**Resume**

Dette speciale præsenterer et etnografisk materiale omhandlende hjemløse migranter fra forholdsvis Ghana, Burkino Faso og Nigeria. Omdrejningspunktet for specialet er, at få indsigt i denne marginaliseret migrants gruppes livssituation, hvor vi bestræber os på at forstå den verdenskontekst de befinder sig i og undersøge de meninger og betydninger, som de tillægger deres erfaringer og handlen. Ved hjælp af etnografiske redskaber ønsker vi at præsentere eksisterende alternative realiteter og beskrive disse realiteter på deres egne betingelser. Dette er netop essensen af det etnografiske felt, som løfter den menneskelige forklaring og handlen i en søgen af viden. Deres tilstedeværelse er farvet af deres mangelende opholdstilladelse og hjemløshed, som har en påvirkning til deres forhold til den danske befolkning, samt landets politi. Læseren vil endvidere få indsigt i hvilke faktorer, der har været medvirkende til deres migration både til Europa, herunder Danmark. Analysen vil ligeledes sætte fokus på hvad det betyder for det enkelte individ, når de bliver ekskluderet og bliver anset som en belastning for samfundet. Med denne forskning ønsker vi at bidrage til en bedre forståelse af en gruppe som ofte anses for at være problematiske i en dansk kontekst. Vi ønsker at give denne gruppe migranter en stemme i et samfund, hvor de ellers bliver overhørt, hvilket kan bidrage til en mere nuanceret debat.

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# **The Structure of the Thesis**

Our thesis is divided into five sections that all entails relevant information in addressing this field of study sufficiently.

The initial section contains an introduction which reflects the context wherein this field of study is placed. In this section, we will also elaborate on the legal framework that is attached to our informants’ status in Denmark as migrants with EU residence permit, wherein we also will describe the concept of emergency shelters.

Our methodology is the second section of our thesis, which has the purpose of demonstrating our scientific approach in addressing this particular field. It is within this section our reasoning for making use of ethnographic method will be presented which sets the overall frame for the creation of this research.

The third section of the thesis is addressing the public debate arising about homeless migrants. We will present ideas and opinions on the group of migrants through newspaper articles and reports. It must be noted that the section is partially analysis where theory will be employed when necessary.

Our main analysis of our ethnographic work is found in the fourth section of the thesis. It is also in this section we will present the emergency shelter which provides the reader a glimpse into our location of fieldwork. In this relation, a short portrayal of our informants is given entailing few details about our informants’ personal life. The analysis is divided into five main themes which have arisen during our work with our empirical data, thus the themes were not present during our fieldwork in the form of a question guide.

The final section entails a discussion and the conclusion. In the discussion we draw on analytical findings and bring them into a broader social and political context.

# **Introduction**

“If we do not develop Africa, if we do not make available the necessary resources to bring about this development, these people will flood the world"[[1]](#footnote-1).

The French president Chirac warned in July 2006, that Africans “will flood the world” unless more is done to develop the continent's economy. African migration is often, in both the sending and receiving country, considered to be a threat to their national security, development and stability. In the migrant-receiving countries, the migration flow is among other things considered to bring financial costs together with an increasing ethnic and cultural diversity, and governments are occupied with finding a way to respond to these changes. The migrant-sending states are in the meantime concerned that their top educated are leaving, which is considered to be a serious threat to the development of the country (Castles & Miller 2009: 1-3). The public discourse expressed in the European public media and by politicians surrounding Africa-to-Europe migration often convey an image of an African migrant as a desperate male fleeing from a continent of misery, poverty, injustice and war in hope of making it to Europe by any means necessary – even risking their lives escaping in an overcrowded boat barely able to stay over water (Pastore et al. 2006; Haas 2008: 9). Nevertheless, the reality is quite more nuanced and the reasons behind migration out of Africa are many and complex; family, failed states, conflict, love, job advancement, poverty, education are just few of the motives behind leaving the continent (Castles & Miller 2009: 21-23)

The Southern European countries, such as Italy, Spain, Greece or France, have for many years experienced migration from Sub-Saharan Africa, where a large portion of the migrants have been part of the countries labour force (Haas 2008: 27). However, the recession and economic downturn that have struck Europe the last years have entailed the loss of jobs for many migrants, which for some has meant looking for other income possibilities elsewhere, for instance in Denmark (Fonden 2012 part 1: 3). The migration of people who are not able to provide for themselves economically and acquire accommodation is a relatively new phenomenon in Denmark in comparison to other European countries e.g. the Southern European. The migration of people coming from Africa and Eastern Europe, at times undocumented and with little means available for self-supporting, became more visible in the street scene and part of a public debate after 2005[[2]](#footnote-2). Studies have shown that there has been a rapid increase of users of West African origin at the emergency shelters for homeless. An example of this increase is at the emergency shelter “Kirkens Korshærs Natcafé”, where West Africans only accounted four per cent of the users in 2009, but by 2012 more than half of the users came from West African countries[[3]](#footnote-3). Such an increase of a particular ethnic group leaves us to wonder why this increase has occurred and more importantly, who these migrants are.

## Life on the Edge in Denmark

People who live on the streets of Denmark are considered to be in a very vulnerable situation, and with that realisation much effort has been set aside to provide help and guidance for this particular group. Danish homeless are according to Danish law entitled to the same social benefits and supports equal to other Danish citizens, and the municipalities are required to ensure that the necessary number of seats in temporary accommodation facilities are available for people with special social problems who experience difficulties managing housing (Social Services § 110)[[4]](#footnote-4). Being a homeless migrant in Denmark, however presents a different scenario. This group does not have access to health services (other than the most acute), they do not have access to addiction treatment and they do not have access to publicly funded shelters[[5]](#footnote-5). They are therefore not entitled to many of the same services available to Danish homeless, including support and assistance from municipal street level employees and social workers. A debate about the living conditions of homeless migrant surfaced in 2007, when the former government emphasized that non-Danish homeless should not be able to make use of public funded shelters. The welfare minister at the time, Karen Jespersen, expressed that Denmark should not become the “shelter of Europe... Eastern Europeans are not entitled to social benefits, and the municipality should not accommodate them. In the extreme, the subsidy for the individual shelter will be dropped if they accommodate people other than Danish citizens” (Politiken 22.12.2007). Even though the focus has been on Eastern European migrants, West African migrants also fall into the group who are not considered desirable to be housed at “Danish” Shelters. The Danish government is increasingly trying to deny irregular migrants access to the welfare state by denying them health treatment and making it very difficult to transform one's legal status into legal. This context of formal exclusion and marginalisation raises the questions of how these African homeless migrants make sense of their presence in the Danish society and moreover, how are their possibilities and limitations tied to their legal status?

The surroundings that we find ourselves in have a great influence on our possibilities for self-agency and identity negotiations. The social settings of the individual provide a framework for its life both in regard to its capabilities and limitations (Holland et al. 1998: 4-7). We find that homeless migrants are to be in a very exposed and vulnerable situation in our society as they are not eligible for social services and often find themselves in a legal grey zone. Their possibilities for self-agency could therefore be extremely impacted by their life situation, both in regard to legal and private matters. They might find themselves living as outcasts of fortune and on the edge of the Danish welfare system. In a Danish context, homelessness is often connected with a social downfall and social problems, such as drug abuse, mental illness or perhaps both , whereto the solution and help to this group is adapted (Järvinen & Tigersted 1992: 26). When looking into reasons behind homelessness among African migrants staying in Denmark other aspects has to be considered, this makes a study on their life circumstances essential. One can therefore conclude that previous research on homelessness in Denmark has to be reconsidered when studying this fragment of the homeless population in Denmark. This also reflects that this phenomenon is new to Denmark, which means that the welfare state might have to approach the issue differently. This group has not been ‘hit’ with homelessness where they previously have experienced a relatively ‘normal’ life in Denmark. Rather they are persons with little means for self-providing who stay in the European Union. They are humans with rights and their situation is not solved by deportation. It can be argued that deportation is simply removing the dilemma from Denmark to another European country where these persons would still face the same circumstances. This is to look at the issue from a humanitarian perspective where we must recognise that these people also are entitled to humane living conditions.

# **Area of Attention**

We find that homeless migrants have been the concern of a political debate which has led to tightening of legislation in regard to the use of shelters, which has raised the question of how to deal with this new influx of migrants who are vulnerable to homelessness. Regardless of the political solutions considered being appropriate for solving the issues that these migrants face, we argue that it is important and necessary to shed light on these people lives and try to understand their life situation. With this study we wish to bring into focus the homeless African migrant’s life stories, where we want to strive for a deeper immersion into their worlds in order to comprehend how they understand those worlds, that is, to explore the meanings they ascribe to their experiences and actions. We find that homeless African migrants are often labelled with negative notions and are associated with being burdens to society. Therefore we want to go behind these public images of this group and detach ourselves from a stigmatic social categorisation. We seek to signify the explanations of the individual on their life circumstances and recognise them as unique individuals, rather than social burdens. We find that there is a need for in-depth ethnographic research on this group, as the public debate has mainly made use of a generalising group explanation, where we refuse to be submissive to these. Therefore the overall aim is to present a new way of considering this group where their meanings and explanations are the centre of focus. It must be noted that we do not seek to cover all aspects of being a homeless African migrant in Denmark and therefore no definitive truth about their lives will be presented as this is not possible. The aim is rather to contribute with new, vital and more specific knowledge based on qualitative data surrounding the homelessness of African migrants in Denmark.

**The above mentioned lead us to the following problem formulation:**

* How do undocumented homeless African migrants staying in Denmark make sense of their state of precariousness?

We employ the term ‘precariousness’ in this thesis to present several indicators of economic and social disadvantages of being a homeless migrant in a Danish society. The term is an adjective that refer to the lack in security and stability and describes circumstances beyond one's [control](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/control) (Room 2002: 49-50).

# **The Legal Framework of Homeless Migrants**

To understand the circumstances of the migrants in relation to the offers and services they have available in Denmark, we will in the following present the legal framework of homeless migrants. The section is particular relevant to get an idea of the social, legal and economic latitude of our informants which is relevant in relation to comprehending our findings.

The group of African homeless migrants in Denmark mostly consists of individuals who have previously worked in Southern Europe and thus have been in Europe for a longer period of time (Fonden, 2012 (part 1): 8). Periodically have some of the Southern European countries executed a liberal migration policy, which has given illegal migrants the opportunity to gain legal grounds for staying. In 2005 the Spanish Government gave amnesty to 700,000 illegal migrants, as a way to try to do something about labour shortages in Spain and to prevent exploitation of illegal workers. It was a three-month qualification period during, which illegal workers and their employers could apply for residency and work permits[[6]](#footnote-6). Some of the African migrants who have lived in other European countries have been able to acquire working permit or citizenship. According to legislation EU citizens are allowed to stay in Denmark for three months as tourists and in six months if they are seeking work required that they during their stay are self-sufficient (Aliens Act § 2, paragraph. 1). This means that it is only possible for EU citizens to have legal residence in Denmark, if they are able to support themselves during their stay. It is therefore essential to find a job before arriving to Denmark or to get one soon after arrival. According to the EU Residence Directive, EU citizens who are not an unreasonable burden on the social assistance system cannot be sent home unless the deportation is for the sake of public order and security[[7]](#footnote-7). The group of African migrants who have residence permit (not citizenship) for other EU countries have the right to reside in Denmark as a tourist for three months out of a six-month period[[8]](#footnote-8). As proof of their residence they must be able to produce a residence card from the country of which the residence permit is issued. In contrast to EU citizens and nationals of the Nordic countries, African migrants entering Denmark with a European residence permit are not allowed to work, as this requires a work permit[[9]](#footnote-9). According to studies, the status of homelessness can prevent a migrant from achieving a work permit and changing their position to one of labour. Under the East Agreement restrictions it is important that a mobile worker has a physical address, when applying for a working permit. Being homeless one cannot produce an adequate address and the address of the shelter in not considered appropriate by the Danish immigration authorities, which means that an application for a work permit will be denied. It is therefore very difficult for the African migrant to change their status from homeless to working and is often left with no other alternative than to try to find a job on the informal market (Stenum 2010: 218).

## Emergency shelters

In present Danish law, individuals without a Danish social security number are not entitled to Social Services which include access to public shelters and access to health services (other than the most acute). This stringent regulation on the usage of social services for homeless was introduced in 2007 and it has meant that homeless migrants are not allowed access to public offers to homeless, funded by the government and prohibits them in making use of 'normal' shelters available for Danish homeless. The government funded shelters, can as a consequence of a violation of the law lose their funds and have to close down[[10]](#footnote-10). To provide social assistance and to meet the needs of the group of homeless migrants, emergency shelters have been established by Christian and non-religious NGOs from the traditional civil society network (Stenum 2010: 210). In Copenhagen was NATNØD established in 2008 as the first emergency shelter[[11]](#footnote-11) and several others have opened up since. However, many have had to close to down due to financial problems. The emergency shelters are highly depending on private funds as well as they can apply to receive money from the rate adjustment pool established by the government, but which is not a certain subsidy[[12]](#footnote-12).

# **Methodology - Sensitive Research**

“The goal of research is that of discerning and uncovering the actual facts of (people's) lives and experiences, facts that have been hidden, inaccessible, suppressed, distorted, misunderstood, ignored” (DuBois 1985, cited by Liamputtong 2007)

In this section, we will elaborate on the methodology and procedures applied in this study. We argue that methodology is an essential part of our research as it reveals to our readers why we know what we claim to know. The methodology will say something about how we have researched our problem and how we ended up with these specific research results (Olsen & Pedersen 149-151: 2005). Our methodological reflections are impacted by our field of study and by the fact, that our informants are individuals in an unusual and vulnerable position in the Danish society. Therefore, our methodology will also touch upon certain considerations when being in contact with 'hard to reach' informants. We will in the following to our reader answer a series of questions; what is our scientific standpoint to knowledge? How did we get in contact with our informant? What has been our ethical concern? What research method have we applied to ensure a successful outcome? What has our role been as researchers in relation to our research community? What considerations have we made about our behaviour in our quest for data?

# **Philosophy of Science**

We will in the following address our scientific approach in order for our readers to comprehend our thoughts and understandings behind the development of this thesis. Our thoughts and believes within philosophy of science have an impact on the final outcome, as it reveals how we address key concepts like reality and truth (Wenneberg 2002: 14). Our scientific approach therefore has an influence on our choice of method and theory and accordingly, how we will move from research question to conclusion.

## Social Constructivism and the Social Reality

This thesis is inspired by a social contructivistic approach, where we find that the social realities of humans must be considered as socially constructed. As we are interested in the lives of homeless migrants and want to examine the identity construction of these, we find it vital to confess to a scientific philosophy which puts an emphasis on the social variations of “truth” and ascribes social processes a significant role in the creation of reality.

Social constructivism has together with constructivism and postmodernism gained significant foothold in the sciences of the social and humanities within the last 15-20 years (Wenneberg 2002: 129-130. The approach is broad and has many constructions within - some speaks of Social Constructivism and others of Social Constructionism. It is not possible to give an unequivocal definition as it depends on the position of the researcher. Especially within ontology is the approach divided (Ibid; Dreyer & Sehested 2003: 9). We will not try to differentiate between the many interpretations of the approach but rather account for how we consider the approach and how it is relevant to our field of study.

Social Constructivism is based on ontology, the theory of being as being, and epistemology, the theory of knowledge. The ontological question deals with what the form and nature of reality is and therefore, what is there that can be known about it? The epistemological question addresses the relationship between the inquirer and the world, where the possibility, limits, origin, structures, methods and validity of knowledge is investigated (Strydom & Delanty 2003: 4-9). Ontologically we consider, reality to be existing, however, we as humans never will be able to achieve full access to it. We are only able to see “reality” in the version that appears to us (Wenneberg 2002: 143). We are sceptical towards the form of social contructivism which denies the existent of any form of objective physical reality as we find the ontological argument to be problematic. We therefore confess to a moderate form of social constructivism, where we find that the ontology can be accepted within the social realm. In accordance to Finn Collin argument, we find that the social and physical reality must be perceived differently, and the ontology of social constructivism is not applicable in the same manner to the physical realm (Collin 1998: 65-67). The epistemological nature of social constructivism emphasizes that our knowledge is always connected to the social settings in which we are included. Knowledge is contingent on social factors which surround the research process, rather than the reality which is the focus of the process. Knowledge is produced when humans collectively acknowledge it, derive a consensus on it or create a linguistic expression of it (Collin 1998: 41).

It’s especially the critical force of social constructivism which we identify us with and it’s view on ‘reality’ and ‘truths’ as a radical break with traditional thinking such a positivism, realism and rationalism, and leaves us able to challenge immediate and natural knowledge. The aim of the approach is to look past a phenomenon, beyond the surface and into the core of it to disclose underlying reasons. What is considered to be the obvious “reality” has according to social constructivism the effect of blinding people and leaves them without questioning what they perceive. The ideas, thoughts, perceptions or feelings we have about the world we live in which we consider natural or common sense, must not be taken for granted, rather they must be investigated (Wenneberg 2002: 13-17). This is where we find that social constructivism has its appeal and applicability, as the main interest must therefore be to uncover the underlying factors and analyse the conditions, which reality is created under, which justifies an examination of the social realities of our informants. Moreover, the approach gives us knowledge on how “homelessness”, “masculinity”, “migrant”, “family” and other phenomena in this world only have significance in our processing of them, hereof in social contexts and it makes it essential to investigate certain social contexts in order to better understand social phenomena.

## The Four Premises of Social Constructivism

We have chosen to draw on Vivien Burr (2003) in the description of social constructivism. Like other scholars, she argues that there is no adequate description of how to relate to social constructivism. However, she identifies four premises which describe and reflect our position to the approach well.

The first premise is that we must *take a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge.* Social constructivism warns researcher against making assumptions based on how reality directly or immediately appears to us. On the contrary, it is crucial to focus on how we categorise the world in order to comprehend it. Knowledge is not a reflection of the reality of the world, rather it is a reflection of how we categorise our comprehension of the world. Objective knowledge is always subjective as it has already been influenced by our own interpretations (Burr 2003: 2-3). In relation to our field of study it means, that we find it interesting to try to understand how our informants construct knowledge about their reality – their homelessness and their ideas of family life for instance. It’s important to note that we do not seek an absolute “truth” about their live circumstances and belies, which is not possible, rather we seek to explore how life makes sense from their perspective as it serves as explanation for their intensions. This kind of knowledge calls for ethnographic methods, where we gain knowledge through sharing social space and having relations to them. We are thus able to step away from taken-for–granted knowledge and replace this knowledge with an in depth exploration of the meanings and relationships accounted for by our informants.

Second aspect is *Historical and cultural specificity* which explains humans as historical and cultural depended beings. Our history and culture are strongly impacting on how we speak, understand and categorise knowledge, and our understandings are also a product of these. We can therefore not claim that our beliefs or understandings are closer to the “truth” than others’. (Burr 2003: 3-4). Considering the “truth” to be historic and cultural specific emphasises our need for employing an ethnographic research strategy, where we seek to understand the worlds our informants that they have their agency in and therefor both creates limitations and possibilities for them.

The third premise is *knowledge is sustained by social processes.* Our knowledge is constructed through interactions between humans in their social living and what we consider to be “truths” are current accepted ways of understanding the world and so forth not objective observations (Burr 2003: 4-5). Only through interaction with our informants are we able to construct a thick description of what is being observed, rather than a thin description. Being in the field, makes us able to explain behaviour from the social context that they are part of and thus, makes their behaviour meaningful (Geertz 1994: 215).

The last premise deals with social actions and claims, that *knowledge and social action go together.* A certain way of considering a phenomenongives rise to a certain action or intervention. Descriptions and constructions of “reality” becomes tools of power as they are contributing to a control of what people find acceptable together with how they will react to it (Burr 2003: 5). In order to understand the social actions of our informants, we consider it to be crucial to have knowledge about the world which our informants participate in, as we will not understand actions without understanding the setting that they are exercised in. The premise also leads us to consider the knowledge which we are producing by doing the study and the connection it could have to actions. By doing this study we wish to impact a discourse of homeless migrants, as being problematic individuals, into a more understanding one which has its emphasis on a humanitarian aspect. An aspect of the study is thus to generate knowledge about our informants and their situation, which could lead to actions that is not dehumanisation or stigmatising to them but consider them as humans with rights.

Being social constructivist does therefore reflect how we will research our field of interest. For us it means that the “truth” does not hold an elevated place in our research. Rather the explanation of the “truth” by our informant gives us access to how they make sense of their lives within the certain social settings they are part of. Being social constructivist further allows us to be loyal to the experiences that we have had, and enable us to present an analysis that focusses on the world perspectives and meanings of our informants. Our informants are solely expressing their own views, which are constructed based on their own philosophy of life. However the material gathered are interpreted from our perceptions. We however feel that we are part of a social group, the Danish society, which makes us able to construct arguments understandable and acceptable within this certain group which we find to validate our research. The issues we will investigate will reflect knowledge and interests of the group, which we are included in. In extension we want to stress that our knowledge of the world is based on our sense of it and we are therefore not cable of stating an overall “truth” about it.

Our placement in social constructivism also has an impact on our methodological considerations. Researchers by tradition reflects upon how one observes ‘what is out there’, however, in social constructivistic studies the researcher will also have to reflect on the position of the observer, and the consideration are therefore directed inwards. It is a reflection which shows that the choice of perspective constructs both the observer and the observed, and the researcher will have to consider how one is relating to field of study as for instance asking the research question, thematisation and categorisation. The method is a choice which will have an impact on the final outcome (Sehested & Reff 1998: 165-166)

## Reasons Behind

Saying that “I have travelled to Denmark and are now homeless” is often accompanied with wonder and the expectation of an explanation. “The differing reasons men give for their actions are not themselves without reason” (Mills 1940: 904). Indicating that explanation and reasons are not randomly chosen, rather socially determined. What makes an explanation legitimate is grounded in the understandings within a social group, and actors will often grasp onto standardised reply when asked to explain their actions. Meanings are created in explaining and meanings are often established in retrospect of the interview (Järvinen 2000: 11). This means that humans are often not aware of what they have done until they have done it, as the meanings of the event lies in their consequence. This does not mean that explanations are not relevant for us in order to uncover reasons behind actions and that we must try to decode our informants “real” motives. Rather it is an acknowledgement of the fact that verbalised motives, together with observations, are all we have to understand their meanings and interpretations, and they are important as well as they have given us access into the legitimate conceptual models of the social life, which our informants are part of (ibid). Moreover, we are also aware that explanations from our informants are often given when we have asked for one, wanting our informant to account for something which we perhaps found undesired or disrupting to common sense. It is important to emphasise, that we consider ourselves to be part of the interviewing process where we are able to attribute meanings in the situation and by asking for explanation, we might indicate to our informant that we find some behaviour irregular. With that in mind, we have been aware of keeping an open mind, that is, to be as impartial as possible when speaking about certain issues. We are moreover aware that an explanation also can have the purpose of justification or self-defense. According to Goffman, (1971: 113) an excuse is a strategy used to correct an interaction that fails to meet social standards, and it is a gesture made where the actor presents himself as consisting two parts. A self who has done the actions and a self that takes a distance from the action done. Conversation about issues such as “homelessness”, “unemployment”, “lack of Danish documents”, “poverty”, “no home-sent remittances” can all be very negative associations for our informants and they perhaps do not want to be connected to these. The informant will therefore in situations try to distance himself from unpleasant associations. Such a strategy can seem as if we as researcher then never will get access into certain parts of their personal life as it is guarded and explained away. Nevertheless, we consider such outdistancing to also present relevant findings, revealing negative meanings attached to certain aspects of their lives.

# **Inductive versus Deductive Approaches**

The current thesis utilises grounded theory to analyse and produce knowledge from our empirical data. Grounded theory refers to theory which is developed inductively from the data collected and it is therefore a method which is used to build theory that explains empiric data (Andersen 2009: 200). Inductive approaches tend to let data lead to the emergence of concepts and we have therefore deliberately chosen to exclude theory until our analysis, as we wanted the empirical data to be the focus of this project. Our research question and theoretical perspective are generated from our fieldwork and conversations with our informants, as we found that a successful inductive stance allowed the experiences in the field to a later development of categories, propositions and eventually meanings based on the actions in the field and not preconceptions. By working inductively with our research, we seek to derive patterns and generate hypothesises from our empirical data, rather than to do hypothesis testing research. We consider that working deductively would have left us with a narrow insight to our field of interest, where we would have been controlled by a particular theoretical perspective and perhaps not been able to find the necessary links to the “real” world under study. As our intention is to produce knowledge about a group of migrants, which there is limited literature about and who we knew relatively little about, we found that we needed to address this field with a minimum of prestructuring, tight design and theories. Considering theory beforehand about the life of people who we did not know much about did not make sense, and engaging in theory would have given us presumptions about their lives; presumptions which would have set boundaries for which aspects we would consider important to study. Rather we wanted to be explorative and make new discoveries possible (Andersen 2009: 35; Bryman 2008: 9-12).

The differentiation of the two approached are better thought of as tendencies, rather than as hard distinctions (ibid). This means that it can be hard to separate induction and deduction in a research project and both is often drawn upon. We argue that both are present in our research, as although we aim to let out empiric data be the foundation for our analysis and to work inductively, we must recognize that by being master thesis students, we have a theoretically apparatus which we cannot leave out and it has an impact on our collection of data. In accordance with Miles and Huberman (1984: 27) we consider that “*any researcher, no matter how unstructured or inductive, comes to the fieldwork with some orienting idea, foci or tools*”, and as Gubrium and Holstein (1997: 27) note, without any conceptual orientation, one would not at all recognise the field one wanted to study, and our position as ethnographers and inductive derive itself from theory.

As part of our analysis strategy, we have let the field of study lead the way to the aspects relevant to study in order to develop theory on the field. Choosing relevant aspects is important to get a holistic understanding of the field which we are moving in. This understanding is gained through reviewing our empirical data; looking for quotes or situations that are illustrating our main impressions (Andersen 2008: 200). Furthermore, we have had on-going conversations with each other and our supervisor about our experiences, which also has given an intensive reviewing of our material. The main task in reviewing has then been to find structures and themes which recurred.

Despite of having an inductive approach to our analysis, we still wish to draw on relevant theories when we find it useful. We will in the analysis deploy certain theories as they are able to reinforce concept which we have found existing speaking with our informants. We wanted to let the field tell us the story and later compare to earlier proposition.

Deductive research strategy is often considered reliable through the existence of already existing theory, where the last face of the study becomes inductive as the researcher shows how the findings can match up with the stock of knowledge existing through theory. Yet this kind of approach is not feasible when taking an inductive position and we therefore have to reflect on reliability and validity through other means. We argue that fieldwork is especially useful in this sense, as we have experienced the “reality” ourselves. We are not only relying on what our informants have told us, but we also rely on what we have seen and understood ourselves. We also consider that interacting with our informants have given us more in-depth information than if we had done traditional interviews in structured settings. Interactions and spending days in our informants company has given us the opportunity to ask follow questions on most aspect of our conversations. This means that if we were in doubt about what we have heard and the meanings behind it, we have simply just asked again which has strengthened the reliability of our findings.

## Producing Theory?

When working with grounded theory it is important to be aware of ones limitations and we want to make it clear that it is not our intention to present ground-breaking theory. The findings we present in this study should be considered as generalisation we have found to exist among our informants and not generally applicable to all homeless migrants. We consider that every life story is unique and for every generalisation has its divergence, nevertheless, we have found that certain aspects and tendencies are repetitive, and it is particular these that reflects what we want to present.

# **Research Dealing with the 'Hidden' or 'Hard-to-Reach'**

“'Hidden populations euphemistically refers to those who are disadvantaged and disenfranchised: the homeless and transient, chronically mentally ill, high school dropouts, criminal offenders, prostitutes, juvenile delinquents, gang members, runaways, and other “street people”-those we are all aware of to one degree or another, yet know so little about.” (Lamber and Wiebel 1990: 1)

We consider our informants to be part of a so called 'hard-to-reach' or 'hidden' population group. The term 'hard to reach' is, however, used with some inconsistency and we thus have to specify how our informants fall into that category, and what methodological impact it has had for us that our informants have been 'hidden' or 'hard-to-reach'. The term can be used to describe a segment of the population who are 'hidden' and does not want to be found or contacted. Other times the term refers to a broader segment of the population such young or old people or a section of the community that are difficult to involve in public participation (Jones & Newburn 2001: vi). The term can also be used to describe a group in the society which can be hard to reach in the manner, that they are difficult to reach with information, like for instance with health campaigns where authorities aim to change a certain behaviour. However, when we adopt the term 'Hard-to-reach' it is within a sampling context where it signifies that our informants can be difficult to get in contact with and arrange an interview with, because they of various reasons do not want to be part of a research study (Atkinson & Flint 2001; Duncan et al. 2003). An issue with the term 'hard-to-reach' is that the' problem' is situated within the group and not within the researchers approach to the group, which means that it can be stigmatising to belong to the group. They may try to conceal their identity as belonging to that group, which makes it even harder to reach them (Atkinson & Flint 2001: 1-7; Liempt & Bilger 2009: 8). A good example of concealing one's identity and not wanting to belong to a rather stigmatised group can be found in Richard Staring's ethnographic research on irregular migration of Turks in the Netherlands (2009: 88-89). Staring was through one of his informant referred to another informant, who he had arranged a meeting with. On the time of the appointment Staring finds that the informant did not show up and only weeks later he runs into him coincidentally. As the reason for not showing up for the planned interview, the informants explained that he had changed his mind about the appointment. He explained that by meeting up with Staring at the scheduled time and place, he would publicly have revealed that he was staying in the Netherlands illegally. The informant knew that the Turkish community knew about Staring's research on undocumented Turkish migrants and therefore, did not want to be associated with him. The informant did not want to belong to the category of undocumented as he felt it would cause the community to treat him with no respect and some would perhaps take advantage of his situation. It can be hard for a researcher to have so much insider knowledge about a community that he is able to predict such a scenario, which means that a research must at all times give attention to the informants unwillingness to participate or give an answer. The problem that Staring runs into does not only reveals the methodological challenges that a researcher will have when studying irregular migration, but it also uncover the problematic aspects of an undocumented migrants life and the many repercussions that they take in order to not become exposed. It must be clear that the informant is an expert on his life, which means that he is also the best estimator of possible consequences. With this notion in mind, we have never tried to push informants to do an interview with us. We had a normal conversation with a young Nigerian man, who had only been in Denmark for 4 weeks at the time. We spoke a bit about how he came and his purpose with his stay here. We asked him if he would be interested in doing an interview to which he declined. Looking in the rear-view mirror we could probably have convinced him, or others who declined, to participate, but we do not know what exact consequences of participating could have been. Maybe there would not have been any physical consequences like arrests or complications when doing their jobs. However, they might consider that opening up to us about their life situation would cause them additional stress; whether it is fearing that we are from the authorities or the stress of reliving a dramatic experience. We have therefore been very careful not to persuade anyone to speak to us.

## Snowball Research Strategy

Studying ‘hidden’ or ‘hard-to-reach’ population often bring up methodological consideration that studies of less sensitive issues or well know population groups. The snowball research strategy is often a suitable research strategy to employ, when wanting to include hard to reach and hidden populations in a study.It is a link-tracing method, which is used most often for qualitative research. With the snowball sampling, informants are reached through referrals that are made within in a circle of people, who either knows each other or somehow connected. This means that the researcher is depending on the present informant to name other individuals who could also fit the criteria posed by the researcher. The newly found informant is then asked to name another individual and then the referrals continue (Atkinson & Flint 2001; Faugier J. & Sargeant M 1997: 790-791). This method of getting informants has worked well in our attempt to get into contact with West African homeless migrants. We got in contact with our informants through the referral of a volunteer who is working on an emergency shelter. We contacted her per e-mail where she wrote back that she would see if anyone matching our criteria could be interested in doing an interview. We were then after a week contacted again and invited down to the shelter. We consider the volunteer to be our entrance person, as she knew the men sleeping there and they would probably trust her as they trust sleeping there. Being in contact with her was the main reason that we were able to move further into their environment as she is a trustworthy person in their worlds. We would not have gained their trust if we would just have shown up at the shelters doors trying to start a conversation. They would not have trusted our intensions, if we were not associated with a trustworthy person within their sphere, which reflect the precautions that they take towards outsiders.

# **Ethnography**

In the following section, we will highlight practices and strategies between us as researchers and our informants in our process of learning about homeless African migrants in Denmark. With this we wish to present a methodological approach that gives access to relevant field settings that can be extremely hard to be invited into. We will clarify some aspects of how our presence in the field created possibilities, challenges and dilemmas. For instance, in relation to what it meant to be a woman in a field that was mostly “dominated” by men, and where we as young female Danish researchers represents positions, which we experienced to be an scientific endeavor. It was very important for us to understand them as human beings, and thereby deviate from the knowledge that rife in society which often presents categorical identities.

## What is Ethnography?

Albert Einstein highlighted the important role of understanding the real world, when he asserted, “Any fool can know. The point is to understand*[[13]](#footnote-13)*. ” With these wise words we begin this section by introducing the field of ethnography, which has become an increasingly popular method across a wide variety of disciplines. We will be using the ethnographic approach as this method makes it possible to study the multiple ways in which people make sense of the world around them. Since our thesis is based on the human aspect of life, we consider the ethnographic approach as the best way of comprehending the social world these individuals are in, and to uncover the meanings inherent to this group. With our ethnographic research, we seek to generate useful information about cultural beliefs, behaviors and reasons accounting for behavioral and other forms of structures within this group that we categorize to be in vulnerable situations.

## Understanding Ethnography

A central difference between the ethnographic method and other types of research methods is the depth and intimacy when collecting data, because the researcher get up close and personal to the people under study. James Spradley, Professor of Anthropology, writes,

“Ethnography is an exciting enterprise. It reveals what people think and shows us the cultural meanings they use daily. It is the one systematic approach in the social science that leads us into those separate realities, which others have learned and which they use to make sense out of their worlds (Spradley 1980: vii)”.

According to Spradley ethnography is the hallmark of cultural anthropology, which involves the study of human culture, where one goes out and gains insights through first-hand experience, which is grounded in the psychical presence of the researcher in the field, where time is spend with the people under study. The many ways of doing ethnography depends on numerous styles ranging from interviewing, observing, participating in activities, taking field notes etc. In this process the researcher will most likely learn how to recognize traits that characterizes a culture, but also how to unify this into a research that inquires to describe and explain (Spradley 1980: 3). In order to discover the “hidden” principles of another way of life, the researcher must become a student, which means that rather to study people, ethnography means learning from people. One of the central elements when doing ethnography is therefore to leave behind preconceived notions, as ethnography hearts the people under study, and therefore it is very important to be open and not judgmental when people ‘invites’ one to see how they live and act (ibid). The method is therefore a learning process where the participant under study leads the direction, by expressing matters significant to them with their own words and actions. Spradley writes “The central aim of ethnography is to understand another way of life from the native point of view (Spradley 1980: 3)”. The data that the researcher acquires is therefore explicitly achieved with direct or indirect contact with people in the field. By direct contact we mean explicit interaction with the people under study, and with indirect contact we mean observing without interfering in their activities. The gathered data which is gained through direct or indirect contact is then used in the process of building in-depth understanding about the people under study, and develops a cycle of theory building. Spradley writes “Before you impose your theories on the people you study, find out how those people define the world (Spradley 1980: 14)”, and he continuous by saying “Ethnography alone seeks to document the existence of alternative realities and to describe these realities in their own terms (ibid)”. This means that ethnographic research provides a framework in which the researcher is encountered with various ways of intellectualizing the obtained data. However, this entails that the researcher systematically reviews, reflect and put the data into perspective as it will lead one to, what Spradley calls “epistemological humility”, as the researcher becomes aware of the tentative nature of knowledge, where Spradley refers to an understanding of the limits of knowledge (Spradley 1980: 15). This means that when doing ethnographic research one needs to have enough self-perspective, to know that one do not ultimately know everything. However, this does not mean that the researcher should not aim high, it means that one should not pretend that knowledge is reached to the fullest. Socrates famously stated “The only real wisdom is knowing you know nothing”. This quote is an excellent example to use in the context of epistemological humility emphasized by Spradley as it illustrates that rather to make claims of knowledge, one should be conscious on ones limits on knowledge as this will reveal that what one knows ideally only shows how little one actually knows. In relation to being social constructivists we consider the information we gained from our research as a ‘piece’ of knowledge that should not be reduced to one ultimate explanation but rather as a fraction of what is yet to be known about this field. Spradley discusses that cultural knowledge is limitless, which means that what one often experiences when conducting research is only the surface of knowledge. Spradley emphasizes that peoples actions and thoughts are reliant on a vast range of factors. The researcher must therefore spend time with the people under study in their various psychical and social environments in order to unfold and describe these factors. Spradley states “Although we can easily see behavior and artifacts, they represent only the thin surface of a deep lake. Beneath the surface, hidden from view, lies a vast reservoir of cultural knowledge (Spradley 1980: 6)”. This means that by spending time with the people under study one goes beyond this surface in order to inquire meaning and understanding of structures like behavior and agency.

## A Methodological Challenge

Before we did our research we became aware that there is a widespread acknowledgment that ethnographic studies could be challenging and that this method would consume significantly more time compared to other methods. However, even though that we were also faced with this challenge, as we used a lot of resources both financial and personal while conducting this research, we consider ourselves better positioned as researchers because we undertook this research area with patience and humbleness which ethnography indeed requires while exploring the cultural others. It must be noted that our fieldwork was conducted within a period of six days, where some may question if this is at all an ethnographic study. We acknowledge this view and therefore approach this method with modesty and stress that this study should be recognised as a contribution to a greater academic field. We consider the ethnographic method suitable in relation to our research field, as it is our aim to convince and present the reality of the events and situations described. We argue that ethnography is not just a research that simply presents a set of findings, but we rather consider this method as a tool that provided a confident account of the group and culture in question. In other words it is important for us to present a social reality that has strong claims to truth.

## Person of interest

Ethnography also account for social and cultural variation, but also conceptualizing and understanding similarities between social systems and human relations. Humanity is therefore the object and sets to answer what do people have in common and in how different they are.[[14]](#footnote-14) Ethnography is therefore about getting to know, understand and learn about people that we often are unfamiliar with or in this case, go behind the social labels that African homeless migrants often carries with them. This means that ethnography to a certain extent acknowledge the diversities that do exists between people in this world. Spradley emphasises that in order to understand the striking diverse feature of human beings the researcher must first begin by wisely describing these diversities. It should be noted that it is one thing to describe differences, and another to account for them (Spradley 1980: 13). We find this factor important in relation to our study as our main purpose is to recognise individuals as separate unique characters, as we try to detach ourselves from group based definitions of homeless African migrants. We therefore stress that diversity should not mainly be seen as something that often is emended in “us” and “them”, but rather, according to Spradley contributes directly to both describing and explaining of variations and sameness in human social culture (ibid). This means that while doing research a certain comparison will arise as the research develops. However we stress that this comparison does not only refer to the difference between “us” and “them” but more likely reveals the similarities that do exist between humans. As mentioned Spradley stated that before the researcher imposed various theories on the people under study, it is important to find out how those people define the world (Spradley 1980: 14). This is exactly the procedure we will make use of, as we consider this way more suitable as we will detach ourselves from the public domain that has already foisted certain ideas about this group. This means that the people under study will describe their reality in their own terms which we consider more valid instead of us leading them and describing what we think about them. A central core within ethnographic research is also how to consider the complexities of the events under study, because “reality” can be difficult to explain. The reason lies in the changes in the human situations that occur constantly. As mentioned ethnography is to explain the shared and learned, in other words a credible account of a cultural reality that is in constant movement. This kind of research can therefore not be reduced to a laboratory experiment. Instead the ethnographic approach aims to study outside of a ‘controlled environment’. This is exactly one of the many challenges that a researcher might face, as the subjects of study can change as the result of numerous factors ranging from innovation to conflicts etc. (Murchison 2010: 8-9). We were aware of that due to our informant’s status as undocumented homeless migrants it could problematize our research as they are at constant risk of deportation and arrest. We therefore stress that it is uttermost important for enhancing the process of ethnographic fieldwork to consider and reflect on the many challenges and changes there will be while conducting this kind of research. By pointing out that we as researchers should prepare how to respond to obstacles and challenges during our fieldwork, means that we to some extent will be able to fulfil the agendas that we had planned in the early process of this research. We also fast came to learn that taking and ethnographic approach also meant not being able to control the settings that we became a part of. We basically did not plan day by day where to meet or where to go with our informants. In order to experience their daily life, we choose to meet up with them where they were, instead of trying to arrange a meeting point, which meant taking them out of their settings. We furthermore did not try to impact where we should go put rather tried to follow them to places which they go normally.

## Given Voice

By stressing the importance of researching on this topic we underline the need for our informants of study to be seen as active agents that produces knowledge. We therefore argue that by enabling this formation of knowledge with our informants it can empower and give voice to the group who we consider are frequently unable to make their voice heard. However we find it important to underline that we do not make the assumption that our informants are incapable of representing themselves, because we to some extent give them voice in this research. Malinowski, Polish-British social anthropology stresses,

“The native takes his fundamental assumptions for granted, and if he reasons or inquiries into matters of belief, it would be always in regard to detail and concrete applications. Any attempts on the part of the ethnographer to induce those informants to formulate such a general statement would have to be in the form of leading questions of the worst type because in these leading questions he would have to introduce words and concepts essentially foreign to the native. Once the informant grasped their meaning, his outlook would be warped by our ideas having been poured into it. Thus, the ethnographer must draw the generalizations for himself, must formulate the abstract statement without the direct help of a native informant” (Spradley: 1980: 11)

Malinowski reinforces a certain power relation which we consider to exclude informants from the process of creating knowledge about themselves. Though that may be the case, we find it relevant and important to recognize, that we as researchers should try to avoid inviting to certain power structures. That said, given this critique, it is also important to ask whether this is avoidable when doing ethnography. It must be noted that on the one hand the best of intentions can become what we deterministic as a ‘tool’ that actually has the control to oppress ‘reality’ presented by our informants. Malinowski’s extract mentioned above indicates that it is possible to change something in the mind set of people under study. We therefore stress that having this in mind, we as researchers should try to avoid this in the best manner, as it does not equal reality or truth. When we started to do ethnographic research we soon realised that this method indeed reveal that the role the researcher has in the research settings, shows that the researcher is a dominant figure in the construction and explanation of the knowledge drawn from the informants. The method can thus be described as a method that gives voice to people, that we argue is in vulnerable situations. However, this does not mean that we as researchers in this thesis try to claim upon knowledge, but rather refer to that we as researchers do not favour that our empirical study should initially be viewed as a research that restrict to one single definition of knowledge. Instead this research should be viewed in a greater context where it should enrich exciting knowledge on this topic. Arguably this topic is in need of great attention, as it is often how others view them that seem to dominate the existent discussion on this matter, instead of giving a voice to the group itself.

Accepting that our empirical findings are a ‘piece of knowledge’ in a greater coherence, withhold that we favour a single dominant explanation. We find it important to be self-reflective constantly as we recognize this limitation on ‘being the voice’ of others. This is not to say that we as researchers endeavoured to find a way of vocalising hidden narratives, but rather that we re-thought the process of constructing how to present their world view on their premises. Spradley writes about how ethnography is a method in the service of human kind. He writes “Cultural description can be used to oppress people or to set them free (Spradley 1980: 17)”. This is a highly noteworthy quote, because Spradley points out that knowledge is power, and with that power comes certain responsibilities (ibid). It is remindful that Spradley emphasises that ethnography is a service of human kind. This means that he broadly defines this method as something uniquely for approaching the people under study, and to a certain extent meeting human needs through an interdisciplinary method like ethnography. It is our aim to ensure that we as researchers conduct this research in their interests and priorities when we shape all stages of our research process. The critical perspective we have on the aspect when given voice to our informants, also stresses the importance of what should be identified and selected, as it is our aim to give an accurate picture of their lives, and how they define the world.

## Fieldwork

A term closely linked to ethnography is fieldwork, which is based on the collection of “firsthand” data, gathered from direct and indirect contact with the individuals in the research setting of choice. The information which is collected is then used in the processing of understanding and learning. The data that the researcher seeks, very much depends on who is being studied and which research setting one find themselves in (Jacobsen, Kristiansen 2001: 17-18). Two key procedures can be distinguished when speaking about fieldwork and collecting information for one’s research. The first one is called observational and the second one is called unstructured interviewing (Spradley 1980: vi). In this research we made use of both procedures in order to produce a vivid picture of our social setting and the people within. This is also called participant-as-observer (Bryman 2008: 410). In this role our informants was aware of our role as researchers. We were engaged in regular interactions with our informants in their daily lives while we were in Copenhagen. This meant that we both observed but also interacted with our informants in the form of interviews, but also conversations that was out of the ordinary frame of interview guides (Bryman 2008: 410). Alan Bryman, Professor in Social Research, believes that this role carries certain risks, as the researcher is faced with a status of “going native” (Bryman 2008: 410). What he means is that it can be both complex and challenging to be an “insider” who gradually will gather intimate knowledge of the people under study, and an “outsider” that to some extent needs to distance themselves from these people in order not to get deeply involved, which eventually may result in a shattered picture, as the researcher might lose sight of his initial purpose of the study. Moreover, this also means that the researcher would typically try not to become an acting agent in the context, which means that the researcher suggest a more detached perspective, where the researcher is watching rather than taking part in the social settings (Bryman 2008: 410). While we agree with this risk, we also argue that it can be very beneficial for the research to have such relationship as it will eventually result in details that we most likely would be without. A former ethnographic project that we conducted on *Thai migrants working in prostitution in Denmark* speaks directly to this point. From this project we learnt that relationships with ones informants actually can be very gainful as we were accepted by them as “insiders”. This meant that we were given explicitly information that we would be without otherwise, if this relationship with our informants was not established. Therefore we argue, that the role that a researcher has is essential for the overall output of the research. We believe it is very important to find out how ones role should be accepted by the informants. We consider the role “researcher with no bounding to informants” is more authorised and may therefore generate some power relations. Moreover, when considering the fact that our field has to do with people in vulnerable situations could mean that these people would rather see equality than inequality when we as researchers are invited into their universe. We argue that homeless migrants are constantly encountered with inequality in their daily lives. Therefore we stress that one should avoid taking the full position as a researcher, as this perhaps would diminish the trust and close doors of opportunities and information’s. However, it can be questioned if this is rightful knowledge as the researcher immerses themselves in the new world ‘by going native’. According to Kirstin Hastrup, Professor of Anthropology, a certain distance must be utilized, so one can identify the realities that are important for the action patterns that are presented. Therefore, one should according to Hastrup establish a balance, where on one hand, one should not ‘go native’, and on the other hand, one must understand that the knowledge is experienced bodily and also reflected (Fibiger 2000: 73-74). Spradley states “… At the same time, the ethnographer can hardly ever become a complete participant in a social situation (Spradley 1980: 51)”. Therefore this means that there will always be a division between researcher and informant, which hold the researcher in a conscious position as “the researcher”. Spradley states,

“You probably is simultaneous insider/outsider experience all the time. On some occasions you may suddenly realize you have been acting as a full participant, without observing as an outsider. At other times you will probably be able to find an observational post and become a more detached observer. Doing ethnographic fieldwork involves alternating between the insider and outsider experience, and having both simultaneously (Spradley 1980: 57)”.

We therefore stress that there exist different layers of research positions that to some extent determine how one will be accepted in the social settings, and further also determine the validity of knowledge. The outcome is therefore based on how the researcher immerses in the social settings and how involved they become with their informants. It must be noted that we alone do not carry the position as researchers, but also carry other subject positions like gender, age, appearance, nationality, personality etc., which also plays an important role in the interplay with informants (Kristiansen & Krogstrup 1999: 118). This means that they do not simply relate to us as researchers but arguably also as a potential resource giving our status and positions. In other words they may also learn from us as young women who come from the ‘outside’ and thereby, their notions about us may be challenged and reconsidered. When doing observation it is important to paint a clear picture of the setting in question in order to get a thick description, which set to describe behaviour, situations and realities (Munck 2009: 188).

Another aspect of our fieldwork is unstructured interviews, that has no format and the researcher therefore chose the questions depending on the informant and the given situation. This also means that this form of interviewing is much more casual and unrehearsed. In unstructured interviews there is a minimum of control, which means that the researcher asks open-ended questions on a general topic and thereby allows the informant to respond using their own words (Bryman 2008: 436-437). For our research this procedure meant that we gave our informants the opportunity to talk openly and freely within the themes that we as researchers presented, but it also allowed new themes to grow while we interviewed, because the direction was not set like structured interviews, and thereby it allowed new research topics to arise. We discovered important data while we made use of this procedure, which we believe we would not be able to see otherwise if the interview was structured in advance. We experienced that our interviews allowed us to see patterns of significant information due to its parallels with normal conversations. For this reason we consider this method more beneficial when researching sensitive topics, such as homeless African migrants in vulnerable situations, as we gained honest answers that had a lot of emotions and feelings attached to them. It must be noted that we had planned a series of questions before we found our informants. These questions were utilized, however, not to the extent that we had in mind in the beginning of our research. Although a researcher has an aim for the research there are no established questions as such when employing the unstructured interviewing technique. This also mean that we as researchers can ask our informants questions based on their previous answers and get deeper knowledge of these answers (Ibid ). In this way we give our informants the opportunity to raise subjects that we most likely would be unfamiliar with and moreover, take us in their chosen direction. As mentioned we managed to build a good relationship of trust with our informants, which we argue encouraged to complete honesty in their answers. However one may keep in mind that honesty is one thing and keeping details from us is another. We argue that even though that we were given great information, it does not equal that the knowledge we were given was absolute and complete, because knowledge is limitless as mentioned earlier. The information can also be withheld by our informants, who may not feel it necessary to share everything with us.

## Placed In Vulnerable Situations

We argue that homelessness is not just a housing issue but something that is inextricably linked with complex and chaotic life experiences in the form of problems, discrimination, alcohol/drugs abuse and institutional experiences (such as prison and the Danish health care system) (järvinen & Tigersted 1992: 26. We therefore categorize this area of research to be extremely demanding and hard to operate in, as these homeless African migrants are placed in vulnerable situations. Despite our prior assumptions to this field we found it important to understand and see beyond our biases that we had before we started this research, and engage ourselves in the world of our informants, because it allowed us to see patterns of behaviour in their lives as being rationally and intuitively for them (Hastrup & Ovesen, 1995: 14-16).

## The Power of Tools and Settings

In our research we made use of the old fashioned way namely notepaper and a simple tape recorder in order to capture all the small details, when we entered the field. Our previously mentioned project on Thai migrants enhanced our ability to deploy ethnographic methods where we learned that they both carry advantages and disadvantages. This meant that even when carrying such innocent tools when entering new environments meant that they could result in certain challenges. For instance we learned intuitively, how to close-read when to record and when to write down notes, or completely omit both. This was related to what our informants talked about, what mood they were in as they at some points could seem a bit stressed and angry, and also when they requested us not to record or write down. We noticed that one of informants showed concern about being recorded, but then stated that “if you feel like you need to record this then you can record it, I just don't see why” (Emmanuel). This was said after we asked and explained why we wanted to record, and we considered that his statement was an indication that he understood why we wanted to record the conversation, however he did not agree with our argument and it was a polite manner of declining the recording. We therefore did not ask again if we could record our conversations.

By giving three completely different examples from our field, we wish to outline how important it is to be observant within a research field. The first social setting was when we invited our informants out for lunch on a snack bar. It should be noted that we invited them individually as we wished to create a trustworthy friendly bond with our informants, which we believe was more likely to be obtained when speaking and interviewing them separately, because they would first and foremost learn about us, and secondly we would be able to observe more than just verbal responses. However it should be noted that we at one point during our fieldwork was also able to interview them all at once, similar to a focus group where people generally are asked the same questions (Bryman 2008: 488-489). However most of our materials are based on individual interviewing. We consider this strategy of speaking with them individually more fruitful because this face-to-face communication with them individually gave us much more information, because it goes beyond verbal expression, where we focused on words, facial expressions and body language.

Within the snack bar scenario, we had consequently decided not to record or write down notes when we were eating together with them. The underlying basis for this decision was in order to show our informants respect by not openly interviewing them within the presence of other guests on the snack bar. We argue that interviewing openly can jeopardise the way a researcher is perceived by ones informants. The main purpose is to not bring any attention to a group that perhaps is already avoiding this. One must remember that the presence of others in such interview setting may place them in an awkward position feeling degraded, which is certainly against all rules when doing ethnography. Moreover, the issue which we wished to address during our interviews, were also of a sensitive character and thus, it might have been embarrassing for our informants to speak about publicly with other guests present. A respect must therefore come into force when researching individuals, where everything is not always done by the book. Both from our previous ethnographic study on Thai migrant women and this study, we experienced that this is an obvious consideration to take in regards to the people under study. However this is not to say that this procedure is easy and as straightforward as it could seem. There is substantial work to be done after one leaves the social setting. For instance it is very demanding to write down everything that was only heard and spoken verbally. This means that a researcher must be very sharp, when remembering everything when omitting the tools notepaper and tape recorder. We argue that it is important to be self-reflective under such circumstances, because we as researchers must note how our presence might alter the environment and the people within.

Secondly in other scenario we made use of both the tape recorder and the notebook thoroughly. This was for instance done when we interviewed on a library. It must be noted that we will not present details on where this library is placed in respect to our informants who often come there. We consider a library as an organ that support teaching, learning and researching, and with so many diverse groupings ranging from young to old, from black to white and many others in this setting, we considered that this scenario would not draw any attention to us while we interviewed and spoke with our informants, because people could in fact just assume that we were students and studying together.

The last setting was when we were on the shelter, which we define to be a sensitive area which needed to be respected, and further not cause any ‘harm’ towards the people coming there. This means that we as researchers must remember that this place is somehow the only place that our informants found peaceful, and where they knew they would not be judged as homeless migrants. This is not to say that the setting removes them from their status as homeless migrants, as we argue that a shelter also holds them in a position as homeless migrants and remind them of this. The evening that we where we were invited into the shelter clearly revealed that these people were tired and exhausted after almost a whole day outside. This meant that we only made use of our notebook partially, because we had no intend to inflict an idea of that we would appear ruthless and only came for selfish reasons without worrying about them as humans as well. To give an example we experienced that many of our informants believed that we would forget them after finishing our fieldwork, and therefore not come back because our work was obtained, which could give rise to certain ideas about how we as female Danish students were perceived in the beginning. This experience will be elaborated further in our analysis.

We meet three of our informants at the shelter and we quickly fell into a conversation with them. As mentioned we only made use of our notebook partially, because we did not want to appear ruthless. But secondly it also established a good contact with them, as we had eye contact and was more deepened in their stories which for instance would be impossible if we just had our heads buried in our notebook. The three scenarios mentioned above demonstrates that it is a matter of choice when deciding which tools to apply when interviewing and which tools that indeed can jeopardize both the relation to informants but also the knowledge given by them.

In addition to noting and tape recording Spradley emphasises that as a researcher should keep a journal that to some extent functions as a diary that contain a record of experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes and problems that arose during the fieldwork. He states that is it beneficial to reread ones journal at a later time, as one can quickly forget what occurred during the first days and weeks. This means that when one begins to write up the study, the journal becomes essential for remembering (Spradley 1980: 71). We also made use of this option, but decided to blend our journal partly with our field notes, so they supplemented one another. Spradley states,

“Many people look within themselves to assess how they feel about particular experiences. In routine, ordinary activities, such as crossing the street or purchasing a coke from a vending machine, we do not become very introspective to our inner state. However, when an unexpected event occurs, such as an auto accident or failing an exam, we engage in more introspection (Spradley 1980: 57)”.

This point is very relevant in connection to our pre-notions about how to remain as observers in different research settings and what tools to apply, because we eventually learn to understand new situations and to gain skills at following cultural rules. According to Spradley introspection, which means self-examination, will greatly enrich the data that the researcher gathers through observation (Spradley 1980: 58), but we also underline that by constructing and deconstructing an idea about when, where and how to use tools, we also come to realize that even the smallest element like a tape recorder and notes paper can have tremendous significance on once research and its output.

## Protection and Privacy of Informants

Once an informant is identified and known, certain areas of their lives needs to be respected and protected, which will be elaborated further in the section “Ethical Concerns”. The focus of protecting informants is to insure that they do not endure any harm or risk as a result of their participation (Spradley 1980: 23). When we got in contact with our informants, it was important from the very beginning to state what our research was about. This was done in order for them to decide for themselves if they had the interest in participating, and also not to undue pressure from us. Our informants were also given information about our research in such form, that we could reasonably assume that it was understood. We experienced a lot of reluctance when we first introduced ourselves as students with the aim to conduct a research on them. We stress that it is extremely important to clear any questions that informants might have in relation to one’s research, in order to avoid any misunderstandings in the research progress. Our informants initially agreed to participate in our research as we would not reveal their true identity. This meant that we in this research had to consider the aspect of anonymity, which will be given to our informants throughout this research. It must be noted that this anonymity was not just given while we conducted this research, but was still kept confidential after. The information that was given by our informants will be used only within this research and not be misused in other ways.

Some scenarios will be described but not described in such way, that others will be able to recognize place and persons. On the side of caution we decided to change their names and omit the names of the places they come. Yet it is presented that our study was conducted in Copenhagen, as most homeless migrants tend to settle down in capital cities as mentioned. Age, nationality and background will only be presented while other potential information will be excluded in respect for our informants. However, we will be given our informants other names as it gives them an identity position which we argue that would not be possible if we did used names for them. Further it also enhances their characters as they are not anonymous to the readers, as they often are to the public.

Furthermore our informants have been aware of that they were entitled to reject to be recorded, filmed and noted for specific details. At one point we experienced a direct confrontation when we approached our informant John. He was very doubting when we asked him if we could interview him for our research, as he believed that we could just as well be from the Danish secret service and not students as we claimed to be. What was noteworthy was that this informant was in close friendship with two of our other informants that we have built a very good trust foundation with, and In spite of this he showed concern. It must be noted that this behaviour to some extent portrays that he is perfectly capable of being an acting agent, and taking own decisions without being influenced by us or our other informants that knew him. In exchange to convince him of our true identity we gave him our student card, which he looked at for a while before he agreed to be a part of this research. It may be argued that this confrontation was also to demonstrate that he was not naive and to show us that he had been in Denmark for longer time than the others. In many ways the entire protection and privacy review process is about ensuring the wellbeing of the informants who make our study on homeless African migrants possible and meaningful.

## Being a Female Researcher in a Man's World

In this section we will address certain aspects of being a female researcher in this field and how this position was accepted by our informants. We experienced that while we conducted this research it became personal, and a feeling of empathetic was prevalent as we became witnesses of a life that we understood to be very harsh and difficult. Being a homeless migrant in Denmark in these days arguably does not comply with the notion of the happy drunk vagabond, but more likely to do with a lack of a working permit and thus an income possibility.

One of the social workers we were in contact with stated, that we should take our precautions when being around these people. She stated “Don’t be naive”, meaning that people in desperate situations may do desperate things. In relation to this it should be mentioned that personal safety is important, but seldom addressed in ethnographic literature (Jacobsen, Kristiansen 2001: 10). However, this does not mean that one should not take their precautions when doing fieldwork. Our goal as researchers was therefore not only to ensure protecting our informants, but also to ensure the physical safety for ourselves while conducting this research among people that we consider is in vulnerable situations. It can be discussed that this may be a bit to dramatize the situation. However, one must remember that some homeless people becomes involved with drug/alcohol abuse, may have psychological problems or have a violent behaviour (Projekt Udenfor 2012: 10). This means that these facts must not be taken for granted, and must be considered before one starts to research in this field. Throughout our fieldwork, we nevertheless experienced any harm or danger when engaging in interaction with our informants.

We argue that there is certain aspect that needs to be addressed as we are female researchers in what we determine as “a man’s world”. We stress that this issue is important, but perhaps frequently overlooked as it seems that very little research has been done on this. Arguably it may be too few who enter in certain male dominated field settings, as some may only achieve superficial acceptance from their informants due to the different positions that researchers inhabits. With great help from our informants and social workers, we were given a unique opportunity to see the many facets of homeless African migrant lives which the vast majority of the population are prevented from experiencing. In many ways it was rewarding to know that we as female researchers were given this opportunity of experiencing a different setting in which the male role dominated, and also representing this gender. For us it was very important to enter the field without having preconceived notions about the homeless African migrants as stated earlier. However we argue that even such attempt, may not eliminate the context in which many of these homeless migrants are presented in. The mind-set we adopted was friendly, open and helpful when we first meet our informants, which we determine to be of great importance as this breaks the gap between us as researchers from another social context than theirs. Further we also showed a great deal of self-confidence as this did not leave any space for us to be labelled as “frivolous” and “afraid”. We argue that the way our informants experienced us was very positive, as we as young female researchers showed up at the shelter where we were surrounded by 20 other men, and further still made the first approach towards our informants. This specific setting could questionably be seen as too dramatic by some. However in our context it was a matter of choice to present ourselves as strong female characters, as this role was indeed a role that we could identify ourselves with. It was further experienced that three of our informants were a bit tense when we first interviewed them, but relaxed and spoke openly about their lives and themselves in our second interview. We stress that many interviews starts in such way, however we also consider this certain tension in the beginning could be caused by our gender as it may seemed a bit taboo-breaking for them as men to openly speak about feelings, thoughts and experiences in front of two young female researchers. It was important for us that our informants felt relaxed, but also that we showed interest in their versions of life and further have respect for what is said. For us as female researchers it was very hard to not show any empathy towards our informants, which in many ways reveal that we are all just humans that has the ability to recognize and understand the feelings of others. This meant that it was sometimes hard to suppress the feelings that sometimes were inside us when they for instance spoke about the loss of family, the journey overseas to get to Europe and the status that prevented them to get access to prober help.

Early in our research phase one of the social workers we were in contact with told us that we should be aware that when we came to the shelter it would only be homeless men, and that these men would most likely show interest in us, because we were young women. This was especially one aspect which is noteworthy as we experienced a lot of interest from the men. When we first came to the shelter, many of them greeted us nicely and smiled, and we noticed a certain curiosity from all of them. It must be noted that we were the only two women among 20 men besides three other female social workers. When we came to the shelter we approached the homeless African men who sat together at one table. We started off our conversations by speaking about how they were doing, and that we were invited by one of the social workers who was also present that evening. This was our first meeting with our informants, which at that point was not part of this study. One of the first things they observed was the engagement ring one of us had on. One of the informants asked what the ring was for, almost well aware that it was a commitment ring, but still asked to get this confirmed. When we told him that both of us were married, his friend, who was also an African, laughed and said something which we did not understand. However by reading their body language it was obvious that he made a joke out of it, because he clapped our informant on the shoulder, almost comforting him for aiming too high. One of the social workers told us that some of these men believe in a brighter future in Denmark if they found a potential woman with Danish citizenship to marry. However, the social worker also stated “who want to marry a homeless guy?”. It is therefore evident that the social worker believed that some of these men have deep interest in marrying a woman with Danish citizenship as this can perhaps be their only solution to get rid of the status as undocumented migrants. Additionally our informants were also very interested in knowing about our husbands and how they treated us, and at one point one of our informants asked if our husbands were familiar with our interactions with them, and if they would get jealous. What was noticeable was that he did not refer to himself as a homeless young guy, but rather positioned himself as a male friend that we were hanging out with. We define this to be a very positive gesture because it reveals that our informants felt comfortable when we were with them and followed them around. The behaviour that our male informants showed reveals much about how our gender was accepted by them. We determine that our position as female researchers was less likely seen as authoritative, because we did not appear particularly threatening to them. As a result this meant that our informants actually began to help us to find new informants, and created the ‘snowball effect’ mentioned earlier. They literally took the responsibility to show us around in the city to the places they come, which we consider to be a very masculine role. It must be noted that all of our conversations and interviews was in English, as many of them only spoke their ‘African’ mother tongue and English, which they had learned in school or by themselves.

## Giving Money

The practice of giving money to informants for their participation in research is not a new phenomenon.[[15]](#footnote-15) However, the issue of paying seems to serve as a point of debate for many researchers. We discovered that there were widespread opinions on this matter, and most of these were often related to ethical concerns. For instance some researchers express concern, because they believe that such procedures can induce informants to take part in a study, that they otherwise would not be part of. While other researcher’s raises the spectre of encouraging informants to produce “a good story”, because of the compensation made.[[16]](#footnote-16) In both ways we stress that payment can have significant influence on one’s research, and we further argue that the matter of giving money to informants needs to be considered in relation to the particular study and the situation which the researcher is part of. Before we undertook our research we also considered the aspect of payment, because the issue of money comes into particular sharp focus. However, we stress that giving money is not a benign act without consequences, and therefore we argue that the practice needs to be debated before one can go out and pay informants for their participation.

We distinguished between three relevant areas that we argue should be discussed when considering payment in one’s research. Firstly we discussed about the people in our research. One must remember that our informants are young men but also homeless, but all of them have gone from home to the street due to the finance crisis in Europe. For us it was therefore very important not to give them an idea that we paid them out of pity and that we felt sorry for them. We stress that this in fact could implicate our relationship with them as we argue that it could place them in an awkward position where they could feel embarrassed and feel that they were framed in a ‘beggar position’. Also taking into consideration that we are females and as males, they might have felt embarrassed. Harvey Bernard, Professor in Anthropology, states “If you are studying elites in your own culture, then payment is inappropriate. If you are studying elites in an African village, then payment may be mandatory (Bernard 2000: 354)”. This is a very relevant extract in this relation because it is pointed out that the issue of paying informants essentially depends on where the money is most needed and wanted. Secondly we considered compensation for informants for the inconvenience posted by our research, such as the time required to participate and meant the loss of time from work/ bottle collection. We emphasise that these should be included in the practice for addressing these concerns, particularly for our research, that poses little or no direct benefit for our informants. Thirdly, we considered the amount to be given to them for their participation, and thought a lot about what was actually reasonable to pay people that we knew in advance had a little to do with in their daily lives. Yet, being students also meant that we ourselves had few financial resources to give from, despite our effort to seek for funds we did not manage to get this for our research. We argue that it is a diffuse task to determine whether the payment is reasonable (200 kroner). We stress that in a research informants should be paid enough to make up for their time and trouble, yet not so much that their decision to volunteer in a study is influenced by the amount offered. We have taken a different and unusual approach in this research, which we stress serves more impartially, because we paid our informants by the end of the interviews, and them not knowing that we would pay them. In this situation we felt that it was more natural to give them money by the end of the interviews, as this somehow showed our appreciation for their participation. Further, if we had settled an amount with them from the beginning, we stress that certain power relations perhaps would arise between informant and researcher, as we would position ourselves better economically. However, in this relation it can be argued whether if this also was the case when we invited them individually out for lunch. We do not consider inviting them out for lunch creates power divisions between us, as we argue that this does not carry the same image as money does. Furthermore we argue that our relationship with them would perhaps not have been the same if we had offered them money in exchange for their participation, because they could perhaps have an idea that we thought that ‘anything could be bought’ for money as we economically were better positioned than them. As demonstrated ‘giving money’ is a very complex issue as money can serve differently in various research context. However, in this research we decided to give our informants money, even though that this was not a settle agreement, and we therefore avoided the power structure that could have been created if the money was introduced in the beginning of the research.

# **Ethical Concerns**

Integrity in the conduct of research has been defined as an individual's commitment “to intellectual honesty and personal responsibility” that embraces “excellent, trustworthiness and lawfulness” (Casebolt 2012: 4). As researchers we find that responsible conduct of research has just as much to do with upholding a high standard, and being ethically responsible than merely avoiding questionable research practices. Especially in the field of irregular migration there can be many ethical and moral pitfalls which we as researchers have to be aware of, and take into consideration throughout the whole thesis process. It is clear to us that sensitivity is needed when we conduct research with individuals in a vulnerable position. Moreover, we believe that the benefits of undertaking the research needs to considered against the risk to the participants who are involved in the research.

One of our thoughts related to this study is the political implications that our new-found information could become associated with. We did not want to supply information which could be used to find our informant or be a tool in curbing migration. Neither did we wish to make a study which would cater to a certain political standpoint. Catering to a specific political standpoint would signify losing the objective of our study, as we do not want to address our informants as illegal or problematic, on the contrary we want to address our informants as humans equal to us but who finds themselves in troublesome life situations. Anette Brunovskis (2010: 47-69) has done research on irregular migration in Norway and in relation to her study, she does some reflection on the potential ethical dilemmas which a researcher inevitably will face when researching in this particular field. Before beginning her study, she speculated what her role as a social researcher should be; should she avoid entering into any context that could contribute to control policies? Is it advocacy? To bring unhampered knowledge and not to pass judgement on possible policies? Like Brunovskis, we also had to consider our role in this social research and decide what we wish to achieve by doing this study. We found that our role is to portray a different image, than the one of the general public, of some who lives in exclusion from the broader society. This might entail aiming criticism at policies and institution. Our aim with the study is so forth not to look for potential negative aspects of a public system, which deals with migrants, rather we must emphasise that the overall aim is to gain insight into lives of people who find themselves in an unusual position in the Danish society where a concern about policies and institutions might be inescapable.

The recruitment of informants was a great concern of ours. Our informants are part of a so called 'hard to reach' or 'hidden' population, which means that they are very difficult to reach or to arrange an interview with (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Brunovskis write, that she did not want to visit state asylum centres as she was worried about the informant free and informed consent to participate (ibid). In our search for informant, we have chosen to solicit emergency shelters and other organisation which could help us in reaching our research community. We must conclude that making such a contact would be a breach on ethical guidelines according Brunovskis. We have however estimated that by contacting staff who would then speak to the users of emergency shelters, we could avoid users feeling pressured into participating in an interview. By simply showing up at the shelters without previous agreement with the staff, would have been a breach on ethical guidelines as it would have been a disruption of the organisations daily routine, and users might have felt forced to do an interview if we 'surprised' them in such manner. This has also meant that we did show up at emergency shelters where the staff had declined our request to visit, even though users have referred us to those locations. At the locations where we were agreed to visit, we assessed that the staff of the shelters had the sufficient professionalism to interact with the users within an ethical frame and had the ability to estimate, whether it would be crossing a boundary to ask users if they would be interested in speaking to us. We have furthermore in our contact to the staff emphasised that our recruitment of informants should not damage the trust between the users and the staff, and the staff could always withdraw their consent for us to visit the shelters. We wanted to make sure that the staff never felt obliged to help us even though they previously had agreed.

In regard to the aspect of a voluntary participation of the users, we can however not completely know with certainty that the users have not felt pressured to participate in an interview with us, because they could have expected either positive consequences of presenting themselves or negative consequences if not doing so. As researchers we cannot entirely control such dynamics (Achermann 2009: 64). From an ethical standpoint it was very important to us, to assure the informant that they did not have to speak about certain issues if they did want to, and during an interview they should not feel pushed or constrained, for that matter, to give us information. Prior to any interview and request for interviews we stressed that the informants should only speak about issues which they felt secure speaking about. We have at all times been aware of both the legal and private situation of our informants and we did not want any of our informants to feel endangered or unsafe because they had revealed private matters. Considering our informants as responsible, powerful, reflective actors who make choices about what they can/will share with us, we tried to be aware of any expression of such a refusal.

# **Practices Theory**

In this thesis we will focus on the lives of homeless African migrants in Denmark and explore the meanings they ascribe to their experiences and actions by utilising ethnographic research tools. We find that by taken the perspective of social practice theory and a focus on agency in this thesis, it can give us a good foundation for our analysis as we understand human actions to be directed, not only by norms or by individual interests, but rather a combination taking into consideration collective meanings and symbolic structures. We consider practice theory to be inevitable attached to theory on agency as what we do, is connected to our possibility of doing so, which means that we will clarify our position to both. We will therefore in the following address how we think of human’s ability to impact their own life choices or history, by taking into consideration norms and self-directions.

Practice theory is a philosophical and sociological approach considering practice as the core in analysis of social relation, recognising social order and actions through symbolic and cognitive structures and their ‘social construction of reality’ (Jensen 2011: 37; Reckwitz 2002:249-250). According to Skinner and Holland, (2008: 193) the aim of practice theory is to understand collective meaning systems as situated in social actions and individual development as they occur in practice. The social life is performative, meaning that this theoretical perspective focuses on social agency, its execution, performance and completion. The analytical vision is therefore directed at everyday practices in order to get insight into how agency is available or limited for humans by structure and previous experience. According to Sherry B. Ortner, (1984: 149) a study of practices is a study of all forms of human action but with a certain political perspective. When using practice theory as an analytical method towards understanding the process of a particular event, one is taking the people and their doings as a reference point. Practices are the moments where life is happening, social formations, cultures, opinions and mental order exist though these. The individual draw upon and develop through the cultural meanings which are embedded in everyday practices and discourses (Holland & Skinner, 2008: 194). The approach thereby allows us to consider cultural norms as an instrument that can identify and inform the individual’s on-going development of cultural specific knowledge of self. Practises are all collectively shared and organised patterns in our everyday life. The individual is considered to be the “carrier” of practices and as the crossing point of practices. Carriers of a practice, understands the world and themselves, and have know-how and motivations in accordance to the specific practice, which makes them neither autonomous or people who adhere to a norm (Reckwitz 2002: 250+256).

Newer theorists within practice theory argue that the theory is not an alternative to the study of system and structures impacting human actions, but rather practice theory should be considered as a necessary compliment to it. Practice theory seeks to describe and explain the relationship between human action and “the system”. Believing that “the system” has a very strong and determining effect upon human actions and event, however, the main interest is not to uncover where the system comes from, but how it is produced and reproduced. In practice theory it is emphasised that society and history are not just unplanned events and adjustment to certain stimuli, but rather “systems” governed by organisational and evaluative structures. It is these structures that constitute “the system” within institutional, symbolic, and material forms (Ortner 1984: 147-149).

Holland et al. seeks to explore the relation between the individual inner world and the social and cultural world of humans, and in order to understand how some practices are available and limited to persons, Holland et al. argue that we have to move beyond two general approaches to self-agency; the constructivist and culturalist. Both of these approaches alone are not adequately explaining self-agency, however, together they cover relevant aspects. Through the constructivist approach, identities and ideas about identities are imposed into the individual. One is considering what others might be thinking and expecting from him/her and then tunes the behaviours accordingly in order to avoid the judgement of others (Holland et al. 1998: 11). In the culturalist approach, people is considered to be driven by an internalised cultural logic and see identities to be embodied in the individual rather than imposed. This means that, people are controlled by their own thoughts and ideas when directing their behaviour and the forces that influences our behaviour is inherent and learned in childhood and thus difficult to change. Holland et al. claim that one approach should not exclude the other because action can often have more than one explanation (Ibid. 10).

Looking at human agency through the perspective of the constructivist and culturalist, we are able to consider humans as able to personalise practises with the possibility for self-direction, together with being social creatures who develop and draw upon cultural meanings that are embedded in everyday practices. Regarding social actions through a practice-oriented perspective, leave us able to focus on the social rather than solely considering the individual and its choice, and we are able to shed light on shared knowledge, systems, symbolic and cognitive structures which also influences our informants’ actions. In must be noted that we in this research do not idealise the idea of minimising collective actions to single acting subjects, rather we wish to pursue a methodology that allows us to take the single subject as being an expression of a larger collective level “History in institutional structures and history in person are never simple equivalents. Nor are they related to each other in unmediated, symmetrical, or predictable ways” (Holland & Lave 2000: 5). We further find that we are able to move away from a generalisation of the group, as with an agency perspective we acknowledge that our informants holds the capacity for agency where the study of their agency favours both the specific individual and the group, norms and rules of their social world. Our analysis will thus address a social world, that is, the world in which our informants live in, and therefore have to relate to. The constructivist and culturalist together with a practice perspective, makes us understand, that the actions of our informants are expressions of the cultural practices where an emphasis on agency does not remove the social settings, which they inevitable are participants and creators of. We are thus able to understand our informants’ ways of performing as rational accomplishments, but also as a response to structural characteristic. We further do not marginalise our informants as we see them as active agents who by no means are weak in their agency. We also find that our usage of ethnographic methods becomes relevant with an agency and practice oriented approach. For our analysis, knowledge about the local cultural or figured world, which our informants participate in, is important as it gives us insight into the understanding of events from how our informants construct and reason them. If one is not familiar with the meanings and practices connected to homelessness, West African migration, male positioning and other relevant structures of our informants’ lives, it would not be possible to carry out this kind of analysis we present here. This kind of knowledge calls for methods, like ethnography, that can explore in depth the meanings and relationships in what is being accounted for by our informants.

# **The Public Debate**

In this section we will present an insight into the public debate on homeless migrants in Denmark, as it is relevant to give a picture of how the public relate to this relatively “hidden” group in society. We will partially be analysing some of the issues that arise in the debate and we will draw perspective to relevant literature. Furthermore, this section is also important in relation to our analysis as it will serve as background knowledge when presenting our findings in our analysis. We find it essential to present the frame in which homeless migrants are presented in as it will give us insight into the dynamics which they might be responding to. Moreover, by looking into the various opinions on homeless migrants, we will be able to better comprehend the system and structures which they caught in between. We will present the material that we have gained from articles, political debates and reports that reveal the public opinion on homelessness of migrants living in Denmark. According to Teun Van Djik, the news we receive about our surrounding world often comes from the media, which means that people often rely on the media version of the particular matter in focus, because we are often not able to question it with our own experiences (Van Dijk 2006: 36). With that in mind, we will uncover aspects of the rhetoric which prevail in our general media.

It is our view that different opinions on how homelessness among migrants should be managed and solved. In 2012 Mikkel Warming, social Mayor in Copenhagen, said “…there has been too little focus on homeless migrants” (Information 26.05 2012). This indicates that this area is in the need of great attention and that it has been lacking so far. We argue that when issues like homelessness among migrants remains hidden, it is much easier for the general public to take no notice of it and pretend that poverty and homelessness are only matters relevant to some third-world country faraway. It should be noted that this section is based on research on the general public debate on homeless migrants, which means that homeless migrants from Europe and other third world countries are classified under the category “homeless migrants”. Therefore it is important for us to stress that we are not in favour of a categorization as our main point is to detach ourselves from group categorizations as we find that it often produces and reinforces stereotypically notions of groups. Having said this, we will in the best manner try to aim our focus on homeless African migrants, but we also have to draw on articles addressing homelessness among migrants in general as this group is often not divided by the journalists and politicians. We will present several aspects of the homeless migrant debate in order to present various notions of homeless migrants in the general debate. These aspects of the public discourse on homeless migrants range from insecurity, danger and the social responsibility component ingrained in the public domain.

## Human Polluters

The issue of homelessness among migrants as it appears today in the dominant discourse of media and politics, is connected to the idea that homeless migrants create danger on the Danish economy and bring harm to the public balance and safety. We discovered that especially Danish politicians addressed homelessness among migrants as a major social crisis that affects the Danish social system. Karen Jespersen (politician) stated,

 ”All EU citizens has the right to travel to another EU country to seek work, but it is a clear precondition that one is able to provide for themselves, while searching for work. The idea is therefore not to strain the social systems in the new country. Mainly no one in Denmark has previously challenged this restriction – if it was to be abolished, it would evidently create chaos within the social sphere (Politiken, 04.01.2008), (Politiken, 17.02.2012)”.

This statement reveals how homeless migrants are perceived as a social problem that burdens the society both economically and socially, in the sense that their presence requires more resources from society than they currently create for the Danish society. We therefore discovered that rather than to help the homeless migrants, the politicians are more concerned about how to control and protect the public from them. This means that the debate did not only address homeless migrants in terms of being “roofless” but it also places the homeless migrants in a discussion about national interests. Karen Hækkerup (politician) states,

“Homeless migrants without legal residence are a challenge. But it is my basic opinion that people without legal residence should not be in Denmark. Therefore, I believe that we should not have or attract them by offering the welfare services to them. That said, it is of course our responsibility as a welfare state to offer them shelter during the cold winter month (Kristeligt dagblad 28.09.2012)[[17]](#footnote-17)”.

It is clear that on the one hand the Danish system wants to take humanitarian concerns to homeless migrants, and on the other hand, there are considerations to be taken to preserve welfare benefits to Denmark's own citizens, and thus avoid making Denmark an attractive target for migrants who are vulnerable to becoming homeless.

In the book Purity and Danger by the British anthropologist Mary Douglas, one can read about her fieldwork in different cultures, and how these cultures relate to the idea of pollution and taboo. Her wide ranging examples direct towards the major problems that societies often face in terms of cultural rules. In other words, she portrays how moral values and social roles are upheld by beliefs about ritual cleanness and dirtiness, and how the role of rituals “purity” and “pollution” play in “primitive” and “progressive” societies. She argues that society consists of shared values and if these are not upheld, they are out of place. Her fieldwork presents the rare spectacle of a mind work, and her aspect of pollution can also be used to describe certain social rules in these days. It is evident that there prevails a certain “purity” discourse in the debate about homeless migrants. It can be argued that homeless migrants are considered to “pollute” the Danish society. We consider this discourse as a way to speak about humans as polluters that danger the rest of the society. Douglas argues the different ways of treating differences, by either ignoring or deliberately confronts the difference and try to form a new pattern in which it has a place (Douglas 1966: 38). What she means is that society has a strong way to standardize values in a community and that it is impossible not to be a receiver of this influence. She further states “… if uncleanness is matter out of place, we must approach it through order. Uncleanness or dirt is that which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained (Douglas 1966: 40)”. This extract is very noteworthy because it portrays how “the out of place” is to be controlled. This extract can also be used to describe the human pollution rhetoric homeless migrants are framed in. It became evident that one way of coping with the issue of homeless migrants, was to send them back to their host country, and therefore place the “problem” somewhere else. We stress that it is an easy solution to the “problem”, however it is questionable whether this in fact is a sustainable solution itself, as it seems like that the Danish government tries to place the “problem” someplace else by deporting them, and thereby ‘pollute’ somewhere out of reach for the government.

## The Moral Panic

As stated homeless migrants are labeled as ‘invaders’ who drains the social system where it became evident that this attitude towards them is resulted by insecurity for the imbalance they can cause in society and for the future, “Well, as it is today, it is better to be homeless in Denmark than unemployment, in for example, Bulgaria. So if we help more - well, then more will come, as it is better to live in Denmark (Kristeligt dagblad 17.01.2012)”. The reasons portrayed for irregular migration, or “pull factors” are clear. It is emphasized that people who are vulnerable to homelessness are seeking the economic opportunities afforded by the EU. The danger is exciting in the sense that suddenly we do not only have to fear the migrants who are in Denmark now, but it is presented through a fear of a possible migration influx, that is, there seem to be a chance that all unemployed Bulgarians will seek accommodation in Denmark. This insecurity can also be described as “moral panic”, which is a sociological term coined by the British sociologist Kenneth Thompson. The term “moral panic” is an indication of the threats to the ideals on the safe life that exist towards a society. Thompson emphasises that these moral panics often are produced by the mass media, and often triggered by an intrusion, and which eventually makes society’s morals and order to be the real “victim” (Thompson 1998: 29). We therefore argue that rather than seeing these homeless migrants as the real victims, the general debate instead points out that Danish welfare is the true victim by endorsing a discourse that consist of fear and insecurity. It can therefore be argued that one of the reasons why homeless migrants are required to be send back to their homeland is because of the “moral panic” they create in society. In many ways it seems that homeless migrants have been caught up in what we call “criminalization of poverty”, where homeless migrants has become a law enforcement matter, rather than a social issue. Hence, we argue that this way of handling homelessness among migrants somehow reveal a neo-liberalistic perspective as political decisions is a matter of necessities. Therefore new laws and enforcement are introduced to effectively solve these problems.

We consider the dominant debate on homeless migrants are ‘economically designed’ and aims to prevent any ‘mess’ in society. In other words this means that by sending them back or by limiting their possibilities when they are in Denmark they are hold down in poverty. To put it briefly these exclusion policies and wishing’s points point to the neo-liberalistic thinking, where the elite of the strong state with its interest to defend their respective economy and political importance. For instance we discovered that most politicians increasingly have moved towards enforcing law solutions that explicitly criminalize homeless migrants in response to their concern about their presence in the Danish society. In relation to this it is relevant to mention that several articles reveal that deportation and massive arrest on homeless migrants is reality, and something which will continue as these people has no legal ground for staying (Politiken 11.12.11, Politiken 18.07.11). The on-going use of criminal justice systems to manage homeless migrants seems to respond to the growing visibility of homeless migrants in Denmark, due to the exclusionary procedures that have wanted to restrict homeless migrants to inhabit the Danish public space. What we can see is that these restrictions appear through the representation of specific laws targeting the homeless migrants often with the consequence of detention and deportation. The rhetoric seems to be based on a “catch all” type of discourse. These specific law targets seem to be driven by the ideology of neoliberalism. In light of the discussion above, we wonder what drove this ‘criminalization of poverty’. We can see that for some it is the concern fatigue towards homeless migrants and the desire to ‘restore’ the Danish society in order to enhance stability and thereby be free of the “moral panic” they create. However, arguably, these influences dovetail within the increasingly dominant view that homeless migrants are disordered and misplaced in the Danish society. In addition to the widespread adoption of ‘order maintenance policy’ we present what Peter Hervik, professor in Anthropology, has termed “the annoying difference”, which provide an academic research account on how the Danes relate to the increasing multiculturalism (Hervik: 1999). Despite the fact that this book does not have its focal point on the integration and foreign policies, it is still very relevant in this relation as it reveal a dichotomy between the Danes and ‘The Other’. In this context “the annoying difference”, does not only seem to focus on the cultural aspect of the other, but also has to with the visible poverty that the public domain is annoyed by.

It can be argued that Denmark is not used to poverty in the degree that the homeless migrants represent, who are perceived to be in a contrast to the surrounding Danish civilisation. A article points directly to this point, “The European poverty is to be seen everywhere (Berlingske 28.05.2011)”, and in a another article it is stated “It is new for Denmark to relate to the aspect of poverty (Berlingske 25.02.2013)

## Dehumanised Humans

We argue that the frame in which homeless migrants are presented in somehow deprive them their humanness. As we presented homeless migrants are almost seen as the social outcasts of society and receive basically no assistance from the government. One can wonder if this way of seeing certain groups in society complies with a view that considers these people less human. For instance the public debate reveals that homeless migrants are not regarded with sympathy, but with suspicion, “Homeless migrants rush to emergency shelters. The shelters are for people, who normally sleep in the streets, but they must not be misused as “cheap hotels”[[18]](#footnote-18), and in another article Benedike Kjær, Danish politician, states, “We do not want emergency shelters to become magnets for poverty refugees (Politiken 02.12.10)”. This means that this group in society is unwanted, because they fall to the bottom with no resources to contribute to society, and when this is not possible for them, no one’s needs them, thus they become what Zygmunt Bauman, sociologist, calls ”human waste”. This term refers to the idea of the modern society that constantly is confronted with humans that we rather would be without. Bauman primarily aim to produce a social theory that explains the disposal of “human waste” in order to examine human inclusion and exclusion[[19]](#footnote-19) (Bauman, 2003). We relate this idea of “human waste” with the principles of the “untouchables” that exist within the caste system in India. Douglas states “A Brahmin should not be in the same part of his cattle shed as his untouchable servant, for fear that they may both step on places connected through overlapping straws on the floor….(Douglas 1966: 34). This extract tells one that a Brahmin (priest) cannot be touched by an “untouchable” because they are divided along many lines of purity rituals. Again the purity aspect is reinforced in the human purity and pollution division that we introduced earlier in relation to Douglas fieldwork. The hierarchy aspect which is portrayed within the Brahmin and the untouchables relationship is also seen in another form in relation to homeless migrants and Danish migrants. A journalist writes,

“At the top of the hierarchy is the Danish homeless because they were here first, know the system and speak the language, and therefore they are the ones with the most rights. Below is the Romanian, who apparently is resented from Christiansborg and down in the gutter (Politikken 13.12.11)”.

This comparison indeed reveals an attitude to who are entitled to survival on streets. The homeless migrants are thus seen as ‘the untouchables’ who “sponge off the state”. Former foreign minister Uffe Elleman stated “It is very important for the European stability that east and central Europeans are with. Consequently we must bear all the hassle and the absurdities that come with it (Informationen 29.01.10)”. This statement is fairly similar to some of the above mentioned statements that reveal that migrants who are vulnerable to homelessness are unwanted, and that open borders has invited people into Denmark that is unable to contribute positively to the society.

## Rethinking the Term Illegal

We noticed that most of the public debate hardly ever enters into a discussion about homeless migrants without mentioning the term “illegal” or references to undocumented migrants as just “illegals”. What we discovered was that most Danish politicians effectively meant that the presence of homeless migrants has taken in Denmark is illegal, which implies that the person’s existence is criminal. In addition, we mentioned earlier that most undocumented migrants in Denmark actually entered legally but overstayed their visas. It seems like that in the public debate the homeless migrants are presented to be criminals because they have no legal reason for staying. However, it can be argued if it is reasonable to term a human as a criminal because of their “illegal” stay in a country. We rather consider the “the stay” as a civil offense and not a criminal offense. It is evident that the term is used to define the social divisions in which the rhetoric in the general debate reveals that homeless migrants without documents should be framed in. Consequently this means that the term is served to distinguish the people with the right to stay and with the papers, from those without the rightful documents. This thinking can therefore be coined with the idea of, that homeless migrants without papers are entitled to fewer human rights. A journalist states,

“The majority of the homeless migrants has legally residence in Denmark, although they are often referred to as ‘illegal’ or the more politically correct term ‘undocumented’ or ‘paperless’. A very large percentage of them are from other EU countries that use their right to free movement - one of the cornerstones of EU cooperation (Politiken 13.12.2011)”.

We argue that the rhetoric in the debate can be seen as a normative definition of how things should or must be, and which things are good and bad.

## Help the helpless

As we presented earlier we presented discourse that rife in the public debate on homeless migrants, which set a huge division between the homeless migrants and the Danish national state that to some extent lead a neo-liberalistic orientation. However there is also a discourse on this issue that deviates from the one we have presented so fare. In this view homeless migrants are embraced and seen as individuals who need help from the Danish society. We have so far been introduced to a view that disclaim responsibility for the homeless migrants, and also places this group in a category of impurity, where they are gradually dehumanized. In this aspect of the debate on homeless migrants the opinion takes a more modest position. According to Thomsen this position first seeks to examine the plausibility’s and factual basis of the claims made. He argues how constructed problems are brought into the centre of public debate and how these problems shape policies (Thomsen 1998: 12). Jan Haslund, Danish priest, explains that Denmark is not taking reasonability for the consequences that the European expansion has brought with it (Informationen 29.01.2012). In other words this means that homeless migrants are being excluded by the Danish welfare state, where the politicians rather blame than raise the mirror of responsibility. Some even believe that Danish politicians only focus on sending the homeless migrants back to their home country (Kristeligt dagblad 10.01.2012), which again could reinforce the idea of the easy solution to this problem. According to Michael Hviid Jacobsen, Sociology Professor, homeless migrants should be helped and not excluded from society. He further states that it makes no sense to neglect this group in society and argues that the less help the homeless are given, the more stuck they become in the Danish society. He also stress that if the Danish Government wants the homeless migrants to travel back or make them be a part of the labour market, they need to give the homeless migrants access to the necessary support. Jacobsen further emphasizes, that instead of dealing with the challenge of homeless migrants, it is far easier to just get rid of the problem or try to avoid letting the problems into the country[[20]](#footnote-20). Again we are able to trace the “send the problem” discourse where the underlying meaning of this refers to a “not our problem” speech. This means that homeless migrants who are vulnerable to homelessness are seen as disadvantaged and therefore we stress that is a marginalized group that Danish society rather would be without. It is evident that homelessness is therefore not only a problem for the individual homeless migrant but also for the society as a whole, and that politicians enforce these laws as quick- solutions to remove the homeless migrants from sight, rather than addressing the underlying causes of homelessness. Thus, this way of coping with the migrants is not a unusual approach, as similar actions has been established in order to break down areas which are heavy inhabited by immigrants in Danish cities, the typically Danish ghettos. Jacobsen further argues, that one reason for this could be that we still as individuals in society struggle to address the meeting with the “strangers”. In other words, this means that the presence of homeless migrants in Denmark is neither well-tolerated nor accepted by the Danish society. Jacobsen believes that tolerance and acceptance needs to be addressed in the legislation dealing with the exclusion of homeless migrants in order to ensure the respect of human rights. The word “strangers” already coexist with other ‘fobiers’ against migrants who are visibly more different compared to the Danes , which is revealed in the book, mentioned earlier, The Annoying Difference by Peter Hervik.

Another dimension of the public debate, focused on how the potential pathways out of homelessness are to be linked to employment and accommodation. In this dimension homeless migrants were debated in a more neutral way where suggestions were made so that there could be more progress in supporting migrant’s pathways out of homelessness,

“Socioeconomically it is really bad not to provide the foreign homeless migrants a place to be, because as long as we can keep them in reasonable condition, the better they can fend for themselves. If one denies them a place to be, they are at much greater risk of going to the bottom of society (Kristeligt dagblad 08.10.12)”.

We can see there also exists a discourse that has the human interest in focus rather than excluding and labelling this group that seems to be in the need of great help from organs that has the ability to do so.

# **The Thoughts of a Social Worker**

In one of our conversations with a social worker, we were told that people who are not well-informed about homeless migrants trust to typically accepted notions such as; finding food in garbage-cans, dirty and filthy men, they get money by begging or that they sleep on park benches. However we were told that while some homeless migrants do fit in this ‘frame’, most homeless migrants rarely take care of their need in such ways. We can therefore see that “homeless migrant” conjure with the notion of impurity which can also be related to the public debate rhetoric.

We asked a social worker working at an emergency shelter, what it meant to be “a homeless migrant” in the eyes of the public. The social worker responded that majority of the general public automatically associated them with “dangerous”, “dirty” and “critical of society”, and often this social worker had repeatedly been asked how it was even possible to live and work between “bums”, “beggars” and “whores”, due to the fact that she had decided to settle down in a flat on a street that is commonly known as socially disadvantaged. It was further stated that a lot of people was misinformed about this group, and often people blamed the homeless migrants for their homelessness, the social worker stated “If they just paid their rent, they would probably not be sleeping on the streets. We therefore became familiar with that society often focuses on the individual as the cause of their own status of homelessness, which means blaming the ‘victim’ rather than focusing on the larger scale of economic and social forces which we also stressed that Jacobsen emphasised in the section ‘Help the Helpless’. In relation to this it is mentioned that homelessness is something that can strike anyone and that it is ‘controlled’ by circumstances. For instance we were told that an Egyptian man worked as a contractor in Italy and had good prospects. However due to the financial crisis he lost everything and therefore moved to Denmark to seek work, but his good prospects in Denmark deteriorate, as he was not able to speak the Danish language and had no legal rights, as he only had an resident permit in Italy. From what is told is that homelessness can occur for even the best situated man, and that people should not misjudge them as people who never had anything. The faces of “homelessness” are diversifying and in so many ways it can be argued that people’s perceptions of homeless people has been swayed by politicians and Medias. The same social worker stated, “Everyone has an opinion on homeless people but no one knows them”, which is a very noteworthy statement as it affirms that it is easier to draw a negative picture of them as one solely rely on the politicians and medias depiction on homeless migrants. In addition we were also introduced to the image of that homeless migrant exploits the Danish system by using the emergency shelters as cheap hotels, also a rhetoric that circles in the public debate as mentioned earlier. The social worker stated, “Many believe that migrants who are vulnerable to homelessness come to Denmark to exploit the system. But it is not a luxury life to stay in shelters. It is not luxury to walk in the streets from 6-21 every day. It is not a desirable life; it is old bread with margarine that the staff begs for”. The labeling encircles these people in an image where people perhaps feel threatened by these “new comers” as they are often characterized as people who exploits and drains the system for economic benefits. The public debate and the social workers statement point out that homeless migrant are often buried in these misperceptions.

# **A Glimpse into another World: The Shelter**

We will in the following section make our readers familiar with the emergency shelter which was the resting place for our informants in the winter months. This serves the purpose to get a sense of where our informants spend their night and further give an insight into a world most people know very little about.

The shelter is placed in an ordinary neighbourhood and from the outside it looks like a conventional office building with no indication that night after night people come here to sleep. The building holds other social institutions and to get to the emergency shelter we walked through a few of them, which could witness that these rooms were not intended to be a shelter and perhaps only a temporary solution. The users were let in at 21 sharp and we got there 20.30 to avoid the queue and to have a look at the place without annoying the users who had been outside since the early morning. The users came in through a gate in the backyard of the building. A certain number arrangement has been put in a system which organizes who comes in first. The number system is arranged by the homeless themselves and consists of a list of names together with a number. During the day, around 16 o’clock, the users come back to the shelter to write their name on a cardboard hanging on the fence. It is in this order that they form a queue and are let into the shelter. The shelter can only have 20 people sleeping there which means that if some were not there earlier on the day to write their name, they would perhaps not be entitled to get a bed. The social worker explained that they too follow the list; however, if they estimate, that someone who is not on the list, is in more urgent need of rest they will disregard it. The users coming to the shelter are only men and the social worker explained that it is mostly the same group coming every night as the homeless often have a routine they follow daily. As the users came inside, food and tea was prepared for them. The food consisted of bread with marmalade stacked up on the kitchen counter. As the social worker expressed “*It is not a desirable life; it is old bread with margarine that the staff begs for”.* This could indicate that there is not sufficient funding to run the shelter.

The shelter did not exactly exude luxury; rather it looked like it was in need of renovation and did therefore not seem like an ordinary Danish institution, at least the facilities in the other part of the building looked more updated. The beds were placed side by side with colourful, non-matching, washed-out beddings on, which again could indicate that this solution to migrant homelessness was temporary and not government funded. The staff told us, that the users are very aware of what bed they sleep in, as the bedding is not changed daily. They all want to sleep in the bed that they slept in the night before. The shelter does not have the financial resources to wash the bedding frequently which means that the users have to adjusts and accept the conditions available to them.

As the men came inside, they sat around the tables enjoying a cup of tea; some were chatting and making jokes while others preferred to sit quietly. We observed from the interaction around the tables, that it seemed that most of the users have had a long and exhausting day and really needed to relax. The sitting arrangement was clearly connected to nationality and we were directed over to the African table, where we came to speak to our informants. It seemed like a lot people where interested in speaking to us and we fast became the centre of attention at the table. We soon learned that this group where all from Ghana and they were all eager to hear why we were there. All of the Africans circled around us and the ones with limited English skills curiously asked for interpretation of their friends.

As we told them the purpose of our stay, we experienced different reactions; some began to ask questions with suspicion and wanted to know why we were only interested in African migrants in particular, when there were so many other nationalities. This reaction was at the beginning unpleasant as we could recognise a certain anger and frustration over being singled out by us. We tried to explain our purpose with the study and the reason for focusing on them, and assured them that we were not from an authority. One seemed particular sceptical of our study and asked us to eat some food but as we declined, he became annoyed and told us that there was nothing wrong with the food. He told us “you’re my guests and therefore you should eat what is offered to you”, indirectly implying that we were rude by not eating with them. The reason why we did not accept the food was that we did not know if it was okay for the staff, as the amount of food was scarce. He several times asked us when we would come back to the shelter, knowing that we would not come back there, and moreover concluded that when we had obtained our interviews with them we would forget about them. It was clear to us that he was trying to assess us and our purpose there, and it seemed that he already had presumption about who we were. He later showed interest in participating as we explained the need for the study and as we spoke with several of his friends. During our fieldwork he actually became one of our main informants and took the responsibility of showing us around in Copenhagen to places, where he and his friends often go. It must be noted that this research indeed has partially been feasible due to him.

# **Portraits**

The following section will entail portraits in which we will introduce the men we have been in contact with and who have been an essential role in shaping this research project. Through the portraits, we wish to give a brief insight into the lives of each individual migrant and thereby give basic knowledge about who these men are in terms of family relations, age, occupation, etc. The information given by our informants varies and thus the portraits are not similar in content. We will introduce five of our main informants, nevertheless, it must be noted that we have had loose conversation with friends of informants and other users of the shelter, who will not be introduced. As noted, the Ghanaian informants are all from the same group of friends.

**Emmanuel** is a 33 year old and left Ghana approximately six years ago. He had his own workshop in Ghana for about 3 years before leaving for Italy. As he explains, he was secured employment before flying off to Italy where his uncle who was living there helped him getting a working permit for job as a mechanic. His mother has passed away and he is the oldest of four children where the younger siblings are studying in Ghana. After working in Italy, Emmanuel lost his job as the crisis forced the company he worked in to cut down and let people go. Emmanuel lived alone in Italy but as he lost his job he moved in with his uncle’s family. He worked in Italy for four years until the crisis hit where after he was looking for new employment without much luck. At the time of the interview he had been staying in Denmark for four weeks and was after three months instructed by the migration authorities to leave.

**Peter** is 32 years old and has lived in Spain previously. He is from a family of seven brothers and three sisters where one brother is living in Ivory Coast and another in England. Before travelling to Europe Peter had tried to get work in Algeria and worked in a restaurant in Libya. It was in Libya he saved up money to go to Spain. The route to Spain was through Togo where he paid 800 dollars for a ship fare. He came to Spain about five years ago where he acquired a working permit and worked in farms and in the Airport. For about three to four years ago he lost his job and since has he been looking for employment elsewhere; in Spain, France, Sweden and Denmark.

**John** is secretive about his age and how long he has been in Denmark, however, it seemed to us that he is in his late thirties and has stayed in Denmark for some time as he was able to speak some Danish. John has three children in Ghana with a Ghanaian woman, who he married while working in Spain but being on vacation in Ghana. He has completed elementary school and has not been able to educate himself more due to limited funds. He worked as a taxi driver when I he was living in Ghana before he migrated to Spain in 2003 where he worked for a longer period. He travels to Ghana every year around February and March to see his family.

**Abdul** is a young man on 19 from Nigeria who fled from Nigeria at the age of 9 due to war in his region. During the war he lost contact with his mother and siblings and his father became a victim of the war. After Nigeria Abdul stayed in Niger a few months together with his mother’s friends until he left for Libya with a man who worked there. In Libya, Abdul had different job among those he washed cars. He was forced to flee Libya as the war with Gaddafi broke out and military troops were kidnapping young men to be soldiers. He decided to flee to Italy as he did not have contact with any relatives in Nigeria. He paid around 500 Dinar for a boat ticket leaving for Italy with around 600 passengers. Unfortunately, the boat lost direction and capsized before arriving to Italy. He explained that most people died because of the accident. They were rescued by a Tunisian boat which brought them on Tunisian land. After Tunisia he went back to Libya where he learned that the war has become worse and he could not stay there. He then found the man who sold him the previous ticket and he was given a new ticket for free. On this fare they succeeded reaching Italian territory. In Italy, he was given refugee asylum. In Italy he went to school and learned the language but as he still could not get a job and he thus decided to try to go to Denmark for employment. Abdul came to Denmark in the winter season and stayed for approximately four to five months where after he returned to Italy on his own initiative.

**Amadou** is from Guinea Bissau but has previously lived in Portugal together with family and whereto he also has citizenship. He is 19 years old and has a primary school education. Amadou is the oldest brother. He is in Denmark in a search for a job in order to provide for his family who has moved back to their home country as the parents also had difficulties getting a job. He has managed to get a job delivering newspapers at night, however, it is not permanent.

# **Analysis: An Insight into an Undocumented Existence**

In the analysis of this thesis, we explore the perceptions and meanings that our informants construct about events and factors in their present lives. Our findings reflect the life experiences and the various positions our informants take in both relations to the public and private sphere. The empiric data is the platform for the analysis as the themes addressed is based on what occupies the mind of our informants when being in vulnerable situations as homeless migrants in Denmark. In this correlation the reader is introduced to the worlds of a group of African migrants which we, through observation and interviews, have become familiar with. By examining their social worlds, we will aim to uncover the underlying logic of agency and formations of identity. The analysis is divided into themes which portray important aspects of our informants’ lives.

# **In the Eye of the Public**

Living in shelters and on the streets of Copenhagen is without question a stressful and painful experience to our informants. Stressful and painful within the meaning that they obviously never can close the door to the public and constantly have to look for bottles with no closing-time like the rest of us. However, the stress and the pain go much deeper than practical discomfort. Being African and homeless, place them in an undesirable category which by our informants is heartfelt. We will in the following address, how their understanding of how others perceive them has an impact on their lives in Denmark.

## Relations to the ‘Normals’

“I don’t tell people that I’m homeless. When you say that you are homeless they think that you are a criminal. Most of them. If you say that you are homeless they are afraid of you, maybe you come to rob them and take their mobile phone. Or you have something to sell.” – Peter

This initiating quote reveals the thoughts our informants believe that the public have about them. They feel that being labelled as homeless is a label with other negative connotation attached. They experience that being homeless means that they become undesirable and dangerous individuals who are unwanted by the public. Sociologist Erving Goffman (1963, 12-13) defines stigma as the phenomenon whereby an individual with an attribute is deeply discredited by his/her society is rejected as a result of the attribute. Stigma is a process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity. Our informant finds it hard to present his actual situation to his social environment as he knows that the actions of others, being the moral judgment of others, will spoil his ‘real identity’, that is, identities which he has a strong emotional attachment to. It is not possible for the informants to form part of a relationship with other non-homeless as these will not give the homeless migrants access to identities, which makes them normal persons equate with the rest of society. The public discourse on homelessness is so heavy and ingrained in our society, that it deprives our informants from being perceived like normal individuals. Their homelessness forces them to distance themselves from society and denies them interaction with people who are not, like them, homeless. Another informant speaks about his friends,

**“**Most of my friends are homeless people, it’s more comfortable. Other people who have a home they always think that you try to find a solution in them. Like I wanna steal and I don’t want that, so I think it’s better for me and more comfortable to be friends with my neighbours, to homeless people like me” *–* Abdul

The quote shows that it is a stressful experience to be with people who are not homeless. As Goffman (1963: 14+15) notes about the thoughts of the stigmatised; he can never be sure of what the other truly thinks about him. The informants, thus in the company of other, will feel self-conscious and be concerned about the impression he is making. Minor failings or everyday behaviour can be interpreted as expression of his stigmatised differentness. Abdul thus experience interaction with “normal” individuals to be extremely stressful and uncomfortable. Other homeless will not interpret their actions as if they are dishonest and hope to achieve something because of their friendship as they are in the same predicament. We argue that our informants are trapped in a social position which they do not consider to be in accordance with how they experience themselves. They are trapped in an identity as homeless, and the ideas of homeless people is that they are in need of help which means that our informants will always be considered needy and helpless. The category which they are put in is so powerful that they cannot through behaviour or conversation convince people that they are not looking for a solution or in need of help, because after interacting with people, they still do not have a home, which says more about their situation than they can perform out of.

Our informants also regard that the public opinion on homelessness in Denmark does not only address our informants’ practical needs, which has to do with a need of resources in the form of capital or housing. They feel that the public opinion on them, is also revolving their psychological abilities where they find, that they are perceived to be deviancy to society as people consider them to “have mental problems”. Our informants feel that the public puts them into the same category as Danish homeless and about Danish homelessness Peter explained “…homeless Danish people are normally not normal. They have something wrong with them. Because you cannot see a 100% normal Danish person being homeless, you cannot”.

Our informant John also argues, that people consider bottles collecting, mental illness and poverty to be interrelated. The stigma is therefore not only founded on practical and tangible issues of homelessness, but it goes deeper and spoils their identity in the sense that they are not able to claim, that they are in fact normal thinking individuals, like the rest of the public. The preconceived notion of homelessness is being attached to them even though they have not displayed mental disability. They are however, not able to conform to standards that society calls normal, which makes them unable to claim their actual identity.

The stigma attached has an impact on how they operate in the public sphere. They take their social status with them in their movement in the city where they adapt to the ideas and beliefs attached to them. Due to their illegal status they cannot afford to not care about the action people might perform as responds to their homelessness and public differentness. Walking around with our informant, we came to see how they avoid drawing attention to themselves, when being in the public sphere. To avoid unnecessary attention, they avoid forming a larger group when being in the public sphere. When making use of public offers and sitting areas there seem to be a mutual agreement that you do not approach one another but instead sit with 15 meters distance of each other. Their bodies are connected with crime, unwantedness and trouble by society and they therefore know that being together in a group generates fear among the Danish population. They themselves consider their bodies to symbolise disturbance of peace in the public, where their presence becomes a flaw in an otherwise perfect society. They know that, they are unwanted guests and while being in a vulnerable situation, they are not able to disregard such an opinion. Instead they embody the fear by acting in accordance to it. Even though these individuals possess many positions and identities (father, brother, musician etc.) they still feel that the stigma of being homeless is so heavy and overshadowing, that it is hard for people to perceive them being anything other than homeless, or slightly different; that the stigma is overtaking other social positions and people therefore disregard other positions as important and meaningful. It places them in a parallel community where they are unable to establish relations to the rest of the society. They are positioned in a vulnerable situation in the Danish society and therefore, unable to speak back, that is, to resist the stigma they are labelled with. To alter the believes that people have about them is not really an alternative as that have no voice and it therefore, seems that the only option available is to avoid the people to avoid the stigma.

## If Only They Knew

Our informants struggle with the ideas attached to them because they do not feel accordance between how they perceive themselves and how others perceive them. They therefore have a wish of letting others know about their actual identity, with the hope that people would disregard their preconceived notions about homelessness. They felt that our thesis is a needed initiative, which was one of the reasons for participating in the study. They thought that the research would display an alternative image of their homelessness, rather than the one publicly displayed. They are aware that people are not familiar with their situation and therefore do not understand why they have come to live under the circumstances of homelessness. They explain that the public do not know that they are homeless because they do not have papers. They do not understand their own homelessness as a matter of choice, rather as a function of structural forces beyond their control. An explanation which distances them from being actual homeless, that is, where their actions are not the reason of their homelessness, but rather the system is the reason. A notion where the system has been the dominating factor, much like; ‘they do not *do* homelessness, homelessness is *done* to them’. It also presents the idea of where the real issue lays. It is not a matter of not having a house or being looked at differently. That is all of course painful. However, our informants’ attention and concern is not directed towards changing people’s perception of them. The real pain and concern is found in the issue of lacking a job and thus, a stabile income. The homelessness and hence the public opinion on them can be changed by having access to the right papers, such as a working permit. Their homelessness may indeed be a matter of choice for them, however, only when there are a limited number of alternatives. The life on the street is a choice made out of less pleasant choices where it is the lesser of two evils. Essentially the issue is employment and hereunder the lack of it, which according to them, is leading them into a life in poverty. They report that employment is not possible in Southern Europe because of the crisis and going home with empty pockets is also not an alternative. The issue of retuning back to their country of origin will be elaborated further in the section ‘The Imagined Europe’.

“*Me, I see Sub-Saharan Africans. It is their situation that forces them to come here and be homeless. Because of job. They want to see if they one day will get a job. That’s why they choose to stay here*”. - Peter

As the quote emphasises, their homelessness is directly linked to the search of a job. It is indeed a matter of choice, but it is a choice which needs to be considered in relation to their situation and has a rather different meaning, than if it was made in the face of more attractive options. The options presented to them are perhaps few; to stay in Spain and Italy together with other unemployed while hoping that eventually one day they will find a job, or secondly to go back to Ghana where unemployment is also high, or third; to do nothing at all to get a job and secure an income. These are just few options that seem available from a researchers point of few, nevertheless, it must be stressed that only our informants knows of suitable options for their situation. However, it shows that the options are not many. The fact that our informants have travelled different places (North of Africa, Spain, Italy, Sweden, France) shows an eagerness to succeed and the capacity for self-agency. Their travel experiences show, that they are in fact strong individuals who are capable of making optimal decisions for themselves. Staying in Denmark is a choice made within emergency, because what do you do when there just is no money and no option to get some? It was never their initial motivation to go to Denmark, but as conditions changed their options decreased. The choice of homelessness is the lesser of evils, and to attribute homelessness to choice without an understanding of the context of which this choice is made within, adds little to our understanding of the reasons of homelessness among migrants.

## Dressed to Impress

The social worker, who we spoke with prior to meeting our informants, explained that there is a difference between the African users of the shelter and other ethnic groups, like the Eastern European. The African group cares more about their appearance than other ethnic homeless groups, which can be seen in the standard of their clothing and mobile phones. We observed that if it was not because of the location, we could not tell that these men are homeless. From the immediate perception they did not fall into the classical stereotype of a homeless man. We firstly thought of why the appearance was so important to them, nevertheless after speaking with them we soon realised a part of the reasoning could be found in the question of why not? Why did we assume that because you are homeless, you automatically do not care about your looks? The matter is that most of these men are of a younger generation and they care about their looks just like ordinary Danish men would do. Indeed, not all of them cared about fashion where the interest was divided by age, but they cared about being presentable. Nevertheless, appearance has become an issue for our informants as they do not have the resources to dress how they wish. They cannot have their clothing washed at times and can only carry what can fit in a backpack. Their appearance is a visual impression of who they are and it is clear, that it bothers them that they do not have the resources to show others who they really are. For some it became important to show us their profile on Facebook where they were dressed to make a good impression. A profile which tells a story about a life in Italy with a job – a story much different than the one they experience here in Denmark. They wished to present that there is more to the category of homelessness than what the stigma portrays. With little financial or social resources to pursue other identities; showing us their Facebook profile became a way of asserting a position which relies on how they previously have been, and give us an idea about identities beyond their homelessness, which is connected to having a job and making enough money. For our informants there was a clear connection between their clothing and the way people in public perceive them. Our informant Peter, spoke about how Danish people see him and argues, “For example if I go in the streets then people cannot see I’m homeless. Unless you go to see where we live then you can see, but not many Danish people go there”.

Their appearance is a way of escaping the category of homelessness, they find themselves placed in. By trying to look presentable they can in some situations avoid the stigma attached to them. According Goffman, (ibid) several strategies can be adopted to avoid a stigma and to minimise the harmful social and psychic consequences of their discrediting attributes. Concealing or withholding information about the stigma becomes a strategy to avoid it, as it is not easily perceived by others. If they are not collecting bottles, going to the shelter or doing other homeless activities, they find that people then cannot see that they are homeless and they therefore have the possibility to blend in with rest of the population. It can create a feeling of normality and invisibility in the eyes of the public and give them a break from an otherwise stressful everyday life.

## Social network

Our interviews revealed that their network of friends in Denmark had become a great resource for our informants. The bond between our informants as many of them were Ghanaians revealed that they had really strong bonds to each other. They were always aware of each other’s locations and had a pattern of sleeping the same place every night. One can argue that this network is very valuable to them as it forms a support group in an otherwise vulnerable situation. In a daily life characterised by uncertainty and unwantedness by society, they have each other as an anchor. They matter to each other and understand each other’s situation, which means that they find recognition and comfort in this network. It can be argued that our informants, who are living apart from their families in Africa, had an urge to seek their fellow countrymen, in order to ‘rebuild’ broken sense of belonging. We observed a close friendship between some of our informants who knew each other back home from Ghana. Here the conversation seemed to be surrounding topics about where they had slept and how they were doing. We stress that it is not only the information that seems to be important, but also the fact that they give-and-take news in the ‘field’ of homelessness. By this we mean, that they create a sense of belonging and shared experiences which makes them feel that they are not alone, and equally sharing the same status as undocumented migrants ‘excluded’ from society. Within this network they know what each other are trying to achieve through being here and no one is looking down upon each other. One can argue that the network of friends, together with a sense of responsibility to their families at home, is a reason for why this group of migrant despite their harsh lifestyle are still able to function and does not fall into depression or hopelessness. Within this group they are able to gain emotional support, respect and social esteem, which is needed to have a positive relationship to oneself and is fundamental to the development of the individual (Honneth 2003: 18). Their group of friends in Denmark becomes a place where they can gain social recognition, a recognition which is transnational as it is based on Ghanaian values. Not only is the social recognition based on having importance in their network in Denmark, that is the space and time they share.

It becomes transnational, as the group of friends acknowledge that the presentations or actions that they perform here are for the benefit of families in their country of origin. The social status and boost in masculinity, that they gain in Ghana is thus transferred to Denmark though a shared understanding of how to behave as a male family member where it gives them a positive relation to themselves (Honneth 2006: 173-174).

In relation to their social networks it must be added that our informants, despite finding resources among their fellow homeless friends, they still consider themselves to be independently here in Denmark. They trust their friends; however they can only rely on each other to a certain extent. One of our informants stated “Can’t rely on people” and “being a man of my own”, which reflect how our informants consider that they cannot rely on people, but rather seek help among their peers.

## Understanding Racism

Our interviews allowed us to see that our informants believed that their skin colour was perceived negatively by some people in Denmark. They even emphasised that people did not judge them because they were homeless, due to the fact that our informants believed that they did not dress as the conventional homeless man, which only left one visible difference to be judged, namely what they believed was their skin colour. Our informants believed that people combined the African appearance with criminality. Our informant Emmanuel describes believes that when they are searching for bottles in particular areas, certain people think that they are rather out stealing bikes because they can see that they are searching the area for something. We asked if they had any idea of why people might judge them as criminals where John stated that a black man in the streets is disruptive. Arguably their visible difference somehow conjures some ideas about them, which they are conscious about. It can be argued that this racialization can be defined to be deeply problematic, because it is used in the context of criminality. It thereby describes them in a negative light, whereto they are perceived ‘less human’, a belief that has close ties to racism. It is noticeable that our informants speak of racism as a biological concept and therefore do not take culture or other notions into account when speaking about racism. From this it seems that our informants to a certain degree only connect racism with the “old” notion of racism and are not familiar with the notion of new racism where cultural difference are the main factor (Romm 2010: 33-34). Our informants feel that they are watched when being in the public sphere, where if they gathered too many Africans in a resident area, it could result in that some people calling the police because the residents felt unsafe. Furthermore, our informant Amadou accounted that when he took the bus he often experienced that when he sat next to a passenger they often took their bag, almost hiding the bag, in their hands, which he believed was a behavioural that also indicated that they were afraid of him because of his skin colour. It was clearly marked by our informant Peter, that Denmark was not used to seeing blacks in the society, also implying a meeting with a ‘stranger’. This was in fact also what was stated in our public debate section that revealed that Denmark still has trouble approaching the ‘strangers’. Our informants told us that it was a norm among the homeless Africans that they should avoid unnecessary attention by gathering in the public. This meant that this group has found other ways to cope with this attention that they seem to draw. In other words this group of homeless Africans has found ways to navigate around issues that can inflict problems to them.

Our interviews alongside our observations to a certain extent reveal that this form of ‘racism’ that they define it to be, is not an issue that seems to be worrying them a lot. We therefore stress that they have enough self-esteem as black men. Our informant John told that he had been called a black monkey, but that he did not take this seriously, and reasoned it with that human beings are different and therefore not created in the same way. He used a very noticeable way of describing it “Racism is also the creation of God”, he expressed. In many ways this statement is outstanding as it presents one to a state of mind that acknowledges the judgemental people that do exist in society; however the problem of racism is theirs and not his. He even stated that people, who mocked him in a racist way, were not better than him just because they felt the urge to divide them by visible difference. He stated “No matter what, they will also die, just like me one day. They will grow old and die”. In many ways our informants reveal that even if they sometimes face racism in society, this does not seem to take up so much of their concerns, which basically means that their status as homeless migrants are more to their concern. It seems that our informants do not hold an inferior position due to their skin colour. However, it bothers them when skin colour prevents them from getting jobs as our informant Abdul described, “… In my experience if a white guy or an Arab go and look for job they take them faster than a black man. I have seen it. More than four Arabs where there in the house and I came before them but when they go they went and got jobs”. The feeling of racism affects them in relation to the problem they define to be their overall problem of their situation, that is, the lack of employment. Being disqualified due to colour therefore seems to worry them more, than the negative attitude of some people. Different from the shame of being homeless, being black is not directed inwards as a feature to feel bad about.

# **The European Dream**

In this section we will introduce the reader to idea of the “European Dream” that all of our informants had before leaving their country of origin. The section is particularly relevant in order to get an understanding of the underlying reasons for migrating to Europe. Furthermore, this section will also deal with how their reality corresponds with the ideas they had before migrating to Europe. The section is particularly relevant in order to get a good understanding for why they are held in homelessness and how they make sense of homelessness in relation to achieving the European dream.

## The imagined Europe

*“The road to success is long and a lot of Africans have to deal with disappointments when they are looking for a job in Europe. Apart from the 4.5 million Africans who officially work and study in Europe, there are seven or eight million African migrants who try to make a living without papers*[[21]](#footnote-21).”

With this quote in mind, we begin this section by asking, why Europe?

The American Dream is the doctrine of the individualist that beliefs that anyone who works hard can succeed and obtain wealth. However, the European version of a better future is in some sense in silence eclipsing the American Dream. In many ways Europe has emerged as an economic and cultural global force, which differs from the United States (Rifkin, 2004). We argue that Europe’s version of a better future emphasizes cultural diversity, a better life and strong community which are slightly different from national pride and material wealth promised in the old doctrine of the American Dream. That said, the financial crisis in Europe has truly showed itself from a darker side, which we argue has turned itself against some people, who now struggle to find a solution to their homelessness. Moreover, open borders in Europe do not necessarily comply with the idea of that one can that easily increase their socio-economic position by travelling from one European country to another.

Our informants were bewildered, as they did not understand why they live as homeless migrants in Denmark, as our informant Peter stated “after all, I am in Europe”. This statement witness that the notion of Europe is far more complex than first assumed, and that it is difficult for our informants to cope with the idea of that one is kept in homelessness in Denmark, even though that plenty of wealth is to be found around them. The option of getting the “right” documents is still far away due to Danish legislation, but this does not mean that our informants have lost their faith in the idea of the “European Dream”. We discovered that our informants had believed in a mythical European paradise, where their plans would be easy to execute. It must be noted that some of our informants has been able to live reasonable in another European country than Denmark, and has been able to earn and provide for themselves and their families back home. However, the conditions have changed now in Europe, as it has entered a new era that none of our informants had imagined. The economic crisis has sneaked its way to many European countries as mentioned, which made our informants leave and search for other alternatives in Europe. One of their main survival tactics has therefore been to migrate to another European country, in this case Denmark.

We came to experience that Europe has somehow marked itself, not just in relation to a place of human rights and liberty, but also as a continent of plenteously economic prospects. This begs the question of where these ideas come from. Our informant Peter told us that he back in Ghana had met people from Europe, and that the interest in migrating to seek better prospects, started from that point. Though, he was warned by them, when he expressed that he himself also wanted to migrate to either Italy or Spain. Peter was therefore informed about how difficult it could be to get a working or resident permit in Europe, however, he told us that he did not believe them at that time and eventually first experienced the challenge when he actually migrated to Europe and experienced it for himself. Our informants introduced us to the idea of Europe that they once have had when they lived in their country of origin.

Arjun Appadurai, Social-Cultural Anthropologist, proposes five causes that contribute to the global exchange of ideas and information. He labels these five dimensions as so called ‘scapes’, which provide spaces and opportunities for the construction of new “imaged worlds”. Appadurai discusses that these “scapes” permit deeper knowledge of the world around one and therefore, these ethno, media, techno, finance and ideo “scapes” simultaneously provide a range of various set of angles for viewing the world, which in some sense mentally puts one in “scapes” (Hopper 2007: 44). However, we argue that even though these “imaged worlds” are created individually, we still consider this as an indication of something more socially conditioned, which means that to construct an idea of something individually, one must also ask where this idea comes from. This is exactly a noteworthy aspect as we argue that these ideas presented to one convey the social context in a society. Two relevant “scapes” can be identified when relating it to our informants causes of migration. The first one is the “mediascapes”, which deals with the global formation and distribution of information and images. In other words this scape deals with the many media outlets that shape our world, and therefore narratives and images are often the only view about a place and culture. The second scape “ethnoscapes” deals with the migration of human beings in search of work or pleasure (Newell 2006: 10). Appadurai’s account for migration and ideas of places was also traceable in many of our interviews with our informants. For instance our informant Peter told us that while he lived in Ghana some years ago, he in a newspaper had read about that many jobs were available in Spain and Italy and that these could easily be positioned by newcomers. In other words, Europe was presented as a promising land where one easily could achieve anything. Furthermore, it was also stated by the same informant that when he was a young boy he often saw many Ghanaians returning back from Europe, and they often had a lot of material goods with them and lot of money, which they used to start business in Ghana. It is evident that Europe in many ways reflects an idea of that material well-being can be achieved in Europe, simply by finding a job. It can be argued that our informant’s movement is in fact fundamentally dictated by their social and economic position, which eventually made them migrate to Europe. Appadurai (1996: 7) states “where there is consumption there is pleasure, and where there is pleasure there is agency”. This is a very relevant citation to mention in this relation as it substantiates that for our informants the search of succeeding and improving ones well-being lies in the economic and social context that exist in the world, and which many are tempted by.

## It’s Europe or Die Trying

Our interviews revealed that seeking a better life in Europe does not come without consequences, as many face dangerous waters, arguably perhaps the most inhospitable place on earth, namely the Sahara Desert and the great sea. Our informant Abdul initiated his journey when migrating to Europe.

 “The trip took three days, but still, five people died on the ship. They were scared. People panic on the boat because they have lost people like that. I was just lucky. The ship was rocking so badly. The sea was just bad”. –Abdul

His story reveals that some people, who are looking to leave the African continent for Europe, face a long and harsh journey across the Atlantic in decrepit boats in order to leave poverty behind. It is evident that these people are prepared to put their lives at risk for the “European dream”. Abdul further stated “I cannot go back to my country. I don’t have anything there. I was thinking, that I had already seen a lot in life, so what’s there for me? It is better that I try with my life and die”. The point highlights an idea that more often than not migrants reach the point of no return, as many, particularly those vulnerable to irregular migration, often have no choice but to try their luck elsewhere. Thus migration represents both an opportunity and a challenge.

The attempts to escape, what we define as a “low quality of life” is a proof to human capacity, where many rely their hopes to an unpredictable voyage to Europe where everything is at risk for opportunity. Peter told us that many from his village in Ghana, mostly the young people, had migrated either to Holland, Germany, Italy or the UK. He stated “They don’t have a future in Ghana”, which he substantiated with the lack of job opportunities in the country. He emphasized that even people who had graduated from the university struggle to find jobs. What was noteworthy was that he stressed that most people were happy even though they struggled on a daily basis, which was due to the strong family ties. However, he believed that this alone could not be a reason for staying as one would quickly realize that happiness would not be able to buy what he determined as “social security”.

## Push Factors

When people move from one place to another there is a reason behind this action, but the reasons can be many and different. We argue that usually there is something these people want to move away from, or something they want to move towards. However, we argue that individuals approaches migration differently. In our interviews we discovered that one of the main motivations behind the choice of migrating to Europe was the willingness to improve the living standards for the whole family. The decision to migrate therefore was done at the price of separating from family members who stayed in the country of origin. In this case we argue that two reflections must be done when looking further into the causes of push factors. For instance it is not only the single individual who is moving and considering his specific wishes, but also the family dimension must be discussed within the context of push factors. We stress that the aspect of migration is not just a mechanism that just happens but stronger forces like agency, in terms of the individual self, becomes the centre of reason. The quest for independence is also a crucial aspect as our informants acted on their own initiatives, in order to find some sense and purpose with their roles as men. This means that the push factors for migrating is not that simple and as straightforward as it may seem. We argue that migration unfolds in time and space, meaning that it refers to the larger opportunity structures, images and social life that the specific place represents and perhaps holds. All of our informants are from poor and working class backgrounds, and their ideas of “a good life” therefore consisted of material - and social well-being. We consider poverty and unemployment to be the basic factors that pushed our informants towards Europe. Our interviews revealed that many believed that Europe was able to provide this for them, and they further stated that it was important for them to migrate so they would break free from a life that they felt led them nowhere.

We found that the role as providers was an essential motivation for migrating among our informants. They seem to be led by an inner responsibility towards ones family that is culturally engrained in them. This was for instance seen in our interviews as our informants stated that they felt the urge to support and help their families, and also because our informants used to send remittances to their families. Our informant Peter explained that he felt disappointed at himself, as he was no longer able to remit to his mother and siblings in Ghana. He stated “I live on the streets. How can I send money?” Arguably remittances act as a social security net for those left behind. In relation to this we were able to discover that our informants hold a traditional attitude about their duty to provide economically for their families. For instance our informant John expressed, that he wanted to build a house for his family, and that he wanted to pay for his children’s education. This again reinforce the idea of that migration is to improve family standards of life and assure a better future for the children or other members of the family. We argue that responsibility is not just a feeling that rises within the self, but their ideas about manhood are also attributed by outer factors. For instance it was clear from our interviews, that our informants migrated in order to provide for their families. In many ways they uphold the traditional and conventional role where men is seen as the main breadwinner of the family, “… men on the other hand, are presumed by traditional view of gender roles to be leaders. The traditional view of the masculine gender role, therefore suggest that men should be the heads of their households by providing financially for the family and making important family decisions” (Miller 2003: 337). We argue that it is important to take the family dimension into account as it gives understanding of the migratory process, and further it also reveals their perceived masculine roles. The family patterns that we were presented to in our interviews indicate, that migration becomes an act in the best interest for families and points to the collective family patterns that exist in such communities. Arguably migration can thus be seen as a family decision, rather than an individual decision. Another dimension that emphasizes the fact that these men have certain responsibility towards themselves and their families is the ‘non-existing defeatism’. Our informant Peter explained “They want to travel, because when you are young, you most work. You have to, and if you don’t find a way and get a job, you will have to go”. In many ways this reveals a determination that will continue as long as these men wish to actualize their goals.

It further seems that our informants’ presence in Europe is contributing to an increase in their own and their family’s social position. Not only are the remittances sent home to support their families transformed into a form of social capital, but also the reputation of having families in Europe is a positive social feature. Through our interviews we were able to distinguish that “to live in Europe” denoted a certain prestige rank that an individual holds when living in Europe. We discovered that to travel overseas is considered to be an achievement as many people cannot afford this but still desires to migrate. Our informants John explained that when he visits his family in Ghana people from near and far come to hear all about the “great Europe”, and he expressed that he felt a sense of pride to speak about his stay in Europe, nevertheless, leaving out details about homelessness as this might be considered stigma in Ghana.

A second factor for leaving was due to the social conditions, especially the lure of “freedom”. Our informants Abdul stated “There was a kind of crisis in Nigeria, a religious crisis. There was war and it was so worse that I even lost my father there”. In this case safety occurred as a main motivation for migrating. The chance to be free and to live in a democracy was desirable in this case. Another aspect was the corruption existing in Ghana which one of informants explained to be deeply problematic. Peter explained, “The leaders of Ghana are not working, there’s a lot of corruption. Everybody knows in Africa”. This statement emphasizes that our informant does not believe that leaders of his country are putting enough effort for creating job opportunities in Ghana. It indicated that there exists an idea that their country does not attend to its inhabitants’ needs and facilitate development to benefit employment growth. This point out that the political system of their country can be part of the reasoning behind migrating as they feel that no solutions to their ‘stagnancy’ is available. It became apparent that regardless of our informants legal status, for them moving from their country of origin was an essential lifeline to themselves and their families. Their migration must therefore be seen as a strategy, which is rooted in the interplay of social and economic push factors.

## “They think I’m lying”

Some of our informants told us, that they often spoke to friends who lived in Ghana and that they also had great interest in moving to Europe. However, these people had difficulties to fully understand the reality faced by our informants here in Denmark. We discovered that some of our informants were judged as liars when they told about their situation in Europe. We were told that many wanted to migrate to Europe “Everybody wants to come here”, and when our informants told that it was difficult in Europe, and that many migrants struggled, many did not believe them, and disagreed with them, as they were not able to see and experience the harsh life for themselves. It can therefore be argued that this pattern of migration will continue as long as they are attracted to the idea of Europe. It is hard for people in their home country to understand the reality of how many migrants live in Europe. For instance, we were told that a lot of people still seek to the Danish Embassy in Ghana, and our informant Peter stressed that if he went back to Ghana he would probably still see queues of people standing and waiting to be given visa. It is hence evident that people still goes from Africa to Europe as ‘fortune hunters’ with very high expectations, but unfortunately with little information about the reality of the life as an undocumented migrant. We stress that this denial of recognizing Europe as a possible “life failure” is resulted by two aspects. The first one is when people come back with money from Europe and build big houses. This visible life upgrading that people see in Africa, makes people desire the same things, and gives the idea that Europe is able to provide this. In other words this means, that when one goes empty handed to Europe, he will most likely return to Africa as a wealthy man. A second aspect worth highlighting is that it is very hard for people to understand the reality that these people suffer under in Europe, because firstly the problem is so far away and secondly, so different from the poverty mechanism seen in Africa, and therefore different to the conflict issues one is caught up in life. It is evident that our informants was also caught up in this illusion of Europe being a land of fortune, and first opened their eyes to what they define as a ‘miserable situation’, when they came to Denmark. It seems like many Africans are trapped between their false expectations of Europe and the often unrealistic social expectations from friends and families. We were also told by our informant Peter, that his acquaintances from Spain, which he knew from the time he lived there, had called him to ask how it was in Denmark whereto he replied “Do you want to come live in the streets?” We asked the same informant what people were saying to him when he explained about Europe. He told us that people did not only call him a liar, but that these people thought that he was lying about his situation to prevent others from coming and taking part in the luxury life offered in Europe,

 “… They say I’m telling a lie, because there are a lot Ghanaians, not in Denmark, but in London, or other European countries. They are living good. So when they go to Ghana, they go with big money. They have a lot of investments and nice houses and cars. So they tell, why he comes here without car, you say, Europe is not good. They don’t believe”.

This reveals that our informants is caught up in a dilemma, as our informants are clearly frustrated about their situation and by the fact that people have trouble believing in them. It was therefore even clearer that even the attempts to warn some from their network failed, as we were told that many came anyway and quickly retuned as they could not manage to live homeless in Denmark. We were told that for instance many Ghanaians had tried their luck in Denmark, but returned back to Ghana, as they found that the life as a homeless migrant was far from the expectations they had in mind. This section thus presents that many prospective migrants have incomplete and faulty information about job opportunities and living conditions, which arguably may have been the cause to the increasing of homeless African migrants in Denmark.

## Keeping Hope Alive

Once our informants made it to Europe, they all realized that life in Europe was not what they had expected. We found this mainly prevalent among those we interviewed, who had made their way through several European countries. By the time they arrived in Denmark, many of our informants were extremely disappointed by the conditions ‘offered’ to them. Our informant John stated “I expected to find a better life”, however, it was also clear that even though their presumptions failed they still somehow try to think ahead and find other solutions that can solve the issue of unemployment and thus homelessness. “I have to stay here, and see what’s going to happen” and “At the moment I have to stay here, for a while and see”, are quotes which come to symbolize their last hope, that is, the hope of eventually finding a supportable income. It sustains them, when everything else is lost, and it becomes a hope that they cannot afford to lose as this will discourage them. However, the reality of their legal circumstances continues to haunt them, and mocks the dreams of wealth that Europe is helping inspire. Alongside this, we also came across another form of hope, “Most of the people who have been here before. They suffer like this. They came here and suffer, and now they have something to do. They find a job, and got papers*”.* Suffering is thus considered temporary which one needs to experience in order to get closer to the dream. The hope that exist while suffering is considered to be for their own good as ‘believe’ and ‘hope’ still exist within this suffering. Our informant John explained “In Africa you need to work with your bones”. This quote is very noteworthy and striking as it in many ways presents the idea that one should not wish for it, rather work for it in order to succeed and manage.

 “Maybe I live here and if I in one year don't find a job I have to find another thing to do another way to go… Maybe go away from Europe, maybe United States or Canada but there it is much difficult now.” – Peter

The quote above highlights that even though they experience difficulties in finding a job, hopelessness is not prevalent and our informants expressed that if they could not succeed in Denmark, they would migrate to another European country. This indicates that they are not prepared to go back to Africa without the desired financial capacity and they would rather re-migrate in an attempt to achieve a secure income elsewhere. One can thus argue that our informants aim to conquer difficult circumstances where they try to uphold a spirit of continuousness instead of sinking into a state of impossibility while being in homelessness.

## Migration gives Experience

In this section the core intent is to present how our informants both experience and express the complex issue of migration, and how this event has affected and transformed our informant’s lives. “To travel is to live.[[22]](#footnote-22)” said the great author Hans Christian Andersen. This idea of travelling was indeed also adopted by our informants. Our interviews revealed that the notion of migration emphasizes more than movement. It means to explore different extraordinary places, and to meet new people and lastly, to be aware of the cultures of others as well as one’s own. In other words migration was a way to learn, see and to explore life. Particularly two of our informants stressed that their journey had given them tremendous experience, and it seemed like that this in fact had strengthened and reproduced their masculinity. In many ways they referred to their travel experiences almost like it had been a test of their manhood. Our informant John stated “I have a huge bag of travelling”, whereupon he stressed that this bag of travelling had given him a lot of knowledge and experience. He told us that not even money could buy this, and not even a book would be able to give him the first-hand-experience that he had achieved through migration. It was evident that our informants believed that travelling gave personal development in terms of learning new languages and meeting new people. It was also stated by the same informant that to travel was just like a “mobile university”. He explained that students studying for instance Spanish people and their culture would be able to write many pages about them, without truly knowing what they were writing about. He asked us “who knows more? The person who study and writes about a country? Or the person who has been and lived there?”. This statement by him stress that many people indeed search for knowledge, but according to him migration gives one real life lessons about foreign cultures. We also did an observation on our informant Skype account where he quoted “The world is a book, and those who do not travel, only read one page”. This presents how our informants identify the act of travelling where being a ‘traveller’ becomes an identity which they have an emotional attachment to. It thus is a social category which does have a stigma attached to it and is therefore more positively perceived and accepted by society.

## The Shame of returning

Our interviews revealed that many of our informants felt a certain pressure on them, as their relatives counted on them. Our informant Peter explained that “There is a little bit of pressure on you. They are not forcing you but yourself”. In many ways these homeless migrants are in a limbo where they are too ashamed to return to Africa without money even though they have difficulties in their present life. They feel that they have failed in their pursue of the “European Dream”, which also becomes an embarrassment. The sense of shame at returning empty-handed seems to be a significant factor for our informants. Peter further explained, “If I got money in my pocket I will go back to Ghana. If I have something, if I just had a little bit to create a job in Ghana, but I don’t have anything. If I have nothing, here is better”. It is clear that our informant links shame and poverty together and moreover stress that he have not been able to pursue his dreams in Europe. The shame was found in many variations which our interviews revealed. For instance, the social discomfort and embarrassment they might experience seemed to hinder them in returning home, as many of their relatives and friends were not aware of their situation in Europe. One can argue that the shame of returning home empty-handed can lead our informant into a partial stagnant position which does not give them room for agency.

According to Halvar Kjærre (2010: 245) who has done a study on irregular migration, states that the shame illegalized migrants feel, often are caused by the socio-political structures in a society. A shame is embodied due to the stigma attached to them which makes them feel lesser of a human, as they have little economic- and social latitude, and because of a liberal thinking that places responsibility on the individual for their own success and failure. As mentioned in the previous chapter addressing the public debate, we found that there is a rhetoric which dehumanizes and consider homeless migrants to be social outcasts that need to be avoided. The shame is therefore not only developed within the self where the individual is discontent with one’s own achievements but as society considers one to be a burden and blames the individual for misconduct, the shame in internalised and thus felt by the migrants. Arne Vetlesen (2005: 136), Professor of Philosophy, notes that it is often the victim that embodies this shame. Vetlesen makes use of a very noteworthy angle originally outlined by Fred Alford, Professor of political philosophy,

“…shame is something that becomes a theme only when (if) victims becomes a theme; that shame, as it were naturally and obviously, is linked with the victims, not the perpetrator? (Vetlesen 2005: 136-137)”.

This angle is relevant as it presents the idea that when a group in society feels a sense of shame it is due to their position in society, a position marked by being inferior in comparison to surrounding others. Shame is therefore interrelated to a position as a victim which is attributed by powerful society, which one in a weak position cannot break with. This view is relevant to highlight as it reveal that the socio-economic context our informants find themselves in, reinforces the shame that our informants embodies. At one point we asked our informant Peter, what he thought people might be thinking when hearing about his situation.

“The Danish people most of them think I should go back to my country. When they can see that the situation is better if I go home, because here, I don’t have any right. The law doesn’t allow yourself to live here”. –Peter

 It is noteworthy that even though that our informant are aware of that his chances of getting resident in Denmark are unrealistic, he still believes that it is better for him to stay, and thereby avoid any shame in Ghana. For instance he further stated “For me it is better to suffer here. Maybe one day I’ll have a chance to get a job here”. Staying for him implies that he most likely will avoid the shame he fears in his home country, and he therefore tries to hold on to the dream of succeeding in Europe, a hope he cannot afford to lose.

We distinguish between two levels of ‘shame’. The first one is the shame they fear to meet when returning home empty-handed, and they second one is the inner shame that many of our informants felt. The first shame was reinforced in the idea that one is worthless without a job, “without job, I can’t do nothing”, seemed to be a feeling that was taken on by all of our informants. Because they are unemployed, they find themselves in a difficult financial situation that has led to their struggle and poverty. It is evident that shame comes in many shapes. The figure presents the variety of shame that exist within our informants. We argue that self-respect is tested when encountering with the different form of shame portrayed. We therefore argue that this shame clearly challenges our informant’s self-respect, which we argue may weaken them or reinforce the shame. The shame presented above also proves that this is closely connected to the issue of poverty. Martha Nussbaum, law and philosophy professor, states in her book “Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law” that one of the most stigmatized states in all world societies, is poverty. She writes “Societies have, in consequence, found it convenient to inflict a visible mark (Nussbaum 2004: 217)”, and she further states “Shame can also be paralyzing, however, particularly if the invitation to shame is issued by another (Nussbaum 2004: 215)”. This reveals that shame, also emphasized by Vetlesen, is most likely to be experienced by “victims” or people of a lower social status, as the public marks them with a stigma, and therefore the shame is thus created by external factors and placed within the individual.

## In the Search for an Income

Leaving their home country to go to Europe is inevitable linked with a search for an income that offers financial stability for either their family or themselves in the future. For all of them the search began in the Southern Europe and as employment became harder to find, they decided to try their luck in Denmark. The migration to Denmark for many seems to be connected with the idea that in a wealthy country there will be wealth to find. To then find out that they cannot be part of the workforce and participate in the wealth in Denmark are to some difficult to fully comprehend. In the meeting with the Danish society it made them consider the concept of freedom where it was hard to understand that Denmark is a free country where Libya is not. For those of our informants who have worked in Libya a different reality was encountered. Their previous life experiences shed lights on how they experience their life in Denmark and their perception of the country.

**“**I was just thinking about the bad life, even though in Libya there is local tribalism and religious crisis, it’s not like this. You still have freedom here you should have a basis to work and get money”. - Abdul

The quote highlights the confusion and disappointment that the experience of being in Denmark has left him with. The concept of freedom should be universal for humans but they experience that being formally excluded from the Danish society leaves them with no freedom. They consider that they should be free in Europe, but instead they find themselves chained to poverty and unemployment. They are confused in the sense that freedom is a western concept and especially Scandinavian countries should be welfare states, but they experience that the reality is different and the discourse of freedom and equality is not at all true. Freedom is not achievable for them in Denmark, rather they have little freedom to carry out anything. It presents the idea that freedom cannot be attached to a country, rather to the bodies which have a ‘natural’ place in the country which thus makes it possible to speak about people who does not have freedom in Denmark. Such a view means changing the label of illegal individuals to constrained individuals. With the perspective of our informants the people who do not hold the right papers thus do not have the right for freedom. This is within a context where freedom to speak, act, and think is not as important as being able to work and earn money. Having freedom means being able to live. For them the priority of being able to survive and earn money is much higher than having freedom in the western sense (right to act, speak, or think as one wants). They are willing to adapt to a society, like in Libya, in order to have a job, but in Denmark it is not a possibility to adjust, which for our informants is hard to understand. The vision imagined by our informants before starting their journey did not include the option of being denied access to participate in the society. It is hard to imagine that wealth and poverty can be so closely present, and one can be poor in a wealthy country. The increase in difficulties manifest in a chance in hope. The hope of being able to work hard and achieve good things in life, is replaced by a hope of eventually finding something, which is a hope more connected to chance than one’s own control and actions.

Moving from one country to another country is more than a physical journey, it is a part of a psychological transformation of self (Sheridan 2009:142). Our research points out that when our informants left their home country, they became “migrants” and when they arrived to Denmark they were deemed ‘illegal’ homeless migrants, on basis of this these homeless African migrants are somehow lost in policy and statistics. Their experience as migrants has torn their identities in the manner that they in one country experience being a valuable labor force, but in Europe they become excluded and considered a burden. The informants several times expressed that they do not find the exclusion logic as they are willing to work with whatever but at the same time there is people coming to the country and lives of benefits. They really want to be part of the Danish society but they are not given the possibility. It shows that from their perspective the system does not appear logical whereas they are from a country where you do not need any documentation to work.

# **Bottle Collecting is a Struggle - Welcome to the Frontline**

In this section we will give an insight into how our informants generate an income through bottle collecting. In this section we will introduce one to the universe of the bottle collecting profession and further, present the various aspects in which this is done, as this doing actually affirm to an ordinary job that consists of structure and organization. As presented in our portrait of our informants they have previously had “normal job” in the countries they lived in before, like in factories, restaurants, etc. However, due to their lack of a Danish work permit finding a job in Denmark is limited, which eventually has introduced them to an expedient which they solely rely on as main income opportunity. By following our informants as they go about their daily routines, we are able to present how the strategy of collection bottles works. We wish to give insight into various elements of the occupation such as, the reactions of the Danish surroundings, and the systematic behaviours that is ingrained in the position and procedure when collecting bottles. The result from our fieldwork is an engaging portrayal of a hard working group in Copenhagen, which represent a wide spectrum of people of the streets of Copenhagen. Most importantly, this section, points towards the need for informing people about a group which is otherwise considered to be strangers.

## To Collect Bottles

If one lives in Copenhagen, one is almost guaranteed to see a “bottle collector” every day, dragging an overfilled shopping bag in the cycling lane, or see someone going through the garbage can. Yet, that might likely to be the limit of the interaction with the “bottle collector” and their profession. The views of bottle collecting are arguably many, but it is probably only a few who know about, that it is a vital task for many homeless migrants in Denmark. Intrigued by the existence of this overlooked group, we set out to answer the question of the value in bottle collecting while perhaps challenging the many views attached to this profession. Our informants gave us an exceptionally opportunity to help us understand the economic and cultural logic when collecting bottles for an income and hence survival. We argue that the term survival can mean many things and take many forms. In this relation, we refer to survival as a state of continuing to live especially in the hard and vulnerable conditions they find themselves in staying in Denmark.

## Bottle Deposit

The Danish Ministry of the Environment determined on the basis of environmental assessments, which bottles is covered by the Danish deposit and return system. According to the current deposit notice, all cans and bottles containing beer, soft drinks, alcohol mixtures below 10%, energy drinks and mineral water must hold deposit. Dansk Retursystem A/S was established on the initiative of the Ministry of the Environment to implement, administrate and operate the deposit/refund system in Denmark. On the Danish bottle a small black logo can be seen where one can read how much bottles and cans redeem; for instance Pant A disburse DKK 1, Pant B: DKK 1.50, Pant C: DKK 3[[23]](#footnote-23).

## Use What You Have, to Get What You Want

For all of our informants the daily search for bottles was resulted by their undocumented status, which prevent them from getting a working permission and thereby puts them in a great disadvantage position in obtaining jobs in Denmark. This means that their only source of income is by collecting bottles daily and making a living out of it, and often our informants collected bottles early morning to late evening. It became evident that from our interviews that our informants have been unable to obtain the conventional or at least idealised image of a job. Our informants had interest in doing a job that consisted of duties, tasks and responsibilities. From their perspective, they seemed to understand “a real job” as a job that includes the physical and social aspects of a good working environment, where they could identify themselves with a certain role, which derive motivation for them.

The motivation for entering the bottle collecting job, despite that this occupation is not favoured by them, we define to be the desire to escape a low quality of life, and therefore only a temporary solution while waiting for other better jobs to be available to them. Our informant Emmanuel explained that he collected 200 bottles daily, and that it was really hard to earn money. He stated “What can I do if I don’t collect bottles? I don’t have any other options. Small things are better than nothing”. The quote is very noteworthy as it refers to how small and neglected things in life somehow have turned out to be of great importance for their situation in Denmark, as it has helped them to keep on going.

## Collecting Bottles is Survival

It can be argued that many homeless migrants have been quietly slipped into poverty in Denmark. This means that this has caused them to live on the margins of society. So how do we accurately define the term survival in relation to their situation in Denmark? From our interviews a certain definition emerged on what bottle collecting encompassed for them. For instance the aspect of survival was the main drive that kept them going in this occupation. For our informants survival suggested to an inner strength and resourcefulness which enabled them to face the challenges that they are exposed to. One of our informants stated

“Sometimes we just pick bottles on the streets. That is the only thing to do. Picking bottles while people look at you like trash. It is not something to be proud of. Even though that you have to start from somewhere, and it is just for some time” – Abdul

This statement reinforces the survival aspect that all of our informants expressed when they talked about their occupation as bottle collectors. It was clearly marked that our informants was not proud of collecting bottles as this had certain images attached to it, though they had no other alternatives for income, as this was the only option they had.

As mentioned all of our informants only saw bottle collecting as a temporary solution. They all feel that it is better to do this job instead of doing nothing. It became evident that our informants wanted us to see that we should not only see things the way they are, but rather the way they could be. In other words our informants referred to how one is not able to release ones potential for success until one work hard for it. It was clear that they had somehow developed a survival mentality, which enabled them to see solutions where others might see as problems. That said, we came to experience that collecting bottles is very demanding, especially since a day’s absence can lead to that one does not get the money that is crucial for them in order to obtain a reasonable income, for instance wind and weather had no influence when they got up early to collect bottles and cans.

All of our informants mentioned that bottle collecting only paid a little. We therefore stress that this kind of work is not able to get them out of homelessness, but rather enable them to manage on the streets as homeless migrants. One of our informants told us that many people think that collecting bottles is a huge industry where people can earn money and become rich on it. We were told that people often thought that bottles collectors did this job because it was tax free, which made people estimate that a lot of money could be earned. However, our informants strongly expressed that this was not the case for them, as they struggled to find bottles daily.

## Organized Work

Our research reveals that bottle collecting is not just picking up bottles unsystematically, but rather affirms to a set of procedures, that in many ways reminiscent the structures that is to be seen in many ordinary jobs. Our informants had clear “tools” and strategies that helped them boost the productivity and efficiency, when collecting bottles and cans. All of our informants had acquired a used bike, which was a unique tool for them to get around in town fast, as our informant Emmanuel stated, “Timeis money”. Another observation that we did, was that their bike was equipped with a front basket with plastic bags, just like their rear rack that also seemed to be having a specific function, as several plastic bags and long rubber bands was also squeezed by the upper rear rack. We do not consider the way that the bicycle is equipped as a coincidence, as we discovered that these elements on the bike also served with a purpose. This shows that their strategies are carefully thought through and shows how informed our informants are in terms of coping with their situation.

During our fieldwork, we discovered that if one thing falls apart, then ultimately this will have consequences for the entire structure of bottle collecting. For instance, while one of our informants was biking the chain suddenly fell off, and he was not able to fix it by himself. We observed that he was very worried, and in a hurry he pulled his bicycle to a local bicycle shop. We meet up with him shortly after the same day, and went with him to the bicycle shop where the cycle was serviced, and he was again able to use his only transportation around the city. He immediately started to search for bottles and it was evident that he was trying to catch up with the time that was lost while his bike was being serviced. Again this can be related to the extract mentioned earlier “time is money”. We were able to understand that our informants were very organized and therefore day-to-day routines were kept. It was very important for them to stay within schedule and not be “disturbed” by any means, because this in fact could affect the overall outcome for the day. This stresses the vulnerable situation that they are in, where little distraction can be afforded as they have little means to compensate for any losses.

Our informant was well-aware which direction we should go, and which garbage cans should be rummaged. What was striking was that he was able to calculate if there was deposit on the bottles and cans on a distance when the bottles were lying on the ground. For instance, as we were going along with our informant, we several times spotted bottles lying on the ground, whereto we made him aware of that. However every time he stated “no, there are not good” even though that we were standing a good distance from them. He had thus learned to distinguish, which cans and bottles had value. We therefore experienced that the activity of bottle collecting is not only psychically demanding but it is also logically complex, due to the skills that is needed to be learned in order to increase the amount of bottles.

We felt an urge to help him collect bottles as he had set beside his time for our study. Thus, it was excrementally surreal for us as researchers to collect bottles during rush hour in Copenhagen, which meant that people were everywhere and we were therefore visible collectors. We were introduced to the contrast of being an invisible homeless migrant and a visible bottle collector in the urban street scene of Copenhagen. It was especially taboo-breaking and surreal for us when we were looking down in a garbage can, as it had always been a rule of thumb that one should not put their hands in them, because what is being thrown in there remains there. We were especially baffled by the things which could be found in a garbage can, for instance minced meat which was still in full packaging. It was therefore a transcendent experience to put ones hand down in a garbage can for a few Danish coins. To many in the “working world” who earn their money in large notes, the idea of making a living in a coin may seem as extreme and absolute absurd, but in this case we discovered the prize that every bottle and can holds. In many ways it somehow reminded us of a “real” job, as it affirmed the idea that the more one is doing, and the more one is finding, the greater profit there is to obtain. Another feature that we discovered was the white gloves, he took from his jacket and offered us when we were rummaging the garbage cans for bottles. He almost seemed to be indignant that we put our bare hands down in a filthy garbage can, which emphasized that he was taking his precautions when he collected bottles from them. While we helped him collect bottles he at one point uttered “Don’t do this, I will do it”, which somehow reflected an idea of that we as women should not be doing his job, as it pulled us down to his level, almost suggesting that we should not be troubled by doing his work. We later on discovered that despite that our informants saw this as a job; they also saw it as a shameful act. This will be elaborated further in the sub-section “*Shameful Job*”.

Another aspect relevant to mention is the agreements that was implemented in their job. This agreement that was put in system involved that, our informants had specific agreements with Danish people living in certain districts in Copenhagen. The agreement involved that people who had a lot of bottles stored at home, could call our informants to pick them up, and thereby donating and saving the time they would have spent by going down to the supermarket to get money for them. Our informants emphasized that this was a very effective solution to keep the streets clean, and stressed that they in fact had a crucial role in keeping the streets clean by collecting the bottles and cans which often is lying around to the annoyance of public. We were made aware of that this in fact was a way of seeing oneself having an important role in society, and emphasizing that in society each individual’s role is different and still equally important. In relation to this, it was also emphasized by one of our informants that he did not understand why people throw the bottles and cans in the garbage, even though that this in fact is rather commonly to do. It can be argued that for our informants the bottles hold a great deal of value, and it therefore seems meaningless to throw them out. Instead he suggested that it was more normal to just place the bottles beside the garbage can, which people often also do. In that way he also avoids the public embarrassment of reaching down into a dirty garbage can, and thus manoeuvres around a general notion that trash cans are dirty.

When we passed benches where people were sitting and enjoying a cold beer or soda, we noticed that these people often placed the bottles near the garbage can, which we saw as an obvious opportunity to go there and ask if we could take the bottles with us. However, our informant told us that we should pick the bottles up later, when the people were gone, which we determine to be a way of avoiding any unnecessary confrontation with these people, who also seemed to be a bit drunk. It can therefore be argued that our informants are well-aware of their vulnerable situation, which may cause certain people to harass them without reason. Another aspect also closely linked to this specific avoidance is the discomfort of showing that they are homeless in the public sphere. This will be also be elaborated further in the subsection “*Shameful Job*”. What was noteworthy was that he walked towards the bottles, picked them up, smiled to the other people sitting on the bench, and afterwards threw the bottles in the garbage can, which somehow is contrary to what he stated to us, that people should not be throwing bottles out in the garbage can. We eventually learned that this was also a technique in the process of bottle collecting, as he came back to collect the bottles, when the people were gone. He thereby avoided confrontation with the drunken people and also avoided drawing any attention to his homelessness. We came back to the exact areas where the bottles were thrown out, and he then picked the bottles up from the garbage can.

Bottle collecting is also conditional upon certain seasons; particularly summers seemed to be a month that our informants had great benefits from. Further festivals also seemed to draw our informants as many bottles would be lying everywhere. Our informant Emmanuel stated “think about it girls, what do you drink in the summers? Water - So bottles everywhere”. He further emphasized that people often drank more than one bottle of water each day during the summer. However, bottle collecting does not come without moments of conflicts. For instance while we were invited inside to a gathering place for homeless, we observed that an African migrant had his bottles stolen within a little time, while we were speaking to him. The reason why the bottles were stolen was because he placed the bottles outside while eating breakfast inside, which means that he did not guard them. We noticed that our informants laughed at him and teased him, as they knew that bottles should be guarded. He had only been in Denmark for a few days and therefore not familiar with norms within the homeless community. We argue that within this occupation chaos can also arise when losing one’s bottles, and people often only think about themselves, as there is no space to take care of others, as it’s already a struggle to manage for themselves.

## Shameful Job

“When people see you in the streets collecting bottles, people look at this guy and think he is wasting his time. Especially in life, you are told that you have talent and still you are facing different kind of problems which you are not supposed to face. So that is why people see you at trash, because people don’t give you respect when they are picking up bottles on the streets to get money and eat.” - Abdul

It was clear that our informants believed that bottle collecting was a very degrading and shameful job. It was explained that people did not respect them due to the fact that they wander the streets and pick bottles. For instance the phrase “shitty job” was used when describing the job. They stressed that people often looked at them as “trash” and believed that they were wasting their time. John even uttered that “*I feel disqualified*”, when people asked him what his job was. There is no doubt that pride might be an issue because bottle collecting can be considered to be a job in the bottom of the prestige ran, which many people find undesirable. It is noteworthy that the activity of collecting bottles is the action which places them in an undesirable category in society, as it is the action which defines them as being different in the public eye. Just simply being in the public, does not necessarily signify a moral judgement or negative attitudes, as they then are just a black man on the streets, rather it is the collecting of bottles which reveals the situation that they are in. It is the actions of rummaging the garbage cans, biking with heavy plastic bags, going to the store for disburses and browsing the city landscape, that visualise this group of migrants and categorises them as individuals who are poor, homeless and initially do not belong in Denmark. It was evident that many of our informants had tried to seek work in Denmark in the hope that they would get free from collecting bottles, by approaching restaurants where they hoped they would be acquire a job; however, they often experienced that employers never called them back which is an indicator that the job market is simply not open to this group.

# **Legal Challenges: Experiencing the Police**

Through our conversations with our informants we came to realise that their position both as homeless and as paperless, have an impact on their relations to the Danish police. As we were in contact with our informants over a longer period of time, we discovered that the relation changed as several of them experienced interaction with this authority. We will in the following chapter present some of our key findings, in relation to how our informants understand the function of the police in relation to their role in the Danish society, both as a migrant and paperless. Moreover, we will shed light on how they understand their own documents and hence, legal status in Denmark.

To our questions revolving our informants relation to the police, our informants explained that they do not have problems with the police, and replied “why should I have that?”. They were indicating that they have done nothing wrong, so why should they fear the police or have problems with them. It seemed as if the question was not thought of as a question about their relation to the police, but rather the police’s relation to them, and their reply is therefore based on how outsiders would look at them and not how they look at the police. There therefore seem to be a connection between having problems with the police and being a problem to the police where these two different perspectives equal each other. When one considers having a problem with the police, makes one a problem to the police, an emphasis is placed on the police’s opinion on them, rather than their opinion on the police. This is particular evident as our informant Abdul explained, “The Danish police I have no problem with them. I just go on with my life and I am not a bad person”. It becomes an expression of their position in the Danish society where they do not want to be perceived as being a burden and a problematic individual who has encounters with the police. In a certain way they therefore assume that in case of problems, they are the ones to blame for these and disregard the fact, that they could in fact have problems with the police due to the police’s treatment of them. A perspective where they only consider themselves to be the actor who are able to be problematic, also presents a skew power relation and a disempowered position in relation to the Danish police. It becomes an expression of not being considered important enough in the Danish society to be able to speak out about a vital authority. Moreover, by avoiding to have relations to the police they avoid a negative discourse of them, that is, the discourse we addressed introductory that frames the African homeless migrants as challenging to the Danish Society. In this manner, they are aware of the discourse attached to them and want to distance themselves from such negative association. They know that they are a perceived to be a problem to the police, a legislative problem, as they are familiar with the possibility of being deported. However, they do not consider themselves to be a legislative problem and they stress that they are not criminals and have not violated the law. It hence reveals that they cannot or will not embody the idea of them being a problem to the police which ultimately means they are criminals and a bad person. All they have done is to travel to find a livelihood, which does not mean that are bad persons and criminals. It shows that it can be hard to recognise the role which society has placed them in and they therefor speak from a position where they are not a problem to the police.

## Invisibility

In the context of considering the attitude of the police towards themselves, the control of the situation is placed on themselves and certain strategies are therefore employed by them; a strategy, such as attempting invisibility in the public to avoid unnecessary attention. Most of our informants explained that they would rather avoid interaction with the police as it could lead to negative consequences. In relation to stating that they do not have problems with the police, it reveals that they do not encounter with the police because they clearly wish to avoid it, and not because there simply has not been a reason for it. The opinion underpin a disempowered position in the Danish society, where they feel that the police is not there to help them, but rather to help the Danish society, which could mean removing our informants from it. They therefore consider that being invisible and away from the radar of the police serve them better. It becomes understandable why their relation to the police is marked by being as unproblematic as possible, and why they chose to consider a question about their relation to the police, from the perspective of the police rather than from their own, as it is this issue which matters to them. It does thus matter much more to them that the police leave them alone and find them unproblematic, rather than they, from a sense of justice, consider the police to be unproblematic. It reveals their priorities and their everyday concern is not whether the police treat them fairly, but rather their priority is to be invisible and able to go about their day without any inconvenience.

The desire for being invisible is moreover taken into their actions when moving in the public sphere. Emmanuel explains that he previously went to a park to hang out with friends but after some time the police started to come to this park. He said that they checked him even though he had never done anything. His reaction to the approaches of the police was to avoid the park. It is evident that they try to avoid ‘dangerous’ areas and people who might be of police suspicion. They do indeed walk around freely in the city, however, in the back of their mind they are aware of the trouble they can encounter with the police. It therefore seems that they rather want to move around in the city unnoticed to avoid any trouble or interaction with the police. It is best to be invisible as they do not have the surplus or power to deal with the police and they therefore, chose to avoid going certain places to spare themselves from questioning and a confrontation. They find themselves in a legal grey zone, where they are easy targets of arrest or deportation if they are found to be in connection with public disturbing behaviour.

As we mentioned previously, we observed during our fieldwork that our informant avoided approaching drunken people when collecting bottles. One can argue that such a tactic is another way of evading trouble as they know that drunken people might cause problems either in the form of verbal assault or because they draw attention to themselves. The informants daily incorporate their desire for being invisible into the practices they perform, such as bottle collecting. They are aware of the extremely vulnerable situation that they are in, that some might consider them an easy target for verbal assault. Moreover, their situation turns them into fragile people who had little power to negotiate protection and respect. Because of their papers and their homelessness they are not able to demand to be heard. Not only do they not have a voice but they are also an object for investigation, an investigation that they cannot protest against.

## My Country my Rules

From our interviews, we also found that our informants do not consider asking the Danish police for assistance to be an opportunity. One of the reasons was that they did not feel that they could depend on the Danish police as they are not Danish. When we question Emmanuel about the police he stated that, if he was in his own country he would do as he pleases. About being in his own country, he stated, “if they wrong me, I can do something about it myself”. This indicates a sense of powerlessness being in Denmark and being here, means that he must just accept the conditions presented to him. They feel that as long as they do not have citizenship here they cannot do anything if someone assaults them. There is therefore a connection between citizenship and certain rights in Denmark such as getting help from the police. The role of the police seem to be shaped by a belief that the police for them is not an authority which helps and protects, rather, the function of the police is to monitor and control them. They are placed externally of the Danish society and unable to claim rights, as claiming rights means monitoring and questioning by the police. When the informant speaks about his position in his own country he explains that in Ghana he is capable of taking matters into his own hands, and that he can “jump over some laws”. The perception of the police does therefore not seem to be the same as the Danish perception where the police is thought of as a resource for the citizens. Rather he thinks of the police as some who control what you can do, which makes it understandable that in order to avoid control, one avoids the police. The quote also becomes an expression of power, a power which he is able to execute in another country. He let us know that this treatment of him would not exist in another context; nevertheless, he accepts it because he is not from Denmark. He is therefore not a vulnerable person, but rather in a vulnerable situation and if he was at home he would react to mistreatment towards him.

 “I do not think it is possible to call the police in Denmark because when I came there, they were asking me so many questions” – Abdul

Due to previous unpleasant experiences with the police they do not believe that they can rely on the Danish police to help them in case of need. They feel criminalised by the police and it is therefore hard to imagine that the same authority will protect them. From the beginning of his stay in Denmark, he felt that he was not wanted as the police were asking him questions about his entrance into the country. The above quote continues where he speaks about his friend’s arrest and detention, an arrest which happened while his friend was collecting bottles. At one point during their stay, either in the beginning or later, they become aware that the police have the opportunity to arrest them and send them out of the country and they cannot make use of the police in case of emergency without risking deportation. The lack of trust is further evident, as Emmanuel was arrested where he felt that it was pointless to argue with the migration authorities, perhaps because he believes that the system does not favour him or because, he was not familiar with the legislation connected to his status. He denied help from us and suggested that it would be better to just leave alone; hence he did not feel like protesting or causing any problem as felt that it would be in vain.

Together with their legal status, which at times makes them a target for police investigation, there also seem to be a general distrust in authorities, where these are considered to be corrupt and illegal themselves. In a conversation Abdul’s friend argues the following,

“When we were growing up we were thinking about becoming lawyers, police, and good profession. But while growing up we learned that these guys act like criminals, so we had to change our course because we don’t want to be like them” – friend of Abdul

This view on authorities could be traced back to their countries of origin where the police perhaps have a rumour of being corrupt. However, it can also be considered that our informants feel that certain authorities are criminals themselves, because of how they act or relate to our informants. In childhood they learned that these are the good guys, nevertheless growing up they experience that it is the same people who are trying to push them into of corner of criminality, impossibility and desperateness. The thought is that they do not consider themselves to be criminals, however they are treated as such, and therefore the real criminals must be these people who make them face these legal issues and problems. That is, the system is working against them.

##  “They are Hunting Africans”

As we mentioned earlier, we experienced a change in the informant perception of the police over time. During our time in the field we came to understand a relation between our informants and the police, characterised by keeping to themselves and avoiding troublesome situations. Their perceptions of the Danish police later changed as they experienced more direct contact with the police and what they expressed to be harassment. It seemed that over time the idea about being invisible seemed not to be compatible with their job of collecting bottles. Collecting bottles makes them especially visible in the eye of the public and the police, as it is considered distinctive behaviour in the Danish society. They cannot be invisible and avoid attention and they experienced that the income activity throws suspicion on them and makes the police approach them. It places the migrants in a vulnerable situation when they try to earn money, as their occupation reveals their status. As mentioned earlier, collecting bottles is associated with being on the bottom of society and moreover, being poor with no papers. They are criminalised when they try to earn money as bottles collecting might be perceived by the police to be executed by people who are involved in crime. Their situation therefore becomes more vulnerable as they daily have to be aware of the police. Previously they expressed that they could avoid interaction with police by avoiding going certain places but they are not capable of avoiding bottle collecting as it is their livelihood.

Their situation became even more stressful a few weeks later, as of two of our informants were arrested by the police. The following will only describe the arrestment of Emmanuel. Peter called us to tell us that he could not find his friend Emmanuel. He seemed very worried as he knew something had happened to him because he knew that his friend would never just leave without saying anything. He believed that he perhaps had been arrested, but our informant did not feel secure to contact the police as he then would be arrested himself. He therefore asked us to contact the police to figure out what had happened to him. When he was speaking about the arrestment of his friends he uttered “they are hunting Africans now”. The statement and episode clearly demonstrates the vulnerable situation that they constantly find themselves in, when they stay in Denmark. They are living in the cracks of society with no means to claim rights or resources of the public. They cannot object to the shift of treatment that they experience, as they have no voice in the public forum. The statement indicates that our informants feel hunted and in danger while staying in Denmark as they feel that the police are especially investigating them. Not only are they singled out because of their income activities, but they feel that the colour of their skin might also throw suspicion on them. It leaves them in a desperate situation and the experience of illegality is no longer perceived to be connected with actions solely, like bottles collecting, but it is diverted inwards to a place they cannot escape, their black bodies.

One could argue that the obvious reason for not contacting the police is the illegal status that Peter holds. He cannot show up at the police station with a request as the police would throw suspicion on his status and he would suffer a similar fate. Another reason for not contacting the police can also be found in his knowledge of how the police would treat his request. One can argue that he can avoid letting the police know about his status and arrestment by phoning in about his friend’s disappearance, instead of showing up at the police station. Our informant is aware of the option as he asks us to call as a favour. The reason behind avoiding to make the phone call himself must therefore be found in his understanding of the police, and he knew that he would not achieve much information by calling himself. He knew that if we called the police, we would have an authority that he did not have, as we are not homeless and as we speak the Danish language. He knew that, he would probably not have been taken serious by the police and in order to evade humiliation or unnecessary questioning it would be better if we called instead. The incident reveals, how they consider their possibilities of reaching out for help by the police to be very limited, and that their way of speaking, having accents and speaking English, together with a request concerning an illegal migrant, would not have been welcomed and acted upon by the police. The incident also shows the little resources the group of migrants have to draw on. Choosing to contact us as researcher shows that there are no institutions or other networks that they can contact for support and they are relying on people they meet, like us, to help out when needed. It shows how they are placed out of society and they excluded from operating in it.

## Speaking with Police

As mentioned above, we contacted the police in order to find out what had happened to Emmanuel. We experienced that the conversation with the police was extremely influenced by the fact that we were making requests about people who are homeless and paperless. The police representative who we spoke with informed us that they could not assist with anything as the person missing did not have a social security number and he further stated, that those kind of people (homeless) they often go home with people so he will probably show up eventually. It is thus clear that the treatment of our request was inevitable linked to the beliefs that the representative had about homelessness. It was obvious that he was not taking our request serious and as we continued to push our request forward, he became angry and hung up the phone. His statements was clearly marked by the idea that homeless individuals are people who are drifters, unpredictable and it is not severe when they disappear. The fact that Peter knew something was wrong and that something had happened to Emmanuel, is an indicator that they do not at all fall into the public image of homeless, rather they are responsible individuals who very unlikely would just go with a stranger home. The incident should also be considered as a window into their everyday life where the public authorities are not a helping hand, but rather a resistance and at times a threat. The lack of concern that one was missing and the attitude of ridicule and unseriousness, are expressions of lack of recognition that these homeless migrants are actual persons who matter. Our informants become dehumanised in the sense, that they are not considered to be persons who are equally important as other citizens, rather they are treated as burdens who they do not want to waste resources on. Their position in the Danish society as both homeless and illegal gives them little social status, which has an impact on the treatment they receive from the society. Treated as an alien body, which does not count among the ‘naturals’, acknowledged and rightfully belonging parts of the Danish society. Not unlikely a cancer growth which is best treated by removal.

## European Papers: A Legal Grey Zone

The Danish legislation tied to our informants’ statuses as migrants, whereby they are somehow different than how we initially had considered. Before speaking to our informants, we had considered these individuals to be illegally staying in Denmark as they had no papers for staying in Denmark. However, our informants had another perspective on their legal status. Most of them stated, that as long as they had their visas, for either Italy or Spain, they did not consider themselves to be illegal in Denmark. Having EU papers therefore seemed be considered to be sufficient for staying in Denmark. Abdul states: “I have my visa so I do not have problems with them (ed. police)”. However, at the same time they were all aware of their limited rights while staying in Denmark and they all tried to avoid the police, which also means that they are aware that they might be in a legal grey zone. It further becomes evident as Peter explains “I have no rights here, the law does not allow yourself to live here”, which again stresses that they are aware of the Danish law. The duality of opinion on legal status could stem from an idea that Europe is the overall destination of their journey and therefore, having to leave one country to go to another might not be a larger significant event. As long as they have papers for one EU country it can never go completely wrong, as they cannot be deported from EU. As long as they are in a European country their situation is tolerable, as there is still hope for employment somewhere. One can also argue that it is difficult for them to fully comprehend their legal status as their perspective on EU legislation is not clear. EU should be considered as united and to have free labour movement, but their legal opportunities seem complicated and they express that they can in some countries, like Sweden, undertake employment whereas in Denmark they are not able to do so. They are aware that they are not allowed to stay in Denmark, thus avoiding the police, but the duality might be an expression of doubt about how long they are allowed to stay and what the consequences of overstaying is. When Emmanuel was arrested and told by the police, that he had to leave Denmark within a week, he asked us to contact the police to ask if he could leave 2 weeks later instead. Such a request on changing the deportation date so it would fit better his economic situation can sound absurd to many who are brought up in the Danish legal system as we are aware that the system are following regulations, however, to individuals who are not familiar with the Danish system it might not be that transparent.

Our interview with Abdul showed that becoming familiar with the Danish legislation on immigration, hence working visa and their requirements, were not thought of and therefore he had not acquired the needed knowledge before his departure to Denmark from Italy. He seemed to be genuinely surprised by the fact that Italian refugee documents, were not sufficient to acquire a Danish work permit. The follow passage establishes this,

**“What about the document for working**? Yeah they say I need documents and the documents cannot work over there. But I’m thinking that it’s all European documents because Italy is also under Europe. Why is it that they can’t use Italian documents to work in Denmark? It was so surprising.

**You didn’t know that before?** No I didn’t know that, I told you, I just decided to come on my own. So no one told me you can do this and you can do that. I though having documents would make it much easier for me. I was thinking if I don’t have documents then I’m illegal but I have documents and I’m not illegal in the country. I have European document, even though it’s not a Danish document. It’s a European document for refugees so I’m thinking I can you use it here to work. I didn’t even think it was possible that I can’t use that“.

The passage shows that the informant is frustrated by the situation that he is in. He initially believed, that he could impact the life he eagerly wishes to change. He however learned, that he is not able to use the documents which he was given in another country and therefore not able to escape the circumstances, which leave him with little means to improve his life. As a result of his unawareness, he comes to realize that the documents he once saw as his “golden ticket” had no real value on the European market. However, he does not consider himself illegal, due to the Italian papers of which he is a European citizen.  He expresses unfairness to his situation as he does not consider himself to be illegal as he has been granted documents and thus is a citizen of the EU. He considers that the unfairness is solely presented to him and others with his kind of papers, as he is aware that EU has free labour movement for its citizens. Before leaving Italy, he did not find it imaginable that he could be formally excluded from the rest of Europe because of his documents.

One can argue that for our informants the experience of being categorized as ‘illegal’ put them into a frame, which they do not find themselves belonging to. They find that being an illegal body is not a body of theirs and therefore speaking about illegality does not make sense to them. Being in Europe and travelling around from country to country, has the impact on them that their status can change from legal to illegal just by crossing a border. It can be hard to fully comprehend and channel the idea inwards, that you now, through crossing an EU border, is considered to belong to the category ‘illegal’. Simply by crossing a border in the EU puts them in situation of being outside the system and by law they are doing a criminal act just by being. As noted, it can be hard to understand the European and hereunder the Danish legislation. However it becomes much harder to speak about one’s own legal status when the category, which we speak about ‘illegality’ forces them to be something which is very undesirable.

 “ People say we’re criminals, I know myself, I’m a good person, my heart is clean I just worry about my future. I don’t sell drugs, I don’t steal I don’t care about someone apart from myself. I don’t want to lie to get help, if you wanna help you help. That’s what I believe in”. – Abdul

They all express one way or the other, that they distance themselves from criminal activities, where being paperless is not considered a criminal act. The category of being illegal can feel very stigmatizing as it is connected with crime, exclusion and unwantedness. Especially as all our informants express resistance towards crime and aim to be morally good.

## Being Sceptic

As mentioned all of our informants were sceptical before they agreed to take part in our research. We asked one of our informants why he thought that people were sceptical to speak to us in the beginning of the research. He stated,

“They don’t want to. Maybe they think you are coming to interview them and then going to broadcast it in radio, or perhaps you come from the police. They don’t know. Maybe you could be from some organization where they want to know people’s mind and tighten the laws”. -Peter

It became evident that we too had been part of the ‘system’ that our informants have to struggle against. We argue that it is not surprising that most of our informants view on the Danish community is dominated by the sense of fear, suspicion and uncertainty. Moreover, the lack of Danish language skills, networks of support and legal help, adds more uncertainty which was revealed throughout our interviews where we could see a sense of helplessness in relation to figuring out the system. For instance when we were having a conversation out of the ordinary interview, they often asked us questions about how they could get documents in Denmark. It must be noted that this dilemma of uncertainty that our informants find themselves in, is not to presenting the informants as being against the government. It is more an explanation of how these informants tries to ‘defend’ themselves and make logic of the barriers they face daily. We argue that, the way they present the ‘forces’ against them reveals how they try to make the vulnerable situation they find themselves in more understandable to themselves but also to us as researchers.

# **The Life of a Migrant**

They way that our informants structure their life is extremely impacted by their present uncertain situation due to homelessness, unemployment and the lack of the sufficient document. These factors seem to have an effect on their agency possibilities and their development of their lives. These aspects will be elaborated in the following chapter.

## Unknown Destiny

As mentioned earlier all of our informants had plans that they hope one day will be achieved. It was not just the plan of improving quality of live, but the plan of “working with your bones” and achieving something with hard work that they would be able to see, feel and experience. In this case we came across the notion of dreams and plans that was most prevalent for all of our informants. The dream of becoming a successful independent man, a singer or to be given the opportunity to study seemed to take up their minds. However, our informants were well-aware of that in order to attain these dreams and plans they needed to get a job, as this is connected. For instance our informant Emmanuel asked us what we planned to do after finishing our studies, whereto we replied that our purpose was to find a job afterwards. He immediately replied “exactly, your goal with your education is to get a job and earn money. You want to improve your life”, and further stated “Who doesn’t want that?”. This statement is a justification for his stay in Denmark, and therefore must not be seen groundless. To start a car company, to afford a wedding, to have a wife and children and becoming a successful music artist were all dreams that only existed in their future plans. It was emphasized that our informants tried to save up money by collecting bottles as this in fact was the only preliminary solution until something would exist or happen in time to come. It was noteworthy when Peter stated “I can’t think of my future, when I don’t have money”, which implies that he in present moment has to solely rely on the things that he finds temporary solutions in. Therefore, he stresses that with money one can be independent, and have some control over one’s life, but right now there are not many opportunities available to them. However, some independence is achieved through the income activity of collecting bottles.

 “I was born in Africa. Sometimes I miss Africa, but I can’t live like that, without money. I have to find something before I can go. It is important where I come from, because I will go back and live in the country, because I speak the language and know the culture. Everything, the weather, everything is good for me there. I have a lot of friends and family there” – John

This quote demonstrates that our informants have indeed a plan for their future, where they dream about eventually returning home. It is evident that our informants have a sense of belonging and close ties to their country of origin which they feel cannot be replaced by Europe, as they still identify with their home country despite having migrated. Our informants expressed that they have little control over their destiny, as they feel that their options are controlled by socio-economic factors and policies.

## Live by Chance

The experience of a long unemployment period in either Spain or Italy has for our informants been the main reason for migrating further north to countries like Sweden, France and next Denmark. The situation of not being able to get a job in neither the receiving countries nor the country of origin, has led to a lack of a pathway among the migrants. They do not have a path which will lead them to success or a recipe of what to do or where to go to make their chances of a work higher.

It seems that our informants do not have a direction, which can guarantee them access to capital which is needed to achieve their goals for migrating. The lack of opportunities which they face has caused to them to live a life highly led by chance. A form of indifference imbues their present life on what will happen to them in the near future. They are all discontented with their life situation in Denmark, but a lack of possibilities of something better is absence and they therefore do not have the option to move forward, that is, a way to get a better life in the future. The indifference can be traced in their relationship with the authorities.

“The only thing they can do is to take me away from Denmark. If you say go, I’ll go because I’m not in a good situation. So if you take me and take me to Spain or Africa, I will be going, I don't mind. I'm not afraid of that…Now I don't have much chance, just live here like that and see what's going to happened because I’m going to so many countries and it's almost the same. Maybe I live here and if I in one year don't find a job I have to find another thing to do, another way to go”. – Peter

The quotes illustrate indifference about his location which can be considered as a lack of vision of where he will achieve success. Perhaps he will have chance somewhere but he feels that it is out of his hands. He can therefore not plan his life but he has to wait and see what the future will bring. They can thus not impact their life in the extent that they want to. They do direct their life through collecting bottles every day, however, they do not have the resources to take the direction further than every day activities. The lack of possibilities makes their search for a better life random where strategies of going to another country can come across as being unplanned and frivolous. However, it can be hard to plan for random chances. They do not know what to hope for in the next country of migration as they rely on luck.

## On the Go

Living life ‘by chance’, seem to be connected with living a life on the move. The quote mentioned above also shows that our informants have not settled in Denmark and are imagining going somewhere else in case this situation does not work out. The life on the go is particular evident as Abdul explained that he would always put his music lyrics on the internet as he did not like to carry them around. They are living a life on the go, much like a drifter who is ready to leave their temporary location at any instant. With little reason for staying, they do not need much for leaving and are therefore always able to leave with a short notice. They do not have more than their bodies and a small rucksack as they in Denmark also do not have a permanent place to settle, but are instead compelled to be on the go every day. They have become forced drifters living in uncertain surroundings as Abduls statement reveals, they do not have more than their bodies in case something happens to them, and because they do not have a home to store things in the safest place becomes the internet, as that ‘location’ is the same no matter where circumstances will take them. Their homelessness have made them Individuals who have no place to settle for now and are able to move location once their problems catch up to them; unemployment or illegality. Move on to another country with other chances as it is the only way to get away from everything that made them become drifters in the first place.

The lack of a path should not be confused with hopelessness as they are strong of will and have hope that eventually they will find something for them. The hopelessness and feeling of failure in life, is to not as prevalent among this group of migrants as other studies (Kjærre, 2010) have found among irregular migrants. They have faith that eventually they will find something for them here in Europe. However, the faith and optimism might be temporary and perhaps it is only a matter of time before they sink into homelessness. The frustration of not being able to plan their own life is prevalent. We asked one informant about what a better life means to him where he explained the following,

“A better life it can mean something like, maybe you’re living in a situation that you never expected before and you’re ready to boost up yourself and be a man on your own or have thing in your life so you start to think ahead. To think ahead. To have good thinks with your own head and intention”. - Abdul

Abdul is in another position than the others. He has left Denmark and went back to Italy as he, according himself, had realised that he would never get the chance he was hoping for in Denmark. It seems that their perspective on their situation is influenced by where they are on their journey. It appears that Abdul has given up on his chances in Denmark and has come to realise the harsh reality that it is not getting better in Denmark, while the other informants might still be chasing a dream. The quote above highlights, that Abdul is frustrated about the lack of opportunities he is now facing in Italy. He has tried his chance in Denmark; now what to do next? He is discouraged by his lack of self-agency and control over his own life. For him, a better life is to be able to control the direction your life is taking. He wishes to achieve goals with his own determination without depending on chance. Our informants’ lives in Denmark are characterized by being placed out of society, not able to grasp onto job possibilities, which means that they instead are relying on chances to improve their living situation. They have no pathway which will lead them to employment and hence, closer to their goal of earning money. For all of the migrants the lack of self-agency came to dominate their life where they are unable to make many plans for their future. They instead rely on others, on chance or destiny to turn their life around.

## Life On standby

Among our informants, the dependence on chance to change their living conditions was also evident in a form of stagnant development in their lives while living in homelessness. Their living conditions are forcing them to stop living and they often made statements about ‘really’ living once they get out of their situation. The ones with no girlfriends all considered themselves to be unable to have a relationship while they were unemployed or homeless.

“.. as a hustler you feel embarrassment and you have to do many things. But I don’t even approach girls on the street just like that, I just chat on the net and that’s all. I don’t have time for dating right now, I have to solve my problem first. I don’t want to put too much problem in my life to be on my girlfriend. Many girls ask for dating but I don’t believe in it, it’s for a joke. Let me have my own rest first”. – Abdul

The quote above shows that it can be a challenge to be involved with a woman as they in their present situation do not feel that they have much to offer. In their current time of life, they have too much to handle to form part of a relationship and believe, that they need to have stability in their own life before they are able to take somebody else in consideration. The informant speaks about having rest and solving his problems first, which means that his situation has assumed his life where he does not have the energy or the resources to develop other aspects of his life and it is therefore not developing forward. John with a wife and two kids in Ghana, explains that kids should have their father to raise them and control them properly. He thus feels absence from his family and the life which he is supposed to life. His life in Ghana is going on without him present.

The quote above is also emphasizing a sense of shame of not having his life under control at the moment. Even though, he does not feel that he can lead his life in the direction he wants, he still considers himself as responsible or more, he thinks that his surroundings hold him responsible. He believes that he is an embarrassment and further argues, that people look at him like trash because he is not using his talent and is wasting his time. His existence in Denmark is therefore linked to a feeling of timewasting and not using the potential he is given. They cannot live their life and be who they actually are in Denmark due to the challenges they are facing. In their mind they are not people who should be facing these difficulties; they are someone else. As long as they are homeless, they cannot do what they actually or deep down wants to do. As Abdul describes “you are told that you have talent and still you are facing different kinds of problems which you are not supposed to face”. He feels attached to a position of him as a person of talent and can therefore not understand, that he cannot perform this because he is facing problem which he should not face, because these problems should not be his. According to him, should his social position not have these problems because he has done nothing to cause them. As noted previously, they are stuck in a position which they do not identify with. The migrants are not developing in the life/identity which they wish to be in. Instead, they have to perform this ’homeless identity’ to survive, whereas they feel that they should be doing things that matches their ‘actual’ identity more, like making music, building a company or being a father or husband. In that way, they are stuck in role where their real life is on hold until they solve the issue of unemployment and homelessness.

## A language barrier

In the migration for possibilities several of our informants stressed that the knowledge of certain languages has an impact on job options. In the search for a job they had the perception that knowing a language could improve their chances and their situation, as it would make it somehow easier to get by in a country. A quote used earlier in the analysis is therefore relevant to highlight once more:“*They tell me I need to speak Danish and I have to have a CPR number and I have to have this and that. Damn that’s a long story. Where can I get all this?*

***Were you surprised that you needed those things****? I didn’t expect all those things. I never expected that. I thought that in Denmark they were speaking English, so they told me now that I still have to learn Danish. How many languages must you learn until you become rich? Or have work? I speak more than 4 languages. So I was thinking damn when they say I must learn Danish.”*

The above shows that knowing the native language is considered to be vital in order to get by in a country, and being able to cope in Denmark means that he has to learn Danish. At the shelter we were further informed that one informant could be interested in the speaking to us as he wish to practice his Danish. Language skills are thus considered to be a valuable skill. The reason for the stress on learning a language could be that it is one of the only resources that they can have control over and have the opportunity to learn. Control over in the sense, that no one can forbid them the skill or take it away from them. It is a skill they can acquire through being on ‘the streets’ in a society. It is a skill which does not require money or the right papers, but rather it is a skill which manifests in the body through what they are able to say. You do not need papers to show that you know a language; rather, you carry the skill in your body and can present it when needed. When one do not have access to education or if the education is not valid, knowing the language thus becomes the only skill accessible which one can say is universally recognized for being intellectual enrichment. The quote presented also reveals a frustration about not being able to achieve a better life despite knowing four languages. He can mentally integrate into a society and do whatever it takes to get a job, but he can never change the challenge presented regarding his legal status. The legal status continues to be the determining factor of his life, and controls the life conditions which he eagerly wish to change. Language is also presented to be a way to make people like you more and an informant states that people like you if you speak their language and it also makes you more attractive as a labour force. Moreover, there seem to be an idea that not being familiar with the language also means being in Denmark illegally.

 “*They speak Danish and its normal here to speak Danish, you can’t go to school before you get documents so you have to speak the language. So when they see you can’t speak the language it means that you don’t have documents*”.

Our informant therefore experience that his legal status is revealed due to his lack of knowledge of the Danish language. He cannot escape the undesired category of being illegal in his social interactions as he believes that people will know that he does not have documents, when he does not speak the language. This also reveals that he might feel a distancing from people when he presents himself in English.

## The Harsh Life

It is evident that our informants consider their life in Denmark to be harsh and difficult. Not only is it hard on a physical level; being outside in the cold all day collecting bottles, but the stories of our informants also reveals mental and emotional hardship. Some feels dehumanized by their conditions as they feel that they are too harsh for humans to endure.

“People have been drinking and they put the bottles in the rubbish. You have to put your hands in and take it out. And sometimes you have to sleep on the street in the snow, just imagine, human beings sleeping in the snow”. –Abdul

The quote reveals a life in stress. When the shelters are full there is no other option than staying outside despite the freezing weather. The situation is considered inhuman by Abdul and he feels like he does not matter to the Danish society. He feels that he is not being treated like a human and thus, his sense of self and humanity is wounded. In the same context he describes himself as being looked at as trash by society. Their position as homeless migrants makes them feel as they are not considered to have value in the Danish society. Being outside of society, collecting bottles and without accommodations, they express feeling humiliation and a pain which humans should not experience. For our informants it seems that some are trying to perceive the hard life in Denmark in the light of something positive, instead of simply feeling discouraged by the situation. A believe such as ’what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger’ seems to be prevalent and they feel a sense of pride for being able to endure such a harsh reality. They have travelled and seen places which others have not experienced, they have grown as individuals and learned lessons of life, are some of the positive outcomes of their situation. The life lived in the tough conditions, are by our informants also a matter of manhood. This life can only be lived by a man, as you have to hustle, be tough, provide and at times you cannot shower. The idea is that in order to survive on the streets you have to be a man. The experience of being in a painful, dangerous and rough situation is made bearable by informants, where they frame the situation in connection with personalities which are strong, resilient and masculine. It is a survival strategy which leads to a construction and assertion of more positive personal identities. Instead of accepting a stigma and the humiliation and the negative feelings which follow, they try to assert themselves as real men. Instead of breaking down, they rebuild new grounds on where they can win a sense of importance and a sense of self-respect and dignity. The feeling of not having any value in the Danish society where they are considered to be trash and not being worth giving shelter to, makes an effort to carve out and maintain a sense of significance and self-worth seems particularly critical to be able to survive and endure the conditions. Our informants have little to rely on in their effort to recover the self - other than their own identity constructions.

Part of the frustration of their present living situation has to do with the lack of ability to control and predict the future, however, their daily life is quite organized and a matter of routine. They are all familiar with places they can go to have breakfast, coffee or use the internet, where they make use of these offers to structure their day. We noticed that weekends for them was a dreaded time period as they therefore had to pass time differently which often meant just walking around. Their routines hence became a way to control their own lives; perhaps only daily, however, it is piece of control and personal autonomy in an otherwise chaotic life. The different public offers and the structuring of their day also had the purpose of passing time. It seems that besides bottle picking, they were lacking meaningful activities in the daily life where the rest of the day became something which they simply had to get through. It witnesses about a life that is not being lived, rather it is something that they have to put up with. To get through the day, social interaction also seemed important to our informants. Their social network consisting of other homeless Africans becomes a great resources in passing the day, where they during the day meet up several times and keep track of where each other is moving. As the structures of the day also guaranteed spending their time waiting at different locations, many also get the opportunity to speak and have fun with their friends. Moreover, when arriving in Denmark the different offers and location also gave newcomers an opportunity to meet people and establish a network.

# **Discussion of Findings**

In our analysis we presented a set of findings in regard to how our informants make sense of their precarious positions in the Danish society. In the following we wish to shed light on issues which we argue is in need of further elucidation as we believe that some aspects of the analysis are significant to comment on. It must be recalled that it is our findings that set the agenda for this discussion. The first section has its focus on how a possible deportation from Denmark to Southern Europe (Spain, Italy) may result in a re-migration by this group of migrants. Our speculations are based on our findings that revealed an eagerness to obtain an income and to change their unstable situations. Furthermore, we wish to discuss the perception of freedom in relation to their position outside the Danish society but yet within the Danish sovereignty.

Our informants’ current situation in Denmark has in many ways turned out to be a struggle on the streets of Copenhagen. We discovered that the Danish government responds to this group by focusing mainly on control, rather than the underlying causes of their homelessness. This means that it can be questioned if the methods of control can be viewed as sustainable solutions to their situations. Arguably we point to that certain things must be discussed and considered before one can come to such a conclusion. Our findings point to an awareness among our informants about the chance of deportation to, either Italy or Spain, whereto they have a resident permit. However, it is obvious that our informants had no intention to leave Europe empty-handed as their main motivation is to succeed in Europe. Two of informants who were deported expressed that they might try their luck again in Denmark, which indicates that those deported want and will attempt to leave again for Denmark or another European country if employment is not found. Crucially, their motivation for succeeding, as well as their needs are left unchanged despite a deportation, which makes it relevant to discuss the aspect of re-migration. It can be argued that our informants are in a cycle that keeps pushing them in and out of European countries where they most likely will face the same predicaments that they have experienced so fare. Their status as homeless migrants leaves them without stability and settlement, which eventually pushes them to migrate once their status as undocumented migrants, catches up with them. In other words by deporting them from Denmark to another European country the problem is thus simply imposed on another country where their predicaments most likely will continue. Open borders within Europe do not necessarily mean free movement for everyone; rather it seems that this right is unobtainable for certain groups within the EU due to their documents. The liberalattitude towardfree movement of labour does hence not apply to this group of migrants.

We argue that there are other factors in play in shaping our informants patterns of migration where we wish to address re-migration factors. Issues connected to Europe such as deportation, legislation and unemployment crisis add new reasons for migrating within Europe and can hinder migration back to their country of origin. We argue that there are push factors within Europe which motivates our informant to re-migrate internally. The aspect of money becomes important as migrants initially paid money to come to Europe, much like an investment. This money can turn into an economic loss that our informants perhaps never will be able to compensate for if they do not find employment in Europe. The ‘investment’ of going to Europe was initially also thought of as an investment that could bring substantial money to the families back home and be a continually income until they return. Arguably the willingness for staying in Europe may increase in order to avoid this economic loss, both tied to the primary investment but also the loss of what they could have earned, that is, the loss of the dream they had of succeeding. Another dimension must be considered, which has to do with the social aspect of returning empty handed. The aspect of feeling shame and fear of how one is perceived when returning to their country of origin with less wealth than expected seem to take up their minds as mentioned in the analysis. We argue that the power of shame should not be underestimated as this in fact creates further pressure to our informants. The desire for re-migrating and staying in Europe is linked to an awareness of, that people in their home country will have a hard time comprehending how hard it can be to succeed in Europe. This reveals that our informants might feel that they endure a loss of social status, if they return with less than expected. It can be hard for their community in their country of origin to understand why these particular migrants did not succeed as other migrants have returned home with wealth. In the light of these factors, we argue that re-migration will most likely continue for our informants as it seems that some will stay in the cycle of migration to avoid social and economic loss. One can therefore argue, that deportation is only a temporary solution and question if such a solution is helping this group of migrants or if it is in fact not contributing to sustain them within a migration cycle which they cannot be released from. A deportation of these migrants to Southern Europe also seem to present a dilemma in relation to the notion of Europe being united with cooperation across borders, as one can argue that deportation is in fact just pushing the problem onto the countries which initially gave this group a working permit which are now in a financial crisis. Thus sanctioning makes little difference in relation to solving the problems of these migrants, however it begs the question of what “the problem is” relative to whom? Moreover, it is questionable who should take care of this group’s human rights. From the public debate we found that the predicaments of the migrants are disregarded where the perspective of national security and welfare is rather prioritised. Karen Hækkerup stated “my basic attitude is that people without legal residence should not be in Denmark”, leaving little consideration for the fact that these people that she refers to as being without legal residence, have scarce resources to draw on, and the problem of these migrants do not just disappear by removing them from a Danish context and thus placing them in Spain or Italy.

## Freedom

In the analysis we became familiar with different perception of what it means to be free and have freedom. In our analysis we discovered that informants’ dream of Europe consisted of achieving freedom, freedom in the sense of financial freedom. Their motivation for migration is connected to a quest for independence in the form of employment and further to change a ‘stagnant’ position in life. Becoming employed in Europe was considered by many to bring economic latitude which could benefit the family or themselves. However, as we can draw from the analysis, a feeling of being free was never achieved from their stay in Denmark. Rather they felt extremely limited by not having papers and not having an income. Two of our informants reflect on their time in Libya were they had employment, and they consider this period to be more secure than what they are experiencing in Denmark, stressing that if you have a job in Libya you are not poor. The statements from our informants seem to revolve and connect poverty to freedom, which led us to rethink the concept of freedom. From our understanding the discourse of freedom entails ideas about the western world being a place of freedom, where its inhabitants have the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without restraint or hindrance. It seems to be a discourse which is reaching beyond the European borders and to countries where its inhabitants perceive Europe to be the promised land with endless opportunities, that is the opportunity to change a somehow locked and pinned downed existence in a third world country. One could argue that for many living in poverty, true freedom does not exist in the form which we in the western world understand, as we cannot understand the situation of not being able to support your family with the income you receive. The example suggests that freedom is also about having ‘freedom from poverty’ and we wonder if an individual only through achieving freedom on this level is capable of achieving freedom in the sense that we in the West speak about freedom. A freedom in the sense of Human Security can be considered absent while they being in Denmark, the freedom that are the essence of life. Being homeless and paperless means, that they have no protection of national agencies in their critical and pervasive situation. Rather the contrary, when Karen Jespersen stressed that Danish emergency shelters are not allowed to help the homeless migrants (Politiken 28.11.2010). The controversy is that if the shelters invite homeless migrants inside, they are at risk of losing financial support. Some have expressed concern to this regulation as it means that some of these migrants are left out in the cold, and thereby could die. It is clear that some believe that the homeless migrants have been trapped, and thus being the victims of Danish regulations, “They should not be kept as hostages in a game between the municipality and the government (Politiken 28.11.2010)”. Through the paradigm of Human Security, the conflicts of our informants must be understood as led by interacting factors and processes (political, social and economic), which needs to comprehended and addressed together, if we are to achieve long-term stability and security. In a Danish context it means creating political, social, economic systems that together give people the resources of survival, livelihood and dignity (CHS 2003: 4).

One could argue that it is rare that the bottom of a society has a voice and the possibility to act without restrains. Having no employment and hence not sufficient money must be considered as significant restrain. In our analysis we found that homelessness and thus poverty was often linked to criminality, and having no voice was partially due to a lack of legal assistance. Our informants do not only bear the stigma of poverty, but also bears the stigma of criminality which according to Loïc Wacquant (2008) is due to an element of neoliberalism. The presence of our informants and their activity of bottle collecting are considered harmful to the society, where punitive regulations are followed with a political agenda of protecting the public and safeguarding public spaces. The homeless are a disturbance as they are seen to be contradicting the image of the Danish welfare state. According to Wacquant, welfare states with strong economies are likely to exclude foreigners in comparison to open economy countries, where simply being an immigrant signifies being criminal as one has unlawfully entered and took up residence. This criminalisation indeed exists for our informants as they are criminals from their point of entry and have had no opportunity to change this status. This perspective can be considered remarkable as they seem to be punished for being poor, and through legal sanctions their poverty is not addressed as a social problem rather a punitive problem. By deporting them they however continue to be poor and thereby still in a search for a chance for an income which can release them from a position pinned down by poverty.

For our informants there were several ways which one can argue that they lack freedom. They did not have the voice to be considered in any aspects of the society, that is where we speak about being placed out of society. They are placed out of society not only because they are excluded from participating in it, but also because they cannot make use of resources like the police that secure the individuals freedom. One can say that being placed out of society also places them outside the usage of freedom. Instead of being part of the society, they become a target of it where they only are part of society in the sense of being the homeless or the criminals. They are either the persons who needs shelter or the criminals who needs the deportation. Only in these contexts are they part of the society. It can be argued if this exclusion is revealing a problematic social inequality where freedom is only achieved by having the right documents where some people become ‘deservable’ of the law more than others and the “unnatural belonging individuals” are deprived from basic human rights as they from a neo-liberalistic perspective can just move if they do not like the treatment. In such context the migrants are considered to be homeless by rational choice and are in Denmark voluntarily. However, as we can elucidate from the analysis, homelessness is a choice made out of less pleasant choices where it is the lesser of two evils. Essentially the issue is employment and hereunder the lack of it, which is leading these migrants to a life in poverty.

In the extension of these reflections, we consider that freedom is not attached to territory but more likely to the persons who rightfully belong to this territory, which means that it is attached to people instead. We consider this to be a situation where policies are put in system in Denmark with the thought that anything is achievable for individuals if they work hard enough and follow legislations. However, we argue that this legislation is unfavourable for people seeking better opportunities than the ones available in their country of origin. The idea of working hard enough does therefore not apply to all individuals of the world.

# **Conclusion**

Through the cracks of the Danish society, African homeless migrants try to generate an income through collecting bottles in urban Copenhagen. This group of migrants is relatively new to Denmark and little research has been conducted in this field particular with an internal perspective on their precariousness. During six days of fieldwork we were able to get a glimpse into a universe that most people are unfamiliar with. By accompanying this group of migrants in their daily practices, we were shortly presented to their reality and thus, how they make sense of it. By drawing on interviews and observations with these men, we were able to look beyond a social categorisation and examine the lives of men who seem to be lost behind the labels of homelessness and illegality. Their voice gave us the opportunity to learn about significant aspects of the positions that they hold in their country of origin and in the Danish society.

We found that homelessness does not only entail the usage of shelters or the practical discomfort; it goes much deeper than that. Being homeless effect these migrants on multiply levels and restrains them in fulfilling other possible identities like being a good father, the providing son or as being accepted as an equal human being. Our research of the public debate revealed a rhetoric wherein this group of migrants are categorised to be deviant and not naturally belonging to Denmark, thus meaning that they should not be present nor wasted resources on.

Through our research, we found that there were many reasons behind migrating to Europe; however, everybody seemed to be drawn by the European Dream that many genuinely believed would be easy to execute as they from their home country had imagined that Europe would be their promised land where they could break away from the stagnancy that they felt they were in.

They felt that they could improve their life circumstances for themselves together with their families’ through migrating to Europe. It was evident that most of them felt and an inner obligation to provide for their families that they have left behind. As the crisis hit Southern Europe, their conditions for proving radically changed with the loss of their jobs and they were therefore compelled to find other alternatives in the search for an income.

A quest for independence in the form of employment and a desire to change a ‘stagnant’ position in life, together with proving for their families back home, becomes a powerful forces that motivates them in a continuing search for a chance their will eventually change their course of life. Their family at home is strengthening factor in their homelessness, as they gain recognition for their financial providing and they are aware that this is a temporary condition, which will benefit their families in the long term. Through remittances they are able to uplift the life conditions of their families and thus themselves in the future, where the money send home makes education, entrepreneurship and buying a house possible. Despite being motivated by family, our informant avoided to reveal their situation as homeless to their families back home, as they were ashamed to reveal the extent of their poverty and their status.

Through our fieldwork we invited along to see what bottle collecting meant for our informants, which showed to be a structured and organized activity, which in many ways resemble a conventional job. Our observations allowed us to see how this group on a daily basis walks or bikes around in the streets of Copenhagen in their search for bottles and cans. Bottle collecting is their only source of income, as this group does not have a working permit in Denmark, thus meaning that the group has managed to find others ways to cope with their lack of income. Our informants are well aware that to collect bottles is not well perceived by others as it is a symbol of being at the bottom of society, and our informants expressed that people considered them to be trash and a flaw in the street scene. Collecting bottles makes them particularly visible in the eye of the public and the police, and it is associated with being on the bottom of society and poor. The migrants are placed in a vulnerable position when they try to earn money through collecting bottles as they found that their occupation reveals their status.

Due to their status both as homeless and undocumented, they find themselves unable to take part in society socially, economically and legally. The moral judgment of others excludes them from being perceived equally to the rest of society and spoils desired identities. The stigma connected to homelessness is overtaking other social positions, which they are powerless to escape from and therefore, it is problematic for this group to engage in relationships with other non-homeless. They can try to avoid public stigma though dressing presentable, and evade to mention this aspects of their lives when interaction with others who are not homeless. However, when doing homeless practices, such as collecting bottles and making use of shelters which is necessities, they cannot avoid the judgment of others. They informants also expressed frustration about feeling misjudged and misunderstood by their surroundings as people often blame them for failing or being a burden, voicing that few people knows that it is their paperless situation which has forced them into this predicament of being homeless. According to our informants, homelessness is not regarded as a matter of choice in the sense that there are many other choices on their shelf of opportunities; it is rather seen as a matter of life circumstances where their legal status plays a crucial role in how their life has taken shape. Indeed, none of our informants have ever been homeless before reaching the Danish border and it was therefore argued that the Danish legal system needs to be considered. Their choice of homelessness is made within a context of having very little resources to draw on, where structural forces beyond their control have made limitations to their space to act freely.

The unemployment crisis in Southern Europe has according to them had a profound impact on their lives and has push them into a search for a stabile income. The pathway to an income does nevertheless not present itself in any secure form, and a type of indifference therefore tends to influence their present life. Not in the form of hopelessness, as they are thinking ahead and have the desire to try different directions, but the direction that they will grab onto is shaped by taking a chance as they do not have a secure direction to take. While waiting for chances to shape a direction to follow, they in the meantime experience stagnant development in their present lives. They are not able to fulfil the identities which they desire to hold, and they therefore do not feel that they are living life truly, while their wait for directions is a wait for their actual life to take off.

It is noteworthy that this group rarely talked about racism and discrimination as a problem. Rather it was the powerlessness that this group felt as the Danish laws denied them access in the public sphere and prevented them in obtaining a job, which is according them the actual reason behind their homelessness.

The fieldwork conducted further revealed a relationship to the police to be influenced by the positions they hold in the Danish society, where most of them did not consider making use of the authority to be an option. They understand the function of the police to be a control of their group, rather than to help and protect them. They are aware of the possibility of deportation when they have overstayed and it is therefore better to adopt a strategy of being invisible to avoid trouble. They moreover, do not find themselves to be in Denmark illegally, despite an avoidance of the police, which can signify that they do not wish to embody the stigma attached to being an illegal body, which is inevitable a hard categorisation to identify with. By being illegal, one is perceived to be criminal, unwanted and harmful, and it is therefore a position which our informants would like to be distanced from. In regard to their papers, the research further shows that the laws of EU is not transparent for them and the free movement of labour within EU does not apply to these individuals which is hard for them to understand, especially when the other users of the shelter often are from within EU. It was moreover found, that during this research, their relations to the police changed. Where they previously could manoeuvre around the police by keeping to themselves, they now experienced that they had become a target of the police by experiencing deportation of friends; “they are hunting Africans” as our informant Peter stated. Because of arrests followed by deportations they felt like an easy target, where they were unable to avoid attention as their black skin together with bottle collecting became a visible feature of their lack of papers. Objecting to the arrests and the focus is thus not possible as they hold no authority in the Danish society so they instead accept the conditions. They hold no voice in the public forum because roughly speaking, who wants to listen to an ‘illegal homeless’?

It is clear that the homeless migrant’s challenges the image of the Danish welfare state, where some people are differentiated and live outside the system. The political approach to the situation of the migrants has been influenced by a belief that this group cannot contribute positively to the Danish society and are therefore, rather seen placed outside the Danish border. In accordance to this belief the political effort directed towards this problem has been to shelter the migrants on the basis of emergency with the objective that you cannot let people die during the hard Danish winters.

It is crucial to raise the question of what the International Community and the Danish society (social workers, policymakers, and police) should do to improve the life conditions of this group of migrants who are finding themselves in a vulnerable situation. It is however questionable if it is at all the interest of governmental institutions to improve their situation as there might be a fear that this will lead to a migration influx which certain countries are not able accommodate. We find no easy solutions to the problems, we have become aware of through our research process. However, we call for a solution which is not based on either ignorance or stigmatisation which we argue is certainly not the answer. Instead we call upon a humanitarian approach which does not only embrace the interest of the Western world but also in the best manner aims at recognising the social economic dilemmas of the migrants entering Europe.

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