a new society.*" (Ryan et al. 2008:7).

Besides 'personal resources' (both physical and psychological), 'material resources' and 'social resources', which Lazarus and Folkman work with, Ryan et al. work with an extra category. This category is called 'cultural resources' and cover knowledge, skills and beliefs that are mastered within a certain cultural setting. Ryan et al. argue that "*the cultural resources can be seen as a 'toolkit' that is provided by one's culture.*" (Ryan et al. 2008:8). There might be an overlap between the 'cultural resources' and the 'personal resources' where for instance the cognitive skills are also shaped by one's culture. Furthermore, 'cultural resources' should be

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<sup>18</sup> Dermot Ryan is a Doctor of Psychological Science in Clinical Psychology in Dublin. Barbara Dooley is Director of Research for DPsychSc (Clinical Specialisation) at the School of Psychology in Dublin. Ciaran Benson is Emeritus Professor of Psychology at University College Dublin.

understood in a broader sense, such as experience with different services and systems in a particular cultural environment.

In the attempt to gain new resources or regain old ones, migrants may encounter barriers in the new host country. Hobfoll (2001) argues for two possible strategies; either 'resource replacement' or 'resource substitution' (Hobfoll in Ryan et al. 2008:13). Applying this to the migrant situation, a family-based support may for example be replaced with support from new friends and/or from NGO staff. And as an example of 'resource substitution', a man may have to substitute his role as a provider with that of a family father. When it comes to gaining new resources in the host country, Lazarus and Folkman's notion of 'personal constraints' and 'environmental constraints' are also applicable. 'Personal constraints' are *"internalized cultural values and beliefs that proscribe certain actions"* (Lazarus & Folkman 1984:165). These values and beliefs determine when and if certain behaviours or feelings are appropriate. 'Environmental constraints' include the *"blocking of access to resources"* (Ryan et al. 2008:13) by institutions or the surrounding environment in general. With regards to migrants, states have the ability to control access to various resources such as housing, food, money, education and so on.

### **5.1.3 Theory of delinquency: Techniques of neutralisation**

Classic theories on juvenile delinquent behaviour (Sutherland 1955; Cohen 1955) argue that such a behaviour is based on the values and norms of a deviant subculture. According to Gresham Sykes<sup>19</sup> and David Matza<sup>20</sup> (1957), these theories are flawed. In Sutherland's (1955) theory of differential association, for instance, a delinquent subculture is characterised by values that oppose those held by the law-abiding society. Thus, delinquent behaviour is learned in the same way as law-abiding behaviour is learned through the values and norms of the larger society (Sykes & Matza 1957:664). Sykes and Matza describe four defects to the existence of a delinquent subculture. First of all they argue that if a delinquent had opposing values and viewed these values as right or true, (s)he would not feel shame or guilt over the violations performed once caught by the system. Secondly, Sykes and Matza point to the fact that most delinquents accord admiration to law-abiding

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<sup>19</sup> Sykes was an American sociologist and criminologist.

<sup>20</sup> Matza is Professor Emeritus at the Department of Sociology at Berkeley, California.

people and view “honest” and “good people” (in the eyes of society) as someone to be respected. Moreover, they argue that there is a tendency that juvenile delinquents often differentiate sharply between who can be victimised and who should not be victimised. Lastly, they state that “*it is doubtful if many juvenile delinquents are totally immune from the demands for conformity made by the dominant social order*” (Sykes & Matza 1957:665) in the sense that family structures, educational systems and information technology will most likely have influenced the delinquent and imprinted law-abiding values.

Sykes and Matza thus argue against the classical view on juvenile delinquents as the stereotypical “*hardened gangster in miniature*” (Sykes & Matza 1957:665) who’s learned values compete with that of the surrounding society. Instead, they believe that much delinquent behaviour is based on an extension of defences to violations of existing norms and values in society. Williams (1951) argue that the normative system of a society is characterised by ‘flexibility’, which means that norms and values only function as qualified guidelines for action and are not binding under all conditions (Williams in Sykes & Matza 1957:666). For example, taking a person’s life is not morally condemned during combat, and violating property right is sometimes viewed as justifiable in case of emergency or disaster. Accordingly, delinquency can be viewed as a justification and rationalisation of an act that is deemed valid by the delinquent but not by society. It aims to protect the delinquent from both self-blame and blame from others. What Sykes and Matza emphasise is that these rationalisations do not only proceed, but also precede deviant behaviour (Sykes and Matza 1957:666). Thereby, the delinquent does not only feel blameless after the deed, but is rather freed from social control beforehand without any damage to her or his self-image.

Sykes and Matza term the justifications of deviant behaviour ‘techniques of neutralisation’ and present five such techniques that teach the person delinquent behaviour. These techniques provide a way of temporarily ‘neutralising’ the actions that are considered deviant to society and thereby permitting violations in certain situations without actually rejecting the norms and values which the juvenile and the rest of society subscribe to. The five techniques are coined 1) ‘denial of responsibility’, 2) ‘denial of injury’, 3) ‘denial of the victim’, 4) ‘condemnation of the condemners’, and 5) ‘appeal to higher loyalties’. (Sykes & Matza 1957:667).

## 5.2 Analysis: Coping mechanisms

In this chapter, on the basis of the theoretical concepts described above, we will investigate the coping mechanisms which the North African boys seem to be using to deal with their situation. We will for the most part draw on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) notions of different types of 'resources' and 'emotion-focused' coping strategies. In the first part, we analyse the way that the boys appear to always consider themselves to be alone which we view through the notion of resources. In the next three sections, we examine which coping strategies the boys use as well as how and why they use these. Afterwards, we explore how the boys use different 'techniques of neutralisation' in accordance with Sykes and Matza's (1957) theory in order to justify the actions that fall outside of society's norms and legislation. In the last part of the chapter, we take a look at what resources the boys have lost and gained as a result of their migration.

### 5.2.1 Lonesome riders

As mentioned in section 4.2.1, some of the boys portray a feeling of loneliness in their 'identity narratives' which is linked to their 'sense of belonging'. However, there is also another perspective to this notion of loneliness.

It is evident from the data material that all the boys more or less travel alone when they move from one country to another. When asked whether or not any of the boys travel together, Wasi for instance answers: *"It is like everyone is alone."* (Wasi L:170), and Yunus explains: *"I have met many people, but I have always moved on alone."* (Yunus L:24). There can be several reasons for travelling alone. If we look at it from Ryan et al.'s (2008) resource perspective, it can be argued that during their migration the North African boys have learned that it is a 'personal resource' to be able to be and travel alone. It may be the easiest way to travel around. This way, they have no one to be responsible for and can therefore decide to do whatever they feel like. Ali phrases it this way: *"As long as you are alone, you will quickly be able to move on"* (Ali L:145). Another explanation could be found in the fact that most of the boys claim to be without close friendships. Ali stresses this by saying:

*"I do not like anyone here [at the asylum centre]. Or yes, I like Rami, who is from Tunisia and Juma'a, who is from Morocco. We are a large group, and there are often problems internally. We are like strangers to each other. You are looking for*

*someone that you can get along with. But it is not certain that it will be a long-term relationship, if they are moving on.” (Ali L:79).*

This comment shows that it is not necessarily easy for the boys to become friends with others that are in a similar situation to their own. The fact that it is easy to uproot and move on also makes it harder to make long-term commitments. Similarly, Said also makes it very apparent that he does not want to engage in relationships: *“I have no friends. Previously (in other countries / contexts) I had some people that I called friends, but I no longer have contact with them. I do not want a friend, and I do not want to engage in relationships.” (Said L:60).*

A natural question to ask is why the boys do not want to engage in friendships. Through the eyes of Lazarus and Folkman, the ‘primary appraisal’ could in this case contain an evaluation on whether involving in a friendship presents a threat or not. Taking the boys’ stories and backgrounds into account, they may have experienced a lot of let downs throughout their lives, and involving in a social relation might then present a stressful situation for them, which thereby represents a threat. The ‘secondary appraisal’ raises the question of what can be done about this threat. A ‘personal constraint’ for the boys could be to decline a potential friendship because of bad experiences with previous friendships. This assumption can be built on the fact that, for instance, Yunus explains that he does not establish close friendships because this *“gives you headaches”* (Yunus L:71). Instead, he just talks with the boys at the asylum centre, but without initiating any close relation to them. And Wasi also underlines this assumption as he explains that it is very difficult to understand the other boys at the asylum centre because *“(…) everyone is in his own world (…) everyone has cold in his life because of something (…) everyone comes from a tough place (…)”* (Wasi L:209). Thus, Yunus and Wasi here suggest that their backgrounds have caused them not to engage in relations or involve others in their own closed-off world. The boys know that they are able to take care of themselves and they tackle the situation with an ‘emotion-focused coping strategy’ that relies on ‘avoidance’. This may not be very constructive in the long run, but it can be effective in their present situation as they do not dare to risk being hurt and let down again. In addition to the above outlined part on refraining from tying bonds, the following statements add an extra dimension which has to do with place. Emir stresses that:

*"there are no obligations [at the asylum centre]. You have no obligations, so if you feel like it, you just go to Sweden. You just get up and head on to Sweden."* (Emir L:283). Moreover, Musa emphasises that the boys at the asylum centre are acting like tourists, and when there is nothing (more) to do, they travel on to another country in the pursuit of opportunities (Musa L:51). A similar explanation is raised by Wasi when saying: *"(...) it was to look for something new you know, only this"* (Wasi L:32). All these statements suggest that the boys also try to 'avoid' any attachments to locations. They instead practice a nomadic "life style" in which they do not want to form any new 'emotional attachments' to people or places. One of the interpreters used in the interviews describes how it seems that there is a tendency for the boys to disappear from the asylum centre whenever there is a positive development in their situation. For instance, if there is a positive turn in their asylum process or if they get an offer to stay at a residential home with the possibility of rehab, they often disappear right before the transfer or an important meeting with the Immigration Service. (OI L:44). As mentioned previously, Wasi has been assessed to be older than 18 which means that he needs to be transferred to a centre for adults. However, in a later conversation in the train to Copenhagen Wasi reveals that he plans to leave Denmark after the transfer and go to Lyon (Wasi L:757). All this could indicate that the boys have a hard time fitting into stable environments and routines that they are not in control of. They have lived a life filled with insecurity and uncertainty, and they seem not to be able to believe that something positive might last or be true. They are in a locked situation which they cannot control themselves; they cannot do anything to influence the outcome of their asylum process and the constant uncertainty has caused them to deal with things on a day-to-day basis rather than plan ahead. Furthermore, they have no idea which stories about their chances to obtain residency they can believe, and which they cannot believe. Regarding these stories, Wasi talks about how everyone - who we suppose is his network or other people with a similar case to his - told him that he would not be able to receive asylum when he first arrived in Denmark (Wasi L:266). This could be a fact based on statistics, but it is also an example of a story that circulates among the boys and lowers their expectations or beliefs in the possibility for having a future in Denmark.

Whether or not the decision to be alone and ‘avoid’ close relations with others is taken by the boys themselves, most of them express that life on the street is tough and lonely. Yunus stresses that: *“It has been difficult [living on the street] - the loneliness. I had no family and no house or my own place. It is difficult always being alone.”* (Yunus L:23). Another aspect of the loneliness is that there is a difference in how social culture influences how people socialise and live together. This may indicate a loss of ‘cultural resources’ (Ryan et al. 2008:8) because some of the resources that are rooted in the boys’ cultural home environment seem to be devalued. Wasi emphasises this by saying:

*“It is a little different you know in the Arab countries, the people are not like in Europe. For example, when you are in Algeria or Morocco and you do not know where to sleep, the first door you knock on, it is so easy, there you are allowed to come in. If you don’t have anything to eat, you also take the first door and knock, and they will give you something to eat. In Europe it is not the same, but in (...) the Arab countries you are not alone (...).”* (Wasi L:58).

What Wasi is trying to elaborate on here is that there is a tendency that people in the Arab countries are more collectivistic in their way of living than Europeans, and that hospitality plays a great role in these societies. In opposition to this, according to Wasi, Europe is a place where every individual takes care of her- or himself and everyone is the architect of her or his own fortune. As a result of this more individualistic way of living, the hospitality and the shared concern for people which seems to be of high value to some of the boys is not present to the same degree in the description of their lives in Europe. This ‘cultural resource’ which can be phrased as “community spirit” is therefore decreased in the new sociocultural setting.

The boys thus cope with the phenomena of loneliness on the basis of their ‘available resources’. They stick to their own little world and tend to portray that they can manage without friends. Although they have most likely been able to engage in close relationships with others when they were younger, they have learned that it is better to ‘avoid’ this. They have thus devalued the ‘social resource’ of being able to involve in close relations because they have experienced too many let downs, and they have instead increased a ‘personal resource’ that is the skill of being able to

stand on one's own feet in order to survive. This could be an example of what Hobfoll (2001) calls 'resource substitution' in the sense that a 'social resource' is substituted by a 'personal resource'. In the light of a lack of 'belonging' and of being alone with few 'cultural resources', it seems to us that the boys have difficulties relating to or engaging in the places that they live in, and it may therefore be very easy for them to make a decision to leave a country and find another temporary home.

### **5.2.2 Coping with problems**

As outlined above, the boys use the coping mechanism of 'avoidance' which suggests that keeping a 'distance' to any feelings that might cause an unpleasant reaction is one of the coping strategies that seems to be working for the boys.

Another area in which this is evident is when it comes to how the boys deal with psychological challenges. Said tells us that he gets through the day without thinking of his problems (Said L:89). This indicates that in addition to 'avoiding' initiating any relations with others, he also 'avoids' thinking about his problems and challenges. Thus, Said may find it difficult to cope with the extra stress that might arise if he gives attention to the problems in his mind.

Besides 'avoiding' to think about their problems, the majority of the boys do not talk about their problems with each other. Wasi stresses this by saying: *"Everyone here [at the asylum centre] has his own story and does not tell this story. I think it is better not to tell it and wait for the moment to pass."* (Wasi L:407). Yasir indicates that talking about emotional topics will not benefit him in any way. He states: *"The boys' problems are in their hearts, and the boys try to talk about positive things. Talking about my dead father will not bring him back"* (Yasir L:63). And Ali explains that all the boys keep their problems to themselves: *"They have their own problems, so they should not deal with mine as well."* (Ali L:75). This suggests that the boys believe that it is better not to share their feelings, concerns and challenges with others, and not even with other people who are in the same situation as themselves and might be better at understanding their struggles. They might be afraid to relive the traumas that they have experienced or believe that the best way to deal with these traumas are simply to act as if they do not even exist.



Additionally, there are a couple of the boys who explain that they do not tell their families or relatives how they are doing. Wasi says: *"They know that I am here [in Denmark], only this."* (Wasi L:111), and Ali explains that: *"I only tell them the good things. Why should I tell them the bad things, this will only make them worry."* (Ali L:71). The boys try to spare their families from the reality that they in fact are in, and therefore they tell only parts of the reality, which they estimate is not associated with any cause of concern or perhaps anger.

In line with this, some of the boys mention that they did not tell their friends and family about their departure before they had already left their countries of origin. Ali explains it this way:

*"I did not say goodbye to anyone - I didn't want to. I did not know what would happen to me. I did not say goodbye to my mother and father. I felt the pressure [during the flight]. I was afraid to die. If I were to die, I did not want my family to know. I called my family later [after arriving in Italy] and they were in shock."* (Ali L:31).

The same applies to Yunus who only after his departure from Morocco told his family that he had left, because *"then they could not do anything about it."* (Yunus L:33). This could indicate that the boys use a coping strategy of 'distancing' in which they distance themselves from their families as a way of protecting them from understanding the severity of the situation that the boys are in. However, it can also be a way for them to protect their own 'identity narratives'. By portraying to others that they live a positive life, they can convince themselves that their situation does not in fact look so bleak and thereby 'distance' themselves from the negative aspects of their life.

However, there are also a couple of boys who 'avoid' contacting their families entirely. Thus, Said and Musa are no longer in contact with their families (Musa L:28; Said L:35). This could be due to the bad experiences that they have had in connection with their (lack of) family life. Congruently, using a strategy of 'avoidance' appears to be what these boys think works for them.

There are also cases of substance (ab)use that are used as a way to 'escape' dealing with problems. Emir states: *"I have problems and I feel better when I take drugs (...)*

*When I am on drugs, I do not want to talk to anyone"* (Emir L:212), and Wasi explains that the boys sometimes takes "tablets" in order to forget (Wasi L:176). Furthermore, Musa states: *"My whole life has been about taking drugs and stealing - anything in order to survive."* (Musa L:21). This is an example of a coping strategy of 'escape' in which the boys numb their minds in order to forget their traumas. Some of the boys "only" (mis)use hash whereas others use cocaine and/or ecstasy (Staff L:647). It seems that the boys to a varying degree see this coping method as an effective way to 'escape' reality or at least as an easy and quick solution. However, in some cases it is also simply a way to survive. Thus, Emir explains that taking drugs eases hunger (Audio file 6).

Overall, it seems that the boys do not approach the stress related situations that they are in with 'problem-focused coping efforts', but rather turn to 'emotion-focused coping efforts'. Although there is never a sharp distinction between the use of a 'problem-focused strategy' and an 'emotion-focused strategy' (Lazarus & Folkman 1984:319), the boys appear to aim for a change of - or a relief of - their emotional distress rather than targeting the root of their problems directly. As mentioned previously, they are in a locked situation which they cannot control themselves and therefore it is not possible for them to find a solution to the root cause of their problems. Congruently, they use 'avoidance', 'distancing' and 'escape' as ways of dulling their pain or downplaying their problems. We are aware that these coping methods can be either conscious or unconscious. It may vary when it comes to how much the boys reflect on their actions. Some of them are aware that taking drugs is part of a reality escape, such as Wasi and Emir who clearly express that drugs are a way to feel better and forget their troubles for a little while (Wasi L:176; Emir L:212). Whether they are conscious about the underlying causes of not making close friendships is more doubtful.

### **5.2.3 A wall of defense**

*"The boys need nothing. They come, they sleep, they smoke and they go."* (Wasi L:720). This quote connotes an attitude of indifference and laissez faire, and this behaviour is clear in some of the boys' appearance. Due to the boys' somewhat unmanageable situations some of them make use of a coping strategy that helps them tackle their situation with a high degree of indifference and as little attention

as possible. This is in congruence with the previous mentioned coping strategies of 'avoidance' and 'distancing'.

The way that Ali presents his story, we get the feeling that he has a rather positive attitude towards his life and does not seem very affected by the experiences he describes (Ali L:165). However, his attitude might also be a way for him to close off his negative emotions. Said takes on a rather indifferent attitude to his time as a migrant in Spain. He states that he does not feel that his time in Spain was special at all (Said L:19). Said here portrays an indifferent attitude to an experience that we would expect to have been difficult. Hence, at the time when he migrated to Spain and left his country of origin and all the bad memories, he may have felt differently, but in his narrative he portrays it as a negligible experience. Accordingly, this could indicate that both Ali and Said form a shield around their negative feelings and closes off their emotional responses.

Wasi reveals that being imprisoned is not necessarily a cause of worry or distress. He talks about another boy at the asylum centre who once got into a fight with a staff member and drew a knife: *"He had nothing to lose and nothing to win. He can go to prison for some time, but for him it doesn't matter. He has been spending all his life in prison, so it means nothing to him."* (Wasi L:714). Wasi refers to what the boy expressed before being taken to prison: *"(...) he said; I made this [a cut with the knife between two fingers]. I go to prison and I am happy. I am happy to have this [the scar]."* (Wasi L:716). What Wasi here hints to is that it does not affect the boy that he was involved in a violent situation and that he was hurt. Rather, every time the boy looks at the scar, he is reminded that he showed people that he was tough. From what we have seen and been told during our research, only very few of the boys at Centre Gribskov tend to use violence against staff members, but this example can nevertheless help to explain how breaking the rules and using violence can for some of the boys appear very easy. Moreover, this boy did not care about the consequences of his actions. This story points to how the bad situations and traumas that have happened to the boys in the past can have formed a wall around their emotions, making new traumatic experiences seem small and indifferent. Thus, the thought of going to prison appears minor in comparison with the feeling of self-

respect and respect (or fear) from others that follow an “attack” on staff members or others.

Although having mentioned that only a few of the boys are acting in a violent manner, we have the understanding that they are all mentally prepared to use violence in case they feel threatened. Thus, they always scan a room whenever they enter it, immediately distinguishing escape routes from dangerous corners and detecting potential weapons or things of value. As one of the staff members points out, a chair or a window or a necklace can function as a weapon (Staff L:439). They typically choose to fight rather than flee and consider every fight as potentially lethal; they have learned through their prior experiences that there is always a chance that the other person has a knife or some other weapon, and therefore it is necessary to fight with all that you have got and it is important to sometimes act aggressively just to show others that you are not to be messed with (Staff L:447). Whereas Wasi, for instance, is well-articulated and can use this to his advantage, some of the other boys have to use big gestures and force to make their point and defend themselves (Staff L:266). The constant awareness of what and how the surroundings can be used signals a feeling of constant insecurity and uncertainty, as mentioned in section 5.2.1. This can also relate to their feeling of being alone and their hesitation to engage in relations with others. Besides the argument that they do not want to be let down or hurt psychologically, they have an ingrained inability to trust others, because these might physically hurt them.

The above outlined issues should of course be seen in light of the boys’ tough migration background and their current situations. Thus, some of them seem to have lost their belief in a better life and they therefore put up a wall of defence and often state or exude that they do not need or care for anything. Yunus even questions whether he will be alive, when asked if he has any future plans (Yunus L:85).

Taking all of the above into account, it seems that the boys do not want to break down their walls of defense which they have put up in order to protect their feelings. They instead alter the significance of their bad experiences by ‘diminishing’ them and making them seem indifferent. Thus, they ‘avoid’ having to relive their previous bad experiences in their current situation.

### 5.2.4 Controlling life

Our data material suggests that it is important for some of the boys to seem in control of their own lives and their actions, and to point to positive aspects of their lives rather than negatives ones. This, we argue, is another 'emotion-focused coping strategy' which the boys use to deal with their situation. When asked if Wasi feels that life has been difficult and that he has not had a chance of a good adolescence, he answers: *"No, I never regret it. I never regret what I am doing now. I prefer this, this is also school, you know."* (Wasi L:494). This is a way for Wasi to show that "life could have been worse", which is a form of 'positive reappraisal' (Lazarus & Folkman 1984:150). To add to this, Wasi talks about how travelling through Europe, changing locations and scenery, and experiencing new ways of living is a magical feeling (Wasi L:138). Taking into consideration the hardships and struggles that otherwise mark the different stories of how life as a young migrant is, it is difficult to reconcile these stories with the somewhat romanticised narrative that Wasi here presents. For instance, Yunus gives the impression that he lives a very harsh life, and he is rather pessimistic about his possibilities for positive changes in his life (Yunus L:85). Wasi's way of portraying his experience of life on the street is thus significantly different. By focusing on the positive side of his life or altering the meaning of the situations in which he has been, he controls his narrative and portrays himself as someone who is living his life exactly the way he wants to.

Another example that gives a good picture of the boys' need for control that we see portrayed in some of the 'identity narratives' is the consumption of drugs. The boys who told us explicitly that they had previously used or still use drugs simultaneously emphasise that they in no way have become addicted. This is for instance the case with Yunus saying: *"I was not addicted"* (Yunus L:59), and Musa who states: *"I am not a junkie, I don't like this, fuck this shit"* (Musa L:82). These two examples show that Musa and Yunus do not want to be seen as someone who are under the influence of drugs and thereby cannot control themselves or their lives. Rather they want to show that they do drugs because they have decided to do so.

As mentioned in section 4.2.3, Wasi seems to add value to the portrayal of himself as having agency and being in control of his life. Moreover, Wasi portrays the boys' lives on the street as a game:

*“ (...) it is like a game for all these boys (...) If he wants to forget, it is like a game. He starts, he does something, he sends money to the country and after that he is changed. And after that he starts again you know. He starts from zero every time, like a game. He is in the game.” (Wasi L:372).*

Accordingly, Wasi says that if and when the boys need to forget about the crimes that they have committed or the bad experiences that they have had, they treat their life on the street as if it was a game. What we assume Wasi is trying to describe here is that the boys in some way have to think of their situation differently from what it really is, in order for them to cope with their stressful situations. If the boys are able to pretend that what they are doing on the street is a game, they might not feel as bad as if they had to relate to reality and the consequences of their actions. This could indicate that the boys in this matter make use of a ‘positive reappraisal’ strategy in which playing the game is a way of emphasising the positive aspects of a situation. Or it could be a way of ‘distancing’ themselves from the reality of their lives.

We can further argue that the boys’ nomadic way of life gives them a high degree of control over where they want to be and when they want to be there. This behavior may indicate that the boys need to prove to their surroundings as well as themselves that they are their own masters and decide about their own lives. If they cannot control anything else, they can always control when to move on, and this perhaps gives them a sense of satisfaction, knowing that this possibility is always open. The justification of this action is a way to manage and convince themselves that it is the right decision that they have taken.

All of this points to ‘identity narratives’ that show a need to appear confident and in power. Thus, in order to cope with the situations that life puts them in, the boys use an ‘emotion-focused coping strategy’ of ‘positive reappraisal’.

### **5.2.5 Neutralising criminal behaviour**

We know from our research and from some of the statements in our data material that at least some of the boys are involved in criminal activities in Denmark (Wasi L:494; Emir L:160; Yunus L:54). Despite this involvement there seems to be an overall tendency that criminal behaviour is not associated with positive values.

As mentioned in section 4.2.1, many of the boys have not had a “typical” upbringing with parents and school teachers nurturing them and teaching them how to behave and what values are important in life. For example, Said, Musa and Emir all say that they left their families and/or countries of origin at a very early age (Said L:32; Musa L:16; Yunus L:17), and even though Musa and Wasi give the impression of having experienced a somewhat ordinary childhood until their adolescence (Musa L:15; Wasi L:29) they have still spent a large amount of time in their teens - a time when a person is often trying to figure out her or his relation to the “good” and the “bad” - away from their parents and the society that they grew up in. However, even though the boys have not been fed the values and norms of society directly from teachers and parents throughout their childhood and adolescence, they have still been exposed to these via the general attitudes of people in their network, the internet and so on. Thus, they have not been immune to the imprint of the general demands that society sets for their behaviour (Sykes & Matza 1957:665); they have a sense of right or wrong according to the dominant social order. Some of the values which they view as good values can be sensed in their ‘identity narratives’, as mentioned in section 4.2.4.

First of all, it seems that criminal behaviour is not well regarded. Yasir does not even want to talk about the criminal environment (Yasir L:95), while Wasi at first refrains from answering anything about crime (Wasi L:253) and then only later opens up and talks about his own involvement with the criminal environment in Copenhagen (Wasi L:496). Said is, as mentioned in section 4.2.4, offended by the insinuation that he steals and states that: *“I do not steal. I do not obtain money that way.”* (Said L:26). This could either suggest that these boys play on our expectations and undertake a ‘role’ of what a “good person” should be like. Or it could suggest that these boys know and have accepted the norm that “good people” do not commit crime. Emir emphasises this argument by stating that stealing is a sin in a religious perspective and thereby not a good thing (Emir L:155). Thus, he seems to accept the demands that a religious society has imprinted upon him. Yunus as well points to the fact that he is dreaming about forgiveness for all his sins. He wants to be an orthodox Muslim. He explains it this way: *“(…) many boys come to Europe and forget their background and start to drink, take drugs and be with women, but I would like to return to my roots.”* (Yunus L:79). Both Emir and Yunus stress that they

would like to live in accordance with Islam as a guiding principle for their decisions and goals in life.

Another value that seems important, especially to Wasi, is honesty, at least concerning being honest to people close to him. To the question of what person is most important in his life, Wasi answers: *"My mother (...) because she gave me life"* (Wasi L:282). When talking about his mother, he seems to become very touched and he explains that he is unable to lie to her. Later in the interview, he again becomes very touched and explains: *"If I say that I am fine, she will know if I am not fine."* (Wasi L:560).

Emir and Ali both highlight the value of decent manners when it comes to what characterises a good friend (Emir L:180; Ali L:84), and Musa and Said point to the fact that mutual respect should also be in place in order to have a good friendship (Musa L:42; Said L:17). Religious behaviour, honesty, respect and good manners hint to the fact that the boys have a set of positive core values that in some way guide their lives and the way that they approach people.

Despite the impression that most of the boys believe in these values, some of them admit to breaking the rules of society. As touched upon in section 4.2.4, Yunus acknowledges that he takes part in criminal activities, but argues that: *"(...) you do not steal just for the fun of it. It is a necessity. Necessity is what causes it. Money is trash, but it is something that you need to have."* (Yunus L:51). This is a way of justifying the actions that he knows clash with the norms of society and his learned values. By 'denying responsibility' (Sykes & Matza 1957:667) and stressing that his situation is to blame for his deviant behaviour, he temporarily 'neutralises' his actions and 'neutralises' the inner feelings of disapproval towards these violations that are caused by his inherent norms. Emir adds to this argument with his remark: *"We do not come here with the intention of stealing; that is not what it is about. But we cannot find anything else, there are no alternatives."* (Emir L:344). In the same way as Yunus, he shifts the blame for his actions from himself to his circumstances. Similarly, Musa explains that: *"I have not had a steady job or a permanent base, and therefore I have been forced to steal in order to survive."* (Musa L:21). Thus, in order to break the rules both Yunus, Musa and Emir have momentarily 'neutralised' their violations with the defense that what they do is not actually morally and legally



wrong, but is in fact a valid act. They suggest that because they are in a difficult situation - as North African youths bouncing between irregular and regular migration - they have been forced into a situation that is out of their control. Their actions are in this way characterised by 'flexibility' in the sense that they believe that the norms and values of society are not binding in this particular situation (Williams in Sykes & Matza 1957:666).

Moreover, Emir explains that sometimes violating the rules of society is done out of loyalty to the family. He explains that the boys who still have contact with parents in their country of origin often suffer from the parents' belief that the boys are living the "European dream" (which will be further explored in section 6.2.1). This belief makes the boys feel obligated to send back money to their families and *"when the reality is that you do not have a job and you cannot get a job, then you have to steal in order to send back the money and help the family, and this is how you get involved with the criminal environment."* (Emir L:149). This points to what Sykes and Matza refer to as an 'appeal to higher loyalties' (Sykes & Matza 1957:669); the boys that Emir refers to defend their violations (both inwards before the actual act and outwards in their 'identity narrative' in the interview situation) by blaming the act on their obligations towards their families. Thus, it becomes not an immoral and selfish act but instead a violation done for the sake of a greater good; that is, supporting the family financially in order for them to have a better life.

Furthermore, one of the staff members points to another justification technique when stating that the boys consider Scandinavia to be one of the easiest places in the world to steal from people, because of the tendency that people do not look after their belongings (Staff L:1005). This could indicate that the boys use 'denial of injury' (Sykes & Matza 1957:667) as a justification technique in the sense that they believe that their criminal behaviour has done no harm. The rationalisation in this case could then be that if people do not look after their belongings, then they must not care about them and will not miss them if they are gone. This could also be linked to the fact that, especially in Denmark, there is a tendency for people to insure - and sometimes even over-insure - all of their belongings (Politiken 2014), which means that they will most likely be able to replace the stolen belongings with new ones. This is another way for the boys to 'deny any injury' happening as a cause

of their violations. In line with this, one of the boys from Centre Gribskov once explained to a staff member that: *"My crime will never be of a violent character, unless I am fighting for my life of course."* (Staff L:691). Congruently, the boys do not want to hurt anyone physically, but they do not consider stealing to be hurting anyone, in Scandinavia at least.

However, despite the 'neutralisations' of their actions the boys might still have psychological difficulties with breaking the moral codes. Emir says that: *"It is always difficult. I mean, it is not the stealing. No matter what haram [forbidden thing] you do, it is always difficult."* (Emir L:198). This indicates that despite his rationalisations, he still feels guilty about violating (religious) values. Hence, it emphasises Sykes and Matza's (1957) arguments that these boys do not behave in a criminal manner because their values are in opposition to that of the society, but rather because they have only temporarily 'neutralised' and rationalised the criminal actions that they have committed.

### **5.2.6 Loss and gain of resources**

As a consequence of their situation, the boys have lost resources. The boys have not left their countries of origin due to war or severe conflict, but rather due to economic difficulties, high unemployment rates and a general feeling of an unfavourable quality of life (Appendix 4). Some of the boys hint to experiences of trauma and distress in their countries of origin as well as during their migration period. In the interview with Musa it is indicated that he has experienced sexual abuse (Musa L:110). Emir as well explains that he has been exposed to rape several times (Audio file 6), and Said hints to violent episodes as he shows the scars on his body (Said L:26). Therefore, it can be argued that these boys have experienced a loss of 'personal trait based resources' such as optimism, self-esteem and hope (Ryan et al. 2008:7). Furthermore, the boys have lost 'material resources' since they have left their families and the economic support that these could or would (potentially) give (Ali L:32; Wasi L:31), or they have left some form of employment, such as Emir who sold cigarettes in Morocco (Audio file 6). Or they have simply had to pay human smugglers in order to leave the country (Ali L:29). All of this has stripped them of money and the goods that money can buy and has left them with few belongings.

In addition to these 'personal and material resource' losses, they have also presumably experienced a loss of 'social resources'. When leaving their families, their friends and their network in their countries of origin they have lost the opportunity for 'emotional and tangible support'. On top of this, they may have experienced a loss of a 'sense of belonging' which is in line with one of our earlier analytical points in section 4.2.1.

It is important to notice that some resource losses will be permanent, while others can be recovered over time. Thus, the boys might have replaced the loss of 'material resources' with new 'material resources' such as obtaining money via theft or short-term, low-paid labour. Also, in accordance with Hobfoll's (2001) concept of 'resource replacement', they may later in life replace some of the 'social resources' that they have lost with other 'social resources' such as new friends or by starting a family of their own.

The boys have not only lost resources during their migration, they have also gained various resources. Yunus explains well the gain of resources that these boys experience when talking about life on the street: *"It is like a school and a prison at the same time. You learn how to read people. How people live. You also learn to look into yourself."* (Yunus L:103). Here, he points to the feeling that even though he has not been included into any educational system during his migration and has not had the opportunity to be taught a standard curricula, he has still gained some new skills. These skills have been learned through his experiences – good or bad –, his own observations as well as through social interaction. In this statement, Yunus denotes that he has gained both 'cultural and psychological resources'. Learning how people live might signify that he has gained cultural knowledge on new value systems, and new ways of organising society as well as *"knowledge on physical surroundings and climate"* (Ryan et al. 2008:8). Furthermore, learning how to read people suggests that Yunus has perhaps improved his social skills in the sense that he has a broader understanding of people's reactions to different situations and different settings. He is very reflective about how life on the street has not only taught him to understand others better, but also to better understand and realise who he is as a person. The 'psychological resource' gain which he describes here is also portrayed by Ali: *"Through travelling I develop both mentally and socially."* (Ali

L:119). Ali gains both psychological and social skills and thus 'personal resources' through his migration.

As Yunus indicates, the boys learn how to act towards others - including each other. Congruently, Said says that he *"knows not to be too reserved. Instead, I have to speak a little bit with everyone - otherwise the other boys will take advantage of me."* (Said L:58). Wasi as well explains that there are certain norms and unspoken rules within the group that the boys at the centre form; he talks about the unspoken knowledge of what can be said and what cannot be said amongst the boys (Wasi L:398). He also explains how these boys always need to be on guard even if they are with each other: *"These people, they do not trust other people (...) When they sleep, they sleep like this [showing one eye closed and one eye open]."* (Wasi L:432). These ways of interacting could indicate that the boys have gained new social skills in the sense that they have figured out how to be around people that are in a similar situation to theirs. Furthermore, they might to some extent develop a 'sense of belonging' to this group. It also points to their idea of friendship and their ability to form relations, which we have already touched upon in section 5.2.1.

Other resources that the boys indicate to have gained are personal skills such as the ability to quickly learn new languages and adapt to different legal, cultural and political systems. Wasi states that: *"Personally, I speak all languages."* (Wasi L:599). What is indicated here is that due to the fact that he has been raised trilingual in Algeria - speaking both Berber, French and Arabic (Wasi L:535) - and due to the many different Arab and European countries that he has been in, he now "masters" the art of learning new languages. Moreover, the actual languages that he and many of the other boys have learned are examples of 'cultural resources' that they have gained. For example, Wasi has learned to speak English to such a degree that he was able to speak English through the entire interview. Moreover, he can speak some Danish and has picked up the Moroccan dialect by being around Moroccans (Wasi L:220). Another example is Yasir who learned how to speak (some) Swedish, Danish and Spanish during his stay in these countries, and the rest of the boys have also each learned various bits and pieces of this and that European language. These new linguistic skills are 'cultural resources' that the boys have gained by living for a shorter or longer period of time in different countries, talking with different people.

### 5.3 Sum up

Summing up the chapter on *Coping mechanisms*, it is evident that the boys use different forms of coping strategies to manage their lives. The boys unconsciously draw from their 'coping options', and from our analysis it seems that they sway towards a use of an 'emotion-focused coping strategy'. They do not seem to tackle their problems head on, trying to find a solution that targets their specific predicaments, and this is most likely due to the fact that there are many aspects of their lives that they cannot control. Their narratives and actions give the impression that they instead of targeting their root problems try to change and downplay their emotions. In sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.4 it becomes obvious that the boys use the coping methods 'avoidance', 'escape', 'distancing' and 'positive reappraisal' in order to dwell their emotions, forget their problems and feel (as well as show) a sense of control over their own lives. Congruently, the boys refrain from talking about their problems and they do not involve others in their personal stories of hardships. Furthermore, some of the boys use drugs as a way of 'escaping' their difficulties, even if it is a short-termed solution. As mentioned in section 5.2.3, some of the boys try to 'diminish' their problems and alter the meaning of these so that they can feel indifferent towards their situation. Aside from 'avoiding', 'diminishing' or 'distancing' themselves from their problems or the situations that trigger the thought of these problems, some of the boys sometimes emphasise the positive aspects of their situation or at least try to portray that they themselves can control their lives.

It is evident from their narratives and behaviour that the boys are constantly living an insecure existence. They see potential threats all over and they are constantly alert, building a wall around their emotions and not letting anyone or any place through. The boys that are involved in crime cope with their feelings about this by 'neutralising' their actions, as mentioned in section 5.2.5. Accordingly, they 'deny responsibility', 'appeal to higher loyalties' and 'deny injury'.

What is also clear from our analysis of the boys' use of coping mechanisms is that they use different 'available resources'. In section 5.2.6, we see that the boys have lost resources as well as gained new ones during their migration. Due to the traumas that they have experienced and the break with their lives in the countries

of origin, they have lost both 'personal, social, material and cultural resources'. However, they have also gained new resources that have helped them cope with the different situations that they have been in. Thus, their 'identity narratives' show examples of how they have gained both 'personal and cultural resources'.

Furthermore, some of the boys view the ability to be alone and separate oneself from others as a 'personal resource' in the sense that they can move quicker and the chances of being let down by others is diminished. Presumably, they have trust issues due to their experiences with their families and their time on the street, and this has taught them not to get attached. In section 5.2.1, it becomes clear that the boys do not want to involve in any personal relations with others, and they do not easily feel attached to places either. They keep a 'distance' to others and stick to their own little world, and they are ready to pick up and leave a place at any minute. Thus, they value the strengthening of the personal skill of being able to stand on their own feet in order to survive, and they no longer see the same value in tying a bond to people or place.

## 6. Migration strategies

### 6.1 Theory: Migration strategies

In this section, we will describe the theoretical concepts that will be used in the following analysis. These concepts will be used to analyse on the grander reasons for the North African boys' migration and the way that they use the European asylum systems. Furthermore, they will be applied to explain what networks the boys make use of and how they do this. Our main theorists in this section are Stephen Castles and Mark Miller, Hans Lucht and Emma Herman.

#### 6.1.1 Push and pull factors

General theories that frame the tendencies of people moving from densely populated areas to sparsely populated areas - or from low to high income areas - or link migration with cyclical fluctuations are called 'push-pull theories'. Migration is influenced either by 'push factors' in which people are driven out of their areas of origin or, on the other hand, by 'pull factors' where various things attract migrants to certain countries. 'Push factors' include lack of economic opportunities, low living standards and political suppression, while 'pull factors' include such things as availability of land, demand for labour, political freedom and good economic opportunities. (Castles & Miller 2009:22).

Stephen Castles<sup>21</sup> and Mark Miller<sup>22</sup> (2009) argue that *"the individual decision to migrate is based on rational comparison of the relative costs and benefits of remaining at home or moving."* (Castles & Miller 2009:22). They furthermore point to the fact that 'neoclassical theory' (from the 1880's) assumes that potential migrants are well aware of employment opportunities and wage levels (i.e. 'pull factors') in a given host country. The economic factors are hereby essential for the decision to migrate. 'Pull factors' do not always connote good living conditions for migrants. In the Western European countries, migrant workers mainly work in jobs which the locals are unable or unwilling to take. With a theoretical concept this is called 'structural dependence on immigrant labour'. (Castles 2004:861). As Yuval-Davis states, in the deregulated neo-liberal economic markets, a lot of the leisure industry - from waiters to sex workers - and many other unskilled sections of the

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<sup>21</sup> Castles is a sociologist and a political economist at the University of Sydney.

<sup>22</sup> Miller is a Professor of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Delaware.

economy are dependent on illegal or irregular migrants who are willing to work for less than the minimum wage and under very exploitative conditions (Yuval-Davis 2013:56).

### **6.1.2 Migration and globalisation**

There are roughly two different human experiences of globalisation; the experience of being inside the circulation of wealth and to have great freedom of movement, and on the other side the experience of being on the outside of the globalised world, with little power to influence one's circumstances and little or no possibility of movement (Lucht 2012:87). Some researchers approach migration in accordance with the first set-up; they see globalisation as a mechanism that gathers people and enhances the possibilities for all, including disadvantaged populations. Hans Lucht<sup>23</sup> instead works with the latter set-up in which globalisation is seen as a deprived mechanism that bears an undesirable outcome for migrants. Their migration is an attempt to get out of the shadows of the global world and become part of the "real" world.

### **6.1.3 The role of personal networks in migration**

Massey's (1993) understanding of network theory is that it is a crucial factor for migration. Increased network opportunities around the world expand the chances for mobility. The likelihood of migration becomes higher when the potential migrant has family and/or friends who have migration experiences. (Massey in Herman 2006:198). Emma Herman<sup>24</sup> explains it through the concept of 'social capital': "*The social capital that lies embedded in these personal ties reduces the costs and risks of migration.*" (Herman 2006:198). Herman works with two different types of personal ties; 'weak' and 'strong' ties. 'Weak ties' refer to having grandparents, friends or other relatives and non-relatives in the host country. 'Strong ties' on the other hand refer to the more close family members (both including in-laws or adoptive relatives) as a partner, parents, siblings and children. Moreover, the quality of the ties has an essential importance to whether they are beneficial for a migrant or not. A large network is needed if a migrant only has 'weak ties'. According to Herman's research, 6-9 'weak ties' were found to score the highest outcome for a migrant's

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<sup>23</sup> Lucht is a Danish anthropologist working at the Danish Institute for International Studies and Copenhagen University.

<sup>24</sup> Herman is a researcher at the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies at the University of Amsterdam.



situation. If the number of ties rise above nine it seems that there is less time to invest in each social relationship and therefore it does not lead to any 'social capital'. Herman concludes that personal networks influence both legal and illegal ways and successes of migration. (Herman 2006:218).

## **6.2 Analysis: Migration strategies**

In the following section, we will bring into play the theoretical concepts that have just been reviewed in order to investigate what migration strategies are connected to the boys. We focus mainly on the theoretical concepts of 'push/pull' in relation to 'globalisation theory', and furthermore Herman's notions on 'network theory'. In the first section, we bring into focus the 'push and pull factors' that have influenced the boys and their reasons for leaving North Africa and travelling to Europe as well as the different views that the boys portray of their situation today. Next, we examine what networks the boys have and use, and whether or not this 'social capital' can be seen as weak or strong. In the last part of this chapter, we investigate how the boys use the European asylum systems and why they chase a new life.

### **6.2.1 Reasons for leaving North Africa**

Most of the boys seem to leave North Africa in the pursuit of a better life. Here, 'push and pull factors' are at play. It seems that there are two underlying reasons for why the boys leave their countries of origin. In some cases, bad experiences in their countries of origin have forced the boys to leave the place; these are for instance poor family relations, violence and assaults. Thus, it could be argued that these boys have left on the basis of survival. On the other hand, some of the other boys express that they leave on a more exploratory and "voluntary" basis, striving towards greater opportunities or at least opportunities which they do not feel exist in their countries of origin.

Emir and Said have been most open in regards to talking about how they felt in their countries of origin. It is obvious that Emir has had a hard life. He explains life on the street as "*very harsh*" (Emir L:42). In Morocco, Emir has spent a large amount of his childhood on the street, and he started using drugs at an early age. On top of this is the fact that he has been a victim of rape several times (Audio file 6). Said as well has had an awful childhood in his country of origin and has felt unwanted by his family (Said L:32). On the street, Said was forced to beg for food and money in order

to survive (Said L:29). Musa and Ali have also had family disagreements and problems - of which we have fewer details - which have led to their emigration (Musa L:18; Ali L:18). The difficult experiences and tough conditions in the boys' places of origin imply that 'push factors' to a large degree have been decisive for the boys' migration. Thus, low living standards, poverty and lack of economic opportunities (Appendix 4) in connection with family complications are what 'push' the boys away, because they see no other alternative but to leave their countries and try to make a fresh start somewhere else.

It looks a bit different for the rest of the boys. Their overall goal as expressed in the interviews is to get out and experience something new, see the world and find new and better opportunities. Wasi phrases it like this: *"(...) for me, it was only to look for something new you know - only this"* (Wasi L:32). Yasir's situation is similar; he left his place of origin in order to play professional football in Sweden (Yasir L:22). Furthermore, Yunus stresses that: *"I wanted to see Europe, but it is bullshit (...) I came to look around and ended up staying."* (Yunus L:19). What is evident here is that Wasi, Yasir and Yunus' argumentation to a larger degree lies within the 'pull factors' where demand for labour and good economic opportunities are the driving forces that act as reasons for them to migrate to Europe.

In relation to the 'push and pull factors', Ali states that: *"The further north, the better. The countries of Southern Europe have problems. It is not a place that you feel you want to be."* (Ali L:142). Ali here touches upon another dimension that lies within the 'neoclassical theory' which suggests that migrants are well aware of the employment opportunities and wage levels that a host country can offer (Castles & Miller 2009:22). Because of the economic crisis, as mentioned in chapter 3, which has set its footprint across Europe and especially in the southern parts, the boys who have been living in Southern Europe have been 'pushed' further north, because they are not able to get the jobs that they have previously been able to get (Staff L:76). In congruence with this, a survey made by Terre des hommes states that: *"in the case of young Moroccans (...) it is considered that the migration is of an economic nature"* (TDH 2009:20). Furthermore, there may also have been 'pull factors' at play in the sense that they know from their networks that there are better opportunities in the north of Europe.

## The European dream

In addition to the above, we have seen a pattern in which many of the boys chase the "European dream", which can be linked to the 'globalisation theory'. In accordance with Lucht (2012), the boys' migration to Europe can be seen as an attempt to get out of the shadows of the global world (i.e. less developed countries) and become a part of it instead, by for instance travelling to Europe (i.e. more developed countries). Wasi explains this well by saying: *"(...) the man in Algeria, the first thing he wants to do is to go to Europe (...) that's the dream, because in his country the future is black you know."* (Wasi L:69) and he later phrases it like this: *"(...) it is like the American dream you know. It's the same for these people - it is the European dream."* (Wasi L:461). Here, Wasi underlines how the Algerian people's understanding of going to Europe means going to a place where things are better and where one's dreams can come true. Additionally, Emir explains that it is a general thing in Morocco that everybody wants to go to Europe (Emir L:80). Moreover, Ali describes that it is a good thing if you are able to leave Tunisia as early in your life as possible. *"It is great that I have gotten out of Tunisia at a young age, because then I don't have to think about that anymore. Boys in Tunisia say "get out of here." Here [in Denmark], I have the opportunity to study, and the possibility of getting an education and a job."* (Ali L:129). Ali emphasises that he was prescient because he thought of getting away from Tunisia early (Ali L:35). From what the boys have told us, most of them are thus born and raised in countries where most people would rather go to Europe in the strive for a better life, at least the people from the same social class as the boys. Ali states that the upper class families have *"ensured their own ass"* (Ali L:126), and the fathers in these families have secured their children, and they do not need to go to Europe in order to improve their situation. The middle class families on the other hand need to make efforts and the children have to take action themselves if they want to improve their conditions.

A closely related question is then how easy it is to go to Europe? Many of the boys express that the travel to Europe is fairly easy to plan; either you go by yourself or you seek out a smuggler. According to Terre des hommes, young migrants from e.g. Morocco usually arrive in Europe by hiding under/aboard trucks or onboard small makeshift boats, and they are often involved with human smugglers (TDH 2009:22). Yunus explains that the smuggling routes are well-known (Yunus L:100), and it is

therefore quite easy to find people who are in charge of the smuggling. There are two main smuggling routes to Europe from Africa. The first route crosses Sahara, through Libya or Tunisia and then crosses over the Mediterranean to Malta and Italy. The second route goes from West Africa along the western coastline, through Morocco to Spain. (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis 2012:50). The difficulties can occur when the boys have to gather the money to pay the smugglers. Ali explains that he had to pay 2000€ (approx. 15,000 dkk) for going to Europe (Ali L:29). This is in congruence with Terre des hommes' survey that showed this exact amount of money being paid to smugglers (TDH 2009:22). Thus, it seems that this large amount of money is the usual amount that people have to come up with if they want help with their travel to Europe from a human smuggler.

Depending on what the boys have been travelling away from and leaving behind and who they have met in Europe, they have different perceptions of what they think of Europe today. For some, getting away from their countries of origin has meant a lot and Europe is therefore experienced as something far better. This is particularly the case with Said: *"It was only when I came to Europe that I could start to think more positively and to have hope."* (Said L:79). Said explains that this has to do with the way people have treated him in Europe. Also Ali finds life in Europe much more attractive than life in Tunisia, and he declares that he will never return to Tunisia permanently. He says: *"Forget Tunisia. There is no future."* (Ali L:60).

On the other hand some of the other boys express that they have become quite disappointed with Europe in general and explain that travelling in European countries and living here has not been as glamorous and easy as expected. Wasi depicts a rather difficult situation when calling a friend and trying to explain to him that he should not go to Denmark, because life in Denmark is not easy. The friend does not understand, because this does not match the view that Algerians have of Europe, as explained above. (Wasi L:458). Accordingly, the tough life that Wasi and the others boys have had and the many dreams that have yet to be fulfilled have in some cases developed into a negative view on Europe. But this view has not reached the potential migrants in Algeria who still believe that Europe is the place of their dreams. A similar explanation can be found in Emir's statement: *"Often, the parents in Morocco have a completely different understanding of what is going on [in Europe] than what is actually the reality (...)"* (Emir L: 146). And as mentioned

before, Yunus finds Europe disappointing and connects it with the adjective “bullshit” (Yunus L:19). All these statements suggest that the expectations that comes with the ‘pull factors’ do not always turn out to be as predicted or create the best conditions for the boys.

Those who say that they are travelling in order to experience Europe and create new opportunities for themselves tend to seem more disappointed than those who mainly left their countries of origin because of personal problems. This is certainly the case with Wasi and Yunus who say that they travelled to Europe in order to explore and seem more depressed with their current situation than Said and Ali who say that they left their countries of origin due to family problems.

### **6.2.2 The use of networks**

As Herman (2006) suggests, we find that there is some sort of ‘social capital’ at play when the boys take the decision to travel to Europe. The personal ties that the boys make use of during their migration influence whether they succeed or not, and these ties therefore to some extent reduce the costs and risks in the boys’ migration phase. We argue that the boys do not have the possibility to make use of ‘strong ties’, simply because they have not expressed that they have any in Europe. The following text is therefore focusing and elaborating on to what extent the boys make use of ‘weak ties’ in their migration.

Even though we have described the boys as “lonesome riders” who mostly travel alone in section 5.2.1, they to some extent make use of a network even though they do not point to it as a special thing. This is mostly visible when the boys refer to the fact that they always stand up for each other and help each other if they get into trouble (Wasi L:159,636; Ali L:46; Yasir L:54; Emir L:90), as elaborated on in section 4.2.4. The fact that the North African boys help each other fits with one of the important social relations highlighted by Boyd (1989) and Staring (2001) which is that of *“co-ethnic relations based on shared origin”* (Boyd & Staring in Herman 2006:200). The boys’ relations with other boys similar to them build upon an understanding for each other's situation and often difficult background. Even though these relations can be seen as rather ‘weak ties’, when we bear in mind the boys’ reluctance when it comes to involving in actual friendships, they are not to be

undervalued, because they also have an influence on how the boys deal with and manage their migration.

From our interview with the staff members, it is clear that the boys are well aware that they only have each other, most of all because they know that only they understand what it is like to be in their shoes. They are therefore most loyal to each other and they call each other “colleagues”. Simultaneously, they are all highly alert because they also know that they cannot trust each other, and if it comes down to their own survival they will steal from or hurt each other, and therefore they never turn their backs on each other. (Staff L:272).

Additionally, we have discovered that a couple of the boys have included specific social relations in the “planning” of their migration which points to a use of ‘social capital’. When Ali was still in Tunisia, he met up with friends who were living in Italy, and they talked about this country in positive terms (Ali L:35), which had an influence on his decision to migrate. Ali describes his presence in Italy like this: *“I stayed there for two weeks. I stayed with some friends (...). During my stay in Italy, I lived in a good area.”* (Ali L: 43). The fact that he was able to live in a “good area” can be connected to the outcome of the relationship and network with the friends who lived in Italy. They presumably knew the good areas from the bad and were furthermore able to meet up with him when he arrived in the country (Ali L:51). Thus, Ali could benefit from his ‘weak ties’ in a way that migrants with no ‘weak or strong ties’ may not have been able to. The fact that many North African migrants already live or travel in Europe makes it easier for new potential migrants to learn from their experiences. From Ali’s example, it seems that there is a mutual expectation that people (or rather migrants) help each other, and Ali explains this by saying: *“When my friends visited Tunisia, I helped them and in Italy they helped me.”* (Ali L:46). Furthermore, Ali describes that he has been lucky because he managed to get out of Tunisia and receive help in Italy (Ali L:51). Although he at some point left Italy in order to seek better opportunities in the Northern European countries, he still felt fortunate to have received advice on life in Italy and life on the street from his network. Ali thus depicts a rather high use of his ‘weak ties’.

Said and Yasir also show examples of using ‘weak ties’. Both in Said’s and in Yasir’s migration situation there has been an arrangement with a person who took care of the boys both physically - in the form of a place to stay and economical support -

and socially, providing care for the boys. Said explains it this way: "*When I was living in Spain, I had someone who could help me, someone who was there for me both practically and emotionally, so it was not nearly as hard as in my country of origin, where the feeling of powerlessness was more significant.*" (Said L:26). Yasir had help from a person who was a friend of his father, and this person regularly met up with Yasir in Sweden and provided him with money to live for (Yasir L:26). In both these cases, a person has been paid for the "service" of helping the boys and this fact coupled with the fact that they are not close family members means that they can be regarded as 'weak ties', in the same way as Ali's Tunisian friends. Another thing that shows that we deal with 'weak ties' is the fact that in both these instances, the support was withdrawn when payment stopped. When Yasir's father died, the friend of the father could no longer provide for Yasir, and Yasir decided to turn himself over to the Swedish police (Yasir L:27). Said's provider also at some point put a stop to his support and Said therefore decided to move on from Spain to Germany (Said L:21).

What these examples show is that Ali, Yasir and Said explicitly talk about the 'weak ties' that have helped them manage better their situation as migrants in Europe. None of the boys point to having any family members in Europe who have helped them along the way, and they therefore have not made use of any 'strong ties'. However, they themselves might function as 'strong ties' to their family members if they at some point want to join them in Europe.

### **6.2.3 Navigating as a migrant**

#### **The use of the asylum system**

The North African boys are known to the Red Cross staff as a group who bounces between the asylum system and life on the street, as mentioned in chapter 3. In some European countries, they are able to find a job within the irregular market and/or they use their network to find a place to live and the means to survive, as mentioned above. However, in other instances they - either voluntarily or involuntarily - make use of the European asylum system.

There are different ways of arriving at the final destination when regarding migration. It can take days or months or even years to get to the final destination, and it can be reached through legal or illegal measures. As mentioned in section

6.2.1, some of the boys have made use of human smugglers in order to reach Europe, while others have made the journey on their own.

Once they have entered Europe, it is different for the boys whether or not they continue to be there without legal grounds - i.e. living on the street - or if they seek out or are forced into the legal system, when caught by the police and claiming asylum.

Herman explains how *“public debate is obsessed with what should be done to keep immigrants from abusing immigrant refugee programmes, and how to get rid of so-called profiteers and impostors.”* (Herman 2006:206). As emphasised here, there is a tendency in Europe to focus on “free-riders” in the asylum system who supposedly take advantage of the system without actually needing or wanting asylum.

Many North African boys only stay in the Danish asylum centres for a couple of months before disappearing, and then a number of them reappear after a while and initiate a new asylum claim. Some boys show little interest in hearing about the progress of their asylum case and some do not always show up for meetings with the authorities (Staff L:135). This could indicate that they may be in the asylum system for other reasons than trying to gain a residence permit.

Some of the boys have travelled through Europe and been in various countries for a shorter or longer period of time without having sought out the asylum system. Said went from his country of origin to Spain where he *“did not apply for asylum”* (Said L:19), but rather used his network to find room and board. And afterwards, he travelled further north and did not enter the asylum system before reaching Denmark. Ali travelled through *“all of Europe without being caught by the police.”* (Ali L:55). The risk of being detected by Frontex<sup>25</sup> or the national police is an important factor to consider, because if an immigrant is registered in the asylum system, it will be of great importance when and where this person is first registered. For instance, after having had his fingerprints registered in Denmark, the Red Cross found that Yasir was previously registered in Sweden (Yasir L:42), which means that

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<sup>25</sup> Frontex is the term for the border management which EU has adopted. It is the *‘integrated border security’ approach that includes not only the policing of borders but also cooperation over border management with third countries.*” (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis 2012:23).



he will most likely be transferred back to Sweden for his asylum claim if he is also assessed to be over 18 years of age due to the Dublin Regulation<sup>26</sup>.

Musa, Wasi and Emir state that they have travelled through and lived in many European countries, but they do not specify whether or not they have applied for asylum in each of these countries (Musa L:15; Wasi L:24; Emir L:101). But the fact that almost all of the boys have been in various European countries in a time period that stretches over perhaps 5-8 years suggests that they do not stay long enough for an asylum claim to be processed. The staff members explain that although many of the boys dream of obtaining residency, for instance in Denmark, and starting a new life they *“have some form of realism about their possibilities in the sense that they know that this rarely happens”* (Staff L:80). Wasi backs this argument in his statement about how he was told that he had no chance of receiving asylum in Denmark (Wasi L:266), presumably because the people who told him did not believe that his background would give him a basis for asylum. Wasi further states that he did not care whether or not he was eligible for asylum at that time, but that he is now trying to get a residence permit and that: *“if you get a ticket [residence permit] it is good, but if you don’t get it, then you don’t get it, and that is no problem.”* (Wasi L:266). This denotes that the reasons for being in the asylum centres are not necessarily to start an asylum process and see it through.

For Musa and Emir, the decision to go to - or at least to stay at - an asylum centre seems conscious and strategic, but not necessarily with the focus on receiving a residence permit. Musa for instance explains why he has been at asylum centres in this manner: *“Should I rather be living on the street? The asylum centre means room and board.”* (Musa L:36). This statement indicates that he has a strategy; Musa knows that he will be better off staying in an asylum centre than having to get by on the street. In the interview, he does not immediately focus on the possibility for asylum as a reason for staying at the centre. Emir as well suggests that he is staying at the centre because it is better than the streets. He has been in and out of the Danish asylum system several times and when asked why he returns, he states: *“I do not know where else to go. It is too cold outside, my friend.”* (Emir L:127). These statements point to a short-term planning in which the boys see their immediate

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<sup>26</sup> We here refer to the Dublin Regulation. For a further elaboration on this, see appendix 5.

needs and try to fulfill these needs to their best ability, thus focusing on getting food and housing.

However, for some boys it seems that they actually do hope to achieve residency in Denmark. For example, Said tells us that *“I cannot imagine what to do if I do not get a residence permit in Denmark. I do not have a Plan B.”* (Said L:86). This suggests that for some of the boys the asylum system is their only hope for obtaining a decent life rather than continue roaming the streets.

What is also evident in the data material is that it is different and often random whether or not the boys end up at an asylum centre in the first place. Emir explains that he did not know anything about the Danish asylum system beforehand, and that the reason why he went into it was because he met an Algerian who took him to Centre Sandholm (Emir L:260). This shows that although he might have had a plan to use the asylum system, he did not know how. But with the help of his network, he got ‘informational support’ and ended up in the asylum centre.

### **Chasing new documents**

Not all migrants travel with their ID-cards or other documents that can make identification possible if they enter Europe illegally. In Arabic, people who leave Maghreb clandestinely are referred to as “harragas”. This term is derived from the Arabic verb meaning “to incinerate” and refers to the act of burning identification papers before leaving in order to make identification harder and avert being expelled from Europe (Beneduce 2008:513). Without documents it is more difficult for the authorities to figure out a person’s background and the story that the asylum seeker gives is the only baseline. It is evident that some of the boys make use of this tactic, being registered with another nationality. Musa is an example of this as he states in the beginning of his interview that he is from Algeria, and later refers to Morocco as his country of origin (Musa L:9).

Beneduce also points out that leaving or burning identification papers signals *“the will to literally burn down social, cultural and familial identities.”* (Beneduce 2008:513). This means that being without papers may be a way of wiping the slate clean and initiating a new ‘identity narrative’, a new life. Yasir says that when he left his home and went to Sweden, he had no passport (Yasir L:27), which could indicate a form of migration strategy. He has left his papers and thus his old life and his old

identity that has been connected to his country of origin. Musa states that he and the other boys travel from country to country because they “*are looking for life or looking for documents*” (Musa L:52). This indicates that they are searching for documents to support a new identity or a new ‘sense of belonging’.

However, it is difficult to know whether the boys have left their documentation on purpose or if they just have not had the opportunity to take them with them. Wasi explains that while in Europe, having ID documents is “*a service, it is free you know, but in Algeria you either pay for it or you cannot have it*” (Wasi L:333). Thus, the boys may simply never have had any documents. Another reason for being without papers could be that the boys fear the consequences of handing over their documents to foreign authorities. The staff members suggest that the reason why some boys have no documents and state a different nationality than their own when asked by the police or the Danish Immigration Service, is that they do not know what information will be shared with the authorities in their countries of origin. They may fear that some of the perhaps delicate information that they give about themselves will be misused or end up in the wrong hands. (Staff L:307).

### **6.3 Sum up**

Summing up the chapter on *Migration strategies*, what we see in section 6.2.1 is that the boys depict two different reasons for leaving. One reason is based on survival and portrays the act of migration as a necessary choice, thus implying that the harsh circumstances were responsible for the departure and break from networks and countries of origin. The other reason is portrayed as a choice based on the dream of experiencing new things and exploring new options. The two sides thus describe a forced contra a voluntary choice. These narratives also portray different ‘push and pull factors’. Congruently, bad experiences such as sexual assault, poor family relations and poverty have ‘pushed’ some of the boys away from their places of origin. Dreams and beliefs of better opportunities awaiting in Europe have instead ‘pulled’ others to Southern Europe to begin with and then to the north of Europe after the start of the financial crisis. However, the view on life in Europe today is portrayed differently. Thus, it seems that the boys who have described their migration as being caused by ‘pull factors’ are more negative in their description of their current situation, while those who left due to ‘push factors’ seem a little less disappointed with the outcome.

Furthermore, we found in section 6.2.2 that it seems they do not have any 'strong ties' to use in their migration process. Rather, they have used 'weak ties' such as friends and acquaintances. Said, Ali and Yasir have used these 'weak ties' to survive in the initial period of their migration, and although they are the most explicit about this, it is evident that the other boys also make use of networks such as each other (their "colleagues") or other Arabs in order to manage better their situation.

In section 6.2.3 we found that it is different when and if the boys make use of the European asylum systems. Thus, most of the boys have travelled through various European countries without having been in an asylum centre. The reason why they seek out or are forced into the asylum system is also different, as some of them use it as a bolt-hole from life on the street whereas others actually try to gain asylum.

Furthermore, we see that the boys in some way try to re-write their 'identity narratives' through the act of migration. They search for better opportunities and a new life. Therefore some of them use the strategy of travelling without documents, which points to either wanting to leave their old lives completely behind them or making sure that they control the information that the European asylum systems or their countries of origin receive about them.

## **7. Discussion and conclusion**

In this chapter, we will try to link the previous three chapters together and conclude on our data as well as broaden out our findings with a few new foci. In the first section, we try to shed light on things that have constrained the lives of the boys in their pursuit of a decent life. Bringing into focus these factors will give a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges that the boys meet in their daily lives. These constraints can be explored with the use of Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) concepts of 'personal and environmental constraints'. After this, we focus on our research questions and conclude on what way the three previous chapters have answered these. In the last part, we open up to a new perspective and discuss a new set of themes that are related to the choices that the boys have made in their lives.

### **7.1 Constraints**

Lazarus and Folkman point out that there are often barriers to the acquisition of new resources or the full use of existing resources during a migration phase (Lazarus & Folkman 1984:165). As we have seen in section 5.2.6, the boys have both gained and lost resources from the time of their break with their families and/or their countries of origin and up to their current situation. However, they have also faced various barriers and 'personal and environmental constraints' that can impede their ability to make the best of their lives.

One of the 'personal constraints' that may hinder the boys in their chances to succeed in life is their difficulties with entering into relationships, as mentioned in section 5.2.1. The bad experiences that the boys tell us that they have had have become part of their personal development, and thus also their 'identity narrative', and guide the way that they make decisions. Their upbringing and their life experiences have made it difficult for them to connect with others, which means that they are constantly alone in their struggles and unable to relieve themselves of their stressful feelings. This could be tied to why some of them would rather "connect" with drugs as a way of 'escaping' their feelings. The fact that they are adolescents with difficulties tying bonds to others and without any stable adults in their lives also suggests that they are very vulnerable. Moreover, their difficulties with fitting into a frame of rules and regulations (in the asylum setting) restrict their possibility for receiving help and care from the Red Cross. And their dreams of

making it back to their countries of origin with loads of money in their pocket is a 'personal constraint' in the way that it perhaps keeps them from grabbing opportunities that can be positive, but leads them down a different path than the one they have pictured in their heads. We will return to the issue of money later.

Related thereto, another 'personal constraint' that may affect at least some of the boys is a refusal of professional help. During our time at Centre Gribskov, we sensed that the residents are sometimes very hesitant about accepting the offer from the Red Cross to talk to a psychologist. This might stem from a coping mechanism of 'denial' or 'avoidance' of their problems, which we touched upon in section 5.2.3. Or it could also stem from a personal or a cultural view that accepting such an offer could imply that they are helpless or weak, and as we have seen in section 4.2.3 Wasi and Ali try hard to portray themselves in their 'identity narratives' as masters of their own lives. The refusal of help could also indicate that they distrust the motive behind the help (Lazarus & Folkman 1984:165). It seems that they have rarely experienced positive developments in their lives, and because many of them do not even believe that they can receive asylum in Denmark, they may question why they are even offered the help of a psychologist. It could also suggest that their lack of possibilities to plan a future is a 'personal constraint' in that it prevents them from wanting to open up to difficult issues, because they do not see any point in doing so. This will be further discussed later.

As discussed in section 4.2.4, the media and the public have imposed on the boys a 'role' of "criminal" and connect them with a deviant behaviour in the eyes of society. At the resident meeting, an issue of broken electronics and missing things came up and a staff member explained that because people have broken computers or playstations, these things will perhaps not be bought again for the centre. The boys then expressed their exasperation and their inability to understand why they should all suffer for what former residents or other residents than themselves have done (RM L:39). This is another example of the boys feeling 'labeled' as culprits because of someone else's doings. They ask: *"Is it just because we are North Africans?"* and suggest that all the things that are taken from them end up with other non-North African asylum seekers (RM L:50). Seeing that many of them have felt that others view them as criminals or illegals for a very long time, there is a

chance that the boys internalise this 'label' and act upon it, thereby initiating a 'deviant carrier' which can be difficult to break from (Becker 2005:56). However, many of the boys are, as we have seen from the data material, involved in various criminal activities and have been for a long time due to their need to survive or to maintain a certain level of income. Therefore, it is difficult to say if the deviant behaviour (in the eyes of others) continues as a result of people persisting to put a 'label' on them, or if it continues because the boys keep rationalising and 'neutralising' their criminal acts, which we have touched upon in section 5.2.5. This can both be seen as a 'personal constraint' in that the internalised beliefs of the 'labeling' determine if certain behaviours or feelings are appropriate, and an 'environmental constraint' in the way that the surrounding society's perpetuating view on them as "bad people" stifles their ability to show the opposite.

Hence, besides the 'personal constraints' there are various 'environmental constraints' that limit the use of resources or the obtainment of new resources (Lazarus & Folkman 1984:166). Yasir describes how he wants to play professional football in a Danish football club, but that he is not allowed to do so because of his status as an asylum seeker (Yasir L:73). This is an example of an 'environmental constraint' that limits Yasir's possibility of, for instance, gaining new football skills, a healthier body, better social skills, the ability to practice linguistic skills and perhaps a carrier. Other 'environmental constraints' that affect the boys are the inability for them to work legally and thereby gain 'material resources', and the insufficient access to school which limits their ability to gain new personal skills (as mentioned in section 4.2.1). These barriers to their development are all enforced by the Danish state and the laws and regulations that control the Danish asylum system (NiD 2014; appendix 5).

*"A major barrier to psychological healing is the degrading treatment and conditions endured while being detained"* (Ryan et al. 2008:14), in places such as detention centres for asylum seekers. Musa portrays such a feeling of degradation when stating: *"Out here in the woods, we are isolated like animals in a cage, because there is nothing to do."* (Musa L:34). The fact that the boys have nothing to do at Centre Gribskov could be hindering their psychological well-being. In section 4.2.1, we see that Yunus also talked about being placed far away without having anything to do.

This shows that there is an 'environmental constraint' in the fact that society pushes them out of the 'national order of things', places them as far away from the rest of society as possible and this initiates a process of "othering". Congruently, the boys do not get a real chance to interact with the public and they are thereby limited in their acquisition of new 'cultural resources' and the possibility to show (to themselves and to others) that they have the potential to integrate into society. Although some of them express that they would like to return to their countries of origin at some point (Wasi L:132; Yunus L:85; Emir L:229), the rest of the boys indicate that they in fact do want to settle down in Denmark or elsewhere in Europe (Musa L:63; Ali L:37; Said L:37; Yasir L:76) and thus integrate themselves.

## **7.2 Concluding on our findings**

The thesis is intended to feed into the limited knowledge and literature about young North African migrants. The Danish social authorities have little experience with this group and are in many ways frustrated with the boys' behaviour and do not know how to help them or what to do with them. It is clear that there is a need for a different strategy in working with this group, because they differ significantly from other unaccompanied minors who arrive in Denmark and have suffered through war and crisis.

This study can work as an introduction to whom the North African boys are. Only when we have an understanding of who they are and why they behave as they do, can we begin to help them. What we have found out about the boys during our research is of course limited to the life stories that they have portrayed to us. Our role as researchers and the situation that the boys are in of course have an impact on the outcome of the interviews and thus what the boys want to portray in their stories. Therefore, we emphasise again that we are only able to work with and conclude on the information which have been presented by the boys. In the thesis we wish to conclude on our research questions: *Who is the group of North African youths with street-oriented behaviour from Centre Gribskov? What coping mechanisms and migration strategies are connected to this group of individuals?*

In order to answer thoroughly these questions, we have decided to divide the next section into three parts focusing on our sub-questions.



We begin by answering: *What societal and psychological factors characterise this group of individuals?* Our starting point is the boys' countries of origin. Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria are all countries that are marked by instability and poverty, and thus the boys come from harsh and challenging backgrounds. Most of them have had a tough upbringing with broken family ties, they have felt alone and felt like outcasts, and from the interviews we get the sense that they have lacked 'emotional attachments'. Some of the boys are still in contact with their families, but there is a tendency that the boys do not communicate the reality of their situation to their families. The severe conditions that the boys have lived under seem to have scarred them for life.

There is a tendency that the boys either portray an 'identity narrative' which is victim-focused or agency-focused, which have much to do with how they view themselves and their situation. This is also connected to how the surrounding society perceives them. Some of the boys highlight that they feel that they are being 'labeled' in a negative manner merely due to their social position as 'North Africans', 'migrants', 'asylum seekers' and so on. It is difficult to say if this is a legitimate argument or if the 'labels' are applied due to actual criminal behaviour. Most likely it is a combination; a 'labeling process' is in play and some of the boys may rightfully be 'labeled' as "offenders", while others may suffer unjustly. This can become a vicious circle in which the boys' behaviour and the view that their surroundings have on them have a contributing and escalating effect on each other. The issue of alienation and "othering" is also linked hereto. Thus, the feeling of not fitting into society and not being part of the "normal" is something that takes up a lot of energy in the boys' awareness.

The second question that we wish to answer with this thesis is: *How do these boys behave and what methods do they use to cope with their situation?* The boys have faced difficult and tough situations over and over again in their lives both in their countries of origin and on the street in Europe, and they do not live a secure and steady life, but instead seem to always be on the lookout for potential threats, from others or from their own emotions. This is what the Red Cross employees recognise as "street-oriented behaviour". Most of the boys do not portray any confidence in their future, and they have been living on a day-to-day basis for a very long time, which can only change if they get the possibility of a future. There is a general

awareness among the boys that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to receive asylum in Denmark, and they therefore have difficulties with planning a stable future.

In order for them to cope with their situation, we have found that the boys mainly use 'emotion-focused coping strategies' as they do not focus on solving their problems head on, because they are not able to. Changing their situation requires changes on institutional levels, and they are in no position to change neither asylum laws nor labour laws in Europe nor the structural economic systems in their countries of origin. They instead - without necessarily being conscious about it - resort to relieving their pain or 'diminishing' their experiences or 'escaping' their difficult emotions in various ways. They use strategies such as 'avoidance', 'positive reappraisals', 'distancing' and 'escape' as ways of dulling their pain or downplaying their problems.

We have also found that the boys use drugs to descend into a state of indifference and numbness, and they 'avoid' talking about the experiences that they have had both in order to pretend they do not exist, but also to spare others the burden of this knowledge. Moreover, some of the boys use a way of romanticising or emphasising the positivity of their situations in their 'identity narrative' as a way to seem in control or as a way of 'distancing' themselves from the negative aspects.

Most of the boys seem to have had either bad experiences with relations in their past or have learned that it is an advantage and a 'personal resource' never to tie a close bond with anyone, but instead travel alone. They all seem to have no difficulties breaking with places or people from one day to another, as they have been used to living life here and there and leaving whenever things seem to be difficult or whenever a better opportunity arises in another place.

Some of them also use different 'techniques of neutralisation' in order to rationalise some of their harder choices in life and the criminal actions that they have performed; they either shift blame from themselves to others or blame their circumstances, or they 'diminish' the consequences of these actions and 'deny injuries'.

The boys have all used different resources in order to cope with their situation. They have gained new resources and they have lost both 'personal, social, material and cultural resources'. We have also found that there are various 'personal and

environmental constraints' that hinder their development and their chances of having the life that they wish to have.

The third question that we wish to conclude on is: *Which migration strategies do they have and in relation hereto, how do they use their social networks?* Our analysis of the boys' stories has shown that there are different 'push and pull factors' that influence their decision to migrate. Thanks to the globalised world, the North African boys are well aware of the differences between north and south and they all travel north in the pursuit of the European dream.

We have also seen that even though the boys clearly reveal that they do not need to tie a bond to anyone, they are in need of some types of networks in order to manage their migration successfully. These networks are, however, characterised by 'weak ties' in the sense that none of the boys can rely on close family members in Europe, and the boys cannot draw on these ties without worrying about sudden discontinuation of the relation. Despite the fact that the ties are weak they embed a form of 'social capital', because they bring the possibility to learn from others' migration experiences and thus the 'personal networks' play a significant role in their migration.

A more surprising finding in this context was that according to the boys their migration movements are not planned beforehand. For the most part, the boys move around here and there without final destinations or specific goals in sight, and the places they end up in are most often a result of coincidences.

At last we have found that the boys seem to make strategic decisions in the choice of either being asylum seekers or irregular migrants. Thus, they shift between the two positions. Although most of the boys are realistic when it comes to the possibility of being granted asylum in Denmark, they use the asylum centre as a place to feel secure, to have a place to sleep and to get a meal. On the other hand, another strategy of theirs is to be part of the irregular market and acquire money for their way of living, including their substance abuse. Both these strategies help them to manage their lives and survive. What seems to be the underlying reason to use these strategies is the hope and desire to re-write their 'identity narrative' in the pursuit of a better life.

### 7.3 The question of freedom and future

In this next part, we wish to open up our findings a bit and explore the way that freedom, money and future are interlinked and affect the choices that the boys take. These three themes have not been discussed thoroughly in the analysis, but they are important in order to understand how to work with the boys in the Danish asylum system.

It is interesting to take a look at how some of the boys describe a quest for freedom and the way that this freedom should be achieved. It seems that the boys are driven by a strive for freedom. All of the resources and the competencies that the boys have gained together with this drive is the basis on which these boys' future is built.

There are several of the boys who mention freedom. Both Yunus and Ali connect the notion of freedom to the physical surroundings when they stress their hunt for more space and thereby freedom, because they have felt a sense of confinement in their countries of origin (as well as in their periods of detention) where there were too many people around them. Ali stresses this by saying: *"It [Italy] was not like Tunisia. It was not overcrowded."* (Ali L:44), and again when describing his situation as good because he now has his freedom and has managed to get out of Tunisia (Ali L:50,188). The same applies to Yunus who would really like to go to Canada, because in Canada: *"There is much more space"* (Yunus L:97). Apart from the spatial notion of freedom, Emir points to the fact that in the pursuit of freedom, the boys often choose a lifestyle where a criminal behaviour is necessary in order for them to gain or maintain the status that they wish to have. Many of the boys have become accustomed to having much money; spending them on drugs, having the newest mobile phones and dressing in expensive clothes. Emir explains that: *"You cannot meet freedom without money, and this is why you have to steal"* (Emir L:345). According to Emir, and probably for the other boys as well, freedom connotes money. It is striking that the boys value 'material resources' this high, but taking into consideration their turbulent upbringing and broken family ties 'material resources' can be said to replace some of their lacking 'social resources'. Wasi phrases this perfectly by saying: *"(...) when you don't have money you don't have respect. You buy the respect with money you know. It is bad, but that's how it is."* (Wasi L:321). Two of the boys mention an Arabic saying which in translation says: *"Your friend is in your pocket"* (Yunus L:73; Yasir L:61) meaning that if you have money you have

friends which corresponds well with Wasi's quote. Overall, it seems that money is of extreme value to the boys and they hang on to the hope and belief that money can and will make them happy. But even though money may give them a sense of freedom, they are not in the literal meaning "free" because they are still subject to fixed structures as migrants and asylum seekers, which constrain them from taking actual free choices. Thus, even if they gain money from various activities during their time in Europe, they will most likely not be able to decide themselves where to settle down, for instance, and the money will therefore not give them the control over their future that they believe or hope.

In connection hereto, another interesting finding is the way that the boys view their future. They are, as outlined in section 5.2.1, in a locked situation where they have very little control (despite some of them depicting a high agency) both when it comes to their asylum case, but also to escaping life on the street. This has very much become a part of their 'identity narrative'. The future is connected with too much uncertainty and vulnerability. Planning a future is not a possibility that everyone has, and the prospects of a better future need to be available before the boys can begin to hope for it. The following quote by Said explains this: *"I had no future possibilities [in the country of origin] and therefore I could not dream of the future, this luxury was not available."* (Said L:75).

The question on how to establish these possibilities for the boys is thus interesting. For example, offering them rehab as a way to strip away the economic demands and the physical and psychological problems that the drugs cause will for most of the boys most likely be an overwhelming and unmanageable step to take, considering that there is no bright future waiting for them on the other side. The different coping mechanisms of for example 'escape', 'avoidance' and 'distancing' are therefore too essential for the boys to function. Moreover, when they in their 'identity narratives' portray that they lack a 'sense of belonging' it seems difficult to create any form of stability for them where they dare start to think of a future. Therefore, it is obvious that the support efforts that are usually provided for a troubled Danish youth or an unaccompanied minor from a war-struck country, for instance, cannot help the North African boys as they need to have their basic needs covered, such as security, housing, jobs and a residence permit in hand, before they

can begin to work on other issues. This makes them a difficult group for social work to establish help efforts for. Congruently, there is a need for further investigation on how to meet and work with this group of North African boys. What is evident from our thesis is that these boys with their background and characteristics need to have a possibility of gaining asylum in Denmark and thus a belief in a stable future if they are to be helped.

## 8. Epilogue

*At the end of thesis writing, the situation regarding the boys has changed. Out of the seven boys that we interviewed, only two remain at Centre Gribskov. Said is still at the centre, presumably still dreaming of a brighter future in Denmark. Emir has disappeared from the centre a few times since our interview, but has recently reappeared and is waiting to be voluntarily repatriated to Morocco. Ali has recently disappeared from the centre, but the Red Cross employees are under the impression that he will return. Wasi, Yunus, Yasir and Musa are no longer at Centre Gribskov (OI L:11).*

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## 10. Appendixes

### Appendix 1:

#### Interview guide for the interview with the Red Cross employees

Following is our interview guide which we have used for the interview with two Red Cross employees. The interview was with a network employee and the daily manager of Centre Gribskov. In the beginning of the guide we have listed some bullet points with things that we had to remember to tell and ask the employees. Hereafter follows the questions which are clustered under two main themes; *background information about the boys* and *working procedures*. Each of the themes consists of sub-themes. Some questions are written in light grey, and these questions are less important and were not to be asked unless the employees themselves touched upon the subjects.

#### Ting vi skal gøre dem opmærksomme på

- Hvad er vigtigt for os at få ud af interviewet
- Diktafon/optagelse
- De unges og de ansattes anonymitet
- Præsentationen af os til de unge fra Gittes side (som frivillige? Studerende/forskere?)

#### Baggrund om informanten

- Alder, køn, stilling, uddannelsesmæssig baggrund
- Hvor længe har du arbejdet hos Røde Kors?
- Hvor længe har du arbejdet på børnecenter?

#### Statistisk materiale vi kan få efter interviewet

- Præcist antal af unge; nationalitet, alder osv.
- Medarbejdermappe om arbejdsprocedure

#### Baggrund om de unge: Hvem er de?

##### *Beskrivelse*

- Hvordan vil du overordnet beskrive gruppen, som er blevet flyttet til



Gribskov?

- Herunder: Hvor er de hovedsageligt fra? Hvilket aldersspænd har de efter din mening? Hvordan er kønsfordelingen? Hvilken familiemæssig baggrund har de unge? Hvilket socialt lag kommer de fra?

### ***Flytningen fra Vipperød***

- Kan du beskrive, hvad der adskiller denne gruppe fra de unge på Vipperød? Hvad gør denne gruppe speciel?
- Hvad er fordelene ved at flytte denne gruppe væk fra de andre uledsagede på Vipperød?
- Hvad er ulemperne ved at flytte denne gruppe væk fra de andre uledsagede på Vipperød?

### ***Synet på de unge***

- Hvordan omtaler disse unge sig selv (Nordafrikanere, marokkanere, muslimer, unge...)?
- Hvordan er lokalområdet holdning til denne gruppe?
- Hvordan omtales denne gruppe af unge, når der tales med andre instanser (Politiet? Udlændingesservice)?

### ***Gruppen***

- Hvordan taler de om sig selv som del af en gruppe (definerer de sig ift. få andre, hele gruppen)?
- Hvordan er gruppedynamikken?
  - Herunder: Hvordan er hierarkiet i gruppen? Hvordan fungerer venskaber mellem de nordafrikanske unge? Hvordan håndterer de unge konflikter i gruppen? Hvordan samarbejder/hjælper de unge hinanden? Hvad tror du gør det attraktivt for de unge at blive i denne gruppedynamik?
- Hvordan agerer gruppen, når de er på centeret?
  - Herunder: Hvordan vil du beskrive de unges adfærd? Kan du beskrive deres relationer til hinanden? Hvordan agerer de i forhold til de andre uledsagede unge på Vipperød? Hvordan agerer de over for dig eller over for personalet generelt?

- Hvor længe har denne gruppe været i fokus hos Røde Kors? Hvordan har sammensætningen af gruppen i forhold til baggrund og størrelse ændret sig, siden man først blev opmærksom på gruppen?

### **Adfærd**

- Oplever I nogensinde, at nogle unge tager afstand til de andre eller til de andres adfærd? Hvordan forholder de andre unge sig til dette? Hvordan oplever du, at de sætter grænser for hinandens adfærd? Hvordan oplever du dyrkelsen af gruppepres i denne gruppe?
- Hvordan påvirker gruppens adfærd dig og dit arbejde?
  - Herunder: Føler du, at det er lettere eller sværere at arbejde med denne gruppe frem for andre uledsagede unge asylansøgere?

### **Dagligdag**

- Hvad optager de unge i deres liv på centeret?
  - Herunder: Hvad laver de/bruger mest tid på i deres hverdag? Hvordan virker deres interesse for deres asylsag? Hvilke aktiviteter efterspørger de?
- Hvad tror du, at de unge laver, når de ikke er på centeret?

### **Kriminalitet**

- Kan du beskrive de unges tilknytning til det kriminelle miljø?
  - Herunder: I hvilken grad er de unge involverede i kriminalitet? Hvilken form for kriminalitet er der i så fald tale om (både kriminalitet, prostitution og stofmisbrug)? I hvor høj grad tror du der er tale om organiseret kriminalitet? I så fald, hvem tror du så organiserer det (bagmænd)?

### **Mål og perspektiver**

- Efter din mening, hvad er så grunden til, at denne gruppe er kommet til Danmark?
  - Herunder: Hvilke mål forestiller du dig, at de har med at komme til landet? Hvilke mål forestiller du dig, at de har med at være på asylcenter? Hvilke forventninger udtrykker de til livet i Danmark? Hvis

de taler om fremtidsperspektiver/drømme/ønsker, hvad giver de så udtryk for at ville lave/være/gøre?

- Kan du beskrive, hvilke udfordringer der kan være ved at arbejde med denne gruppe?

## **Arbejdsprocedurer**

### ***Flytningen fra Vipperød***

- Har du/I haft nogen indflydelse på, hvem der bliver sendt til Gribskov fra Vipperød? Kender du til proceduren for, hvem af de unge, der bliver sendt til Gribskov fra Vipperød?
  - Kan du beskrive, hvordan udskillelsen/udvælgelsen af disse unge sker?
    - Herunder: Hvor hurtigt beslutter I jer for, hvem der skal sendes til Gribskov? Hvad baseres denne beslutning på?
- Hvordan adskiller arbejdsproceduren med denne gruppe sig fra arbejdet med de uledsagede, som ikke er en del af denne gruppe?
  - Herunder (håndteringen af de unge): Er der forskel i sammensætningen af de ansatte med hensyn til antal, uddannelsesmæssig baggrund/erhvervserfaring? Er der forskel i arbejdsrutiner? Er der forskel fra Gribskov til Vipperød i de "husregler/ordensregler", som bliver opsat fra personalets side?

### ***Juridisk***

- Hvordan er proceduren omkring repræsentanter og bisiddere, når det gælder denne gruppe?
- Hvem er ansvarlig for at informere denne gruppe om deres rettigheder?
  - Hvilke rettigheder virker til at være vigtigst for denne gruppe i forhold til deres ophold i Danmark? (Ifm. asylsag? Ifm. kriminalret? Børnerettigheder generelt?)

### ***Forsvindinger***

- Kan du beskrive, hvad proceduren er, når de unge forsvinder fra centeret?

### ***Fremtiden***

- Hvordan arbejdes der fremadrettet med denne målgruppe?
  - Herunder: Er der lavet nogle handlingsplaner eller nogle retningslinjer

for, hvordan Røde Kors fremover skal arbejde med gruppen? Hvilke tilbud gives til de unge nu og er der planer om at ændre disse (uddannelse, praktik..)?

### **Samarbejde med andre instanser**

- Hvem samarbejder I med omkring denne gruppe af unge?
- Hvordan føler du, at samarbejdet med Center Agger er? Eller med andre asylcentre (såsom Center Sandholm)?
- Hvordan føler du, at samarbejdet med politiet omkring denne gruppe er?
- Hvordan føler du, at samarbejdet med den sociale døgnvagt eller andre sociale institutioner omkring denne gruppe er?
- Hvordan føler du, at samarbejdet med Udlændingestyrelsen omkring denne gruppe er?

### **Anbefalinger**

- Føler du, at der kunne ændres på nogle ting, som ville kunne gøre det nemmere at arbejde med denne gruppe?
  - Herunder: Hvad ville du ændre i de daglige arbejdsrutiner for at lette arbejdet med denne gruppe?
- Hvad kan man gøre fra det danske samfunds side for at forbedre tilværelsen for denne gruppe?
- Hvad kan man gøre fra samfundets side for at mindske gruppens adgang til det kriminelle miljø?
- Hvad kan man gøre fra Røde Kors' side for at mindske denne gruppes adgang til det kriminelle miljø?

## **Appendix 2:**

### **Interview guide for the North African boys**

Following is our interview guide which we have used for the interviews with the North African boys. The guide starts with an introduction of the purpose of our assignment. Hereafter follows the questions which are clustered under different themes. Some questions are written in bold and these are the ones which we have found most important to ask the boys. Some questions are written in light grey, and these questions are less important and were not to be asked unless the boys themselves touched upon the subjects.

*Vi skriver en skoleopgave om nordafrikanske drenge som dig, som har tilbragt tid og levet på gaden i forskellige lande i Europa.*

*Vi er utrolig glade for, at du vil snakke med os, og vi vil bare gerne høre lidt om, hvordan det er at være dig. Hvordan er din dagligdag? Hvordan er det at bo her på center Gribskov, og hvordan har du oplevet tiden på gaden/livet som gadedreng? Hvis vi stiller dig nogle spørgsmål, som du ikke vil svare på, så er det helt okay, så siger du det bare, og så snakker vi om noget andet. Okay?*

*Din historie kommer til at være fuldstændig anonym i vores opgave. Vi kommer ikke til at bruge dit navn. Faktisk kan du selv få lov til at bestemme, hvilket navn vi skal bruge i stedet. Så hvis du gerne vil kaldes Ramzi eller Henrik eller noget andet, så bestemmer du det selv.*

[Det følgende er kun sagt til de drenge, hvor vi fandt det muligt at spørge om at optage interviewet]

*Vi vil gerne spørge dig, om det er okay, at vi optager vores samtale? Der er ingen andre end os, der kommer til at høre den. Og den eneste grund til at vi gerne vil optage samtalen, er at vi har svært ved at nå at skrive alting ned samtidig med, at vi lytter til det, som du fortæller. Det er selvfølgelig helt op til dig, men du skal vide, at vi ikke videregiver det til nogle autoriteter, Røde Kors medarbejdere her på centret eller til de andre drenge. Det er kun os, og samtalen vil blive slettet, så snart vi har hørt den igennem derhjemme og går i gang med opgaven.*

## **Livet før Danmark**

- **Hvordan var din tilværelse før du kom til Danmark?**
- Hvordan har det været at være dig? At vokse op på farten (uden rigtig at kunne bosætte sig et fast sted)?
- Hvordan er det at rejse rundt i så mange forskellige lande?
- Hvordan var dit liv i fx Spanien? Hvordan klarede du dig? (Hvor sov du henne? Hvordan fik du mad?)
- Hvilke oplevelser har været betydningsfulde for dig i forhold til den du er i dag?
- **Hvordan er det at have levet på gaden? At leve uden nødvendigvis at have haft et sted at høre til.**

## **Personligt**

- Hvilke fællestræk er der ved alle jer drenge og jeres livshistorier?
- **Hvis du nu skulle fortælle nogen som ikke kendte til din og drengenes historier og baggrunde, hvordan vil du så beskrive det liv? Du behøver ikke fortælle din egen historie hvis du ikke vil, men kan stykke den sammen af flere forskellige historier fra forskellige drenge.**
- **Hvis du skulle interviewe en dreng som dig, hvad ville du så spørge ham om? Hvad ville være interessant at vide?**
- Hvordan vil du beskrive dig selv? Vil du sætte nogle ord på dig selv? ("Hvad er du for en fyr?") Hvad gør dig speciel?
- Vi er jo klar over, at unge i din situation er nødt til at fortælle bestemte typer af historier om dem selv for at passe ind i myndighedernes krav for ophold eller for bare at være her på centeret. Når du taler med politiet eller udlændingemyndighederne, hvilken historie fortæller du dem så om dig selv; om hvor du er fra, hvor gammel du er og hvordan du er kommet hertil?
- Har du lyst til at kommentere lidt på, hvilke historier det er du synes kræves af dig af myndighederne? Er du nogle gange nødt til at fortælle en anden version af din historie end den rigtige?
- Hvilken baggrund kommer du fra (hvilken klasse/samfundslag)? Hvordan er der i dit hjemland - er der stor forskel på de forskellige klasser?
- Hvordan var din opvækst? Voksede du op hos din familie eller måtte du tidligt ud og leve for dig selv (evt. på gaden)?

- Vil du beskrive din ungdom? Hvordan har det været for dig at blive teenager (samtidig med at du har måttet klare dig selv)?

### **Familieliv**

- Hvilke mennesker (relationer) har været betydningsfulde for dig i forhold til den du er?
- Har du stadig familie i dit hjemland eller andre steder i Europa? (Har du stadig kontakt med dem?)
- **Hvis ja, hvordan tror de, at din situation er? Hvad ønsker de for dig?**

### **Dagligdagen på centret**

- Hvordan var dit kendskab til andre nordafrikanske unge (blandt andre dem fra Center Gribskov) inden du kom til Danmark? Kendte du nogle af dem fra centeret i forvejen?
- **Vil du beskrive dit liv her på centret / i Danmark? (Hvordan er det at bo her på Center Gribskov?)**
- Hvad laver du til daglig her på centret? Hvordan adskiller hverdagen sig fra weekenden?
- Hvad laver du, når du ikke er på centeret?
- Hvad laver du, når du tager ind til byen/ind til København?
- Kender du mange i København? Hvordan, hvorfra kender du dem?
- Kender du til folk fra Christiania, hvor det er nemt at få fat i hash eller andre stoffer? Bruger I meget tid på at ryge og tage stoffer? Hvorfor tror du I gør det?
- Kan du fortælle om, hvorfor du tror at de unge her på centret kommer og går? Hvad kan være grundene til at de forsvinder i flere dage og dukker op igen?
- **Hvordan er dit kendskab til det kriminelle miljø (/kriminelle grupper) her i Danmark?** Hvordan bliver man en del af dette? (بيئة)
  - Ved du selv eller har du hørt om, hvor nemt eller svært det er at komme af med stjålne ting? Hvordan ved man, hvad man skal gøre? Hjælper man hinanden med at komme af med ting?
- Er du selv involveret i kriminalitet (og hvilken kriminalitet)?

### Ungdomsliv og venskaber

- Hvordan er det at være ung her?
- **Hvordan er dit forhold til de andre unge her på centret? Hvor mange venner har du?**
- Hvordan er i drenge sammen her på centeret? Dvs. Hvad laver i sammen?
- **Hvordan vil du definere en ven?** Frem for en bekendt? ( صديق و مأروف )
- Hvordan er de unge her på centret grupperet? Hvem går sammen? Hvem bestemmer?
- Hvordan vil du beskrive din rolle her på Center Gribskov? Hvordan tror du de andre ser dig?
- Hvad er du god til? Hvad kan du fremhæve ved dig selv, som gør at du klarer dig igennem? Hvordan synes du at du klarer du dig her på centret?

### Penge

- Hvordan er det at skaffe penge her i forhold til i nogle af de andre lande du har boet i?
- Hvorfor er det nemmere/sværere at skaffe penge her?
- Hvordan er det nemmest at skaffe penge?
- **Kan du fortælle os om en typisk måde at skaffe penge på for dig eller nogle af de andre drenge her i Danmark eller i andre af de lande du har været i?**
- Hvad plejer du at bruge dine penge på?
- Sender du penge hjem til familien? Hvis ja, hvorfor?
  - Hvis ja, Er det noget du gør af dig selv eller forventer familien, at du sender penge hjem? Hvor svært er det for dig at undvære de penge, som du sender hjem?

### Fremtidsdrømme/fremtidsperspektiver

- **Hvilke forventninger havde du til din fremtid da du var yngre?**
- Hvad gav dit liv mening før din tilværelse i Danmark (asylcentret)?
- Hvilke forventninger havde du til at komme til Danmark?
- Hvad giver dit liv mening i dag?
- **Hvilke ønsker og fremtidsdrømme har du?**
- Hvor ser du dig selv om fx 5 år? (Hvor? Hvad (uddannelse, arbejde..)? Med hvem (familie, ny familie, nye venner, gamle venner)?



### Ankomsten til Danmark

- Hvad fik dig til at rejse til Danmark?
- Kendte du til asylsystemet i Danmark inden du kom? Kendte du allerede til Vipperød eller Sjælsmark eller et andet center? Hvordan kendte du til det?
- **Hvordan vidste du, at du skulle tage til et børnecenter? Hvorfor er det godt at være på et børnecenter? Hvorfor er det bedre at være på et børnecenter end et voksencenter?**
- Hvordan er det at være i Danmark?
- Hvor mange gange har du været på et asylcenter i Danmark? Hvor længe har du været i Danmark?

### Lovgivning

- Hvor meget kender du til den danske lovgivning? Om hvad man må og ikke må i samfundet.
- **Når man kommer til et nyt land, hvordan finder man så ud af, hvilke regler der gælder for én? Fx i forhold til kriminalitet, asyl, skole eller arbejde.**
- Hvilke af disse regler er vigtige for jer unge?

### Forholdet mellem de unge og det danske system

- Hvordan føler du, at du er blevet behandlet? Af Røde Kors? Af politiet? Af udlændingesservice? Af danskere generelt?
- Hvad skal ændres på asylcenteret efter din mening for at din tid her i Danmark bliver bedre?
- Hvad skal ændres i Danmark efter din mening?

### Kontakten til de ansatte

- Hvad synes du om medarbejderne fra Røde Kors? Hvad er din relation til dem?
- Hvad er en god medarbejder? Hvordan skal han/hun opføre sig overfor dig?
- Hvad synes du om det danske asylsystem?

## **Appendix 3:**

### **Extended person profiles**

Following is an extended outline of the information that we have gained from the interviews with the North African boys. This is meant to provide the reader with a summary of who the boys are and in what way they are alike or differ from each other. The profiles appear in the same order as the interviews were conducted, and they are systematised in accordance with themes that represent the most important issues from the interviews. The actual notes from and transcriptions of the interviews can be found in appendix 10-16.

### **Extended person profile: Wasi**

#### **General characteristics**

Wasi tells us that he is from Algeria. In his asylum application, he claims to be a minor, but the results of his age test – which he received on the day of our interview – deem him to be older than that. He tells us he is in fact 21. Wasi explains that he is from an upper-middle class family; his mother being a psychologist and his father a high school teacher of French. He and his family are Berber. He has four sisters and three brothers. Wasi is in contact with his family every day via Skype or email. He tells us that he left his family in Algeria when he was 14. However, later during the interview, he tells us that he left his family for the first time at the age of 11

#### **Migration route, reasons for leaving and the asylum system**

Wasi explains that he left Algeria in the pursuit of better opportunities. When he left Algeria, Wasi went to Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco before taking a plane to France. Later in the interview, he says that he travelled from Algeria to France and not from Morocco to France. He says he was living in France for a year with a girlfriend. He has furthermore travelled in Spain, Belgium and Germany, and then went to Denmark where he stayed for six months at Centre Sjælsmark, amongst other places. Then he left for Sweden where he stayed for six months after which he returned to Denmark. He tells us that in each country, he went to school.

#### **The criminal environment and substance abuse**

Wasi tells us that he drinks alcohol and smokes hash, but does not do any other drugs. He adds that many of the other boys at the centre are addicted to different

types of drugs, and that many, but not all, also drink. Wasi tells us he prefers to stay at the centre during the weekends, since there are problems in Copenhagen at this time. He is unwilling to further comment on this, and he initially does not want to talk about the other boys or how they may earn money through crime. Later on, he says that no one actually needs money from the asylum system since everyone has an alternative way of getting money. However, he also says that it is not something the boys talk about, rather it is an unspoken rule that no one talks about their criminal money making. Wasi tells us that he is good at fixing phones and computers, which is his side business, but he emphasises that he knows it is not good to help people with stolen items.

### **The future**

Wasi tells us that he is not interested in getting a girlfriend or starting a family at the moment. He says that when he was younger, he dreamed of becoming a pharmacist. Regarding the future Wasi says he plans on going back to Algeria, but he also states that without a lot of money, he will never go back there.

### **The impression of Wasi**

What is noticeable about Wasi is his intelligence and charm. He portrays himself as someone in control of his actions and as someone who finds pleasure in learning new things. When talking about his reasons to leave his family and his home country, he emphasises his wish to explore new things. Throughout the conversation, he accentuates his potential and the opportunities that follow from his intelligence and his experiences. Moreover, he says that he does not actually need asylum, since he plans on going back to Algeria one day. At one point he tells us that the other boys at the centre look out for him and take care of him, while he at the same time describes how everyone respects him which is why he is able to take the place of the “king of the castle” sometimes. He distances himself from the hardship of life on the street, always talking about how the other boys feel.

## **Extended person profile: Yasir**

### **General characteristics**

Yasir tells us that his mother is from Morocco while his father is Brazilian. He has no siblings and was raised an only child, and his father died while Yasir was living in

Sweden. He is no longer in contact with his family. Yasir does not exactly state his current age, but he says that he was 14 when he was sent to Sweden, leaving his father in Brazil 1-1½ years ago, which would indicate that he is currently between 15 and 16 years old.

### **Migration route, reasons for leaving and the asylum system**

According to Yasir, he went from Brazil to Colombia and from there to Sweden via Denmark. The reason for leaving was his chance to play professional football, encouraged by his father who sent money to a person in Sweden, who then took care of Yasir. However, after a while in Sweden his father died and Yasir went to Stockholm, turned himself in at the police station and was sent to an asylum centre. After having been at the centre for six months without receiving ID-papers (or possibly a residence permit) and without the possibility of playing for a professional Swedish football team, he chose to leave Sweden and go to Denmark, where he was caught by the police.

### **The criminal environment and substance abuse**

Yasir avoids most questions about crime and substance abuse. He tells us that the criminal environment is tough, and says that his things have been stolen from the centre more than once.

### **The future**

Speaking about his future and his dreams, Yasir says that he has the same dream of becoming a professional football player as he had when he was a child. He adds that he also wishes to start a small family with only one child as he himself is an only child. Furthermore, he wants a job. He emphasises the importance of an education, which opens doors to many possibilities, and explains that having a job means having possibilities too.

### **The impression of Yasir**

Yasir portrays himself as an excellent football player with the potential to make a living doing what he loves. Furthermore, he gives the impression that he adored his father and had a good childhood, travelling around the world with his father on some form of boat or ferry. In contrast to this childhood and all the dreams he talks

about is his life in the asylum system. He describes his situation as one without a solution, as problems without end. Moreover, Yasir also comes off as a sad boy without anyone to talk to. Thus, when Yasir talks about friendships he says that “your friend is in your pocket”, implying that only wealth will bring him friends. During the interview, Yasir seems a bit at unease with the situation. The uneasiness can be caused by the fact that the interpreter and Yasir seems a bit off together, perhaps due to the dialect differences or perhaps because the interpreter has not yet established a trusting bond with Yasir.

## **Extended person profile: Said**

### **General characteristics**

Said initially tells us that he is from Algeria. At this point, the interpreter meddles in the interview and tells us that Said speaks with a Moroccan accent and is registered as Moroccan in his file.

Said has two brothers. From an early age there were many quarrels in his family, and Said tells us that he felt unwanted by his parents which was one of the reasons why he chose a life on the street. After moving away from his family, he lived with his grandmother for a while until she died. Today, Said has no contact with his family.

### **Migration route, reasons for leaving and the asylum system**

Said travelled from his country of origin to Spain where he lived for a while. He did not apply for asylum here, but instead he met up with a person who looked after him. This person helped him with both money, food, clothes and a place to sleep. At one point the person could no longer look after Said, and Said therefore decided to move on. From Spain he travelled on to Germany and from there to Denmark.

### **The criminal environment and substance abuse**

In his country of origin, Said was addicted to sniffing glue. He had to beg for money on the street in order to survive. He tells us that he feels strongly against crime and he becomes very offended when we ask him how he acquires money.

### **The future**

Said finds it difficult to talk about the future. He tells us that in his country of origin

he did not have the privilege of thinking about the future. Now he is just waiting to see if his asylum case is approved and then he wants to learn the Danish language. He also says that he loves to play football and that he would love to play professionally, but that this would require him being discovered and he cannot see how he should be discovered.

### **The impression of Said**

It is clear from the interview that Said has had a hard life on the streets in his country of origin, and he even shows some of the scars on his body from his time on the street. His time on the street has clearly made a huge impact on how he views life. In general he seems very sad and he seems to be on guard all the time. It seems that Said is different from the other boys at the centre in the way that he is more withdrawn and isolated, and he is not interested in having friends and sticks to himself and he has a hopeless and indifferent attitude towards life. It is obvious that he is embarrassed about certain things in his life, such as having had to beg. He is also one of the boys who have stayed the longest at the asylum centre without disappearing. Said tells us that at the time of the interview he has been in Denmark for seven months and two days.

### **Extended person profile: Ali**

#### **General characteristics**

Ali is from Tunisia. In the interview, he does not talk about his current age. In Tunisia, he was living with his family in a neighbourhood with social housing and explains that his family was placed socially between the middle class and the lower class. Ali is still in contact with his family. He tells us that he was 15 when he left his family and Tunisia.

#### **Migration route, reasons for leaving and the asylum system**

According to Ali, his reasons for leaving Tunisia was the general situation in the country with terror attacks, his possibilities for the future and personal problems with his girlfriend's family. Ali went from Tunisia to Italy with the help of a smuggler. He paid a smuggler 2000€ (approx. 15,000 dkk), then he was taken to a coastal city in Tunisia by the name Sousse [a port city on the eastern coast of Tunisia], placed in a truck driving to a harbour and onto a boat that transported him and other

irregular migrants to Italy. The trip took them 26 hours. He states that it was a spur of the moment thing, a sudden decision to leave; he had the idea of leaving, contacted a smuggler and set foot on Italian ground two days later. He says that during the trip he felt pressured and scared of dying. After a couple of weeks in Italy, he travelled further on to France, Belgium, Germany and Denmark. He was only caught by the police when arriving in Denmark, never before. He states that he knew about the Swedish asylum system, but not the Danish one. However, he had heard of Denmark as a great country before coming. According to him, his reason for heading north through Europe was caused by the problems that Southern Europe is experiencing. He did not feel that the south was a place to stay.

### **The criminal environment and substance abuse**

Ali talks about Moroccan boys and how criminal behaviour and substance abuse is ingrained in Moroccan culture and says that they bring this with them wherever they go. He does not talk about himself as involved in criminal activities.

### **The future**

When discussing his future, Ali states that he wants something to happen in his life. He does not want it to be over without anything having happened. He states that had he stayed in Tunisia, this would be the case. He assigns importance to having a job and states that one has to strive for it and work hard to keep it. He also expresses that he would like to work with his hands. Furthermore, he wants to stay in Denmark, marry someone and have a quiet and decent life. When mentioning marriage, he accentuates that it will help him in his process of becoming a Danish citizen. Even though he wants to stay in Denmark, he emphasises that he would like to visit his home country, preferably soon.

### **The impression of Ali**

Ali is very cheerful and seems exceptionally happy-go-lucky although talking about a hard life. He seems not at all affected by his own story or by having to talk about his life story. When portraying his journey, he sometimes makes it appear as a grand tour helping him to develop his social and mental skills and granting him the freedom he wants. He portrays himself as a womanizer and a party guy, and he distinguishes himself from other Arabs and the other boys at the centre. He says

that there are no common features about the group of North African boys. He also portrays himself as a smart kid who thought about his own future even at the age of 15, and as someone who keeps himself out of a criminal environment. However, he also emphasises his own vulnerability when talking about his fear of dying on the way to Italy, and puts emphasis on the fact that he has been lucky enough to have known or met people who have helped him throughout his travels.

## **Extended person profile: Emir**

### **General characteristics**

Emir tells us that he is from Morocco, from a town in the area called Stag in Casablanca. Emir's parents divorced when Emir was very little, and his mother moved to Oman. His two brothers still live with his father. From an early age, he spent time on the street selling cigarettes in the area around his hometown in order to earn money. When Emir grew a little older he started travelling around to some of Morocco's bigger cities in order to earn money, and when he was around 12 years old, he ended up in the city of Tangier [a port city in northern Morocco]. According to Emir, it was tough and unpleasant to live on the streets, and it was difficult to get food and clothes. Emir still has some contact with his family, but, as he explains, they do not care for his situation. He believes that he was around 13-14 years old, when he left his country.

### **Migration route, reasons for leaving and the asylum system**

Emir wanted to leave Morocco because of poverty and bad experiences. He reveals that he has been a victim of rape several times. In Tangier, he tried to get to Spain several times by hiding under trucks that were on their way to Spain. He attempted this many times, but was always caught by the police. After two years, he finally managed to jump onto a truck without being seen. In Spain, he arrived in a town called Huelva [a coastal town in southern Spain on the border to Portugal]. He was in Spain for two years, and hereafter he traveled to Belgium where he stayed for about a year. From here, he went to Germany and from Germany to Denmark. Emir did not know anything about the asylum system in Europe beforehand. Besides Denmark, he has applied for asylum in Spain. Emir has lived at centre Gribskov since it opened in August 2013, but has for a period of time been away from the centre.



### **The criminal environment and substance abuse**

Emir explains that, often, parents in Morocco have a completely different understanding of what is going on in Europe than what is actually the reality. He explains that parents often think that it is okay that their son is in Europe because then he will have better opportunities; he can go to school or he can get a job. This way the son earns money and can send money back to the family. And so, the boys feel obligated to raise money. According to Emir, this is one of the reasons for the boys ending up in crime. Emir tells us that he is involved in crime; he steals things which he then sells in order to make money, but he is not proud of this. He states that his father does not want money from stolen things, so Emir does not send money home to the family. Emir says that he does drugs, mostly hashish.

### **The future**

When Emir was young his dream was to go to Europe, but currently, he wants to go back to Morocco. He misses his mother (who regularly travels between Oman and Morocco) and his home country. The interpreter explains that Emir has agreed to a voluntary repatriation which has already been set in motion. From a knowledge exchange with two journalism students, we have been told that Emir in their interview pointed to the fact that he will probably slip back to life on the street after his voluntary repatriation within a week and maybe even head back to Europe.

Emir would very much like to work as a mechanic, and is annoyed that he has not been given this opportunity by the Danish authorities.

### **The impression of Emir**

Emir exudes a sense of sadness and bitterness. He does not feel that he has received the correct help in order to move forward and out of his criminal pattern. People have not believed in him, and he has not been given an alternative to the criminal environment.

During the interview, Emir seems to be on drugs as he looks very groggy and has a blurry gaze in his eyes.

## **Extended person profile: Musa**

### **General characteristics**

Musa says that he is from Algeria and is 17 years old. Later in the interview, he talks about Morocco as his country of origin. He has no contact with his family, and he tells us that they were well aware when he left them. Later in the interview, he says that he has some contact with his younger brother. According to him, he was eight years old when he left his country of origin. He left together with his younger brother, who he says is now in Berlin. It has been two years since they split up. According to Musa his younger brother now goes to school in Germany

### **Migration route, reasons for leaving and the asylum system**

Musa does not talk much about his migration route, but he does say that he went from North Africa to Spain, and we assume that he came on a boat. He states that when he was close to the Spanish shores, he almost drowned and this was an episode that left a big impression. He says that he left Morocco because of problems, but he does not explain what these problems were. Musa tells us that he has travelled all over Europe; Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden and Denmark. Originally, he wanted to go to Sweden, because he had heard that the asylum system in Denmark is very strict, but by mistake he ended up in Denmark anyway. He was travelling by train with another boy and they ended up in Malmö, but because they did not know where they were they rode the train back and forth between Denmark and Sweden and were then caught by the police on the Danish side.

### **The criminal environment and substance abuse**

Musa has spent most of his life in the criminal environment. He tells us that he has been stealing and taking drugs in order to survive. Because of this he has been in prison many times. When we interviewed him, he had just served two months of detention due to a stabbing incident. Musa was released for lack of evidence. Because of Musa's criminal record he does not feel that he has lived; he says that he has spent his whole life going in and out of prison. He tells us that for the last six months he has been clean. A staff member says that after his last release Musa also tried to get clean, but did not succeed. Musa says that he feels that taking drugs is acceptable if they are only taken once in a while and not every day. He emphasises

that he does not see himself as a junkie.

### **The future**

Musa would like to go back to Morocco to visit his parents, but he wants to have a residence permit for a European country in his hand. He tells us that he would like to begin a new lifestyle in which he goes to school, has a job and plays football. Musa has been offered a placement at a place for disturbed youths in Jutland where he can receive help with his drug abuse and start a new life. Musa has agreed to this.

### **The impression of Musa**

Musa has an aggrieved attitude to life and portrays his life as unfair. At the same time, Musa lacks seriousness through the interview in which he jokes and says inappropriate things that the interpreter does not want to translate.

When we ask Musa to talk more about the experiences that have made a big impression on him in his life, he withdraws from the interview and no longer wishes to participate. The interpreter explains that there are several episodes that he knows that Musa does not want to talk about, including the fact that Musa has been sexually abused in his past.

## **Extended person profile: Yunus**

### **General characteristics**

Yunus says that he is from Morocco and that he is 17 years old. He comes from a middle class background. He only told his family where he was, after he had left them and Morocco. According to him, his family does not know where he is now except that he is in an asylum centre. He is still in contact with his sister. Yunus explains that he was about nine or ten years old when he left his home.

### **Migration route, reasons for leaving and the asylum system**

Yunus explains that he has been staying in four or five countries in Europe. He went from Morocco to Spain, and then travelled north through Belgium and Germany. He originally meant to go to Norway in order to visit some friends, but was caught by the police in Denmark. His goal is to make it to Canada. At the time of the interview, he has been in Denmark for 2 weeks only. He has been at an asylum centre in all of

the countries in which he has stayed.

### **The criminal environment and substance abuse**

Yunus states that previously he was drinking and taking lots of drugs, such as cocaine, but at the moment he only smokes hash and cigarettes. His drinking stopped due to an intense episode in Spain where he became very drunk during a bullfighting and accidentally fell into the arena - with the bulls still inside the ring. Furthermore, he says that he cannot afford to buy drugs anymore. He is not willing to speak much about crime, but he does speak about the act of stealing as a necessity as opposed to stealing just for stealing.

### **The future**

When speaking about his future and his dreams, he talks about forgiveness and roots. He wants to be forgiven for all his sins and wants to live like an orthodox Muslim. Furthermore, he talks about starting a family as well as visiting his parents in Morocco. He accentuates his wish to go back to Morocco rather than stay in Denmark.

### **The impression of Yunus**

In the beginning of the interview, Yunus was very hesitant and closed off. He needed some time to open up as well as trust that we would not pass the information he told us on to the authorities. He portrays his life in a very negative manner and portrays himself as a lonesome person, struggling with loneliness yet still wanting to be alone because it is easier. When talking about relations to others, he also says that “your friend is in your pocket”, implying that only wealth will bring him friends. He depicts himself as a sinner due to his substance abuse and the things he has done while intoxicated, but also as a victim of circumstance; not necessarily a sinner of choice, but a sinner of necessity. When talking about the street life, he portrays it as school and prison at the same time, and when discussing his future he initiates his talk with questioning if he will even be alive in the near future.

## **Appendix 4:**

### **Country profiles**

The profiles on the three North African countries that follow are meant to provide a basic and superficial comprehension of the region in order to better understand which conditions the informants come from and what they may potentially return to.

#### **Country profile: Tunisia**

The Republic of Tunisia has an estimated population of 10.7 million people in 2012 (Lust 2014:790). Ethnically, Tunisia is a blend of Arab, European, Jewish and Berber groups and the predominant religion is Islam. The official language of Tunisia is Arabic, but French is used as a working language in many places. The Tunisian population is very young, with approximately 70 % of the population under 25 years, which places great demands on the further development of housing, construction of schools and especially investment in new jobs that can provide young people with employment in the labor market. (GDS, Sociale Forhold, Tunesien 2013). On average, women earn \$ 3,347 (approx. 18,000 dkk) a year, while men earn \$ 9,320 (approx. 50,000 dkk) a year. Figures from 2003 show that about 6.6 % of Tunisia's total population live below the poverty line. (Middle East, Tunesien 2013).

France has had a great influence on Tunisia up through the 1800-1900's. In 1861, the country made the Arab world's first ever constitution. The country was still a French protectorate in 1881, but by the end of the 1800's, there was significant support for liberation and democratisation. However, they did not actually attain full self-government until March 20th 1956 where they gained their independence. (Globalis, Tunesien 2011).

In Tunisia in December 2010, Mohammad Al-Bouazizi committed suicide by self-immolation when his only source of income - a vending stand - was taken from him by the police. This became the spark that set the entire Arab world on fire with protests and demonstrations against repressive regimes. In January 2011, Tunisia became the first country in the MENA region to change its autocratic regime when President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was overthrown and the first free elections in the country were held. (Lust 2014:67).

The Islamist party Ennahda surprised everyone by getting 37.4 % of the votes and could subsequently dominate in a coalition government, which quickly earned the nickname "Troika". Recently, they have resigned and power has been transferred to an interim government of technocrats, which has already been widely welcomed. It took two years, three months and three days for the new constitution to be adopted on January 26th 2014. In the new constitution, particular emphasis is put on civil rights and gender equality, and among other things the constitution points out that there must be an equal number of men and women on electoral lists in all elections. Furthermore, a decentralisation of power is also in focus. During the Ben Ali regime the internal region of Tunisia was neglected in favour of the coastal regions, which was also an essential reason for the revolution to break out. Even though Tunisia has come far in the democratic process, there is still discontent among the people who cannot see themselves in the political ideological discussions, and thus there is still a gulf between the political elite in Tunisia and the people. (Weekendavisen 2014).

Tunisia has one of Africa's most competitive economies in which phosphate, oil and gas are important pieces. However, it is estimated that oil reserves will be exhausted within a few years, while there are opportunities for more gas production. Agriculture nearly makes up a third of the country's employment and the country is one of the largest producers of olive oil. Tourism is a major industry as well, but after the Arab Spring with the associated disturbances the tourism has been declining. (Globalis, Tunesien 2011). Thereto should be mentioned that the global economic crisis which began in 2007 led to a setback which Tunisia still suffer from. There is a huge political pressure in creating jobs given the economic downturn and the structural unemployment, especially among the youth. The currency, the dinar, was made convertible in 1993, and in 1995 Tunisia was the first Arab country to sign an association agreement with the EU including guaranteed free trade in industrial manufactured goods between the parties over a 12-year period. (GSD, Tunesien, Økonomi 2013).

Tunisia's main trading partners are France, Italy and Germany, which together account for approximately 60 % of foreign trade. The trade deficit is partially offset by tourism revenues and remittance transfers from Tunisians abroad. (GSD, Tunesien, Økonomi 2013).

## **Country profile: Algeria**

Algeria is a republic in the northern part of Africa, which is situated out to the Mediterranean Sea and borders Tunisia, Libya, Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Western Sahara and Morocco. Throughout time Algeria has had a focal place in both Europe and Africa's development, with its central placement between the two continents. In many ways Algeria is similar to Tunisia, Libya and Morocco but because of the country's interaction with Europe, they have experienced more intense conflicts. Algeria has through history worked as trade route between Europe, Africa and the Middle East. The Algerian people have therefore become a mixture of many different people. (Christelow 2012:2). Algeria is the largest country in Africa with its 2.4 million square kilometers and is estimated to have 37.4 million inhabitants in 2012. The majority of the country consists of the almost uninhabited Sahara Desert. (Lust 2014:430). As in other Middle Eastern countries, the Algerian population is very young: 29 % of the total population is under 15, while only 4.7 % are over 65. The official language is Arabic with French as the second language. Almost all Algerians are Muslim, and Islam as a religion continues to play a prominent role in the lives of many Algerians. (Middle East, Algeriet 2013).

Algeria came under Arab influence in the 600's and in the 1500's, Spaniards conquered the area. Algeria was under Spanish power for 300 years, but defeated Spain in 1775. Algeria was later recognised as a province of the Ottoman Empire. The French conquest of Algeria began in 1830, and the country ended up as a French province. The local population struggled for decades against the colonial power, among other things, led by the Algerian Berber Emir Abd al-Qadir. The national liberation movement the National Liberation (FLN) began a military war of liberation against France in 1954. Eight years later in 1962 a peace agreement was signed and Algeria gained its independence. (Christelow 2012:3).

When the country became independent, the dominant party FLN managed to gain the power alone. FLN stressed that Algeria should be one country and that Algerians constituted a single population with common Arabic language and Islam as a religion. Throughout the country, people were busy with another interpretation of Islam which relied on the scholars at the universities. However, this was suppressed by the regime. (Middle East, Algeriet 2013). The cancellation of an election in 1992 led to the outbreak of a civil war in Algeria. The government stopped the

parliamentary elections because an Islamist party, the Front for Islamic Salvation (FIS), was about to win. FIS fought for a transformation of Algeria instead of an expansion of global jihad. The very bloody civil war ended in the beginning of the 20th century and over 150,000 people died during the war. (Christelow 2012:3).

Political life is still characterised by lack of transparency, widespread corruption and inefficiency. At the same time the political institutions are very vulnerable. The country is affected by major religious and ethnic tensions in the population. The Algerian people's discontent is further fuelled by the massive social problems of widespread unemployment, housing shortages and inadequate infrastructure, which not even the considerable income from the country's large natural gas and oil deposits have so far been able to tackle. (GSD, Algeriet 2013).

The oil industry is the main source of income in Algeria and corresponds to 30 % of GDP and over 95 % of export income. Algeria has the world's fifth-largest natural gas reserves and is the world's second largest natural gas exporter. It has the world's 14th largest oil reserves. In order to reduce dependence on oil, the government is trying to diversify investments to other industries, but continuously experiences problems with high unemployment rates and low living standards. (Globalis, Algeriet 2006).

### **Country profile: Morocco**

The Kingdom of Morocco is a constitutional monarchy in the Maghreb region of North Africa with an estimated 32.3 million inhabitants in 2012 (Lust 2014:661). Culturally, Morocco is a blend of Arab, Berber, African and European influences, and the predominant religion is Islam. More than 40 % of the population identify with Berber roots. (Miller 2013:226). The conservative norms of society shine through all levels of education (Miller 2013:218).

In recent history, Morocco gained its independence in 1956 after having been a protectorate of France since 1912. Spain at this time had - and still has today - two enclaves in the northern part of Morocco. Unlike other Arab countries which gained their independence and became republics, Morocco remained a monarchy. When the old King Hassan II died in 1999, his son Mohammed VI became the new king.



Mohammed VI tried among other things to loosen up on the strict security service which his father had been responsible for. Mohammed VI established a commission to investigate the human rights violations that took place from 1956 to 1999 under King Hassan II. Furthermore, he established a Council for Human Rights. But even though Mohammed VI has done a lot to improve the conditions in the country there is still a long way to go. (Middle East, Marokko 2013).

The need for further reforms was for instance visible in the population's involvement in the Arab Spring. In 2011, Moroccans took to the street and protested against unemployment, corruption, suppression of Berber rights, and the monarchy's monopolisation of politics (Miller 2013:234). The youth-led uprising demonstrated in both a non-violent and violent manner, and with the examples of what happened in other Arabic countries, the king therefore tried to meet some of the demands by announcing the creation of a new constitution. The new constitution brought with it a confirmation of the role of Islam as state religion, the recognition of Tamazight (Berber) language as an official language and limitations to the king's power in daily politics. (Miller 2013:235). The new constitution as well as other strategic gestures from the monarchy such as increased food subsidies and an increase in government job offers led to a quieting down of the situation, but the quality of life of Moroccans is still challenged (Miller 2013:236).

Several Moroccan monarchs have wrestled with the boundaries of the state and the establishment of a national identity (Miller 2013:216). One of the most well-known territorial matters in the recent political history of Morocco is the conflict between Morocco and Western Sahara. Western Sahara was a Spanish colony until 1975, but when Spain withdrew from the area, Mauritania and Morocco both claimed that the area is part of their territory. However, the Saharawi population, led by the freedom movement Polisario, declared Western Sahara independent. Whereas Mauritania withdrew its claim due to the rejection of the claim from the International Court of Justice in the Hague, Morocco instead invaded the area after which hundreds of thousands Moroccans settled there. The neighbouring Algeria has supported the Western Saharan freedom movement in the conflict, and many of the Saharawi refugees that are an outcome of the long-lasting conflict are therefore settled in refugee camps in Algeria. (Globalis, Vestsahara 2010). Due to this and other issues

the relation between Morocco and Algeria is tense. The border between the two is closed and Algeria refuses to do business with Morocco. Relations between Spain and Morocco are also sometimes difficult due to the Spanish territories of Ceuta and Melilla located in the northern part of Morocco which Morocco demands the return of. (Miller 2013:234). These enclaves contain some of the biggest concentrations of asylum seekers in Morocco and Spain (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis 2012:58).

The Moroccan economy is heavily export-oriented, but import is still higher and the gap between import and export therefore needs to be covered by tourism revenues and remittances. However, the economy is still *“fragile and sensitive to fluctuations in the global economy”* (Miller 2013:231). Officially, 15 % of the population live below the poverty line. However, unofficially the number is 30 % (Miller 2013:231). Economic troubles are one of the main reasons for the massive emigration of Moroccans, which has characterised the modern Moroccan history. Morocco has, since 1968, had a consistent policy of *“encouraging emigration in order to manage unemployment levels.”* (Baldwin-Edwards in Ureta 2011:77). After the independence in 1956, Moroccan workers migrated to Europe due to its booming post-war economy which allowed the Moroccans to work factory jobs. In more recent years, Moroccans have become better educated which has initiated a process of brain drain where Moroccan doctors, engineers, scientists and other highly educated people have sought salaries appropriate for their experience in Europe and the Americas. Besides the well-educated migrants, a large number of political exiles and clandestine migrants make up the Moroccan community abroad. The majority of Moroccan migrants live in France and Spain, but many others also reside in other Western European countries as well as the Arab East, Canada and USA. (Miller 2013:232).

Morocco is – from a Western point of view – seen as a stable place in a turbulent region. However, poverty, illegal drug trade, corruption, a highly increasing population, a marginalised youth group, political immobility, a variable economy and authoritarian governance are all still issues that strain the everyday lives of Moroccans (Miller 2013:234). Thus, this is the reality for people living in Morocco and for anyone returning to the country.

## **Appendix 5:**

### **The asylum procedure in Denmark for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers**

Unaccompanied minor asylum seekers (UMI) are considered a specifically vulnerable group within the asylum system, and for this reason there exist specific guidelines and regulations for starting and handling their asylum applications.

Because this group is vulnerable, their cases should be treated faster than regular asylum procedures and the minors are kept in special centres for children and youths only, where they can receive proper care. Furthermore, the state administration appoints a personal representative to support the UMI during the asylum process. If the representative cannot perform, an assessor is appointed instead.

When an unaccompanied minor arrives at the Danish borders, claiming to be a minor and believed by the police to be so, the police immediately contact the Red Cross who brings the minor to a reception centre for children and youngsters. Currently, they are brought to Centre Vipperød. The first registration happens here, and the minor is informed, with the help of an interpreter, what will happen next. At this time, there will also be a medical check-up and the minor will start a Danish introduction program in which language class starts and information on Denmark and what it means to start an asylum case is explained. Within the first couple of days or weeks, their fingerprints are taken in order to establish their identity and see whether or not they have been registered in other EU countries before entering Denmark. (Red Barnet 2013).

### **The Dublin Regulation**

The Dublin Regulation is an EU agreement made to ensure that an application for asylum within the EU is processed in one country only. The Danish opt-out relating to judicial co-operation is applicable here, but Denmark has adopted the regulation through a parallel agreement, law 323 of May 18th 2005 (Retsinfo 2005). The regulation sets forth some criteria for which country is responsible for processing the application for asylum. According to the regulation, the country responsible is 1) the one in which the close family of the applicant resides (only parents, siblings and legal guardians), 2) the country which has already issued a residence permit or a visa for the applicant, 3) the first EU country which the applicant has entered through legal or illegal measures or 4) the country in which the applicant has already applied

for asylum.

The process of figuring out whether a case should be processed in Denmark or elsewhere usually takes around three months. The Danish Immigration Service in cooperation with the National Immigration Centre tries to determine the applicant's identity, nationality and route, and investigates whether or not immigration services in other EU countries have come across the applicant on her/his way to Denmark. If the applicant in accordance with the Dublin Regulation is to have her/his case processed in another country than Denmark, the Danish Immigration Service requests this country to take the applicant. If agreed upon, the applicant will be transferred to this country. (Ny i Danmark 2013).

However, a new EU verdict from June 6th 2013 declares that the Dublin Regulation does not apply for unaccompanied minors: *"Unaccompanied children who have applied for asylum in more than one EU Member State, and who do not have relatives legally residing in the EU, shall remain in the country where their most recent asylum application was lodged, and that country shall take responsibility for the examination of their claim. Therefore, unaccompanied children should not be sent back under the Dublin Regulation to the country where they filed the first asylum application"* (Ecre 2013).

Thus, an application for asylum made by an unaccompanied minor in one country is to be processed in the country where the minor is present, unless relatives are to be found in another country, despite her/him having asked for asylum in other countries before. This decision was taken in order to take into consideration the best interest of the child.

Some member states have expressed their concerns that this might enhance "asylum shopping". Advocate General Cruz Villalon of the European Court of Justice, however, stated that: *"the potential risk of that was sufficiently justified by the fact that the best interest of the child was a primary consideration"* (EU Law blog 2013).

Another thing which has been changed with the newest regulation is that the term 'close family' has been replaced with 'relatives' and thereby widened, so that uncles, aunts and grandparents are to be considered when deciding where the minor will have her/his case processed.

### **The legal procedures for unaccompanied minors**

An unaccompanied minor needs to be evaluated for maturity by the Danish Immigration Service in order to understand if the UMI is going to be able to understand questions and be able to describe the journey to Denmark. If the minor is considered mature enough, (s)he will undergo a normal asylum procedure. If (s)he is not considered mature, the UMI will be given a temporary residence permit in accordance with § 9c, clause 3, no. 1 (Retsinfo 2013) in the Danish Alien's Act without starting an actual asylum case. Common practice is to consider minors under the age of 12 immature and unable to undergo an asylum procedure, while minors between 15 and 18 years old are usually considered mature enough.

If an UMI is considered mature, (s)he will proceed with a normal asylum procedure in accordance with § 7 (Retsinfo 2013). The first step in this procedure is an interview with the Danish Immigration Service, in which a caseworker will ask about living conditions, family relations, political activities, motives for the flight and so on. An interpreter and a representative or a personal counsellor will be present. The UMI can here either be granted a rejection or asylum.

If granted asylum, the residence permit will expire after four years, after which the refugee will be able to apply for extension. If the applicant at this point has reached the age of 18 or above, (s)he will be able to apply for a permanent residence permit. When granted asylum, the UMI will be settled in a municipality chosen by the Danish Immigration Service.

If denied asylum, the UMI will be granted an attorney who will automatically begin the further process. Next step is an interview with the Refugee Appeals Board which will decide whether or not to support the Danish Immigration Service's decision with regards to the maturity of the UMI, alterations in regulations and practice, changed conditions in country of origin and/or a new evaluation of what information can be considered relevant to the case. (Ny i Danmark 2012).

The Refugee Appeals Board consists of a chair and a vice-chair, who are judges (only one of them is present during the processing of a case) and moreover members from the Danish Bar and Law Society, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Danish Refugee Council (Flygtningenævnet 2013).

If the Refugee Appeals Board disagrees with the decision of the Danish Immigration Service, asylum will be granted and the UMI will be relocated to a Danish municipality.

If the Refugee Appeals Board upholds the decision of the Danish Immigration Service, then the Danish Immigration Service will decide whether it is possible for the applicant to receive a residence permit in accordance with § 9c, clause 3, no. 2 (Retsinfo 2013), which states that the applicant can be granted a residence permit if there is reason to believe that a return to the country of origin will leave the UMI without any family network and without the possibility to stay in a reception centre and thereby put the UMI at serious risk. If the Danish Immigration Service decides to grant residence permit, the UMI will be relocated into Danish society.

A residence permit according to § 9c, clause 3 (no. 1+2) (Retsinfo 2013) will almost always expire when the UMI turns 18. This law took effect in 2011 and concerns all UMI's that have entered Denmark after January 1st, 2011. Depending on the age of the UM, the residence permit will usually only be given for a year, and then the minor can apply for an extension every year until the grounds for asylum changes or the minor turns 18.

If the Refugee Appeals Board upholds the decision of the Danish Immigration Service, the UMI can appeal to the Ministry of Justice as a last resort, if (s)he is still a minor. However, the complaint has to be filed within seven days for the UMI to be able to stay in Denmark during the processing of the asylum case. If the deadline is not held, the minor will (usually) have to leave the country. The Ministry of Justice bases its decision solely on the asylum application and transcripts from the interviews with the Danish Immigration Service and the Refugee Appeals Board.

If denied asylum in all instances, the minor will have to leave Denmark. (Ny i Danmark 2012).