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Turid Misje

# Social Work(ers) and Homeless EU Migrants

Welfare Bordering in Norway



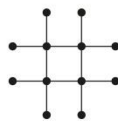
**Social Work(ers) and Homeless EU Migrants  
Welfare Bordering in Norway**

**Turid Misje**

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For Joy and Florina

## Samandrag

Denne avhandlinga utforskar korleis sosialt arbeid vert ‘gjort’ og erfart i møte med og av personar som har svært avgrensa rettar til hjelp frå velferdsstaten. Fokuset er på heimlause EU migrantar og den norske konteksten. Den er ein etnografisk studie som bygger på feltarbeid i Oslo mellom august 2017 og november 2018. Feltarbeidet utgjorde deltakande observasjon i settingar der møte mellom sosialarbeidarar og personar med svært avgrensa tilgang til offentleg velferd fann stad, deltaking på møte i samarbeidsforumet til Oslo kommune for å koordinera innsatsen overfor ‘tilreisende bostedsløse EØS-borgere’, djupneintervju med forskingsdeltakarar og utforsking av tekstar som politiske dokument, handlingsplanar og juridiske kjelder.

Hovudproblemstillinga studien utforskar er: Korleis er ‘gjeringa’ av sosialt arbeid i møte med personar som har avgrensa rettar til offentleg velferd vevd saman med ynskjet til den norske (velferd)staten om å kontrollera migrasjon, og særleg med prosessar som flyttar grensekontroll innanlands og fremmar interne former for migrasjonkontroll? Observasjonane og argumenta i dei tre artiklane som dannar grunnlag for avhandlinga, framhevar dei mange ulike – sjeldan direkte og tidvis motsetnadsfylte – måtane norsk velferdspolitik og (velferd)staten sitt ynskje om migrasjonskontroll er samanfiltra, og dermed korleis velferdspolitik- og tenester både opererer som og skaper interne former for grensekontroll. Artiklane viser vidare korleis denne samanfiltreringa konstruerer og formar dei sosiale tenestene til, og ‘gjeringa’ av det sosiale arbeidet med, heimlause EU migrantar i Norge. Samla sett peikar avhandlinga på korleis både sosialarbeidarar som forvaltar offentlege velferdstenester og dei som ikkje gjer det vert innblanda i og bidreg til ‘internalisering av grenser’ (Persdotter et al., 2021), og særleg til kontroll av migrasjon gjennom velferdspolitik- og tenester [‘welfare bordering’] (Guentner et al., 2016). Parallelt utforskar den dei mange dilemmaa ein slik posisjon fører med seg for sosialarbeidarar, og dei levde erfaringane til dei som vert gjort til gjenstand for denne forma for migrasjonskontroll. Ein hovudobservasjon er at slike prosessar er konstruert ulikt for og erfart ulikt av ulike migrantar, og at regulerande og disiplinerte dimensjonar råkar hardast dei som treng (humanitære) sosiale tenester mest.

Studien viser dessutan at heimlause EU migrantar ikkje beint fram er ekskluderte frå det norske velferdssystemet, men heller ‘prekært inkluderte’ (Karlsen, 2021) gjennom politikk og tenester som er retta mot å trygga fysisk overleving. I realiteten er heimlause EU migrantar i Norge avhengige av veldedigheitsbaserte tiltak for å få dekkja grunnleggande behov. Avgrensingane, den manglande føreseielegheita og skjørheita som kjenneteiknar denne forma

for inklusjon står i skarp kontrast til prinsipp om sosial rettferd, rettar og likskap – prinsipp som er rekna å vera grunnsteinar i den norske velferdsstaten.

Avhandlinga argumenterer for at den særlege måten hjelp og kontroll vert kombinert på i velferdspolitik- og tenester retta ikkje berre mot heimlause EU migrantar, men migrantar med prekær velferdsrettsleg status generelt, tillèt den norske (velferd)staten både å kontrollera migrasjon og oppretthalda eit nasjonalt sjølvbilete som omsorgsfull og barmhjertig. Velferdspolitik- og tenester som samstundes er både ekskluderande og inkluderande, impliserer dermed individuelle sosialarbeidarar såvel som sosialarbeidarprofesjonen generelt i å skilja mellom verdien til menneske innad i Norge og i intern migrasjonskontroll.

Arbeidet mitt peikar på korleis det gjensidige tilhøvet – til og med gjensidige avhengigheita – mellom den norske sosialarbeidarprofesjonen og den nasjonale velferdsstaten, fører til at heimlause EU migrantar vert ekskluderte frå det som tradisjonelt har vorte sett som praksisfeltet og mandatet til sosialt arbeid i Norge. Dette inkluderer (tilrettelegging av) tilgang til dei omfattande og rettighetsorienterte offentlege velferdstenestene som kjenneteiknar velferdsstaten. Å møte menneske i prekære livssituasjonar, som gjerne lever i synleg fattigdom og naud, men utan å kunna ty til rettighetsorienterte velferdstiltak- og tenester for å betra situasjonane, ser ut til å skapa forvirring og profesjonell usikkerheit mellom sosialarbeidarar.

Sjølv om avhandlinga hevdar at *nasjonale* grenser produserer særlege idear om og skiljelinjer mellom ‘dei som høyrer til’/ ‘verdige’ og ‘dei som ikkje høyrer til’/ ‘uverdige’ også innad i Norge, spør den om den interne grensekontrollen – som også har moralske dimensjonar – som heimlause EU migrantar vert gjort til gjenstand for, òg kan forståast som eit frampeik mot meir omfattande endringar i velferdsstaten og som ei fortsetjing av korleis den norske staten og sosialarbeidarar historisk har markert ‘grensene for organisert solidaritet’ (Lorenz, 2006). Følgeleg oppmodar avhandlinga sosialarbeidarar og sosialarbeidarprofesjonen i Norge om å granska og å følge nøye med på om innvevinga av sosialt arbeid i intern migrasjonskontroll også medfører (ei tilbakevending til før-velferdstatleg) ‘kontroll av dei fattige’, og å reflektera over moglege implikasjonar av ei slik utvikling for ein profesjon som har som mandat både å promotera og realisera menneskerettsprinsipp – for alle.

## Abstract

This thesis explores the ‘doing’ and experiences of social work with persons who have very limited rights to assistance from the welfare state – specifically homeless EU migrants – from the perspective of the Norwegian situation. It is an ethnographic study drawing on fieldwork that took place in Oslo between August 2017 and November 2018. The fieldwork included participant observation in settings where encounters between social workers and persons with severely restricted access to public welfare in Norway took place, participation in biweekly meetings of a collaborating unit set up by the City Government of Oslo to coordinate efforts directed at ‘visiting homeless EEA citizens’, in-depth interviews with interlocutors and various stakeholders and engagement with texts such as policy documents and legal sources.

The key question guiding the thesis as a whole is: How does the ‘doing’ of social work in encounters with persons who have limited rights to public social welfare intersect with the Norwegian (welfare) state’s concerns with migration management in general and internal bordering processes specifically? The observations and arguments of the three articles forming part of the thesis accentuate the manifold – seldom straightforward and sometimes conflicting – ways in which Norwegian social welfare policies and the (welfare) state’s concerns with migration management are intertwined and thus how welfare policies and provisions both operate as and create internal bordering practices. Second, the articles show how this intertwinement frames and moulds the configurations of social service provision to, as well as the ‘doing’ of social work with, homeless EU migrants in Norway. In sum, the thesis brings forth how both social workers mandated with administering public social welfare provisions and those who are not get implicated in and contribute to the ‘internalization of borders’ (Persdotter et al., 2021) and ‘welfare bordering’ (Guentner et al., 2016) specifically. Parallely, the manifold dilemmas this position entails for social workers and the lived experiences of those who are subjected to such bordering processes are explored. A key observation is that these processes are configured and experienced differently for different migrants, and that the regulating and disciplining dimensions are most harshly felt by those most in need of (humanitarian) social services.

The study demonstrates that homeless EU migrants are not simply excluded from the country’s welfare system but rather precariously included (Karlsen, 2021) through policies and provisions directed at ensuring bodily survival. In effect, homeless EU migrants in Norway are left dependent on charity-based social service structures to meet their basic needs. The restrictedness, unpredictability and fragility inherent in this form of inclusion contrasts

with the principles of social justice, entitlements and equality – principles that are considered cornerstones of the Norwegian welfare state.

The particular combination of measures of care and control in social welfare policies directed not only at homeless EU migrants but also at migrants with precarious citizenship statuses in general, the study asserts, allows the Norwegian (welfare) state to simultaneously manage migration and retain the nation's self-image of being caring and compassionate. Welfare policies that are both exclusionary and inclusionary, then, implicate individual social workers, as well as the social work profession, in the differentiation of human worth within Norway's borders and in internal migration control.

Accordingly, my work brings out how the close interrelationship – even interdependency – of the Norwegian social work profession and the national welfare state excludes homeless EU migrants from the mainstream social work field of practice and mandate, including (facilitation of) access to the comprehensive and rights-oriented public social welfare provisions characteristic of the welfare state. Meeting people in precarious situations, who often are visibly poor and live in destitution, while being unable to resort to rights-oriented public social welfare provisions to better such situations appears to create bewilderment and professional insecurity amongst social workers.

While asserting that *national* borders do indeed produce specific ideas of and demarcations between the 'belonging'/ 'deserving' and the 'nonbelonging'/ 'undeserving' inside Norway's borders, the thesis asks whether the processes of welfare – and moral – bordering that homeless EU migrants are subjected to may also be interpreted both as indicative of wider transformations of the welfare state and as a continuation of the manners in which the Norwegian state *and* social workers historically have marked 'the boundaries of organised social solidarity' (Lorenz, 2006). Consequently, it urges social workers and the social work profession in Norway to scrutinise and monitor carefully whether their entanglement in processes of welfare bordering risks resulting in the (return to the pre-welfare state's) 'policing of the poor' and reflect on potential implications of such a development for a profession mandated with promoting and realising human rights principles – for all.



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Misje, T. (2021). Queuing for food and playing lottery for beds: A parallel social service system and the lived experiences of humanitarian service provision to homeless EU migrants in Norway. *Nordic Social Work Research*, 11(2), 103–116.

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Misje, T. (2022). The precarious inclusion of homeless EU migrants in Norwegian public social welfare: Moral bordering and social workers' dilemmas. *Critical Social Policy*, 42(3), 448–468. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183211036580> (article 3)

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## Foreword

It does indeed take a village to complete a PhD thesis. Many have been involved in shaping this work, and even more people have contributed to making it possible.

First and foremost, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the generous, courageous and patient migrants and social workers who allowed me to take part in their everyday (work)lives and who so openly shared their stories, quandaries and reflections. Without you, this thesis would simply not exist. It is my sincere hope that my account serves you justice, even if you might not agree with all my analyses. Thank you also to the NGOs that facilitated my fieldwork for your helpfulness and goodwill and to the participants in the City Government of Oslo's collaborating unit to coordinate efforts directed at 'visiting homeless EEA citizens' for generously allowing me to sit in on your meetings.

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My research project is part of the PhD programme 'Diaconia, Values and Professional Practice' at VID Specialized University. Thank you for admitting me to the programme and for employing me as a PhD candidate. A special thank-you to the two leaders at the Centre of Diaconia and Professional Practice during my affiliation there, Tormod Kleiven and Oddgeir Synnes, for continuous support and encouragement. Research advisors Erlend Hovdkinn From, May Britt Kirkhus Johansen and Anja Nieuwenhuis similarly deserve thanks for crucial administrative assistance at various stages of the research process. VID's librarians must also be thanked specifically. I am very grateful for your flexibility and efficiency in helping me access the relevant literature for this thesis. Thank you to Per Kristian Hilden and Gunhild Odden for constructive and encouraging comments at my project's mid-term evaluation.

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My 'home' at VID, the Faculty of Social Studies, has been instrumental in facilitating this PhD project and ensuring its completion. Thank you to all my enthusiastic and supportive colleagues who have cheered me along. A particular thanks to the deans during my PhD period – Torhild Bjerkreim, Elisabeth Brodtkorb and Mona-Iren Hauge – as well as to programme directors Gunhild Regland Farstad and Inger Oterholm for generous facilitation.

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# 1 Introduction

One early evening, Joy, a Nigerian woman in her late twenties, is seated in a chair facing mine in my office at Pro Sentret, Oslo's municipal health and social service centre for persons with experiences with prostitution, where I am a social worker.<sup>1</sup> Joy is roughly 14 weeks' pregnant; she has previously terminated several pregnancies and wishes to keep this one, as she feels she is getting too old for 'this kind of life' and wants to settle down. I do not remember the exact date of our encounter, but it must have been during the summer months of 2012, as I clearly recall being very much aware, throughout our meeting, that I myself was pregnant, although it still did not show.

Joy has asked to see me to discuss her possibilities of getting a work permit so she can get a 'normal' job and receiving social assistance or other public welfare services in Norway – which I inform her are all very limited. Regarding a work permit and social assistance, her chances are virtually close to zero, due to her lack of legal residence in the country. We explore her options, which include terminating the pregnancy; travelling back to Nigeria, where she has not been since she left nearly a decade ago in search of a better life in Europe; and living 'illegally' with her child in Norway or another European country. She is now crying softly, asking me if I think this is fair and why I, and Norway, cannot help her, since all she wants is a 'normal' job and to keep her child.

When Joy has left Pro Sentret to go back to the rented room she shares with five other Nigerian women and prepare for yet another night on the streets, I go to my colleague Ingunn's office, stating furiously that I cannot do this job anymore, that it feels like all I do, all day long, is kill people's dreams. This is not what I signed up for when I became a social worker; I am certainly not contributing towards any positive changes in their lives. Ingunn shakes her head and says that maybe we should not always be the ones saying no; perhaps we should refer also people in Joy's situation to NAV [the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration offices]<sup>2</sup> more often, even if the chances of receiving any assistance from them is, in reality, nil.

I do not meet Joy again during the two years I continue to work at Pro Sentret following this episode, but I learn through a friend of hers that she has travelled to Paris,

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<sup>1</sup> Pro Sentret is also the Norwegian national centre of expertise on prostitution. I was employed at Pro Sentret between 1999 and 2014.

<sup>2</sup> The NAV offices are mandated with providing public social assistance under the Norwegian Social Welfare Act (2009); see chapter three.



where her sister lives, with the intention of having her baby there, hoping that in time she will be able to regularise her stay in France.

These evening hours with Joy, narrated from memory, along with countless similar meetings during my years at Pro Sentret and a hard-to-pin-down ‘unease’ related to my professional role in these situations sparked my engagement and interest in the overall theme to be explored in the following pages – namely, the ‘doing’ and experiences of social work with persons who have very limited, if any, rights to assistance from the welfare state in the Norwegian context. This thesis, comprising an extended abstract and three published articles, is the result of a PhD project I embarked on several years after my encounter with Joy, which provided me with the opportunity to investigate the multifaceted subject in depth.

My work is an ethnographic study drawing on fieldwork that took place in Oslo between August 2017 and November 2018. The fieldwork included participant observation in settings where encounters between social workers and persons with severely restricted access to public welfare in Norway took place, participation in biweekly meetings of a collaborating unit set up by the City Government of Oslo to coordinate efforts directed at ‘visiting homeless EEA citizens’, in-depth interviews with interlocutors and various stakeholders and engagement with texts such as policy documents and legal sources. As the project unfolded – and as part of the continuous interaction between theorisation, methodological approach and data production that characterises such research designs, including analyses taking place during fieldwork (Hilden & Middelthon, 2002; Okely, 2012; Wadel, 2014) – I became increasingly interested in the entanglement of human mobility, (national) borders, welfare rights and social work as theoretical and empirical ‘research puzzles’ (Gustafsson & Hagström, 2018). Moreover, I gradually came to realise that my above-mentioned ‘unease’ when working with persons in predicaments such as those of Joy, largely stemmed from quandaries related to this experienced entanglement.

These interrelated processes prompted me to ask the following key question, which guides this thesis as a whole: How does the ‘doing’ of social work in encounters with persons who have limited rights to public social welfare intersect with the Norwegian (welfare) state’s concerns with migration management in general and internal bordering processes specifically? My usage of the term ‘doing’ in this study is broad and descriptive, referring to how social work is practiced and reflected upon in the situations and settings I studied (cf. Levin, 2021). I generally employ it interchangeably with ‘social work practice(s)’, which similarly also denotes assessments of cases and reflections on situations. Through the three

articles, I show how social workers in various social welfare provision settings, though seldom in straightforward manners, get implicated in and contribute to the ‘internalization of borders’ (Persdotter et al., 2021, p. 97) in terms of drawing up the boundaries of the welfare state (Guentner et al., 2016). I parallelly explore the manifold dilemmas this position entails for social workers and the lived experiences of those who are subjected to such bordering processes.

My work is indebted and seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature that critically discusses the increasing intertwinement of welfare policies and migration management in general, which leads to complex hierarchies of welfare rights (e.g., Ataç & Rosenberger, 2019; Bendixsen et al., 2015; Bendixsen, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2019; Guentner et al., 2016; Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2016; Karlsen, 2015, 2018, 2021; Könönen, 2018; Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018; Mayblin et al., 2020; Ratzmann, 2021; Ratzmann & Sahraoui, 2021a, 2021b; Tervonen et al., 2018; Walsh et al., 2022; Yıldız & De Genova, 2018). More specifically, it aims at contributing to the emerging, but still scarce, scholarship on the particular role and position of social work and social workers in this nexus, especially pertaining to the situation of and encounters with migrants with precarious citizenship statuses (Bhuyan, 2010; Cuadra, 2015; Cuadra & Staaf, 2014; Ekendahl et al., 2020; Furman et al., 2012; Hardina, 2014; Jolly, 2018a, 2018b; Jönsson, 2014; Nobe-Ghelani, 2017; Nordling, 2017; Nordling & Persdotter, 2021; Mostowska, 2014; Mpofu, 2021; Park & Bhuyan, 2012; Synnes, 2021) – topics that remain underexplored in the Norwegian context.

In what follows, I shall expand on the main ‘research puzzle’ (Gustafsson & Hagström, 2018) of this study in some detail. Next, reflections on the two main constructs used in my work to designate persons who have limited rights to public welfare in Norway, namely ‘homeless EU migrants’ and ‘migrants with precarious citizenship statuses’, are provided. These reflections also serve to introduce some of the main themes that are explored and discussed in the thesis as a whole. Finally, I detail the thesis’s questions of investigation and outline the structure of the thesis.

## **Social work in Norway – and an elaboration on the research puzzle**

It is three weeks into my fieldwork, and I am chatting with Mona, a social worker at the nongovernmental organisation [NGO]-run social service centre where I have so far spent most of my time. We are seated at the big table in the room where the staff write reports, conduct their meetings, have their breaks and receive and make phone calls. It is also

where I go when I want to write up fieldnotes during the day, which is what I was doing when Mona came for her break. She is now telling me of several cases over the years where they have tried to assist EU migrants whom they consider to be in very precarious situations by contacting various parts of the public welfare system – but where there, in her words, ‘has been no help to be found’. She is especially frustrated with situations where they ‘try and try’ but never reach clarity on who or which part of the system they should talk to and keep being thrown back and forth between offices. While she talks, I reflect on how what she describes reminds me of my own experience when working with Norwegian citizens who were suffering from a combination of psychiatric illness and substance addiction. I ask her if there is really a qualitative difference between such cases and those that she is talking about. Mona pauses and, after a while, says that this is an interesting question and that in several staff meetings, they have actually discussed the similarities of working with people who seem to have no rights in the welfare state and their Norwegian guests who do not typically fit into the neat categories of the public welfare system, such as those I referred to. However, she continues, the latter will still normally involve close collaboration with municipal social services. When working with ‘those who have no rights’, it is different, she concludes: ‘We are so alone. There is loneliness in this. There is no one to be angry with, no one to tell that they must take their responsibility, no one to refer to.’ (Fieldnotes, September 2017)

The key empirical ‘research puzzle’ (Gustafsson & Hagström, 2018) that motivated and instigated this research project is why social workers in Norway – including myself, as accounted for above – appear to experience such bewilderment, helplessness and ‘professional loneliness’, as in Mona’s account, when encountering migrants with precarious citizenship statuses and wanting to contribute to the betterment of their situations. A main contention in my study is that these experiences and sentiments relate to how the social work profession has evolved in the Norwegian setting, constituting these migrants as anomalies outside the purview of the mainstream social work practice, mandate and training – as well as research. This, in turn, frames how social workers in Norway get entangled in processes of ‘welfare bordering’ (Guentner et al., 2016). As a start to untangling the puzzle, I shall elaborate on the potential dilemma inherent in social work self-identifying as a national welfare state profession *and* positioning itself as a global human rights profession, zooming in on the Norwegian case. As my study shows, this dilemma is rendered particularly visible in encounters with migrants with precarious citizenship statuses.

Social work scholars Malcolm Payne and Gurid Aga Askeland (2008) pointed to how the identity and practices of social work are ‘created in a historical, political and economic context’ (p. 80). In many European countries, its professionalisation was tied up with the emergence and expansion of post-WWII national welfare state projects, and nation-states’ particular welfare state models remain ‘the primary frame of reference for social work’ in this context (Schröer & Schweppe, 2020, p. 345).

In what follows, I explore the specific configurations of the relationship between the social work profession and the welfare state in Norway.

### Social work as a national welfare state profession

While recognising its early onset, though charitable and philanthropic practices in the pre-welfare state area, scholars generally agree that the social work profession in Norway, as elsewhere in Europe, came into existence as part of the construction of the modern welfare state (Askeland & Strauss, 2014; Berg et al., 2015; Dahle, 2010; Ellingsen & Levin, 2015; Levin, 2021; Lødemel, 2019; Messel, 2013; Terum, 2003). The establishment of the first public social work education in 1950, Norges kommunal- og sosialskole, is often identified as the starting point of professional social work in the country (Dahle, 2010; Ellingsen & Levin, 2015; Levin, 2021; Rasmussen, 1991). This happened at a time when the welfare state and its social services were expanding significantly. Post-WWII social work education and professionalisation in Norway came about and developed as a result of policy-makers’ recognition and articulation of the need for qualified social workers with ‘scientific’ knowledge to administer these services – as opposed to the domination of ‘laypeople’ and philanthropic ideas of ‘charitable compassion’ in the field of social service provision pre-welfare state (Askeland & Strauss, 2014; Ellingsen & Levin, 2015; Messel, 2013; Rasmussen, 1991; Terum, 2003; cf. Lorenz, 2017b; Righard, 2018; Righard & Boccagni, 2015, on the European situation in general).

Compliant with the international literature, definitions and descriptions of social work in various Norwegian textbooks point to its multifaceted unit of analysis and area of intervention, known as the ‘person-in-environment’ approach. Interventions and practices aimed at bettering precarious situations and addressing social problems should direct attention to both individual and structural factors – and, not least, the interrelationship between the two (Berg et al., 2015; Hansen et al., 2017; Levin, 2021; Messel, 2013; Terum, 2003). It is, nonetheless, largely acknowledged that in the Norwegian setting, social work most commonly concerns individual assistance directed at ‘the people whom the welfare state sees as its task

to focus on' (Levin, 2021, p. 123). Accordingly, social work and social workers are, in textbooks introducing Norwegian social work students to the profession, described in the following manner:

Many professions were involved in the founding of the welfare state, and social workers became part of the welfare state's project, and soon defined as one of the welfare state's professions. (Levin, 2021, p. 36)

Today social workers are counted as one of the professions of the welfare state, together with other professions carrying out important tasks to promote inhabitants' wellbeing. (Ellingsen & Levin, 2015, p. 62)

Social work is a generalist education qualifying to carry out tasks of coordination in the welfare state. (Hansen et al., 2017, p. 23)

Correspondingly – and tellingly – the Norwegian Union of Social Educators and Social Workers (Fellesorganisasjonen [FO]), when launching an information campaign also intended to recruit new members in 2022, titled it 'Social workers are the heart of the welfare state'.<sup>3</sup>

Now, while the majority of social workers in Norway are employed by state and municipal organisations and services (Askeland & Strauss, 2014; Lorenz, 2006), many, such as Mona, work in NGOs or private institutions. In chapter three, I shall expand on how the historical relationship between civil society and the Norwegian welfare state results in service provision through NGOs not really being conceived of as separate from that of the welfare state. Due to this development, even social workers in NGOs and the private sector are generally perceived as working on behalf of the welfare state in the Norwegian context. Moreover, social workers in the NGO sector are accustomed to working within the welfare state frame, as seen in Mona's account, and perceive rights-oriented public social welfare provisions as their main professional tools when working towards the betterment of people's precarious situations.

Social work as a global human rights profession

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fo.no/nyhetsarkiv/se-filmer-sosialarbeiderne-er-hjertet-i-velferdsstaten>

people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels. (International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) & International Association of Schools of Social Work [IASSW], 2014)

While self-identifying as a national welfare state profession, social work in Norway also accentuates its belonging to a global profession (Askeland & Strauss, 2014; Berg et al., 2015; FO, 2017, 2019; Hansen, et al., 2017). In the international literature, social work is frequently described as a ‘human rights profession’ and social workers as ‘human right workers’, in terms of having a mandate to work in accordance with and promote human rights principles, such as human dignity and nondiscrimination, and social justice (e.g., Healy, 2008; Ife, 2016; Jönsson, 2014; Mapp et al., 2019; Staub-Bernasconi, 2014, 2016). Accordingly, the global definition of social work, as well as both international and national codes of ethics, emphasises social works’ reliance on and contribution to the realisation of human rights; the commentary notes to the global definition state that ‘[a]dvocating and upholding human rights and social justice is the motivation and justification for social work’ (IFSW & IASSW, 2014; cf. FO, 2017, 2019; IFSW & IASSW, 2018).

Naturally, the reality of social workers doing ‘human rights work’ and committing to principles of social justice has been debated, questioned and contested from various positions and contexts (e.g., Ife, 2016; Mapp et al., 2019; Murdach, 2011; Staub-Bernasconi, 2014, 2016), not least so in the literature on social work with migrants with precarious citizenship statuses (Bhuyan, 2010; Cuadra, 2015; Cuadra & Staaf, 2014; Furman et al., 2012; Jolly, 2018a; Jönsson, 2014; Lundberg & Kjellbom, 2021; Mpofu, 2021; Nobe-Ghelani, 2017; Park & Bhuyan, 2012). The challenges of realising social work as a human rights profession have been discussed by some scholars as inherent to its dual mandate, in terms of ‘answering’ to individuals in need of assistance as well as to societal and political demands, often referred to as the tension between care and control (Murdach, 2011; cf. Staub-Bernasconi, 2014, 2016). Apart from in studies on social work with migrants with precarious citizenship statuses (Jönsson, 2014; Mpofu, 2021), little attention has been paid to the dilemma of human rights being global and ascribed to people simply due to them being human beings, whereas these rights’ realisation and implementation also take place within sovereign nation-states, whose ‘bounded’ solidarity is restricted to those deemed members (cf. Trägårdh, 2021, p. 19–20).

In Norwegian social work scholarship, the innate tension between care and control – or between social workers providing assistance to individuals and implementing the ambitions and goals of policy-makers, embedded in their operating within the welfare state’s frames and systems – is accentuated in fields such as child-protection services and the provision of social assistance (Levin, 2021; Terum, 2003; Ylvisaker & Rugkåsa, 2020). Scholars nonetheless argue that there are parallels between characteristics of the welfare state, such as universalism and solidarity, and social work principles, such as upholding human rights, suggesting that ‘the welfare state should be a work place where social workers should be able to work according to the principles of the profession’ (Askeland & Strauss, 2014, p. 251) – though acknowledging that the developments in the welfare state seen over the past decades has made its relationship with social work more uneasy (cf. Kamali & Jönsson, 2018).

My work, conversely, demonstrates how the close interrelationship – even interdependency – of the Norwegian social work profession and the national welfare state excludes some people, such as those who are the focus of this study, from mainstream social work practices and mandates, including (facilitation of) access to the comprehensive and rights-oriented public social welfare provisions characteristic of the welfare state.

Social workers who encounter migrants with precarious citizenship statuses in their work have called attention to the challenges of working ‘on the outside of the welfare state’s safety net’ (Strøm, 2019; Vigen, 2018) and raised concerns about the experienced entanglement of social work practice and migration control in such encounters (Näsholm, 2018; Scheistrøen, 2015). A handbook on social work with vulnerable migrants, including irregular migrants and homeless EU migrants, has been produced (Vollebæk, 2022; see also Vollebæk, 2018).

Apart from these few, though significant, contributions, little attention has been paid to the topic and dilemmas of social work with, as well as social service provision to, persons whose migratory-legal positions limit their rights to public welfare in Norway – neither within the profession itself nor in social work scholarship. The main aim of this thesis is to address this overall knowledge gap.

## **On choice of terminology: Preliminary clarifications of key concepts and themes**

### Homeless EU migrants

The empirical point of departure for the analyses and discussions in this study is, for reasons detailed in chapter four, social work with and social service provision to what I term

‘homeless EU migrants’. ‘EU migrants’ is a construct used in much of the scholarship concerning intra-European Union (EU) / European Economic Area (EEA)<sup>4</sup> mobility (Dwyer et al., 2019; Heindlmaier & Blauburger, 2017; Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018; Mostowska, 2014; Ratzmann, 2021; Scheibelhofer & Holzinger, 2018; Shutes, 2016; Tervonen & Enache, 2017). In my work, the term is nevertheless used with some caution because it risks underplaying that the persons whose situations I explore are indeed EU citizens exercising their right to free movement; thus, ‘their border-crossings are not formally designated as “migration”’ (Persdotter, 2019, p. 67; Mantu et al., 2019; Ratzmann, 2021; Yıldız & De Genova, 2018). Intersecting with this concern, and as I shall return to several times in this extended abstract, employing the construct might add to the ‘continuous (re-)reification of “migrants” as a distinct category of human mobility’ (De Genova, 2013, p. 253) or, relatedly, support the idea that ‘migration-related difference is naturally given’ (Dahinden, 2016, p. 2208), whereas my aim is rather to nuance and question such assumptions.

My reasoning behind opting for this term while engaging critically with these concerns is twofold. First, I do find the term more apt for capturing the heterogeneity of the persons focussed on in my study than alternatives such as ‘vulnerable EU citizens’ (Nordling & Persdotter, 2021; Persdotter, 2019; Dahlstedt et al., 2021) or ‘poor visiting EU citizens’ (Ekendahl et al., 2020). In the Norwegian setting, these constructs are inevitably associated with Romanian Roma who beg on the streets, assumed to be without possibilities or ambitions of settling permanently in the country. The persons I met during fieldwork and whose situations are analysed in this thesis – while many are Romanian citizens and self-identifying as Roma – are diverse in nationality, ethnicity, means of survival and aspirations for length of stay in Norway. Second, and following Lafleur and Mescoli (2018), I have chosen ‘EU migrants’ over ‘mobile EU citizens’ (e.g., Friberg et al., 2013; Synnes, 2021), the latter often being employed in EU policy discourse to designate citizens of EU/EEA countries living in another EU/EEA member state (Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018, p. 481; Ratzmann, 2021). This is to underscore that the persons I am concerned with in this study do experience the precariousness and unpredictability accompanying ‘migranthood’ (Yıldız & De Genova, 2018, p. 430), including their (legal) presence in Norway being contested, even ‘undesired’, and limitations in access to (public) welfare services, despite having a different migratory-

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<sup>4</sup> As will be elaborated on, EU citizens’ rights and position in Norway are similar to those of EU citizens moving within the EU. Unless it is of empirical or analytical relevance to distinguish between the two, I shall refer to intra-EU and intra-EEA mobility, as well as EU citizens and EEA citizens, interchangeably – primarily employing the former terms.



legal status than third-country nationals like Joy (see also Jacobsen & Karlsen, 2021; Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018; van Baar, 2014).

When describing the EU migrants as homeless, I refer both to their actual lack of a home in Norway *and* their position within Norwegian social welfare legislation. Regarding the latter, having so-called ‘habitual residence’ (*fast bopel*) is a requirement for eligibility to social assistance (i.e., financial support and temporary accommodation). When NAV decides whether a person has habitual residence in Norway, their assessment is based on the person’s general ties to Norway, including their housing situation (Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet, 2012). I return to the social welfare legislation in greater detail in chapter three; suffice to say, the migrants’ position as homeless in Norway – in this dual sense – leaves them dependent on emergency support aimed at securing bodily survival and charity-based social service structures, rather than being included in the comprehensive and rights-oriented public welfare provision, which is considered a cornerstone of the Norwegian welfare state.

#### Migrants with precarious citizenship statuses

In my work, I generally employ the construct ‘migrants with precarious citizenship statuses’ (cf. Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018; van Baar, 2017) when referring to and discussing the situation of, as well as scholarship on, the larger category of persons who are thus ‘precariously included’ (Karlsen, 2021) in the Norwegian welfare system. In this study, those encompassed by my usage of this term are therefore both ‘homeless EU migrants’ and persons in similar circumstances to that of Joy, who in scholarly literature often are termed ‘irregular’ or ‘irregularised’ migrants (e.g., Drangland, 2021; Bendixsen et al., 2015; Bendixsen, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2019; Cuadra, 2015; Cuadra & Staaf, 2014; Jacobsen & Karlsen, 2021; Karlsen, 2015, 2018, 2021; Mpofo, 2021; Nordling & Persdotter, 2021). These latter notions commonly refer to people ‘who enter or dwell on state territory without formal authorisation’ (Jacobsen & Karlsen, 2021, p. 1), hence comprising migrants in many different situations, ‘including those who remain on state territory after having overstayed their visa, having had their residency revoked or asylum application rejected or never having applied for residency or asylum’ (Jacobsen & Karlsen, 2021, p. 1). Other terms used to denote persons in similar migratory-legal positions include ‘undocumented’, ‘clandestine’ and ‘illegal’ (see, e.g., Bendixsen, 2017; De Genova, 2002; Drangland, 2021; Jacobsen, 2015; Karlsen, 2015; Lillevik & Tyldum, 2021; Nordling, 2017, for in-depth discussions on choice of and ‘battles’ over terminology in this field).

Arguably, the migrants whose situations I discuss in this thesis can be considered ‘irregular’ or ‘irregularised’ in that they do not fulfil the conditions for so-called ‘right of residence’ in Norway beyond the initial three months guaranteed by EU legislation and the EEA agreement, which Norway is party to (cf. Bendixsen, 2018a; Cuadra, 2015; Cuadra & Staaf, 2014; Karlsen, 2021; Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018; Nordling & Persdotter, 2021). Consequently, as already alluded to and as I shall return to in depth, these EU migrants have equally restricted access to assistance from the Norwegian welfare state as irregularised third-country nationals like Joy.

When I chose ‘migrants with precarious citizenship statuses’ over ‘irregular migrants’ as my ‘catch-all term’ (Nordling & Persdotter, 2021, p. 165) to denote persons whose migratory-legal positions limit their rights to public welfare in Norway, my reasoning was once more twofold. First, the majority of migrants focussed on in my work enter and reside legally in the country due to Norway’s participation in the EU’s single market through the already-mentioned EEA agreement. This agreement authorises an EU migrant’s stay for three months, during which period they are not required to register with the authorities (The European Parliament and the European Council, 2004; cf. Minderhoud, 2014; Yıldız & De Genova, 2018). Their migratory-legal position, therefore, differs from that of the persons most commonly referred to as ‘irregular migrants’ in the Norwegian setting – not least in EU migrants being less ‘deportable’ (De Genova, 2002) – namely, rejected asylum seekers (Bendixsen, 2018a; Jacobsen, 2015; Karlsen, 2021; Lillevik & Tyldum, 2021). Hence, I use ‘migrants with precarious citizenship statuses’ to avoid general connotations of ‘illegality’, ‘illegal residence’ or ‘deportability’ with regard to the migratory-legal status of the larger group of persons being ‘precariously included’ (Karlsen, 2021) in Norway’s welfare system. My second reason for using this construct is connected to the first, as it relates to Norway being part of the EU’s single market despite not being one of the union’s member states. The migrants focussed on in my work do, because of the EEA agreement and in contrast to those generally understood as belonging to the category ‘irregular migrants’, have the *potential* to access public welfare assistance if they comply with the conditions of long-term ‘right of residence’, equalling legal residence according to the social welfare legislation.

As this study nevertheless shows, while conceptually separating ‘homeless EU migrants’ and ‘irregular migrants’ for the reasons discussed above, the relationships between the Norwegian *welfare* state and the persons denoted by both constructs are equally precarious. Moreover, the differentiation between them in terms of being demarcated as ‘illegal’ and ‘deportable’ is not as clear cut as their migratory-legal statuses might suggest.

This becomes particularly evident when considering the social welfare legislation, social workers' practices in encounters with homeless EU migrants and migrants' lived experiences of the Norwegian social service system, through the lens of 'welfare bordering' – a key analytical optic in my work. 'Welfare bordering' refers to how welfare policies operate as and create internal bordering practices by limiting 'undesired' and 'undeserving' migrants' access to welfare systems within a given nation-state (Guentner et al., 2016).

When employing the construct 'migrants with precarious citizenship statuses', I thus mean to accentuate the restrictedness, unpredictability and fragility characterising the precarious inclusion (Karlsen, 2021) of *both* homeless EU migrants and irregular migrants in the Norwegian welfare state. My usage of the term 'citizenship' therefore refers to 'broader conceptions of belonging' (De Genova, 2017, p. 20) than those indicated by (migratory) legal status alone, conceptions that relate to processes of constituting insiders and outsiders, of producing 'others' and 'strangers' within a given community, including nation-states and supranational entities such as the EU (Anderson, 2013; Bosniak, 2006; Bhuyan, 2010; Dahlstedt et al., 2021; De Genova, 2017; Guentner et al., 2016; Nordling, 2017; van Baar, 2017; Yıldız & De Genova, 2018).

My intention is, however, in no way to diminish the role migratory-legal status plays in shaping the lives of homeless EU migrants in Norway, as well as in conditioning social work practice and social workers' dilemmas in encounters with these migrants (cf. Anderson, 2019; Bendixsen, 2018b, 2019; Bosniak, 2006; De Genova, 2017; Jacobsen & Karlsen, 2021). Rather, this study seeks to shed light on the manifold – seldom straightforward and sometimes conflicting – manners in which the intertwinement of Norway's social welfare policies and concerns with migration management influence the 'doing' of social work with and social service provision to migrants with precarious citizenship statuses. Consequently, this intertwinement also influences migrants' – and social workers' – lived experiences of the Norwegian social service system.

## The study's questions of investigation

The core query guiding my work is, as previously stated: How does the 'doing' of social work in encounters with persons who have limited rights to public social welfare intersect with the Norwegian (welfare) state's concerns with migration management in general and internal bordering processes specifically? Following from this main objective, I have formulated four

questions of investigation to explore the issue at hand from different perspectives and at different levels.

1. How is the intertwining of social welfare policies and management of ‘undesired’ migrants, particularly homeless EU migrants, configured and produced in the Norwegian setting?
2. How does this intertwining shape the ‘doing’ of social work in encounters with homeless EU migrants?
3. How do social workers experience working with migrants whose access to public welfare in Norway is severely restricted?
4. What are homeless EU migrants’ lived experiences of social service provision in Norway?

In chapter two of this extended abstract, the study’s objective and questions of investigation will be further discussed and contextualised within the scholarly debates it aims at contributing to.

## Structure of the thesis

A compilation thesis like mine consists of self-contained articles and an extended abstract. My thesis’s extended abstract comprises six chapters, including this introduction. In the introductory chapter thus far, I have elaborated on the ‘research puzzle’ (Gustafsson & Hagström, 2018) that instigated this research project, and I sketched out the main themes that are explored in my work. The study’s specific questions of investigation have been detailed, and reflections on the two constructs employed in the text to designate persons who have limited rights to public welfare in Norway have been provided. In the remainder of the chapter, I shall first deliberate on writing a compilation thesis and the academic tradition within which this extended abstract has been written, followed by an outline of the remaining chapters.

On writing a compilation thesis in an anthropological tradition

The key requirement of an extended abstract is to provide an account of the internal cohesion of the thesis. How it is organised and written may, however, vary in accordance with traditions in the various disciplines.<sup>5</sup> My research project is part of an interdisciplinary PhD

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<sup>5</sup> See [VID’s guidelines for writing extended abstracts](#)

programme and bears evidence of my previous academic training within social work and social anthropology.<sup>6</sup> This extended abstract has been written in an anthropological tradition, which has specific bearings on its content and structure.<sup>7</sup>

First, emphasis has been placed on situating the cases and situations discussed in a broader ethnographic-empirical context. The sociolegal context, both framing and creating the restrictedness of welfare rights for ‘undesired’ migrants in Norway and, consequently, configuring processes, practices and experiences of ‘welfare bordering’ (Guentner et al., 2016) accordingly receives extended attention. Relatedly and secondly, the extended abstract – particularly chapter three, which zooms in on the sociolegal context – presents several ethnographic accounts as well as excerpts from other parts of my data material. This adds an analytical dimension to this chapter, which might be unexpected in other academic traditions. The accounts and excerpts, however, do not fuel new analyses but substantiate and further illustrate observations and arguments in the three articles – as well as demonstrate the linkages between them. The accounts and excerpts are also included to retain and accentuate the ethnographic character of my study in its entirety and to provide more insight into my fieldwork. Ultimately, then, the rationale behind this choice combines an ambition of providing a firmer foundation for readers to critically engage with my analyses, arguments and conclusions (cf. Drangland, 2021) with the aim of further demonstrating how the different parts of this thesis are connected.

#### Content of the chapters

The chapter following this introduction discusses the thesis’s main aims and contributions, positioning my work within the existing knowledge of social work and migrants with precarious citizenship statuses. It elaborates on my epistemological stance and the study’s theoretical framework. Chapter three is devoted to the sociolegal context configuring homeless EU migrants’ restricted access to social welfare in Norway, while in chapter four, I detail my methodological approach and discuss matters of positionality and research ethics. Chapter five presents summaries of the articles, which, together with the extended abstract, constitute this thesis. Throughout the extended abstract, I refer to these as article 1, article 2 and article 3 – following the order in which they were written. The sixth and last chapter

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<sup>6</sup> I hold a bachelor’s degree in social work from 1999 and a master’s degree in social anthropology from 2007.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., [Requirements for article-based theses in Social anthropology](#).

returns to the overall research query, summarising and highlighting the study's main arguments, conclusions and contributions – while also providing some final reflections.

## 2 Theoretical framework and previous research

This chapter provides reflections on my overall epistemological stance, outlines the study's theoretical framework and positions the thesis within the scholarly conversations to which it aims to contribute. I start by reflecting on my way of theorising in this thesis. Thereafter, I elaborate on my epistemological reasoning by discussing how and why I pay theoretical and ethnographic attention both to the sociolegal *production* of 'internal borders' and to how processes and practices of bordering are *experienced*. Next, I locate the study's main aims within the existing literature on social work and migrants with precarious citizenship statuses, followed by a discussion of the key analytical concepts that constitute the thesis's theoretical framework. The chapter ends with connecting my work to the epistemological debate of the 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002) at work within social work theory and practice, and I also position the thesis within the tradition of critical social work.

### Theoretical stances and epistemological reasonings

My research project is part of an interdisciplinary PhD programme. The programme focusses on professional practices and values, drawing on theoretical perspectives from several academic fields. As discussed in chapter one, this thesis bears specific evidence to my previous training within social work and social anthropology.

Much theorising within anthropology is due to the discipline's attendance to 'localised' ethnographic details arguably context-specific – while this is not necessarily the case (Brettell, 2015; Brettell & Hollifield, 2015; Okely, 2012). Anthropologists Vered Amit and colleagues (2015) argued for the aptness of working with 'mid-level concepts' in ethnographically grounded scholarship, which characterises the discipline. These are concepts that are analytically useful in terms of being

“‘good to think with’ because they are neither too narrowly defined nor too sweeping. They can be used to think through ethnographic situations, but they are not particular to one kind of ethnographic circumstance’. (p. 3)

Mid-level concepts are hence neither intended to serve as overarching, all-explanatory grand or master theories, which bear the risk of becoming 'abstractions that soar too far from the ground they are trying to explain' (Amit et al., 2015, p. 3), nor must they be too close to a specific empirical setting and hence nonapplicable in other contexts. Rather, they should function as 'thinking tools' (Jacobsen & Karlsen, 2021, p. 6) – or analytical 'optics' or

'lenses' – through which to explore and articulate the complexities of certain issues or research domains. Their call for working with mid-level concepts or 'mid-range conceptualization' (p. 3), Amit et al. (2015) proposed, is in line with 'a pragmatic orientation towards conceptualization' (p. 5), which has long been implicit in much anthropological scholarship. Here, 'concepts are judged in terms of whether or not they are "good to think with" as a framework for investigation, rather than as a set of general propositions that seeks to provide comprehensive explanations' (p. 5). Anthropologist Bruce M. Knauff (2006) correspondingly contended that '[i]ncreasingly, anthropological work pursues mid-level connections by linking individual facets of large-scale theories, topics, and methods to particular but not entirely local objects of study' (p. 411).

Such a 'pragmatic orientation towards conceptualization' has informed my way of theorising in this study. While working at different levels of abstraction, I have generally not attempted to construct, or engage with, large-scale or 'grand' theories but have rather worked with 'facets' of these in terms of engaging with analytical concepts developed within the research domains where I locate my study – as 'thinking tools'.

The anthropological discipline is generally 'phenomenologically inclined' (Desjarlais, 2005, p. 369, as cited in Willen, 2007, p. 12), attempting to grasp people's life worlds – their lived, embodied experiences of being-in-the-world (Brettell, 2015; Hilden & Middelthon, 2002; Ortner, 2006). In this endeavour, anthropologists pay ethnographic and theoretical attention to 'the interaction between structure and agency' and generally understand people and their life worlds as shaping and being shaped by 'the context (political, economic, social, cultural) within which they operate' (Brettell, 2015, p. 174; cf. Bourgois, 2003, p. 15). While I here centre on anthropology, similar epistemological underpinnings are reflected, I propose, in social work's 'person-in-environment' approach, deliberated on earlier in this extended abstract (e.g., Levin, 2021). Thus, my interdisciplinary background pulls in the same direction in terms of epistemological stance. Combining attention to life worlds *and* their structural underpinnings permeates both the choice of analytical optics and the thesis as a whole.

In what follows, I shall first elaborate on my epistemological reasoning, discussing the fruitfulness and significance of such a combined approach in my specific field of research. Following a literature review, I will turn to the key analytical concepts, or 'thinking tools', that construct this thesis's theoretical framework.



## Critical phenomenology and the sociolegal production of borders

As the study's core query and more detailed questions of investigation suggest, my work is driven by a simultaneous interest in how the restrictedness of welfare rights framing social work with homeless EU migrants in Norway is configured, the role and position of social work(ers) in this nexus and what bearing experiences of having limited welfare rights have on migrants' everyday 'modes of being in the world' (Willen, 2007, p. 9). Thus, I investigate the sociolegal *production* of 'internal borders' and 'precarious citizenship statuses' in the historical and political context of Norway (cf. De Genova, 2002), specifically those shaped as – and through – differentiation in welfare provision and rights within the country, or 'welfare bordering' (Guentner et al., 2016). Parallely, I deepen the understanding of how being entangled in and subjected to these bordering processes and practices is *experienced* by social workers and homeless EU migrants. Such a combination of critical and phenomenologically oriented approaches was termed 'critical phenomenology' by Sarah S. Willen (2007) in a study of migrant 'illegality' in Tel Aviv. She draws on fellow anthropologist Robert Desjarlais to develop 'a phenomenologically inclined account ... which attends at once to the concerns and lifeworlds of [our ethnographic subjects] and to the interrelated social, discursive and political forces that underpinned those concerns and lifeworlds' (Desjarlais, 2005, p. 369, as cited in Willen, 2007, p. 12).

Willen's call for thick descriptions and 'humanizing' of migrants through vivid ethnographic 'portraits' is, in part, a response to anthropologist Nicholas De Genova's seminal article from 2002, 'Migrant "Illegality" and Deportability in Everyday Life', where he urged migration scholars to empirically explore and pay analytical attention to the historically and politically situated sociolegal production of migrant 'illegality' – or, transferred to my field of enquiry, restrictedness of welfare rights to 'undesired' migrants. If merely constituting migrants themselves as the ethnographic object of study, he argued, researchers risk reifying them as a group *and* naturalising the phenomenon of 'illegality' – in my case, restrictedness of welfare rights – as something that just 'is', beyond questioning and scrutinising. I propose that the same arguments apply to constituting social workers as the ethnographic object of study. Approaching the phenomenon of restrictedness of welfare rights to 'undesired' migrants as sociolegally produced conditions allows instead for critiques of 'nation-states and their immigration policies, as well as of broader politics of nationalism, nativism and citizenship' (De Genova, 2002, p. 423) – without losing sight of the role and position of social work(ers) in this nexus.

Willen (2007) advanced De Genova's 'model' by arguing for ethnographic attention to 'two interrelated dimensions of social life: first, the conditions of structural inequality and structural violence that shape migrants' position and status [...]; and second, to the impact of these contextual factors on migrants' individual and collective experiences of being-in-the-world' (p. 13). She suggested that the critical phenomenological approach can not only

strengthen our capacity to produce thicker, and ultimately more satisfactory, ethnographies of a phenomenon that is commonly – and in many ways misleadingly – constructed in pejorative terms as a straightforward 'social problem' despite its tangled roots in an array of overlapping macro-, meso-, and micro-level processes [...] but it can also help ethnographers sensitize policymakers, politicians, and potentially even broader public audiences to the challenging, often deeply anxiety-producing, at times terrifying consequences that laws and policies frequently generate. (p. 28)

The latter part of her argument speaks to De Genova's warnings of 'anthropological pornography – showing it just to show' (2002, p. 422) in this field of study. My work has been guided by this insight. The choice of providing ethnographic accounts of migrants' lived experiences of the social service system and of social workers' experienced quandaries is motivated by a wish to 'sensitize' the Norwegian social work profession especially, but also policy-makers, of the predicaments of homeless EU migrants in Norway, and, not least, by a desire to encourage reflections on social work(ers)' role – and dilemmas – in the production of the boundaries of the nationalised welfare state.

My thesis's contribution to critical scholarship on states' increasing intertwinement of welfare policies and migration management is thus informed by the epistemological, theoretical and empirical ambitions – and concerns – voiced by De Genova (2002) and Willen (2007), as well as by how these have been carried forward in more recent studies from the Norwegian situation. This body of research combines careful ethnographic accounts of the experiences that migrants with precarious citizenship statuses have with the welfare system and vigorous scrutiny of how processes of 'welfare bordering' are configured and sociolegally produced in the historical and political context of Norway, including the roles played by welfare providers in bordering processes (Bendixsen et al., 2015; Bendixsen, 2018b, 2019; Karlsen, 2015, 2021). These studies have primarily focussed on rejected asylum seekers and the Norwegian health-care system. My work complements this scholarship by offering insights and analyses from a different empirical setting – namely, social work with and social service provision to homeless EU migrants – to which I now turn. In what follows, I shall first review the existing

international literature on social work and persons whose migratory-legal positions severely limit their rights to public welfare. Then I will discuss the key perspectives and concepts employed in my work to analyse the social work–migration management nexus in the case of homeless EU migrants in Norway.

### **Existing knowledge on social work(ers) and migrants with precarious citizenship statuses**

Research centring specifically on social work and social workers' position in the welfare provision–migration management nexus, and particularly that which takes the situation migrants with precarious citizenship statuses as its empirical point of departure, is an emerging field of enquiry.

Parts of this literature are primarily based on document analyses of national and municipal policies and legislation, as well as media coverage – illuminating the interconnectedness of particular nation-states' migration and social welfare legislation and policies. In this strand of the scholarship, emphasis is put on how the convergence of these legal and policy areas excludes migrants with precarious citizenship statuses from welfare services and general protection from the state. This may result in value conflicts for social workers, who are mandated with upholding both human rights and current national policies (Bhuyan, 2010; Furman et al., 2012; Hardina, 2014; Lundberg & Kjellbom, 2021; Mpofu, 2021; Nordling & Persdotter, 2021).

Other studies, while also paying attention to the sociolegal context, shed specific light on the perspectives and experiences of social workers who encounter migrants with precarious citizenship statuses in their work (Cuadra, 2015; Cuadra & Staaf, 2014; Ekendahl et al., 2020; Jönsson, 2014; Mostowska, 2014; Nobe-Ghelani, 2017; Nordling, 2017; Park & Bhuyan, 2012; Synnes, 2021).

Within this strand of the literature, scholars, primarily from within the social work discipline, have explored how social workers 'make sense' of these migrants. In a study of social workers providing services to so-called 'poor visiting EU citizens' from the Swedish context, Mats Ekendahl and colleagues (2020) found that social workers construct the migrants as 'active victims' in recognising the structural underpinnings of their predicaments while also pointing to their agency in 'trying their best to handle marginalization and stigmatization' (p. 190). Jessica H. Jönsson (2014) also identified a 'victim discourse' in her study of Swedish social workers' positions towards 'undocumented migrants'. This discourse

does, however, primarily concern women and children, who, in social workers' accounts, are construed as victims of circumstances outside their control and thus deserving of 'some kind of help from "Us"' (p. i42). Conversely, a 'discourse of illegality' prevails concerning undocumented men, who are generally perceived as blameable for their own and their families' 'illegality' and predicaments and thus less deserving of assistance. In their research from the US context, Yoosun Park and Rupaleem Bhuyan (2012) found similarly disparate views amongst social workers towards 'undocumented immigrants'; while some viewed these migrants as 'perpetrators of transgressions' (p. 35), others highlighted their victimhood and blamelessness. Magdalena Mostowska (2014), in a comparative study on how social workers in Ireland and Denmark frame their strategies for helping 'homeless EU migrants', identified several partly competing 'interpretive frames that enable social workers to make sense of their actions and express their values' (p. i18). There was an emphasis on these migrants as 'undisciplined deviants' in the Irish case, while the 'migrant worker' frame stood out in the Danish situation. Social workers' construction of migrants with precarious citizenship statuses' as 'failed' workers or as a temporary work force who are only considered deserving of (public) assistance if they are able to contribute to the host country's economy also comes through in Katrine M. Synnes' (2021) investigation of NAV employees in Norway's decisions on social assistance for unemployed Polish migrants and Chizuru Nobe-Ghelani's (2017) research on Canadian social workers' sense-making of their practices towards 'migrants without full immigration status'.

Now, whereas these studies are conducted within the frames of various sociolegal contexts and draw on different theoretical perspectives, a common theme is how migrants with precarious citizenship statuses are represented and constructed as 'alien elements' (Ekendahl et al., 2020) or 'the other' (Jönsson, 2014) – be it as undeserving villains, deserving victims, failed workers or populations putting their poverty and precariousness on excessive display. This functions to position them 'outside the bonds of social work' (Park & Bhuyan, 2012, p. 24) – or at least mainstream social work (cf. Boccagni & Righard, 2020) – and 'beyond the borders of the national community while living in its midst' (Park & Bhuyan, 2012, p. 34). The studies thus also, more or less explicitly, address how social workers' framing of migrants with precarious citizenship statuses, intersecting with the migrants' severely restricted access to public welfare, implicates social workers in nation-states' particular ways of managing migration.

Scholars have also paid attention to how social work practice, or the 'doing' of social work, contests the exclusionary mechanisms embedded in the interconnectedness of nation-

states' migration and social welfare legislation and policies. In her research on Swedish social workers' support for undocumented migrants, drawing on the cases of the municipality of Malmö's guidelines on social assistance and support for 'unaccompanied minors', Vanna Nordling (2017) proposed that while the social work practices she studied 'traverse some frontiers and uphold others', they may be seen as 'a statement towards justice at some levels [...] [creating] new spaces to act in relation to undocumented migrants' (p. 300). Jönsson (2014) similarly showed how some of her interlocutors engage in 'unofficial practices' that question established norms and rules or attempt to find 'loopholes' in the legislation so as to assist undocumented persons 'in need' – while not acting in direct confrontation with regulations or organisational routines. Correspondingly, Mostowska (2014), in her Danish case, identified a less prominent but competing 'frame' to that of the 'migrant worker', where social workers used 'informal contacts or informal ways to help individual migrants' (p. i31), though also not challenging regulations and policies outright. Opposing strategies were also found in Carin B. Cuadra and Annika Staaf's (2014) research on the encounters of social workers' in the Swedish public social services with 'irregular migrants', which they interpreted as 'an on-going arbitration in considering to what extent it is reasonable to withhold services as an element of control of migration' (p. 101). In a follow-up study, Cuadra (2015) discussed how some of these social workers 'approve assistance exceeding that which can find support in the national legislation' (p. 302), suggesting that social workers thus question their profession's entanglement in migration control. In sum, therefore, this strand of the literature demonstrates that the 'doing' of social work in some cases may 'destabilise' (Nordling, 2017) or 'disrupt' (Bendixsen, 2018b) the exclusion of migrants with precarious citizenship statuses from welfare provision while not challenging the intertwinement of social welfare policies and migration management per se.

Little of the existing scholarship is based on studies that have employed an ethnographic approach in their enquiry, leaving it in particular want of 'portraits' of migrants' lived experiences of being subjected to processes of welfare bordering, which this thesis offers. A notable exception is Andy Jolly's two publications (2018a, 2018b) from the UK context. Albeit drawing on interviews, his research sheds light on undocumented migrant families' experiences of 'statutory neglect' in terms of how '[p]oor home safety, cleanliness and lack of shelter result in impaired language and other development problems in children' (2018a, p. 197) and how the families respond to their predicaments with a strategy of resignation and resilience (2018b). Jolly argued that his observations 'raise questions about how social workers can practice ethically in a situation where immigration control is

increasingly intertwined with welfare provision' (2018b, p. 112). From the Norwegian situation, despite not having a specific focus on social work(ers), Mateus Schweyher (2021) and Synnes (2022) provided important insights into the experiences that Polish migrants in precarious situations have had with exclusionary mechanisms in encounters with the Norwegian public social welfare administration. Schweyher's (2021) research demonstrates the migrants' difficulties in meeting entitlement criteria for public assistance when working in unstable and low-paid employment, as well as how their precarity impacts their ability to actually apply for such assistance. The latter was the particular focus of Synnes' (2022) study, in which she identified three types of challenges impairing unemployed Polish migrants' contact with NAV. In addition to their position in an unstable and unpredictable labour market, she pointed to their lack of 'bureaucratic competence' (see chapter three) and experiences of humiliation in such encounters. With regards to NGO-run social services, a master's thesis exploring the health of 'migrating street-workers' in Oslo also sheds light on migrants' experiences of such service provision in Norway, arguing that 'poverty, the policing of public and private space, lack of access to shelter and limited health and social rights, collide to shape the ill-health of this group' (Patel, 2018, p. 2).

In my work, the phenomenologically 'inclined' ethnographic approach deepens our understanding also of *social workers'* lived experiences of being implicated in the 'internalization of borders' (Persdotter et al., 2021, p. 97). This is accomplished by providing accounts of their 'convictions and doubts [...] their prejudices and their reflexivity' (Fassin, 2012, p. 13) and how their reflections, and practices, at times are characterised by 'a great deal of despair and distaste' (Oeye et al., 2007, p. 2303) – while not losing sight of the significant part they play in the (re)production of borders.

To conclude this literature review, the existing scholarship on social work and migrants with precarious citizenship statuses demonstrate that social workers' discourses on, framing of and practices towards these migrants are moulded by and configured through the sociolegal context within which they work. My thesis thus adds to all the strands of the literature elaborated on above by providing insights and nuances from the underresearched Norwegian situation, accentuating how this particular context frames and shapes the migrants' lived experiences of social service provision in specific ways.

## Social work(ers) and bordering: 'Thinking tools'

### Welfare bordering

Considering the entanglement of social work practice – including social service provision – and states' migration management through the analytical lens of bordering is a novel development within social work scholarship. Nobe-Ghelani's article on border narratives in Canadian social work from 2017 was an early contribution from within the social work discipline, while more recent years have seen an increased interest from social work researchers, including myself, in exploring the merits of the optic.

'[H]ow social work, in its regulations and practices, are involved in the bordering of both the nation and the welfare state' (Persdotter et al., 2021, p. 95) is the specific focus of a recent special issue of *Nordic Social Work Research*, edited by Maria Persdotter et al. (2021). The articles constituting the issue, article 2 of this thesis being one of them, draw on research in Norway and Sweden. The special issue includes several of the articles reviewed above (Lundberg & Kjellbom, 2021; Nordling & Persdotter, 2021; Synnes, 2021). A special issue of *Social Policy & Society* from the same year (Ratzmann & Sahraoui, 2021b; cf. Ratzmann & Sahraoui, 2021a; Ratzmann, 2021) addressed 'street-level bordering practices' in access to social services, though none of the articles focussed specifically on social work and migrants with precarious citizenship statuses. Scholars of sociology and social work Julie Walsh and colleagues (2022) – in a comparative study from England, Sweden and Bulgaria – employed the concept of 'everyday bordering' in the analyses of social work with migrant families, also not with a particular focus on those with precarious citizenship statuses. How the concepts of 'borders' and 'bordering' are conceived of and deployed in this literature is in line with later developments in border and migration studies.

Scholarship on borders has a long and interdisciplinary history (Persdotter et al., 2021). In more recent literature, migration scholars from different academic fields have moved away from conceiving of borders as static and neutral, reconceptualising them as processes being enacted by – and materialised through – various state and nonstate actors, including migrants (Bendixsen, 2019; Guentner et al., 2016; Karlsen, 2021; Könönen, 2018; Nobe-Ghelani, 2017; Persdotter et al., 2021; Tervonen et al., 2018; Yuval-Davis et al., 2017, 2018, 2019). Hence, borders are conceived of as 'productive and generative' (Anderson et al., 2009, p. 6; cf. Balibar, 2009), placing individuals in specific kinds of power relations with others and producing particular categories of people, such as 'foreigners', 'migrants' and

‘citizens’. As poignantly put by De Genova (2013, p. 253), ‘if there were no borders, there would be no migrants – only mobility’.

Correspondingly – and in the wake of policy changes both on supranational levels and within nation-states, following alterations in patterns of cross-border mobility due partially to the EU enlargement and the economic and financial crises of the 2000s as well as the 2015 peak of migrants seeking asylum in Europe – borders are perceived of as ‘deterritorialised’ (Anderson et al., 2009; Tervonen et al., 2018; Yuval-Davis et al., 2019) and ‘dislocated if not *ubiquitous*’ (Balibar, 2009, p. 203, original italics). Accordingly, practices of bordering are envisaged as ‘decentralized, diffuse and dispersed’ (Persdotter et al., 2021, p. 95).

In their theorising, many scholars build off French philosopher Étienne Balibar (2002, 2004, 2009), who has postulated that ‘sometimes noisily and sometimes sneakily, *borders have changed place*’ (2004, p. 109, original italics). Borders, he proposed, do not exist only ‘*at the edge of the territory*, marking the point where it ends, it seems that borders and the institutional practices have been transported *into the middle of political space*’ (2004, p. 109, original italics), working as ‘internal’ or ‘internalised’ borders ‘*within the territories*’ (2009, p. 203, original italics) of nation-states. Thus, ‘borders follow people and surround them as they try to access paid labour, welfare benefits, health, labour protections, education, civil associations, and justice’ (Anderson et al., 2009, p. 6). This happens in particular, though not solely, through the differentiation produced by migratory-legal status, constructing hierarchisations of rights and accordingly differential treatments ‘within the same legal and political space’ (Könönen, 2018, p. 55) – not exclusively between ‘migrants’ and ‘citizens’ but also within these groups (Tervonen et al., 2018). Balibar (2002) conceptualised such processes as ‘the *polysemic nature* of borders’ (pp. 81–82, original italics): ‘In practical terms, this simply refers to the fact that they [borders] do not have the same meaning for everyone [...] but actively [...] *differentiate* between individuals’.

While informed by the theoretical discussions on the internalisation of borders in general, the concept of ‘welfare bordering’ has proved itself particularly fruitful as a ‘thinking tool’ in my work. To my knowledge, the term was coined by sociologist Simon Guentner and colleagues (2016) in their study on bordering practices in the UK. It refers to how

[n]ew exclusionary state borders are being drawn around social rights and public welfare provisions [...] which demarcate categories of people so as to incorporate some and exclude others, in a specific social order’. (p. 392)



The notion accordingly captures how managing migration is directly tied to defining and guarding the boundaries of the welfare state (Tervonen et al., 2018). States restricting access to welfare provisions is, in this perspective, perceived not only as a substitute for exclusion at the physical border but also as a bordering practice in differentiating between people within the borders of nation-states (Karlsen, 2021). I have deployed the concept to explore and articulate how Norwegian social welfare legislation and policies, more or less subtly, both operate as and create bordering practices. Moreover, it has deepened my understanding of the role and dilemmas of social workers' entanglement in such processes, as well as of migrants' lived experiences of being marked by the Norwegian (welfare) state as 'undesired' and 'belonging to certain categories who should leave the territory' (Bendixsen, 2018a, p. 167).

In my study, I have also worked with the notion of 'moral bordering' (Karlsen, 2021) – most explicitly so in article 3. This concept denotes the judgements and discourses surrounding migrants with precarious citizenship statuses regarding their deservingness of welfare (cf. also Guentner et al., 2016; Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2016; Ratzmann, 2021; Ratzmann & Sahraoui, 2021a, 2021b). As an analytical lens, it has been fruitful in exploring and articulating firstly how social workers morally justify the exclusion from welfare of people who are not encompassed by the ideas of 'territorialised deservingness' bestowed upon those who do meet the criteria for membership in the welfare state. Second, I have deployed it to shed light on how social workers' deliberations on deservingness contribute to further differentiation and hierarchisation *between* migrants with precarious citizenship statuses, where some migrants are cast not merely as 'undesired' but also as undeserving even of limited forms of assistance, while others are deemed 'worthy of compassion and care' (Karlsen, 2021, p. 49).

Two additional – and closely related – 'thinking tools' developed within my larger research domain have been instructive for my understanding of the entanglement of migration management, welfare rights and social work in the Norwegian context – namely 'humanitarian exceptionalism' (Bendixsen, 2018a, 2019; Jacobsen, 2015; Ticktin, 2005; see especially article 2) and 'precarious inclusion' (Karlsen, 2015, 2021; see especially article 3). These optics have worked to further my thinking on how particular ways of combining measures of care and control in social welfare policies directed at migrants with precarious citizenship statuses allow the Norwegian (welfare) state to simultaneously manage migration and retain the nation's self-image as caring and compassionate (see chapter three). They also illuminate how the 'doing' of social work intersects with this more or less articulated dual

ambition – in some situations and cases taking the shape of bordering practices – thus configuring migrants’ experiences of social service provision in Norway in particular ways.

#### Humanitarian exceptionalism

‘Humanitarian exceptionalism’ refers to the ‘logic’ or ‘reason’ underpinning health and social service provisions and parallel care systems specifically aimed at ‘undesired’ migrants lacking access to nation-states’ ordinary public welfare systems (Bendixsen, 2018a, 2019; Jacobsen, 2015; cf. Fassin, 2005, 2012; Ticktin, 2005, 2006, 2011). This logic builds on principles of humanitarianism – including compassion, benevolence and charity – instead of on principles of social justice, entitlements and equality between individuals, hence mobilising empathy ‘rather than recognition of rights’ (Fassin, 2012, p. x) and constructing people ‘as objects of charity rather than of law’ (Ticktin, 2006, p. 40). Accordingly, and particularly for the case of Norway (see chapter three), provisions and care systems configured through humanitarian reasons are understood as ‘an exception to [the] rules’ (Ticktin, 2005, p. 348), ‘an extraordinary departure in policy’ (Karlsen, 2015, p. 57), or a ‘suspension of the usual social norms’ (Fassin, 2005, p. 379) – accepted solely due to being directed at ‘undesired others’ who should leave the territory. Social service provision meted out through the logic of ‘humanitarian exceptionalism’ consequently draws boundaries between those belonging and those not belonging to the Norwegian (welfare) state and both operates as and creates bordering practices. I have introduced the notion of ‘the humanitarian administration of time’ (article 2) to capture how the particular combination of care and control embedded in the parallel social service system directed at homeless EU migrants in Oslo produces ‘unintended’ consequences in terms of having a regulating, even disciplining, function in migrants’ everyday lives – ultimately taking on a bordering function.

#### Precarious inclusion

The concept of ‘precarious inclusion’ was coined by anthropologist Marry-Anne Karlsen (2021) in her analyses of how irregularised migrants in Norway – with a primary focus on rejected asylum seekers and health care – despite precarious citizenship statuses and formal exclusion from the nation-state, do have access to some, albeit very limited, services in and assistance from the welfare state:

The term refers, on the one hand, to how the limited inclusive practices address the precariousness of migrants’ life through a minimalist management of survival and, on the

other hand, to how the inclusion itself is precarious, that is, insecure and unpredictable.

The inclusive practices thus protect exposed life and expose it at the same time. (p. 5)

Rather than drawing attention primarily to exclusionary policies and practices, which has been the tendency in studies concerning migrants with precarious citizenship statuses and access to public welfare – including, in part, my own – (e.g., Guentner et al., 2016; Jolly, 2018a, 2018b; Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018; Scheibelhofer & Holzinger, 2018; Synnes, 2021; see article 1), the notion of precarious inclusion brings out how these migrants *are* included in the Norwegian welfare system through measures directed at alleviating acute suffering (cf. also Ataç & Rosenberger, 2019). The restrictedness, unpredictability and fragility inherent in this form of inclusion results from it being underpinned by the logic of ‘humanitarian exceptionalism’ and ‘a moral imperative’ (Ticktin, 2011) to ensure survival, rather than by principles of social justice, entitlements and equality – the latter being characteristics of the Norwegian welfare state (see chapter three). Precarious inclusion, as a ‘thinking tool’, therefore contributes to nuancing binary understandings of exclusion versus inclusion in public welfare, which arguably is an underlying assumption of related concepts such as ‘welfare chauvinism’ (e.g., Barker, 2018; Guentner et al., 2016; Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2016). Precarious inclusion aims instead to capture the simultaneity of the two (Karlsen, 2021) while accentuating the ‘subordinate’ nature (De Genova, 2013) of the inclusionary social welfare policies and practices directed at migrants with precarious citizenship statuses in the Norwegian context. This demonstrates that within the same ‘space’, some lives are worth less than others (Könönen, 2018; Mayblin et al., 2020). In my study, therefore, the optic serves to draw out and articulate how social work(er)s’ entanglement in – at times enactment of – internal bordering processes are shaped by welfare policies that are both exclusionary and inclusionary, implicating individual social workers and the profession in the differentiation of human worth within Norway’s borders.

### **Welfare bordering and the historical control of poor people’s mobility**

This thesis aims to advance explorations of the above discussed optics’ merits – and limitations – in the social work field, particularly that of the ‘bridging’ analytical concept in my work, namely ‘welfare bordering’. It does so first by providing new insights into how ‘internal borders’ are produced, configured and experienced in social work practice with homeless EU migrants in Norway, and second by juxtaposing the discussions on welfare bordering with scholarship paying attention to social work’s historical ‘problem’ with poor

people's mobility, specifically in the Nordic context (Dahlstedt et al., 2021; Johansen, 2016; Lødemel, 1997; Montesino, 2015; Terum, 1996, 2003), as well as with scholarly debates on the profession's dual mandate of care and control (Levin, 2021; Lorenz, 2006, 2016, 2017a; Murdach, 2011; Staub-Bernasconi, 2014, 2016; Ylvisaker & Rugkåsa, 2020). In what follows, I shall elaborate briefly on these two strands of scholarship.

The common theme in the literature on welfare bordering and the profession's relationship with poor people's mobility speaks to a core issue in social work: '[W]ho has the right to belong to the societal community and thus receive its welfare and rights' (Dahlstedt et al., 2021, p. 226)? Or, to borrow the words of social work scholar Walter Lorenz (2006): How does a given society mark 'the boundaries of organised social solidarity' (p. 16)? As further argued by Lorenz (2006), social workers have, throughout the profession's history and pre-history, been tasked with fine-tuning 'the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion' (p. 16) on behalf of local municipalities and states; hence, social work's involvement in drawing boundaries between the 'belonging'/'deserving' and the 'nonbelonging'/'undeserving' is not a novelty brought about by contemporary mobility of 'the poor' across national borders (Cuadra, 2015; Persdotter, 2019; Persdotter et al., 2021). Rather, as is the case for the Nordic situation in general (Dahlstedt et al., 2015; Montesino, 2015; Persdotter, 2019; Persdotter et al., 2021), the drawing of such boundaries based on ideas of 'territorial belonging' has long historical roots in Norway, stemming from the local anchoring of social protection systems for the poor (e.g., Terum, 1996).

In drawing these historical lines and when relating to discussions on changes in the welfare state (see chapter three and all three articles), my thesis speaks to scholarly debates where the exceptionality often attributed to 'the migrant' as well as to cross-border mobility in migration studies is problematised and nuanced (Anderson, 2013, 2019; Anderson et al., 2009; Dahinden, 2016; Dahinden et al., 2021; De Genova, 2013, 2017; Jacobsen & Karlsen, 2021).

### **Methodological nationalism within social work**

My work is nonetheless premised on the assumption that the specific configurations of how the (welfare) state and social work deal with those whose presence in and 'belonging' to Norway's national territory is 'undesired' and contested warrant special consideration. As poignantly put by migration scholar Bridget Anderson (2019):

Whether one is a ‘migrant’ or a ‘citizen’ matters [...] immigration status matters, being subject to immigration control and/or being ultimately deportable has all kinds of impacts on a person’s life. It impacts on a range of rights, and it impacts on life plans, on how and indeed whether one can imagine a future. (pp. 5–6; cf. also Boccagni & Righard, 2020)

Transferred to my narrower field of enquiry, being deemed as not belonging to the ‘organised social solidarity’ (cf. Lorenz, 2006) of the nationalised Norwegian welfare state indeed matters and has particular consequences for migrants’ ‘modes of being-in-the-world’ (Willen, 2007, p. 9), including experiences of the country’s welfare system, not least in being left dependent on charity-based social service structures (article 2). Moreover, as discussed by social work scholar Magnus Dahlstedt and colleagues (2021) in a study of historical and contemporary discourses on the mobility of the poor in Sweden, sociolegally produced demarcations of ‘the right to belong’ – such as the ones examined in this thesis – have profound implications for how social work is conceptualised and practiced and, importantly, for what and who are ‘left outside’ (p. 226), often unobserved, in particular political and historical contexts.

A main contention running through my work is that the precarious situations of homeless EU migrants in Norway, how hierarchisation of social rights within the country’s borders signal ‘a general consensus among politicians and publics that some human lives are worth more than others’ (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 108) and the role and quandaries of social work(ers) in the production of internal borders, especially when being configured through ‘good intentions’ (cf. Ticktin, 2014, p. 277), mostly escape the direct attention of the Norwegian social work profession at large. This is owed, I suggest, to the general taken-for-grantedness of the nation-state within Norwegian social work, stemming from its previously discussed self-identification primarily as a *national* welfare state profession (cf. Askeland & Strauss, 2014; Dahle, 2010; Ellingsen & Levin, 2015; Levin, 2021; Lødemel, 2019; Messel, 2013; Terum, 2003).

These observations speak to the emergent scholarly conversation on ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002) at work within social work theory and practice. Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, in an influential article from 2002, ‘Methodological Nationalism and the Study of Migration’, defined this phenomenon as ‘the assumption that the nation-state society is the natural social and political form of the modern world’ (p. 217). This assumption has also become implicit in the social sciences; hence ‘nationally bounded societies are taken to be the naturally given entities to study’ (p. 221).

While having been slower in making their way into social work scholarship than other disciplines, discussions of ‘how social work has naturalized the nation-state’ (Olivier-Mensah et al., 2017, p. 123) or ‘how the nation state often tends to become an unexamined backdrop for social work’ (Schröer & Schweppe, 2020, p. 342) – an assumption ‘that rationalizes this whole phenomenon of borders-making-migrants’ (De Genova, 2017, p. 18) – are on the rise.

In this literature, particular attention has been paid to how social work, especially in the European context, developed ‘as a solidarity creation project within the nation-state building project’ (Cuadra, 2015, p. 305); how its practice and research hence ‘builds on, and reproduces, dichotomised understandings of place and belonging’ (Righard, 2018, p. 247); and thus, how solely those deemed to belong to a certain territory – the nation-state – are considered ‘legitimate claimants of social justice’ (Mpofu, 2021, p. 20). Such framing of ‘the social question’ or ‘how solidarity can be defined and secured’ (Lorenz, 2016, p. 5) has, as argued by social work and migration scholar Erica Righard (2018),

hampered social work’s ability to respond to social vulnerabilities and promote welfare among individuals and groups who live their life anchored in, and who foster identities of belonging to, places in two or more countries. (p. 247)

Lorenz (2016), in a similar vein, noted that while cross-border mobility in some regards is being facilitated in Europe, ‘this mobility is not accompanied by and secured by trans-national support structures [...]. In other words, people move at their own risk’ (p. 12; see chapter three).

The scholarship addressing methodological nationalism within social work, formed in part by much of the literature reviewed earlier, accentuates how a situation where national borders, in a globalised world, are used as a frame for welfare claims results in differentiation of access to welfare – signalling ‘hierarchical conceptions of human worth’ (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 108) – within the borders of nation-states, being at odds with social work’s *global* self-identification as a human rights profession working for equal inclusion of and social justice for all (Cuadra, 2015; Cuadra and Staaf, 2014; Furman et al., 2012; Jolly, 2018a; Jönsson, 2014; Lundberg & Kjellbom, 2021; Mpofu, 2021; Olivier-Mensah et al., 2017; Park & Bhuyan, 2012).

## Critical social work

While this thesis engages with the scholarly discussions elaborated on above, my ambition goes beyond contributing to conversations within academia. My hope is that this study, and its combined focus on how internal borders are produced and experienced, will also ‘sensitize’ (cf. Willen, 2007) and encourage reflection amongst social workers in Norway and within the Norwegian social work profession at large regarding the exclusionary potential inherent in its self-identification as a national welfare state profession – being particularly accentuated in encounters with migrants with precarious citizenship statuses. To slightly rephrase social work scholar Silvia Staub-Bernasconi’s (2014, p. 36) question in a discussion on whether the discipline’s knowledge, professional mandate and ethics are ‘globalisable’: Does the mandate of social work end at the boundaries of the nationalised Norwegian welfare state? Or perhaps more precisely put: Who is (to be) considered part of the ‘imagined community’ whose needs and risks should be addressed in Norwegian social welfare policies and by social work(ers) (cf. Cuadra, 2015, p. 216; Park & Bhuyan, 2012, p. 36)? Following the critical phenomenological approach accounted for earlier, and in inviting the Norwegian social work profession to engage with these queries, including how the needs of those deemed not to ‘belong’ to the welfare state are (to be) cared for, I place my study firmly within a critical tradition thus described by anthropologist Didier Fassin (2012) in his work on ‘humanitarian reason’:

In the past as today, the vocation of social scientists often emerges from a combination of interest in the permanent process of invention of which societies are both the source and the product, and judgement about the state of affairs as they encounter them in the social world. Critical thinking sits at the crossroads between the two, between curiosity and indignation, between the will to understand and the will to transform. (p. 243)

In social work, critical scholarship has, as is the case for this thesis, centred on ‘understanding and addressing the impact of broad social structures on the problems facing service users and the social work process itself’ (Healy, 2014, p. 183). The scholarship has also, in line with Fassin (2012), argued for both societal change and transformations within social service provision systems (Dahlstedt et al., 2020; Healy, 2014). A crucial part of a critical stance in the discipline and profession is thus to challenge established truths concerning what social work is and can be and how it is practiced (Dahlstedt et al., 2020, p. 199) in particular contexts – an aim of my work. Such a researcher position requires sustained reflection on my

own positionality and its implications for the knowledge produced, which will be addressed in chapter five.

## Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have elaborated on my overall epistemological stance and the more specific ‘thinking tools’ deployed to explore the entanglement of the ‘doing’ of social work and the Norwegian (welfare) state’s concern with migration management – ‘welfare bordering’ in particular. A particular aim has been to ‘bridge’ discussions on welfare bordering with scholarship on social work’s historical involvement in controlling the mobility of the poor, while still contending that the profession’s entanglement in the management of cross-border mobility warrants special consideration – thus connecting with the epistemological debate on ‘methodological nationalism’ at work within social work. These reflections will be taken further in the concluding discussion of the thesis. As also accentuated in this chapter, my work is premised on the assumption that the restrictedness of welfare rights to ‘undesired’ migrants in Norway must be explored as a historically situated and sociolegally produced condition and not be taken for granted as something that simply ‘is’. The latter will receive specific attention in the following chapter.



### **3 Sociolegal context: The Norwegian situation**

This chapter discusses the sociolegal context configuring homeless EU migrants' restricted access to social welfare in Norway and thus framing the practices and dilemmas of social workers in encounters with these migrants as well as the migrants' lived experiences of social service provision in the Norwegian situation. I start by outlining key characteristics of the Norwegian welfare state, zooming in on how visibly poor and homeless migrants without access to the ordinary comprehensive social welfare system appear profoundly 'anomalous' to the universalistic-oriented, nationalised welfare state. Next, the legal situation of EU migrants in Norway is sketched out, focusing on entitlement to social assistance, followed by a discussion of the historically situated role of civil society in the Norwegian setting. I end with a deliberation on the specific position of the Roma in both Europe and Norway, accentuating how their mobility is considered particularly 'undesired' or 'unwelcome' in most states, the Norwegian one included. The chapter has a double aim: first, to situate my observations and arguments in a broader sociolegal context, and second, to demonstrate that the contextual factors highlighted, such as the nationalisation of the welfare state and the legal situation, are themselves 'produced'. Their seeming naturalness and givenness, I argue, leave them in particular need of thorough scrutinising.

#### **The generous Norwegian welfare state and undesired migrants**

It is late autumn, and I am sitting at a café table at one of the NGO-run social services available to homeless EU migrants in Oslo, chatting and drinking coffee with four men. Three of them are from Romania. The fourth man – whom I meet for the first time today – is originally from Albania but became an Italian citizen many years ago. The conversation is carried out in a mix of English, Italian and Romanian – everyone helping each other out with translations. I have just come from a meeting in the collaboration unit set up by the City Government of Oslo to coordinate efforts directed at 'visiting homeless EEA citizens', where the NGOs running the two shelters available to homeless EU migrants in the city reported that, over the past two weeks, they have turned away between five and 40 people every day, following a lottery, since the people wanting beds outnumber those available.<sup>8</sup> One of the NGOs also informed about an open meeting they had conducted with the users of one of their other facilities, where they provide free showers, the week before. During the meeting, the migrants had asked for an increase in

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<sup>8</sup> See article 2.

beds at the shelters and more public toilets in Oslo. With this in mind, I ask the men where they spend their nights and what they think of the availability of shelters, toilets and affordable or free places to eat – for them – in the city.

This turns into a heated and humorous discussion between the four men. They talk, and laugh, about how difficult it can be to find a toilet when one needs one, having to wait for one of the NGO-run social services to open or ‘run across town’ if not near one of the facilities and having to do more than just pee. They talk also about how the lottery for beds is experienced. ‘This week I have just picked red [the colour of the ‘losing’ chips], red, red, and then it is goodbye’, one of them says while chuckling and shaking his head. Only two of the men have tried to get a bed at the shelter lately, and just one successfully. The other two are staying with friends or sleeping outdoors, which they find to be a better option than the uncertainty of the lottery. The man who has so far not managed to get a bed at the shelter has worked unregistered and slept rough in several other European countries, including Denmark, Ireland and Germany. He states that from his experience, Norway is the hardest country to survive in for ‘people like us, the extras [...] it is even difficult to find a tap or a fountain to drink water from’. He says that in the other countries he has been in, there are many more services available, if not always with the same quality as here. He has never experienced not getting a bed at a shelter if he wanted to before coming to Norway. Before he leaves soon after, I ask him if he plans to try the tombola [the word used by most migrants to refer to the lottery] again tonight. He says that he is. I wish him luck and show him my crossed fingers, and all the men burst into laughter. (Fieldnotes, November 2017)

Earlier the same autumn, I am at the same facility, this time seated in one of the two comfortable sofas also available there. I sit next to a Romanian Roma couple, Florina and Nicu, who earn their living mainly through begging and whom I have talked to almost daily since I started my fieldwork nearly three weeks ago. Florina is curled up on the sofa, her eyes closed and her head resting on her husband’s lap as he is stroking her back. ‘She is sick and only sleep today, so no money’, Nicu says to me. His English is rather rudimentary, but we manage to keep a conversation going – using also a translation app on his phone. He talks about their lives in Romania, where none of them have a job and only ‘get very little money’ through what I gather is some kind of government support programme. ‘The system in Norway is better; it is very good’, Nicu says. ‘For you, too?’ I ask. He shakes his head. ‘No, for me no. For us no.’ (Fieldnotes, September 2017)

The experiences and discussions of homeless EU migrants accentuated in these two fieldnote excerpts draw attention to the fact that the Norwegian welfare system ‘does not stand out as

particularly generous or caring' (Karlsen, 2021, p. 15) towards migrants with precarious citizenship statuses when contrasted to other European countries (see also Bendixsen, 2017; Jacobsen, 2015; cf. e.g., Nordling, 2017, on a similar argument regarding the Swedish situation). This might seem like a paradox, given the, comparatively speaking, comprehensiveness and ambitiousness characterising Norway's welfare policies towards those deemed to belong to the welfare state.

The Norwegian welfare state developed post-WWII is described in the literature, together with its Nordic counterparts, as ambitious and comprehensive in terms of 'the scope of responsibilities the state assumes for the welfare of its citizens and the extensiveness of the welfare system' (Ugelvik, 2013, p. 185; Rugkåsa, 2012; Vike, 2004); universalistic in that its policies and provisions target all its members, or entire categories of the population (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005, 2014; Pedersen & Kuhnle, 2017); rights-oriented, as its services generally are distributed following statutory rules rather than means-testing or assessment of individual deservingness (Bradshaw & Terum, 1997; Lødemel, 1997; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005); and as having a 'passion for equality', resulting both from and in 'extraordinarily low levels of poverty', in a comparative perspective (Pedersen & Kuhnle, 2017, p. 221; Bendixsen et al., 2018; Rugkåsa, 2012).

The reality of these characteristics, or principles, of the Norwegian welfare state has naturally, and increasingly so, been debated and questioned by scholars (Bendixsen et al., 2018; Bradshaw & Terum, 1997; Ervik & Kildal, 2015; Kamali & Jönsson, 2018; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005, 2014; Nilssen & Kildal, 2009; Pedersen & Kuhnle, 2017; Vike, 2004). Particular attention has been paid to how neo-liberal policies are 'seeping into' the conceptualisations and practices of the welfare state. Studies accentuate a recent celebration of 'contractualism', i.e., a justice of reciprocity where the link between contributions and benefits has been strengthened at the cost of the principles of universalism and egalitarianism, as well as an increased de-politicising and individualisation of social problems (Bendixsen et al., 2018; Kamali & Jönsson, 2018; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005; Nilssen & Kildal, 2009; Ylvisaker & Rugkåsa, 2020). As ideas, or ideals, its historic characteristics and principles nonetheless appear to frame and influence the (welfare) state's position and policies towards migrants with precarious citizenship statuses in specific – partly conflicting – manners, to which I now turn.

I start by discussing why expansive welfare states seem to guard their borders particularly well, highlighting concerns of sustainability, the territorial boundedness or national framing of the Norwegian welfare state and how, as pointed to in the fieldnote

excerpts introducing this section, Norway seems to be particularly hard to ‘survive’ in for migrants with limited access to the country’s welfare system. Next, ideas of the morally ‘good’ welfare state and its ‘problem’ with (visible) poverty and suffering are examined. My presentation and deliberations in the following sections rely largely on observations and arguments in the existing scholarship on the welfare state’s relationship with migrants with precarious citizenship statuses in Norway.

### Discourses on the sustainability of the welfare state

Somewhere in the legislation, there is a phrase that is used, about not being a burden to the welfare state. That you should not be, as an EEA citizen. You can come, but you should be able to manage on your own. As long as you do that, it is totally fine. Because one should not be a burden to the welfare state. Because the welfare state is reserved for those who belong to the Norwegian realm [riket], sort of. [...] But I find this to be a rather unkind phrase. Being a burden to the welfare state. Because that is not what most people are trying to do. Most people coming to Norway from an EU or EEA country come here to make money and want to manage on their own. And then maybe something happens so that they can’t. And that can be self-inflicted, or it can be not self-inflicted. [...] So, these are matters that we have to take into consideration [when assessing applications for social assistance]. (Interview with Rakel, social worker in the Norwegian public social welfare administration, June 2018)

The phrase about not being a burden to the welfare state, which Rakel referred to, can be found, in more or less similar wording, in EU Directive 2004/38 (The European Parliament and the European Council, 2004) and has been incorporated into Norway’s immigration legislation (Immigration Act 2008, chapter 13; UDI [The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration], 2011a, 2011b). I return to the legislation in more detail later in this chapter. For now, I will highlight that the Norwegian Directorate of Labour and Welfare, in their guideline on assessing the legal residence of EEA citizens applying for social assistance (Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet, 2018), specifically states that NAV is not to consider whether an applicant is a burden to the public welfare system, as this is beyond the scope of their competence and authority (p. 3). This point was also strongly made by a jurist from the county governor of Oslo at a seminar for employees in the public social welfare administration on the guidelines, shortly after they had been launched, which I attended. She underscored that when the county governor – in their role as an appeal body in cases

involving applications for social assistance – receive a decision where considerations of whether an EEA citizen is a burden to the welfare system is part of the assessment, they routinely return it to the NAV office for renewed assessment, since this, in her words, ‘is a question solely for the immigration authorities’ (Fieldnotes, March 2018).

As is demonstrated in my work, and coming through in Rakel’s statement, social workers mandated with administering public social welfare provisions, as well as those who are not, appear, nonetheless, to consider the sustainability of the Norwegian welfare state in encounters with homeless EU migrants. Such considerations seemingly play a part both in assessments of eligibility of public emergency support (article 3) and in deliberations on whether to negotiate for the inclusion of these migrants in the public welfare system in the first place (article 1). This corresponds with observations made in other studies of welfare state professionals’ positions towards migrants with precarious citizenship statuses in Norway. In an investigation of encounters between EU migrant workers and the Norwegian public social welfare administration that took place before NAV was mandated with assessing the legality of residence of EEA citizens applying for social assistance, Jon H. Friberg et al. (2013) found that NAV employees strongly identified with the budget balance of the Norwegian state and worried that assistance to labour migrants would become costly for Norwegian society (p. 89). Synnes (2021) similarly found that NAV employees highlighted the prevention of EU migrants becoming a financial burden when describing their assessments of applications for social assistance from unemployed Polish migrants. While seemingly not as accentuated as in NAV employees’ and social workers’ accounts and practices, Karlsen (2021) – in her study of the Norwegian state’s response to irregular migration, which has a particular focus on the health-care system – showed how some doctors point to an experienced obligation to take the management of public resources into consideration when determining the course of treatment for rejected asylum seekers. These observations are reflective of prevailing discourses on the relationship between the sustainability of the welfare state and migration in the Norwegian context.

Norway has only gradually come to follow what legal scholar Linda Bosniak (2006, p. 4) has called a ‘hard on the outside and soft on the inside’ approach to citizenship in terms of membership of the nationalised welfare state (cf. Karlsen, 2018, 2021). Of significance here is that the Norwegian welfare state was constituted and developed during a period in which cross-border mobility was far less extensive than it is today (NOU [Official Norwegian Report] 2011:7, p. 11). Establishing and upholding a ‘hard outer edge’ (Bosniak, 2006, p. 4) thus came to be of real significance, as well as a challenge, when Norway became so-called

net importers of migrants in the late 1960s, having been net exporters until then. This resulted in ongoing efforts to halt immigration, including a general ban on labour migration in 1975 (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012; Karlsen, 2021; NOU 2011:7). Correspondingly, and according to sociologists and migration scholars Grete Brochmann and Anniken Hagelund, the assumption that ‘generous welfare distribution depends on a restrictive selection of its new members to avoid being overburdened’ (2011, p. 14) is constitutive of Norway’s migration policy and that of Nordic countries in general. It has become vital to control immigration to avoid Norway’s welfare model being exposed to too great a load and, hence, being undermined (2012, p. 13). Following from this line of reasoning, then, Norway’s restrictedness in granting welfare rights to migrants with precarious citizenship statuses is not a paradox but a logical consequence of the welfare state’s comprehensiveness and ambitiousness; it is precisely its defining characteristics that create a need for the welfare state’s borders to be well regulated, also in terms of administrative routines, and guarded (see also Bendixsen, 2017, 2018c; Jacobsen, 2015). That two Official Norwegian Reports [NOUs] have been commissioned to explore the relationship between increased immigration and the sustainability of the Norwegian welfare model over the past decades (NOU 2011:7; NOU 2017:2) is indicative of this premise. In line with sociologist Vanessa Barker (2018), who writes from the Swedish context, one might therefore understand the phenomenon of Norway and its Nordic neighbours not being particularly generous when it comes to the provision of welfare to migrants with precarious citizenship statuses, in a comparative view, as stemming from the welfare state’s commitment to providing and preserving security for its members. This, in turn, makes it ‘dependent upon the exclusion of perceived others to keep solvent. Welfare state preservation is what drives exclusion’ (p. 13). The acclaimed universalism of the Norwegian welfare state is hence very much a ‘bounded universalism’ (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2011; Bendixsen & Wyller, 2021b; Friberg et al., 2013; Trägårdh, 2021), and concerns of – as well as measures of – migration management result in large from the needs and demands of the welfare state itself (cf. Barker, 2017, p. 121).

The welfare state as a sedentary construct

As reflected in Rakel’s earlier statement and accentuated in all three of this thesis’s articles, the divide between those inside and those outside this bounded universalism has traditionally been marked by the geographical borders of the Norwegian nation-state (Friberg et al., 2013, p. 90). The Norwegian welfare state was developed as part of a post WWII nation-building project driven by the political will to overcome class divisions and to include ‘all

Norwegians' (Christoffersen, 2017; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005; Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012). The welfare state is thus both a product of and a tool for the realisation of such a nationally bounded solidarity project (Christoffersen, 2017, p. 103; Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012). Comparable developments have taken place in other European countries, and similarly to its European counterparts, the Norwegian welfare state can be described as a 'sedentary construct' (Boccagni et al., 2015, p. 313). It is premised on an assumption that people belong to particular places and, consequently, that the proper place to realise welfare rights is within the nation-state one is deemed belonging to (Barker, 2018; Karlsen, 2021; Malkki, 1995).

Brochmann and Hagelund (2012) described the nationalised welfare state as a 'radically inclusive project' (p. 6). The Norwegian state's historical treatment of its indigenous people and national minorities – whose ways of living traditionally have been characterised by various forms of mobility – is nonetheless a testimony to that those who 'are imagined as part of the national project' (Barker, 2018, p. 58) are not a given but rather configured in specific sociohistorical contexts. This involves exclusionary processes marking some people as 'strangers', 'outsiders' and 'nonbelonging', including those whose presence in national territory has historical precedence or a long history. Moreover, the comprehensive inclusionary ambitions of the welfare state have had devastating consequences for those whose way of living was conceived of as impossible to reconcile with the drives and demands of the evolving welfare state and its modernisation project (Bendixsen & Wyller, 2021b; Brandal et al., 2017; Midtbøen & Lidén, 2015).

There can, however, be no doubt that the Norwegian welfare state, as with its Nordic neighbours, has greatly improved the welfare of the vast majority of the nation's inhabitants. No other modern societies are known where virtually the whole population is secured and encompassed by wide-ranging welfare provisions, to the extent that is the case in the Nordic countries (Vike, 2004, p. 11). In terms of Norway's migration policy, the comprehensiveness and ambitiousness of the welfare state has had the consequence that

it has been seen as necessary to integrate new arrivals, especially in working life but also in society. If one is to maintain the societal framework, new arrivals must be part of it. Good welfare states do not want to have large numbers of people or groups that fall through the net, disturb regulated working life, overload social budgets, or eventually undermine solidarity. (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012, p. 13)

Thus, as Norway's general approach to migrants' access to welfare demonstrates, '[w]hile all democracies determine membership and access to the territory, this prerogative does not

necessitate the differential treatment of non-members [of the nation-state] once they have accessed the territory' (Barker, 2013, pp. 245–246). Inclusion in the Norwegian welfare state has become dependent on residence in the country and not formal citizenship exclusively (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005; Rugkåsa, 2012); the welfare state hence primarily operates with a conception of membership that is premised on legal territorial presence (Karlsen, 2021, p. 19; Bendixsen, 2018a). Once migrants have made it through the 'hard outer edge' in terms of complying with the 'hard' threshold regulations (Bosniak, 2006, p. 4) or requirements for legal residence, they are, as a main rule, included in its 'bounded universalism' (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012).

The Norwegian (welfare) state's position towards migrants with precarious citizenship statuses, who rupture the neat divide between the adopted 'hard outside' and 'soft inside' approach and do not adhere to 'the national order of things' (Malkki, 1995) by being present in Norwegian territory while not being deemed members of the welfare state, is more disputed (Karlsen, 2018, 2021). Several studies, my own included, have demonstrated how these migrants – through various administrative regulations, circulars and guidelines issued by state departments and directorates – have gradually come to be formally excluded from ordinary, comprehensive welfare provisions, thus marking their presence in Norway's national territory as undesired and unwelcome (Andersen, 2014; Bendixsen, 2017, 2018a; Bendixsen et al., 2015; Karlsen, 2018, 2021; Haddeland, 2019). I return to this below. First, however, I draw attention to how the comprehensiveness and ambitiousness of the welfare state shape the everyday experiences of 'being-in-the-world' (Willen, 2007) for migrants with limited access to the public welfare system, as well as impact how the existing social service provision is configured, in rather conflicting manners. I start by discussing exclusionary tendencies and how the extensive responsibility the Norwegian welfare state takes for its members makes it difficult to 'survive' for those who are not encompassed by its all-inclusiveness – 'the extras', as the man quoted in the introductory fieldnote excerpt put it.

#### Administrative borders and a hostile environment

You know, it is like before you cross to enter into the system, it is very difficult. But I think inside the system, it is good. [...] Like to start to get a D number [a temporary national identification number<sup>9</sup>]. [...] When I came, I did not even know what this D

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<sup>9</sup> [A D number is a temporary identification number issued to migrants who intend to stay in Norway for less than six months or who do not meet the criteria for receiving a permanent national identity number \[fødselsnummer\].](#)



number is. I tried to get a job, but they ask you for the D number. Then I talked to many people. They said that no, without a work contract, you cannot get a D number. So I kept looking for a work contract, but they wanted the D number. But then when I met Janne [a social worker at an NGO-run facility], she said that NAV could give me a D number. But NAV said no; you must have a [work] contract first. But then Janne went with me to NAV, and they applied for me. [...] It took me around two months [to get the D number]. And after that, I got a job. They were asking me for the D number and my bank account number. Another problem. I did not have an account number, so I lost the job. The bank said to send them all my papers. They said it would take six weeks. Still now, after five months, I do not have an answer from that bank. But I got an account in another bank; my friend took me. It took three months. So I have the account number now. [...] So small, small, step by step, now I have the D number, so now I can live and think. Before, I was only thinking about D number, account number, place to sleep. So now, small, small, I have a place to stay, I have a job, I have a contract, I have my D number, I have my appointment for a personal number [permanent national identity number, *fødselsnummer*] next week. I asked for the appointment in December. So I waited almost six months. Just for the appointment. (From interview with John, originally from a West African country and a Spanish citizen for nearly 30 years, May 2018)

John has been in Norway for a month or so when I meet him during my second week of fieldwork. I follow his struggle with Norway's administrative routines over the succeeding months. In addition to Spain, John has lived in and travelled between several other European countries over the years, setting up various small businesses. Due to the financial crises, his businesses failed, and he eventually decided to try his luck in Norway. With the exception of England, he states, he has never experienced a country with more difficult 'systems'. As his account shows, and as article 2 of this thesis draws attention to, a Norwegian identification number [D number or *fødselsnummer*] – while essential for getting access to the regulated labour market and public welfare services, 'a key to inclusive citizenship in the country' (Burrell & Schweyher, 2021, p. 2) – is not straightforwardly acquired.

Several studies have similarly observed how the highly regulated nature of the Nordic welfare states, characterised by digitised administrative procedures, makes communication with the public welfare system and the everyday lives of migrants with precarious citizenship statuses particularly challenging. Friberg et al.'s (2013) enquiry demonstrates the catch-22 situation John's account is an example of, where EU labour migrants do not get a D number because they do not have a job, and equally, they do not get a job because they do not have a

D number. The enquiry also demonstrates the reluctance of NAV employees to apply for a D number on behalf of these migrants, despite NAV being one of the agencies mandated with doing so. Research with Polish migrants living and working in Sweden reveals the centrality of the personal identification number for the migrants' working lives and daily access to various services and argues that difficulties in attaining an identification number manifests as a fundamental obstacle to functioning and, by extension, belonging, in Swedish society (Burrell & Schweyher, 2021). Consistent with these observations, Karlsen (2021) found that administrative practices and routines in Norwegian public health services, such as the extensive use of national identification numbers, contribute to deterring and excluding irregularised migrants from health care, even in cases where they are entitled to this care. Nuancing the picture of the significance of the D number and based on research with Polish labour migrants in Oslo, Schweyher (forthcoming) draws attention to the limitations of this temporary identification number compared with the *fødselsnummer*, which many migrant workers do not manage to obtain due to failing to meet its residence-related criteria. Schweyher shows how living with the D number both hinders equal access to public welfare services for these migrants and complicates their everyday lives in terms of deterring access to phone and internet subscriptions, online banking and BankID – the latter being a 'digital ID' needed to log in to a wide range of government services and for signing contracts digitally. Related to the latter, Synnes (2022) discussed how NAV's recent transition to mainly digital solutions for information, contact and submitting applications has resulted in the 'digital exclusion' of several user groups. Her enquiry demonstrates how a lack of 'bureaucratic competence', including digital skills, hinders unemployed Polish migrants from accessing information about their potential rights to public social services as well as from applying for them.

These administrative and bureaucratic hurdles are, in several studies, conceptualised as internal bordering practices or techniques (Burrell & Schweyher, 2021; Karlsen, 2021; Schweyher, forthcoming). They demarcate 'insiders' from 'outsiders', or the 'belonging' from the 'nonbelonging', not only in terms of access to welfare but also by extending processes of 'othering' more deeply into everyday life – in rather trivial, yet highly effective manners (Yuval-Davis et al., 2017, 2018, 2019). As elaborated on in article 2, a D number (or a *fødselsnummer*) is needed to obtain a library card in Oslo; access to libraries provides access to amenities such as a toilet, drinking water and a warm place to rest. I was similarly told by migrants that a Norwegian identification number is required to rent a storage space or become a member of a gym – the latter providing access to showers – amenities to which (lacking)

accessibility greatly impacts their ‘modes of being-in-the-world’ (Willen, 2007). As article 2 thus shows, the digitised administrative routines characterising the Norwegian welfare state also configure *differentiated* experiences with the NGOised parallel social service system amongst homeless EU migrants in Oslo, not least in terms of who the humanitarian administration of time affects the hardest.

In sum, therefore, and to borrow but slightly rephrase the words of anthropologist Shahram Khosravi in a frequently cited article from 2010, ‘An Ethnography of Migrant “Illegality” in Sweden: Included Yet Excepted?’, it would seem that in a strong welfare state, such as Norway, where large parts of social life – such as the labour market, housing, health care and education – are regulated through the state, being excluded from its membership means an even harsher everyday life than in countries with weaker welfare systems (p. 111). Feeding into this harshness or configuration of a ‘hostile environment’ – the latter being a term coined by former British prime minister Theresa May in 2012 in her effort to deter illegal residence in the UK, which ‘has since mutated to refer to general state-led marginalisation of immigrants’ (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021, p. 521) – is that ambitious and comprehensive welfare states, comparatively speaking, have developed few alternative or parallel welfare systems for nonmembers, ‘the extras’. This, then, may result precisely from their ideals of all-inclusiveness and universalism (Bendixsen, 2018c; Jacobsen, 2015), where those who are ‘strangers’ to the welfare state appear ‘anomalous’ and do not fit in (Tervonen & Enache, 2017), creating consequences such as the humanitarian administration of time (see article 2).

Having paid attention to exclusionary aspects of the Norwegian welfare state that feed into the production of internal bordering processes and that are brought to the fore in its encounters with migrants with precarious citizenship statuses, I turn now to an elaboration on defining characteristics that configure more inclusive policies and practices towards these migrants – in particular, the ‘passion for equality’ (Pedersen & Kuhnle, 2017, p. 221) and nontolerance for (excessive) poverty (Lødemel, 1997; Terum, 1996).

The ‘good’ welfare state and its problem with (visible) suffering and poverty

Anthropologist and social work scholar Marianne Rugkåsa (2012) discussed how ideas of solidarity and equality have been decisive in shaping the Norwegian welfare state. Its ambitiousness in terms of inclusiveness and, not least, scope of responsibility for inhabitants’ welfare not only is material but also has a pronounced moral dimension (cf. Trägårdh, 2021, on a similar argument regarding the Nordic countries in general). That people perceived of as

being in precarious situations are cared for is crucial for the legitimacy of the welfare state (Rugkåsa, 2012, pp. 32–33). Suffering is seldom conceived of as (purely) an individual responsibility – as opposed to in the charity-oriented poor relief system, which the post-WWII welfare state aimed to distance itself from – but is rather seen as a ‘stain’, reflective of an immoral society (Vike, 2004, p. 67; Ervik & Kildal, 2015; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005; Lødemel, 1997; Terum, 1996). Norway thus fosters a self-image of being a ‘good and caring’ nation – a ‘branding’ that the ideas and ideals of the welfare state feed into. These processes have led to poverty and other forms of precariousness being conceived of as ‘unacceptable’, creating ‘a strong normative pressure or expectation on the state to address suffering of different kinds and to ensure that no one lives under conditions defined as undignified’ (Karlsen, 2018, p. 237; see also Rugkåsa, 2012, p. 33; Bendixsen, 2018a; Vike, 2004). The ideal of equality or egalitarianism similarly configures low tolerance for, and disapproval of, pronounced differences in rights and access to welfare as well as quality of life within Norway’s borders (Bendixsen et al., 2018; Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012; Karlsen, 2021; Rugkåsa, 2012). Migrants with precarious citizenship statuses’ visible poverty and homelessness, particularly that of homeless EU migrants who beg or are involved in other forms of street work in city centres, therefore create political and emotional unease in Norway and in the Nordic countries in general (Djuve et al., 2015). These migrants’ presence in Norway appears ‘deeply anomalous’ to (the ideals of) the welfare state (Tervonen & Enache, 2017). This is not only because of their nonadherence with ‘the national order of things’ (Malkki, 1995) but also, and closely related, because of their public display of poverty and inequality within the country’s border, which the welfare state – due to its constructed boundedness – is hindered from framing and addressing in customary manners; through universal right-based provisions.

As argued by Karlsen (2021, p. 58), there is, nonetheless – and reflective of the idea that ‘suffering not only is the sufferer’s own problem but testifies to a somewhat immoral society’ – a bottom line also to what ailments and how much nonmembers of the welfare state are ‘allowed’ to endure in Norwegian territory. In Karlsen’s analysis of the public and political debate preceding and surrounding the introduction and amendment of the Social Welfare Regulation concerning social services for people without habitual residence in Norway (Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet, 2011; see articles 1 & 3 of this thesis), she showed how the debate revealed concerns not only of migrants’ worthiness and migration control but also of ‘the nature and moral limit of the welfare state’ (p. 63). Anthropologist Synnøve Bendixsen, in her work on irregularised migrants’ encounters with the Norwegian health-care system in a similar vein, contended that the parallel health provision structures set up – and

tolerated – at the margins of the welfare state, the NGO-run health centres for undocumented migrants in Oslo and Bergen specifically, should be understood in light of the emotional and moral demands configured by Norway’s particular welfare state model and ideals (2018a, 2018b, 2019).

Both Bendixsen and Karlsen – drawing on anthropologists and scholars on the politics of humanitarianism and ‘humanitarian reason’, Fassin (2005, 2012) and Miriam Ticktin (2005, 2006, 2011, 2014) – paid theoretical and ethnographic attention to the contrast between welfare provision based on ideas of social rights and universalism and that which originates from principles of charity and compassion (see chapter two). The latter characterises migrants with precarious citizenship statuses’ inclusion in welfare policies and services in Norway. Moreover, Bendixsen (2018a, 2018b, 2019) and Karlsen (2021, p. 59) demonstrated how, in the Norwegian context, ‘these different welfare commitments have largely been projected onto two separate stages – humanitarianism internationally and universality domestically’. They critically discussed what happens, both in terms of migrants’ lived experiences and the shaping of political and societal discourses, when principles of humanitarianism not only are applied to geographically distant strangers but operate within Norway’s borders (cf. Trägårdh, 2021, on the Swedish situation).

In articles 2 and 3 of this thesis, and building on Bendixsen’s and Karlsen’s work, I analyse the development, configurations and dynamics of the social services and public welfare provisions in which homeless EU migrants are ‘precariously included’ (Karlsen, 2021). Both articles demonstrate how the logic of ‘humanitarian exceptionalism’ (Bendixsen, 2018a, 2019; Jacobsen, 2015; Ticktin, 2005) underpinning this form of inclusion marks these migrants as ‘undesirable’ and ‘strangers’ who should leave Norwegian territory, while simultaneously retaining the (welfare) state’s self-image as good and caring.

Having thus far discussed how ideals and characteristics of the welfare state frame Norway’s position and policies towards migrants with precarious citizenship statuses in rather conflicting manners, I turn now to a review of the legal situation of these migrants, zooming in on homeless EU migrants and social rights.

## The legal situation: EU citizenship and the nationalised welfare state

You know, not knowing and not being sure makes us insecure in our social work role. I do not find a structure in it [how the welfare legislation is applied in cases of homeless EU migrants]; it seems pretty random to me. I mean, I have not been able to figure out

what it takes, how bad must a situation be, if you know what I mean. (Interview with Helena, social worker at an NGO-run social service facility, June 2018)

In my work, chiming with the critical phenomenological approach underpinning my study as a whole, I follow anthropologist Susan B. Coutin and legal scholar Véronique Fortin (2015), in primarily ‘seeing’ and treating legal sources ethnographically (p. 75; cf. Hilden & Middelthon, 2002; Karlsen, 2015, 2021). I am hence interested in how ‘the law’ is ‘constitutive of and constituted by [...] way[s] of thinking and imagining social reality’ (Coutin & Fortin, 2015, p. 79) – including how such thinking is practiced and experienced ‘on the ground’ (p. 76) – and how these processes feed into the production of internal borders. In what follows, I shall primarily expand on the legal ‘reality’ of homeless EU migrants in Norway and how it is reflective of seemingly contradictory ways of thinking and imagining EU citizenship and territorial belonging to nationalised welfare states. As is pointed to in my work (articles 1 & 3) and illustrated by Helena’s reflection, this ambiguity appears to create uncertainty amongst many social workers regarding homeless EU migrants’ welfare-legal positions. The following elaboration on the legal situation thus also nuances the argument amongst others Karlsen (2021, p. 18) put forward that ‘[i]ntra- and extra-EEA migration have come to be viewed very differently in terms of their presumed “utility” or “risk” to the sustainability of the welfare state’. As touched upon in my earlier discussion of terminology, my study shows that ‘European others’ (Yıldız & De Genova, 2018) are equally subjected, and in many regards equally vulnerable, to restrictive welfare policies or practices of welfare bordering, as are third-country nationals (cf. van Baar, 2014).

#### EU citizenship and the conditionality of social rights

When Norway became part of the EU’s single market through the EEA agreement in 1994, the general ban on labour migration from the 1970s was, in effect, liberalised. EU citizens have the right to free border crossing, to reside and work in Norway and, importantly, to equal treatment with nationals. These are rights granted by their so-called ‘EU citizenship’, a notion established in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, which came with a ‘promise’ of transforming migrants into citizens (Mantu et al., 2019, p. 283; Dwyer et al., 2019; Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018; Seeleib-Kaiser & Pennings, 2018). As underscored in the first of the earlier mentioned Official Norwegian Reports on immigration and the Norwegian welfare model (NOU 2011:7), there is thus far less latitude in terms of developing restrictive national migration policies and legislation directed at intra-EEA migration, compared to those addressing

migration from outside the EU (p. 24). The enlargement of the EU in 2004 and 2007, consequently, greatly impacted patterns of cross-border mobility to Norway – and was in fact the single event contributing most to the increase in immigration seen over the past two decades (NOU 2017:2, p. 59).

Now, as addressed in the literature on EU citizenship, this citizenship is far from unconditional. Rather, it is ‘a highly stratified status built around an exclusive idea of the citizen as a paid worker’ (Dwyer et al., 2019, p. 135). Economic activity is what actuates a ‘right of residence’ for EU migrants beyond the initial three months – being a precondition for accessing welfare benefits in the host country. According to migration scholars Jean-Michel Lafleur and Elsa Mescoli (2018), EU/EEA member states have historically been dubious with regard to establishing structures ensuring equal social rights at the EU level, wanting to have ‘the final say’ on who should be recognised as belonging to the national welfare state and benefit from its protection. Nonetheless, they argue, ‘while safeguards have always existed in the name of protecting European welfare states from abuse, EU migrants’ access to social protection in destination countries was not always the controversial topic that it is today’ (p. 482). At the time of the signing of the Treaty of Rome (1957), discussions on the ‘coordination of social entitlements and supranational welfare provisions [...] as possible ways to eliminate or reduce barriers to free movement’ (p. 482) were in fact taking place.

In the wake of the EU enlargement and the economic and financial crises of the 2000s, welfare policies are, conversely, increasingly being turned into national instruments for restricting the mobility of the so-called economically inactive EU migrants – the undeserving ‘European others’ (Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018; Ratzmann, 2021; Seeleib-Kaiser & Pennings, 2018; Tervonen & Enache, 2017; Yıldız & De Genova, 2018). This development is made possible by a situation where – while EU legislation contains references to the importance of supranational social rights – the actual design of social policies and provision of welfare remains part of national sovereignty (Bruzelius, 2019; Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018; Lorenz, 2017a; Mantu et al., 2019; Seeleib-Kaiser & Pennings, 2018). Consequently, the notion of EU citizenship lacks a binding, joint vision of social rights at the supranational level – which, in effect, undermines a factual equal right to freedom of movement within the EEA. Economically inactive EU migrants are left with inferior social rights compared to those with a ‘worker’ status and thus with less ability to exercise their right to free mobility and residence (Bruzelius, 2019; Dwyer et al., 2019; Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018; Lorenz, 2017a; Mantu et al., 2019; Minderhoud, 2014; Scheibelhofer & Holzinger, 2018; Shutes, 2016; Tervonen & Enache, 2017; Yıldız & De Genova, 2018). Conversely and somewhat

paradoxically, due to this ‘uneasy coexistence between free movement and exclusive welfare states [...]: increasingly, EU migrants are being tolerated as residents with precarious status without access to minimum subsistence benefits’ (Heindlmaier & Blauberger, 2017, p. 1198).

Norway has, in large, followed suit with this general development. National debates and discourse preceding the enlargement of the EU testify to considerable concerns regarding citizens of the new member states potentially coming to the country with the intention of benefiting from its comprehensive welfare system rather than working (NOU 2011:7, p. 71; Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet, 2013). Accordingly, as my work demonstrates, such considerations clearly frame the configurations of the Norwegian social welfare legislation directed at migrants with precarious citizenship statuses, not least in terms of gradually demarcating some EU migrants, the homeless and poor, as ‘illegal’ (see article 1) and deserving of only very limited forms of aid (see articles 2 & 3).

Despite the similarity in EU/EEA member states’ approaches to economically inactive migrants and social rights, and as noted by scholars of EU citizenship, ‘the real worlds’ and migrants’ experiences of (non)access to such rights vary greatly between countries due to the different welfare state models at work within the EEA (Seeleib-Kaiser & Pennings, 2018, p. 1). Earlier in this chapter, I elaborated on how particularities of the Norwegian welfare state frame Norway’s position and policies towards migrants with precarious citizenship more generally, including how its intolerance for (visible) poverty configure humanitarian responses to migrants’ suffering. I turn now to the social welfare legislation specifically.

The Norwegian social welfare legislation and homeless EU migrants

In Norway, the provision of social assistance, comprising financial support and temporary accommodation, is mandated by and regulated through the Social Welfare Act (2009) as well as circulars, regulations and guidelines of the act (Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet, 2011; Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet, 2012, 2018). The act’s stated purpose is to improve living conditions for the disadvantaged, to contribute to social and economic security and to be the Norwegian society’s final safety net for those in need. Social assistance is a subsidiary provision meant for persons who cannot provide for themselves through employment or access other welfare benefits (Section 1, Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet, 2012). It is a



municipal responsibility administered through the NAV offices<sup>10</sup> – and, in the case of Oslo, the Social and Outpatient Emergency Service (SAA) when NAV is closed.

The provision of social assistance is subjected to the discretionary assessments of social workers in the public social welfare administration (i.e. NAV and SAA) while also exhibiting rights-oriented traits in terms of including the right to appeal (Lødemel, 1997). Similarly, it is both means-tested *and* universalistic – the latter ‘in the sense that the circle of people who can apply for such support is very broad’ (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012, p. 6); the Social Welfare Act defines its scope as ‘everyone residing in the realm’ (Section 2). According to Karlsen (2021), there was, for a time, some uncertainty concerning the extent to which migrants with precarious citizenship statuses were eligible for social assistance – or to use the phrase employed in the Social Welfare Act Circular, regarding whether these migrants are to be considered ‘part of our society’ and thus entitled to the protection and security of the Norwegian welfare state (Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet, 2012).

However, the Social Welfare Act Circular came to specify that to be eligible for social assistance, a person must document both legal residence *and* habitual residence (Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet, 2012). These conditions exclude the migrants of concern in my work, as they neither comply with the requirements for ‘worker’ status – equalling legal residence in the context of EU migrants and access to public social welfare (Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet, 2018) – nor are they able to provide evidence of sufficient ties to Norway. Therefore, they do not qualify for habitual residence. Moreover, the Social Welfare Act allows for regulations limiting the inclusion of ‘persons who are not Norwegian citizens or who do not have residence in the realm’ (Section 2), and the Social Welfare Regulation concerning social services for persons without habitual residence entered into force January 1, 2012 (Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet, 2011; cf. Arbeidsdepartementet, 2011). This regulation states that persons without habitual residence (Section 1) and people without legal residence (Section 4), are excluded from individual services under the law (i.e., financial support and temporary accommodation), except for access to information, advice and guidance. However, if they are in an emergency situation, they are entitled to these services for a short period of time. In articles 1 and 3 of this thesis, I have detailed how homeless EU migrants have gradually come to be explicitly included in this emergency provision and thus – similarly to irregularised ‘extra-EEA’ migrants or third-country nationals – are excluded from

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<sup>10</sup> NAV was established in 2006 through a reform where the national employment and social insurance administrations were merged with the municipal offices mandated with providing social assistance (see, e.g., Nilssen & Kildal, 2009).

so-called ‘full rights’ under the Social Welfare Act. This process culminated, for now, in the amendment of the Social Welfare Act Circular, effected in February 2018, mandating NAV with making independent assessments of whether an EEA citizen has legal residence at the time of applying for social assistance. Previously NAV relied on documents issued by the immigration authorities – specifically a registration certificate for EU/EEA citizens (Arbeidsdepartementet, 2011). The guideline accompanying the amendment unambiguously states that EU migrants with ‘limited rights under the Social Welfare Act’ should be assessed according to the Social Welfare Regulation concerning social services for people without habitual residence (Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet, 2018, p. 3).

As demonstrated, the circulars, regulations and guidelines to the Social Welfare Act consistently employ the term ‘legal residence’ [lovlig opphold] regarding the requirements EU migrants must meet to access social assistance – and not ‘right of residence’ [oppholdsrett], which is the terminology used in EU legislation on access to social assistance for EU citizens in host states (The European Parliament and the European Council, 2004; cf. e.g., Minderhoud, 2014) as well as in the Norwegian immigration legislation concerning EEA citizens (Immigration Act 2008, chapter 13; UDI, 2011a, 2011b). The guideline to the NAV offices on assessing legal residence explicitly emphasises that NAV’s decision does not have consequences for an EEA citizen’s right to reside in Norway; this remains the concern of immigration authorities (Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet, 2018, p. 3). My work indicates, nonetheless, and as illustrated by Helena’s previously cited reflections, that this ‘bundling’ of jurisdiction (Andersen, 2014; Karlsen, 2021) generates uncertainty amongst social workers with regards to homeless EU migrants’ welfare-legal *and* migratory-legal position in Norway and thereby contributes to their increasing ‘illegalisation’ as well as to processes of welfare bordering (see articles 1 & 3). In sum, this examination of homeless EU migrants’ legal situation in Norway accentuates the many similarities between the Norwegian welfare state’s relationship with these migrants and that with other migrants with precarious citizenship statuses – and how homeless EU migrants’ ‘precarious inclusion’ (Karlsen, 2021) in the welfare legislation mirrors that of irregularised migrants from outside the EU. None of them are considered ‘part of our society’, appearing equally ‘anomalous’ to the nationalised welfare state.

Scholar of migration law Paul Minderhoud (2014) argued, nevertheless, that EU legislation on access to social assistance, Directive 2004/38 specifically, is rather ambiguous in its wording and intentions – and holds that EU/EEA member states do not have a univocal right to withhold social assistance from ‘economically inactive’ EU migrants or migrants

without habitual residence. At the very least, ‘according to the Directive it is not forbidden for Member States to provide social assistance’ (p. 214) in such situations (cf. Ekendahl et al., 2020). Similarly, legal scholar Njål Wang Andersen (2014), in his discussion of the Social Welfare Regulation concerning social services for persons without habitual residence, contended that the regulation does not prohibit municipalities and the NAV offices from granting social assistance to persons without legal residence even when they are not deemed to be in an emergency situation (p. 67). My study suggests nonetheless, that social workers in the public social welfare administration navigate the legislation in accordance with what they understand the policy-makers’ intentions to be, i.e. to secure the sustainability of the welfare state through migration management, thus ‘guarding’ its borders through restrictive assessments and practices (see article 3).

Homeless EU migrants in Norway are consequently, as demonstrated in my work, largely left dependent on charity-based social service structures administered by various NGOs in their efforts to meet basic needs. An exploration of the context framing the practices and dilemmas of social workers in encounters with these migrants, as well as the migrants’ lived experiences of social service provision, hence also warrants a closer examination of the historical position of civil society and philanthropy in the particular Norwegian situation. The following account contextualises NGOs’ service provision to homeless EU migrants within the general relationship between the welfare state and civil society in Norway, aiming to provide better understanding of how the manner in which this service provision is configured feeds into the production of internal bordering processes. I refer to ‘charitable organisations’, ‘civil society’ and ‘NGOs’ interchangeably to denote nongovernmental structures providing social services while not differentiating between faith-based organisations and those who are not.

## **The civil society and provision of social welfare in Norway**

Prior to the foundation of the modern Norwegian welfare state, poor and marginalised people primarily received assistance through charitable organisations and the poor relief system. The latter was administered through the Poor Laws at parish and municipal levels. Charitable organisations established welfare institutions such as elderly homes, hospitals and institutions for alcohol treatment and were often involved in the day-to-day provision of poor relief as partners of the local government (Bendixsen & Wyller, 2021b; Henriksen et al., 2018; Levin, 2021; Loga, 2018; Lødemel, 1997, 2019; Terum, 1996, 2003). Eligibility for the very modest

assistance provided through these structures was generally tied to moral worth, and the ‘undeserving poor’ – displaying ‘immoral conduct’ – were subjected to harsh forms of control and discipline in the name of alleviating suffering (Johansen, 2014, 2016; Levin, 2021; Lødemel, 1997; Terum, 1996, 2003). Also the pre-WWII national social programmes, such as the old-age pension system, were selective – excluding the ‘unworthy’, the ‘beggars’, ‘drunkards’ and ‘lazy people’ from coverage (Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005, p. 23).

The post-WWII welfare state aimed to remove the humiliating loss of dignity resulting from exclusion from programmes and entitlements, as well as from having to rely on charity and compassion, by introducing public, rights-based and universalistic provisions and services (Bendixsen & Wyller, 2021a; Christoffersen, 2017; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005; Loga, 2018; Lødemel, 1997). The earlier discussed ideals of the welfare state, including its ‘passion for equality’, thus led to scepticism towards philanthropy in the Norwegian context, as well as towards any service provision with a ‘taint of charity’ (Lødemel, 1997, p. 155; Loga, 2018; Selle & Wollebæk, 2010; cf. Trägårdh, 2021, on similar developments in Sweden).

Provision of social services through civil society has thus traditionally taken a different shape in Norway and the Nordic countries in general, compared to countries with less comprehensive and ambitious welfare states. Firstly, NGOs primarily offer services that are a supplement to public welfare (Loga, 2018). They have therefore generally not been the main or sole providers of welfare in areas where the welfare state has been absent – contrary to what is the case in the field of social service provision to homeless EU migrants at present. Second, NGOs often provide services on behalf of the welfare state through contracting, thus being fully publicly financed and integrated in state and municipal policy plans (Bendixsen & Wyller, 2021b; Loga, 2018; Vike, 2015). The latter has led scholars to suggest that in the Norwegian context, social service provision through civil society is not really seen as separate from that of the welfare state, particularly when all or most funding derives from public sources (Bendixsen et al., 2018, Karlsen, 2021; Vike, 2015). The current situation where NGOs are effectively solely responsible for providing social services to homeless EU migrants, some public funding notwithstanding, nonetheless clearly departs from the general division of labour between the welfare state and civil society in Norway and Oslo (see article 2).

The past decades have seen profound changes in the configurations of the Norwegian welfare state, also influencing its relationship with civil society (Kamali & Jönsson, 2018; Loga, 2018); during recent years, there has been an increase in charity-based initiatives aimed at those considered poor in Norway in general (Karlsen, 2021). In contrast to NGO-run

services directed at homeless EU migrants, these initiatives remain a supplement to public social welfare. The ‘NGOisation’ of service provision, in terms of relegating responsibility for basic social security for these migrants to civil society seemingly mirrors the situation in other European countries (Tervonen & Enache, 2017). In the Norwegian context, I propose, it signals a willingness to differentiate between people living within the same territory, paralleled only by the pre-welfare state’s poor relief system and dependency on charitable organisations.

In article 2 of this thesis, I suggest that the parallel social service system emerging in Oslo takes on a bordering function in marking homeless EU migrants as undesired, only eligible for very modest forms of services distributed as ‘sovereign gifts’ (Karlsen, 2018) through NGOs. I also suggest that the migrants’ lived experiences of this system intersect with their general, everyday experience of being in Norway – which is differently configured depending on gender, ethnicity, network in Norway, aspiration for their stay, financial obligations, previous experiences with sleeping rough and access to public spaces.

In what follows, I shall pay particular attention to the situation of Roma migrants and processes of racialisation, as such processes are conditions of structural inequality that shape these migrants’ position and experiences in specific ways (cf. Willen, 2007).

## Roma migrants and processes of racialisation

It is a particularly cold winter afternoon in Oslo, windy and several degrees below the freezing point. I am walking through the city centre, on my way back from looking for a woman who did not show up for our scheduled interview earlier the same day – but she was not at her regular begging spot. Outside an office building, I see Mariana, a Roma woman in her early forties who regularly travels back and forth between Norway and her home in Romania. She sits on the pavement, on a blue Ikea bag, with some pairs of knitted socks laid out in front of her. A cardboard sign stating the price of the socks is propped up beside them. Next to the sign, there is a paper cup with some coins in it and a framed picture of four children.

Mariana and I have met and exchanged greetings several times at one of the social service facilities where I have spent time during fieldwork, but we had not talked much until I took part in the weekly outreach work conducted by social workers from one of the NGOs working with homeless EU migrants, some days ago – where the social workers explained my research project to her in some detail. I buy us both coffee from the nearby Deli de Luca and crouch down beside her. We chat for a while. She tells me that

this has been her regular spot for years and that she likes it here because she now knows many of the people working in the building, and they are kind to her. One woman has, for example, given her the winter jacket and shoes she is wearing. She also often gives Mariana food and, on occasion, offers to wash her clothes. The biggest reason behind Mariana's appreciation of her spot is, however, that 'security [guards]' never come here – unlike what used to be a regular occurrence when she sat outside Kiwi [a chain of grocery stores] during her first years in Norway – so she need not worry about being chased away.

I ask Mariana if I could do a formal interview with her one day. She first looks sceptical, saying that she does not want me to take a picture of her. I assure her that I will not, explaining also that I will not tell anyone that she has spoken to me and that I will make sure that no one will recognise her in what I shall later write. She says that she is cold, so we might as well do it now, and that she will take me to where she normally goes when wanting to warm up. Since I had planned to do an interview today, I have my Dictaphone and consent forms with me, and she agrees for the interview to be recorded.

Mariana places all her belongings in the Ikea bag and puts some cigarette stubs scattered around her spot in the now-empty coffee cup, saying, while chuckling, that she always makes sure to clean up when leaving so that the people working in the building, and others passing by, will know she is not filthy. She leads the way to a half-indoor, half-outdoor hallway between two busy streets, where there are some tables and chairs belonging to a café, which is now closed. Mariana repeats that this is where she goes when she is cold, but she states that she never sits for long because she knows that 'security' will come if she does.

During our interview, a Romanian Roma family of four – mother, father and two adult daughters who we both know and who beg in a different part of the city centre than Mariana – walk past us, and we greet each other. They are all carrying the characteristic blue Ikea bags, and the women are dressed in long skirts and flowery head scarfs. They sit down in a corner just by the swing doors and pull out some readymade grilled chicken and start eating. 'You see', Mariana says. 'Many people come here when it is cold, but just wait. Security will come soon.' After about five minutes, when we are wrapping up the interview, sure enough, I spot a security guard talking to the family – they all get up and leave. 'Now he is coming here', Mariana says, and as he is approaching, we get up, and Mariana holds up her palms, saying, 'Sorry, boss. I am leaving, boss.' The security guard smiles at us in what I perceive as a good-natured manner and walks away.

After having said goodbye to Mariana, who wants to pass by a grocery shop before heading to the shelter where she has a reservation for the night, I see the family who was told to leave sitting outside on the pavement, continuing their meal, and go to talk to them. The father, clearly frustrated, says in broken English, 'Security is crazy; they

just say to us go, go, go, every day. Why?’ (Fieldnotes and interview with Mariana, March 2018)

This account illustrates the precarious position of Roma migrants in Norway and how they are exposed to more and harsher forms of discrimination than other homeless EU migrants – warranting specific considerations of their situation. During fieldwork, I observed and was told of countless similar incidents in which Romanian Roma, especially those whose traditional clothing and outer appearance signal their ethnicity, were denied access to stores and cafés, denied deposits on bottles and told to leave public places (see article 2). These observations correspond with those in other studies from the Norwegian context, demonstrating how the Roma are perceived as particularly undesirable and unwelcome and are racialised in terms of being associated with ‘begging, pick-pocketing and the littering of public places’ (Johansen, 2016, p. 169; Djuve et al., 2015; Johansen, 2014; Nasjonal institusjon for menneskerettigheter, 2015; Tyldum, 2015). The Church City Mission, one of the NGOs providing humanitarian social services to homeless EU migrants, has recently made available testimonies collected from Romanian Roma with whom they work. These testimonies – while giving evidence to individual persons’ compassion, as also reported by Mariana – document harassment, forms of discrimination and processes of racialisation that would not have been accepted if they were happening to other people but that, in the case of the Roma, occur openly and are rarely countered (Seilskjær & Nybø, 2022).

Existing public policies also testify to the racialisation of the Roma – some more explicitly than others. In 2013, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security introduced an instruction intended to make it easier to deport, so-called reject or expel, EEA citizens on the grounds of minor criminal offences, such as petty theft (Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet, 2013). The need for the instruction was justified by concerns about the growing number of persons coming to Norway to beg and a perceived correlation between begging and criminal activities, leading the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman to warn against the instruction’s potential for discriminating against the Roma (Johansen, 2014; Seilskjær & Nybø, 2022). Correspondingly, a ban on sleeping outdoors was implemented in Oslo in 2013, following an increased presence of homeless EU migrants in the city (Forskrift om politivedtekt, Oslo, 2013 [2007, Section 2-1]). While the ban was neutrally formulated, the public debate preceding it leaves no doubt that it specifically targets Roma migrants, resulting

also from the national government's decision against a general prohibition of begging<sup>11</sup> – leaving local governments 'in need' of other ways to regulate the presence of these migrants. Studies have shown that the enforcement of the ban affects the Roma in particularly harsh manners and discriminates against them (Johansen, 2014, 2016; Nasjonal institusjon for menneskerettigheter, 2015). Policy-makers' concerns about a potential increase in the arrival of 'EEA citizens without means to support themselves' (Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet, 2013, p. 7) when developing the present social welfare legislation (see articles 1 & 3) – while not explicitly put – similarly allude to the heightened undesirability of the Roma.

The situation of Roma migrants in Norway – including experiences of being racialised and discriminated against in everyday life, as well as through public policies – mirrors their position in other European countries. Moreover, main drivers behind their intra-EU mobility are poverty and lack of access to education and employment in the nation-states of which they are formal citizens, intersecting with anti-Roma racism (Barker, 2013, 2017, 2018; Castañeda, 2015; Dahlstedt et al., 2021; De Genova, 2019; Djuve et al., 2015; Persdotter, 2019; Tervonen & Enache, 2017; van Baar, 2014, 2017; van Baar et al., 2019; Yıldız & De Genova, 2018; Yuval-Davis et al., 2017).

Scholarship in this field accentuates the increased 'securitisation' of both Roma minorities and migrants across Europe, analysing how, as my discussion of the Norwegian situation also points to, 'they and their practices have been considered to be a threat to public, social, or even national security or to themselves – the latter mostly in the context of human security' (van Baar et al., 2019, p. 3). This has, in turn, justified their removal from streets, neighbourhoods, towns and states through direct forms of power, such as the enforcement of the ban on sleeping outdoors, demolitions of camps and outright deportations (e.g., Castañeda, 2015; Johansen, 2014; Persdotter, 2019; van Baar, 2017), or through more subtle mechanisms, such as limiting their access to basic services (e.g., Tervonen & Enache, 2017; Barker, 2017, 2018; Yıldız & De Genova, 2018) – and often through a combination of the two, as is the case in Norway (Johansen, 2014, 2016; cf. articles 2 & 3). Roma migrants are thus continuously produced and portrayed as the quintessential 'European other' (Dahlstedt et al., 2021; van

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<sup>11</sup> Following and resulting in much debate, a bill proposing a national ban on begging was launched in 2015 but later withdrawn (Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet, 2015; see e.g., Djuve et al., 2015; Johansen, 2014, 2016). However, in 2014, the Police Act was altered to allow for local governments to ban begging (Police Act, 2014 [1995, Section 14, first part (8)]), which the municipality of Oslo has decided against implementing. At present, only one of Norway's municipalities is enforcing such a ban, while debating to remove it (in Norwegian only): <https://lokalen.wordpress.com/2022/05/28/politiet-i-kommunen-stotter-a-ta-tiggerforbudet-ut-av-politivedtektene/>



Baar, 2017; Yıldız & De Genova, 2018) in public discourse and through national policies, in direct opposition to the ‘ideal’ economically active holder of EU citizenship (cf. Dwyer et al. 2019). They are, as such, in reality, barred from exercising this citizenship, although it is theirs on paper. In my work, I discuss how this position configures their experiences of the parallel social service system in particular ways (see article 2) and shapes assessments concerning homeless EU migrants’ eligibility of public social emergency provisions of (see article 3).

### Concluding remarks

This chapter has been devoted to exploring the sociolegal context configuring homeless EU migrants’ restricted access to social welfare in Norway, as well as their ‘precarious inclusion’ (Karlsen, 2021) in provisions and services aimed primarily at securing bodily survival. I have aimed to show how the particularities of the Norwegian welfare state, the idea of EU citizenship, the historical relationship between the welfare state and civil society and the exceptionally precarious position of Roma migrants frame the practices and dilemmas of social workers in encounters with homeless EU migrants and feed into the production of internal bordering processes. These factors also influence the migrants’ lived experiences of social service provision in the Norwegian situation. A key objective has been to show how this particular sociolegal context is itself produced through processes that should not be left unexamined and taken for granted.

Before presenting the articles that form part of this thesis in depth in chapter five and returning more explicitly to the study’s research question and key contributions in chapter six, I shall reflect on how the data on which I base my analyses and arguments was derived and produced. The chapter to follow also deliberates on my own positionality and ethical considerations.

## 4 Research methods, positionality and ethics

One winter evening while watching TV with my five-year-old son, I receive a text message from Lisa, a social worker at one of the NGO-run service centres where I have spent hours and hours during fieldwork. She asks if I could accompany Florina, a Romanian Roma woman in her late thirties,<sup>12</sup> to a hospital appointment at noon the following day. Lisa is unable to herself, and Florina wishes for me to join. I have at this point known Florina for nearly six months, during which time she has travelled to Romania once. I have encountered her at most of the facilities I ‘hang out’ at and have been invited to follow her in her everyday life, including to the places where she begs. Over the past months, her health has deteriorated, and she was diagnosed with cancer not many weeks ago. She has been to several hospitals for various examinations and tests during this period, including at the health centre for undocumented migrants, who were the ones who succeeded in referring her to the public health system. I have attended many of these appointments, normally as an observer while Lisa or another social worker from the same NGO have assisted in the communication with doctors, nurses or other health personnel and in understanding the workings of the health system in general. At times, however, as in the present situation, none of the social workers have been able to accompany Florina, and I have gone with her alone.

This particular appointment is, however, the one where she is to get detailed information about her prognosis, and I am conflicted about what to do. I am confident that Florina knows that I am a researcher, as I have told her many times, also with the assistance of Romanian-speaking social workers to ensure she understands. Still, in this specific situation, I am concerned that it is unethical for me to accompany her, seeing that I do not have the professional ‘mandate’ and hence possibility to help in the same manner as I did when practicing as a social worker and finding myself in similar situations. I worry that Florina might harbour hope that I can, even though we have talked about my role and what I can and cannot do many times. I conclude, nonetheless, that since she has asked me to come, I will do so, finding it more unethical not to – having to admit to myself, while feeling rather uncomfortable about it, that I also see this as a valuable fieldwork opportunity.

The following morning, I meet Lisa at the facility where she works, and we discuss the situation and upcoming appointment in more detail while lighting candles, setting out fresh flowers and in general preparing for opening the doors. She assures me that the hospital has confirmed the presence of an interpreter – she has, bearing in mind

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<sup>12</sup> See chapter three.

several previous occasions where this has not been the case, double-checked. She also tells me that she has arranged to meet Florina the day after to talk about today's appointment, and we agree that I can call her from the hospital if I need advice or support. When Florina arrives at the service centre at the arranged time, accompanied by her husband, Nicu, Lisa and I remind her once more about my role. Florina, clearly exasperated, says that she has agreed to take part in my research, that she wants me to be with her and that I do not have to ask her 'all the time' – 'I am not stupid'. Nicu must try to earn some money on the streets, so he will not join us for the appointment. Florina and he share a long hug outside the facility and agree to meet there once we are back.

The information Florina receives at the hospital – from a doctor sitting behind his desk in front of four chairs where a nurse, Florina, the interpreter and I are seated in a row – is that the tumour they have found is too big for surgery and that the preferred treatment is radiation therapy. 'But', says the doctor, 'the difficult part here is that since this is not a situation qualifying for immediate help [*øyeblikkelig hjelp*], and you do not have the European Health Insurance Card<sup>13</sup>, we cannot help you; you need to travel home to Romania and get treatment there'. Florina, looking dazed and with tears filling her eyes, says that she does not have a proper home nor a doctor in Romania, and she has no money to pay for the treatment. 'It is not free in Romania, like here.' The doctor, clearly uncomfortable, replies that he is not the one who has made this decision, that it was made by the management of the hospital, that he does not like it but that there is nothing he can do – and that his best advice is for her to ask the health centre for undocumented migrants to help her make an appeal. He can write them a letter with the results of the examinations and tests, but 'You must understand that I cannot write that you should complain, that would be to sabotage my own employer'. He looks straight at me, saying in Norwegian: 'Can you make sure that my advice about appealing reaches the health centre?' I nod, knowing that he is aware of me being a researcher since I introduced myself and asked for permission to participate prior to the meeting. Florina now sobs and says that she cannot bear this, that she would rather die right away than have to suffer for a long time without treatment. I am seated too far from Florina to be able to reach out to her physically and am debating whether to get up and go to her when the doctor reaches over the desk to squeeze her hand, keeping it there for a while in silence before he says, 'I

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<sup>13</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to detail or address the (restrictedness of) health rights of migrants with precarious citizenship statuses in Norway, but see Andersen, 2014; Bendixsen, 2017, 2018a; Bendixsen et al., 2015; Haddeland, 2019; Helse- og omsorgsdepartementet, 2011; Karlsen, 2021; Lillevik & Tyldum, 2021. None of the migrants I followed in encounters with the public health-care system were in possession of [the European Health Insurance Card](#) and were generally not aware of its existence.

hope it will end well for you'. Florina replies by thanking him and calling God's blessing on him and his family.

The moment we step outside the doctor's office, Florina tells me to call Lisa and explain 'everything' to her. I do what she asks, unable to hold back my own tears during the phone call. Lisa confirms that she will contact the health centre at once. She says that they were expecting this outcome, and she believes they have already started writing an appeal. She also tries to comfort me. On our walk to the hospital from the Underground, on icy roads, Florina and I had been talking about the big and probably very expensive houses and cars we were passing, as well as about our families, and she tried to teach me some sentences in Romanian, laughing at my terrible pronunciation. On our way back, we mostly walk in silence, arm in arm. When we are seated in the Underground, she rests her head on my shoulder, tears running down her face, and I put my arm around her.

The health centre's appeal is successful, and Florina receives some radiation therapy in Norway during the following month, being allowed to stay at the hospital during the treatment, although she could have received it as an outpatient. I visit her at the hospital several times, both together with Lisa and on my own. Nicu is often there, many times nodding off in a chair by Florina's bed; she explains to me that there frequently is a lottery for beds at the shelter for men these days, so Nicu sometimes has to sleep outside. I am also present at two meetings with the hospital social worker, generally as an observer, but when I am asked and with her consent, I offer the information I have about Florina's situation. I also share my knowledge about the social welfare legislation on several occasions. Both Lisa and the hospital social worker are in contact with NAV to enquire about the possibility for social assistance upon her discharge, but due to what they perceive as discouraging signals, they decide against applying, and Lisa manages to find a solution within the NGO system. Florina eventually decides to travel back to Romania, and the plane ticket is paid for by the NGO Lisa works for.

The last time I see Florina is on the day of her journey. I am together with Lisa at the NGO-run facility where Florina and Nicu have stayed since she was discharged from the hospital. At one point, I receive a text message from my husband telling me that he has cleaned the house. I read it to them, and we all laugh and joke about gender roles and housework. When I am to leave, we wish each other well, Florina calling for God's blessings on me and my family. We hug, with tears welling up in all our eyes. Lisa shakes her head and says, 'Now you make me cry too; you have to stop'. I hand Florina 500 Norwegian crowns, which she at first refuses to accept but does so when I tell her that it is a token of appreciation for all her assistance in my research process and that I am grateful beyond words for having gotten to know her and for her letting me tag along to

so many places. ‘If I had known about more places, I would have taken you there too’, she replies. (Fieldnotes, November 2017–March 2018)

On the very last day of my fieldwork, towards the end of June 2018, I receive word through Lisa, who has talked to both Nicu and a friend of his, that Florina has died from her illness in Romania.

While my relationships with Florina and Lisa are not representative of my contact with interlocutors during fieldwork, the above account is still reflective of how much of the data on which I built my analyses and arguments in this thesis was constructed. In this chapter, I shall describe the different components of my fieldwork and reflect on my positionality and research ethics. The relevance of the latter is clearly demonstrated by the narration of my relationships with Florina and Lisa, together with several of the ethnographic accounts presented in earlier chapters and the articles forming part of this thesis. I start by reconnecting to the epistemological underpinnings of my study and their implications for methodological choices and considerations. Specific attention will be paid to my core methodological approach of participant observation. I then depict in detail how I went about doing fieldwork, also reflecting on the issue of language and the analytical process. Next, I address questions of positionality and my situatedness in power relations during fieldwork, before ending the chapter with a discussion of other matters of ethics, including consent, anonymity and representation in writing.

### **The choice of ethnographic fieldwork and ‘the ethnographic stance’**

In a discussion of the commonplace assumption that research methods should be chosen based on the research questions and not the other way around, sociologists Paul Atkinson and Amanda Coffey (2003) postulated:

[I]n the world of real research, social scientists do not dream up ‘problems’ to investigate out of thin air, divorced from concerns of theory and methodology, and only then search for precisely the right method. Clearly, problems and methods come as part of packages of ideas – whether or not one chooses to call them ‘paradigms’. The notion that one can simply apply the best method to an independently derived problem is at best unrealistic. (p. 111)

My research journey testifies to the relevance of their claim. This study was instigated by an interest in the ‘doing’ and experiences of social work with persons who have very limited

rights to assistance from the welfare state, motivated by my own professional background as a social worker (see chapter one). At the same time, I hold a master's degree in social anthropology based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork (Misje, 2007). My epistemological stance of combining attention to life worlds *and* their structural underpinnings, i.e. being informed by critical phenomenology (see chapter two), is mirrored by social work's 'person-in-environment' approach (e.g., Levin, 2021). My interdisciplinary professional and academic background thus pulls in the same directions in terms of shaping my interest in people's practices and lived experiences – and how they both mould and are moulded by the sociolegal context that surrounds them. My anthropological training undoubtedly drew me towards exploring these issues through ethnographic fieldwork, and my research objective and more specific research questions were fine-tuned as part of the fieldwork experience.

The key component of ethnographic fieldwork is the methodological approach of participant observation, which has set anthropology apart from other social sciences since Bronislaw Malinowski published *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in 1922 (Howell, 2001; Hume & Mulcock, 2004; Longva, 2001). In this classic work, Malinowski (1984/1922) outlined what has been referred to as the methodological 'commandments' of social anthropology (Howell, 2001) – namely, the close interaction with one's interlocutors over longer periods of time, especially in terms of simultaneously observing and participating in their daily activities in settings that are not structured by the researcher. He postulated that the final goal of an ethnographer is

to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise *his* vision of *his* world.

We have to study man, and we must study what concerns intimately, that is, the hold which life has on him. (Malinowski, 1984/1922, p. 25, original italics)

Close to a century later, anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner (2006) stated that in spite of the criticism developed from both within and outside the discipline on the reality and dilemmas of this endeavour over the years (see e.g., Clifford, 1986; Gupta & Ferguson, 1992), the rationale and definition of participant observation has remained more or less unchallenged: '[I]t has always meant the attempt to understand another life world using the self – as much of it as possible – as the instrument of knowing' (Ortner, 2006, p. 42). A key epistemological reasoning underpinning participant observation, therefore, is the assumption that knowledge and understanding can also be produced through means other than verbal exchanges and reading of texts and, correspondingly, that practices and experiences are more than that which

can be articulated through words alone (Hahonou, 2019; Hilden & Middelthon, 2002; Hoëm, 2001; Howell, 2001; Longva, 2001; Okely, 2012). This reasoning also resonates with social work's epistemological position; so-called 'tacit knowing', often derived from practical experience, is increasingly recognised as constituting valid professional knowledge (Levin, 2021). Accordingly, and returning to the attention to context or environment (see chapter two), what Ortner referred to as 'the ethnographic stance' denotes a commitment 'to producing understanding through richness, texture and detail' (2006, p. 43). This includes 'locating narratives and arguments within their frame of utterance' (Fassin, 2012, p. 10) – and acts within their frame of action – to avoid simplistic portrayals of one's interlocutors' experiences and practices (Howell, 2001).

Consequently, then, as illustrated by the account of my relationship with Florina and Lisa and astutely observed by anthropologist Philippe Bourgois (2003) in his study on the lives of crack dealers and the crack trade in East Harlem: '[I]n order to collect "accurate data", ethnographers violate the canons of positivist research; we become intimately involved with the people we study' (p. 13). Following from this, and as accentuated in the introductory account of this chapter, '[b]y definition, participant observers deliberately place themselves in a series of very awkward social spaces, some of which are more difficult to inhabit than others' (Hume & Mulcock, 2004, p. xi). The particularities of my intimate involvement with migrants and social workers, and the more or less awkward social spaces I placed myself in, have consequences for the knowledge produced in my study but also obvious ethical dimensions in need of consideration, all of which will be addressed in the pages to come.

Ethnographic fieldwork, however, does not consist of participant observation alone, as Malinowski (1984/1922) pointed to in his emphasis on collecting 'statistical documentation' and 'codes of law' (pp. 24–25; cf. Coutin & Fortin, 2015; Hilden & Middelthon, 2002; Howell, 2001; Hume & Mulcock, 2004). It is commonly combined with formalised interviews as well as engagement with relevant texts (e.g., Bourgois, 2003; Drangland, 2021; Karlsen, 2015; Tickin, 2011), which is also the case for my work. These latter methodological approaches have been particularly significant in tracing policy and legislative developments producing restrictedness of welfare rights in Norway, as well as for gaining insight into how these developments are interpreted and reflected upon 'on the ground' (cf. Coutin & Fortin, 2015; De Genova, 2002; Willen, 2007). I now turn to an account of the entirety of my fieldwork.

## The doings of ethnographic fieldwork

Anthropologist Signe Howell (2001) discussed the challenges of carrying out fieldwork in settings where the ethnographer is very familiar, what she termed ‘our own backyard’. She was concerned with fieldwork in geographical proximity to one’s ‘home’ in general, as opposed to travelling to ‘faraway places’, usually outside Europe’s borders. Howell’s reservations included worries about anthropologists ‘forgetting’ to locate their research topics and analyses within a broader ‘socio-cultural-historical-political frame’ (p. 21), as well as normally not having access to or being present in the field 24/7 (p. 22). Both of these tendencies, she proposed, leave the ethnography produced in lack of the ‘thickness’ and contextual framing traditionally characterising data derived from anthropological fieldwork, resulting in what Ortner (2006) described as ‘ethnographic thinness’. Accordingly, the ethnographer is left less able to grasp the totality of their interlocutors’ life worlds – and thus to carry out and present ‘holistic interpretations’ that substantiate people’s lived experiences and practices (Howell, 2001, p. 19). Several of these concerns will, more or less directly and critically, be addressed in this chapter. For now, I draw attention to another of her concerns, namely that captured by fellow anthropologist Marianne Gullestad’s (1991) notion of ‘home blindness’. This refers to the lack of experienced ‘culture shock’ when doing fieldwork in familiar settings; such an experience is considered a methodological strength within the discipline, as it makes implicit, or ‘tacit’, knowledge explicit for the researcher, thus being central to the analytical process (Lie, 2012; Howell, 2001). While not being intimately acquainted with the ‘fieldwork in our own backyard’ debate when planning my project,<sup>14</sup> I did worry about the logistics and methodological challenges of doing fieldwork ‘at home’ – my only previous experience being a more traditional 24/7 fieldwork in Tanzania where I also did not have familial responsibilities like I had this time around. My most pressing concern was, however, whether having a common (professional) knowledge base and sharing fundamental understanding of concepts with many of those I hoped to engage with during fieldwork, social workers specifically, would increase my ‘home blindness’ and impair my ability to create new and relevant insights. This will be reflected on more thoroughly in the section on positionality, but first I turn to how it influenced my choice of fieldwork location(s).

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<sup>14</sup> It is beyond the scope of my work to engage with the debate in detail, but see also e.g., Frøystad, 2003; Gullestad, 1991; Hastrup, 1991; Howell, 2011; Lie, 2012; Lien, 2001; Longva, 2001.



## Negotiating access to the field

Following the quandaries accounted for above, I decided early on in the process against approaching services that specifically assist persons with experience of prostitution. I contacted an NGO, which I – admittedly due to my previous employment at Pro Sentret – knew provided a variety of social services to migrants with restricted access to public welfare through several of their facilities. I met and communicated with representatives of the NGO both prior to and during the process of writing my research proposal in 2016, receiving valuable feedback on my ideas in the course of this process. A written confirmation of their interest in being part of my research formed part of the proposal. When preparing for the onset of my project, I had meetings with the NGO, including with leaders of services who had expressed particular interest in the topic of my research and where encounters between social workers and migrants with precarious citizenship statuses took place on a daily basis. I was informed that while persons with rejected asylum applications had regularly visited the facilities a couple of years ago, this now happened more seldom,<sup>15</sup> so the majority of migrants I could expect to meet were formal citizens of EEA countries.

Based on my research interests and the services' availability to my presence at the time I planned to commence fieldwork, a joint decision was reached regarding the place that would be most fruitful for me to 'hang out' at to start with – a social service centre originally aimed at Norwegian substance users. For several years, it had welcomed migrants with precarious citizenship statuses. I participated in a staff meeting there to introduce myself and the project during the spring of 2017. I was particularly careful to elaborate on my intent to observe interaction and thus probable requests to follow both social workers and migrants in their daily activities. I also underscored the voluntariness of my presence in meetings, informal conversations and other situations on the part of all involved. It turned out that I was familiar with several of the social workers due to my previous job at Pro Sentret, and I was later informed that they had been especially positive about my doing research with them due to our prior acquaintance and their knowledge of my social work background. When I enquired about this, their reflections were that they expected me to 'blend in' more easily, referring to other experiences where researchers clearly had felt 'out of place' and needed

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<sup>15</sup> The reason for this can only be speculated on, but the Norwegian police did, during 2015, intensify their effort to deport migrants without legal residence following political signals from the then-conservative-led government (in Norwegian only): <https://www.nrk.no/norge/ny-rekord-i-antall-tvangsreturer-1.13319094>

quite a lot of assistance from the social workers when approaching migrants – taking up ‘too much’ of their time at the expense of their other tasks.

The particularities and practicalities of participant observation

My fieldwork started at the end of August 2017. The first months were characterised by ‘deep hanging out’ (Drangland, 2021; Karlsen, 2015) at this specific social service centre. The centre serves low-priced food, and guests may charge their phones, access a computer, use the toilet, talk to a social worker or just relax. It is open from Monday to Friday. During my fieldwork, the opening hours were from 11:00 a.m. till 3:30 p.m. three of the days and from 11:00 a.m. till 8:30 p.m. the remaining days. Up to 180 persons could visit during the long days, the majority being men. The guests were a mixture primarily of Norwegian citizens and citizens of EU countries, occasionally including third-country nationals. The majority of migrants held Romanian citizenship, but I also met many holding citizenships of other European countries, including Poland, Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Great Britain, France, Germany, Croatia and the Baltic states. They typically made their living through begging, collecting bottles or selling street magazines; as street musicians; or through manual work with questionable contracts or none at all. A minority managed to secure formal work contracts periodically. The service centre was staffed with social workers, persons responsible for running the kitchen and volunteers. Volunteers were mainly in charge of serving food and other practicalities.

My ‘hanging out’ included participation in staff meetings before and after opening hours, where episodes and individual situations in need of discussion were reflected upon and logistics were planned. I joined in on practical chores, such as preparing food and making the café area ready for guests, as well as cleaning up after closing hours. Countless hours were spent seated around the café tables or in the two sofas available, chatting with migrants and social workers, together or individually, and instigating, joining or being invited into conversations both on everyday matters such as updates from home and on issues like encounters with the police, the D-number, possibilities for employment, contact with NAV or the public health system and information about and discussion of other welfare services available to them. I also spent time in the room where the staff wrote reports, had their breaks and received and made phone calls, especially when writing up fieldnotes. This gave me a chance to have informal conversations with social workers, where I could ask in more detail about their reflections on situations or themes that had arisen during the day.

Information about my project, including my picture (see Appendix 1), was posted by the entrance to the centre in Norwegian, English, Romanian, Polish and Spanish. When first meeting a person, I would normally introduce myself as a researcher, often referring to the posted information and in the case of anyone who did not master English, I would ask social workers with additional language skills for assistance. I shall return to the issues and dilemmas of language, consent and the handling of confidential information later in this chapter.

Eventually, as both social workers and migrants became familiar with my presence and I got to know many of them well, I asked or was invited to follow migrants to appointments to apply for a D-number, with the public health-care system and with NAV, mostly together with social workers. My ‘tagging along’ both was planned in advance and happened spontaneously due to my presence when a situation necessitating contact with the public welfare system arose. As I gradually grew interested in the total ‘system’ of services available to homeless EU migrants in Oslo (see article 2), I also asked to accompany migrants as they moved between the different services. Between October 2017 and June 2018, I visited all the services and facilities that, to my knowledge, were accessible to these migrants in Oslo, including shelters, showers, laundry, information centres, free breakfasts and soup kitchens – run by altogether six different NGOs. This happened either by following migrants or by ‘hanging out’ for shorter or longer periods of time in agreement with the service providers; at most services, I did both. I carried out prearranged participant observation at the two existing shelters for 13 evenings and two mornings, and at free breakfasts and soup kitchens for a total of 10 days – during daytime, in the evenings, on weekdays and weekends as well as during all seasons of the year. I visited the places many more times when accompanying migrants. At these facilities, information about my project was also posted where it could easily be seen during my planned presence.

In addition to following migrants when navigating the various services, I accompanied them in their daily activities: being shown their begging spots and joining in when they collected bottles and when they went to libraries, petrol stations and other public spaces where they could relax – but also were asked to leave the premises by employees or security guards. As time passed and I was acquainted with many of the migrants present in the city centre, I would also simply walk around from time to time, often before or after opening hours of the various services, chatting with those I encountered. Moreover, I joined in on outreach work directed specifically at ‘visiting homeless EEA citizens’ – which was conducted in collaboration between two different NGOs and the municipal outreach service, Uteseksjonen,

(Oslo kommune, 2018b) - five times. I also participated in some of the NGOs' ordinary outreach efforts for a total of three times with two different services. During the entire period, I continued to 'hang out' at the service centre where I started my fieldwork, though that happened less frequently as I increasingly expanded what I constructed to be 'my field' (cf. Karlsen, 2015) – namely the entirety of social services accessible to homeless EU migrants in Oslo and, consequently, the totality of arenas where encounters between them and social workers take place.

Lastly, I participated in both internal and external meetings and seminars of relevance for my research topic, primarily with social workers from the service centre at which I spent most of my time. This included, amongst others, several meetings where an NGO planned and evaluated a new service directed at migrants in particularly precarious situations and the county governor's seminar on the guideline for assessing the legal residence of EEA citizens applying for social assistance, referred to in chapter three. The meetings of the collaborating unit set up by the City Government of Oslo to coordinate efforts directed at 'visiting homeless EEA citizens' warrant specific mentioning. Here, agencies and organisations working with these migrants in Oslo met biweekly, including representatives from NGOs, public service providers, the police and the Agency for Urban Environment (Oslo kommune, 2018a). I was invited in through the NGO running the service where I started and spent the majority of my time during fieldwork. and, with the permission of all participants, took part in 12 meetings from November 2017 until June 2018.

As my account shows, I was not present in the field 24/7 (Howell, 2001). I did not ask, nor was I invited, to participate in social workers' lives outside their working hours. Whereas time was spent with migrants when the social services were closed, I did not take part in 'all of their activities' (p. 18). On many occasions, I did have to rely on people recounting their experiences, such as in the story of Marian, which I recount in article 1 of this thesis, because I lived at home, and due to family logistics, I was not 'there' when it happened (p. 21). Following Howell (2001), one might argue that I, for these reasons, cannot present equally 'holistic interpretations' of my interlocutors' lived experiences and practices than would have been the case if I had done a more classical fieldwork. Others contend that Malinowskian fieldwork has always been more of an ideal than actually practiced, and that holistic and contextual understanding can also be achieved through other approaches, such as the study of texts (Lie, 2012). Anthropologist Kathinka Frøystad (2003) suggested that many of the challenges raised by Howell (2001) relate more to doing fieldwork in large cities or on phenomena that are not place-bound than to geographical proximity to the ethnographer's

'home'. She moreover proposed that 'fields' can be constructed based not only on geography but also on the theme one aims to study or the networks of one's interlocutors (Frøystad, 2003, pp. 45–46; cf. Hilden & Middelthon, 2002). My 'field' was, as alluded to earlier, gradually constructed through a combination of the three: I zoomed in on Oslo, the network of social services available to homeless EU migrants and the theme of restrictedness of public welfare rights to these migrants. Within this frame, I believe my way of carrying out participant observation yielded 'thick' descriptions as well as holistic and contextual understandings, producing in-depth knowledge on homeless EU migrants' lived experiences of social service provision in Oslo as well as on social workers' 'doing' and experiences when encountering these migrants. Participation in seminars and meetings provided additional contextual insights, particularly into what I gradually came to conceive of as the sociolegal production of 'internal borders' in terms of the restrictedness of welfare rights.

During the course of my fieldwork, I conducted 56 formalised interviews or research conversations (Hilden, 2014). I shall provide details on with whom and how they were carried out in what follows before reflecting on the role texts played in the data production.

On the research interviews

Between March and July 2018, I interviewed a total of 16 migrants in 15 interviews – two of them wished to participate together. Seven were women, and nine were men. They were all without a home in Norway. They regularly used at least one, but normally several, of the social services I spent time at during my fieldwork; accordingly, the interview was never the first time we met. Nine of the migrants were citizens of Romania, the remaining seven of other EU countries; three of the latter were originally from an African or South American country. The youngest participating in these interviews was in his mid-20s, and the oldest had just passed 60, while the majority were between 30 and 50 years old. Most interviews took place at cafés or outdoors somewhere in the city centre, depending on what was convenient for my interlocutors. Five of them were, however, done through an interpreter, in which cases I requested that they should be done at my office at VID to ensure more privacy. Apart from the interpreted interviews, our conversations were carried out in English. The shortest interview took 22 minutes; the longest lasted for one hour and 42 minutes – the majority somewhere in between. They were all recorded and later transcribed by me. I developed an interview guide (see Appendix 5) that is reflective of my increasing interest in migrants' lived experiences of the total 'system' of social services available to them in Oslo. Each interview, however, turned out differently, since prior to meeting interlocutors, I would scrutinise my

fieldnotes for previous chats or situations we had both been part of, taking note of issues I wanted to explore further or gain more clarity on. Hence, the interviews mainly took the shape of in-depth, semi-structured ‘research conversations’ (Hilden, 2014) or ‘ethnographic interviews’ (Hilden & Middelthon, 2002). Such interviews, or conversations, normally happen as part of repeated contact between the researcher and interlocutors, where an ambition is to create a shared space for reflection and knowledge production (p. 2475). In such a research practice, it is common for interview guides to develop during the research process<sup>16</sup> and to be individually adapted – as was the case in my study. The migrants were habitually compensated with 200 Norwegian crowns for their time, a sum I, in dialogue with social workers and based on my fieldwork experience, estimated to be roughly what a person could expect to earn through begging or collecting bottles during the time the interview took – on a good day. I also paid for their Underground tickets if they were travelling to VID or for refreshments if we were doing the interviews in a café. I did not mention the possibility of economic compensation when asking for an interview and gave the money after we were done, requesting that my interlocutors not convey information of it to others to avoid money becoming a motivation for agreeing to take part in my research. While I cannot rule out that this nonetheless happened, I was never asked for money in these situations, and those I interviewed all seemed positively surprised when being given the 200 crowns – several refusing to accept until explained that I did not take them from my own pocket but from a research budget administered by VID.

I also started conducting formalised interviews with social workers in March 2018 and continued until November 2018. A clarification of whom I include in the ‘category’ of social workers is here required. While not delimiting myself to ‘hanging out’ with or interviewing those with a formal social work training, also including people being employed as one but with a different educational background, I did, due to the direction my research interest took, gradually centre in on those of my interlocutors who had been trained as social workers. Of the 23 social workers from the NGO sector interviewed, 15 had formal social work education, and this was the case for all hospital social workers (3) and municipal outreach workers (3). There were 18 women amongst them and 11 men, and the great majority had many years of experience in social work practice. Similar to the situation with migrants, with the exception of one of the hospital social workers, the interview was never our first encounter. Usually we had met and regularly spent time together at one or several of the social service centres,

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<sup>16</sup> The attached interview guides are the latest versions.

during outreach work, at seminars, when migrants were admitted to a hospital or at the biweekly meetings in the municipal-run collaborating unit referred to earlier – and often in several of these settings. These interviews also took the shape of in-depth, semi-structured research conversations. I developed interview guides beforehand (see Appendixes 6 & 7), but prior to all interviews, I searched through my fieldnotes for experiences, utterances or practices that I had been puzzled by and wanted to explore further – thus none of them ended up taking the same path. Perhaps even more than with the migrants, these interviews turned into dialogues where we together reflected on situations we had been part of and probed into discussions that had taken place at meetings we had participated in – and where I presented observations and tested out tentative analyses, my assumptions being both challenged and substantiated. They were, accordingly, in the words of anthropologist Per Kristian Hilden (2014), ‘special instances of social interaction – instances in which meanings take shape in dialogue between parties that mutually contribute to the sense being made’ (p. 7). These interviews lasted between one and two hours, took place at cafés or at the offices of my interlocutors and were recorded. With the explicit consent of those taking part in the interviews, they were transcribed in collaboration between three assistants whom I hired – who all signed nondisclosure agreements – and myself.

The above-described interview processes commenced roughly six months into my fieldwork, while I had countless informal research conversations throughout the period when I carried out participant observation. My motivation for wanting to conduct interviews of a more formalised kind and my reasoning behind whom I asked to take part in them were many-faceted. At this point in time, I had a better understanding of the configurations of my ‘field’ and had reached more clarity on the direction of the research process as well as on my more specific research objective and queries. I was therefore in a position where I could focus, and not least contextualise, my questions, while still being open to the course each individual research conversation would take and to continuously reviewing the interview guide. In terms of who was requested to participate, I was, on the one hand, driven by wanting to have more room for talking one on one with those of my interlocutors whom I knew best, to continue unfinished discussions and to reflect on observations and episodes in a setting where we would not be interrupted and where none of us were in a rush. At the same time, the interviews provided me with an opportunity to engage more thoroughly with interlocutors with whom I had thus far not interacted very much. While naturally not aiming for representativity, I had the aim of speaking to both men and women and to persons of different ages. With regards to the social workers, I sought to include the majority of NGOs present in

this field as well as social workers in the public sector who encountered migrants with precarious citizenship statuses but who were not mandated with administering public social welfare provisions. In the case of migrants, I was conscious of wanting to talk to persons holding citizenship in various EU countries. The totality of participants in the formalised research conversations so far described is reflective of this mixture of motivations; thus, the data produced through this approach includes a wide range of voices – hence, as my work shows, offering insight into different, at times conflicting, experiences and perspectives.

Now, whereas some persons – mainly migrants – turned down my requests and a couple of interviews got cancelled or people did not show up due to illness, travelling to their home country earlier than planned or getting an offer of paid work on the day of our appointment, I experienced few challenges in the ‘recruitment’ process for these interviews. Albeit, it could take time to arrange the logistics of them. It was a different matter when it came to the participation of social workers in the public social welfare administration, where I spent many hours on the phone and writing emails to get contact and received several rejections.<sup>17</sup>

Inspired by Karlsen (2015), I originally aimed to approach social workers in NAV or at SAA by following migrants in their interactions with these offices. As it turned out, such contact happened less frequently than I had anticipated. The cases I did follow, including the written decisions I got access to, did, however, leave me with many questions and fuelled my interest in including the perspectives of these social workers in my study. Through a combination of reaching out to the social workers involved in or with intimate knowledge of the cases I followed, approaching participants of the municipal-run collaborating unit referred to earlier, the snowball method, contacting leaders of NAV offices in Oslo<sup>18</sup> and using my own professional network, I was eventually able to carry out interviews with six social workers employed in NAV and three working at SAA. I also interviewed one employee at the Social Services Ombudsman in Oslo, whose office assists people who have had their applications for social assistance rejected in appealing the decision, and two employees from the county governor of Oslo’s office, the appeal body of such cases. The latter two wished to speak to me together.<sup>19</sup> With the exception of one of the employees at the county governor’s

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<sup>17</sup> The ones who turned me down mainly gave heavy workload and lack of time as their reasons but generally said that they found the topic of my research interesting and relevant.

<sup>18</sup> There are 15 NAV offices in Oslo.

<sup>19</sup> In articles 1 & 2 I refer to the interviews with employees at the Ombudsman and county governors’ offices as ‘other actors in the field’ – which also comprises an employee in the Agency for Urban Environment in Oslo. In article 3, I include the employees of the two offices in the construct ‘social workers in the public social welfare administration’, which I continue to do in this extended abstract.



office, all interlocutors were formally trained as social workers and had worked at NAV or SAA for four years or more, either in their present or previous employment. The majority of them were women. These interviews generally took a different shape than those accounted for earlier in this section, as we, for the most part, knew little of each other before we met. The interview guide (see Appendix 8) was followed more strictly. I included more questions on written policies and the legislation, and the conversations, for the most part, ended up being shorter, between 40 minutes and one and a half hours. However, many of these interviews were also characterised by the sharing of reflections and me testing out tentative analyses. With the consent of the migrants involved (see Appendix 4), individual cases served as points of departure for discussions with social workers who were familiar with them – when my interlocutors were not familiar, I presented the cases fully anonymised. The social workers taking part in these interviews gave two main reasons for why they were participating. First, many found cases involving EU migrants – and particularly those with very limited rights to services under the Social Welfare Act, with which they all had experience – complicated and unknown professional territory, making it an interesting and useful topic to reflect on. Second, several voiced concerns about NAV and SAA being unfairly represented as ‘the bad guys’ in discussions of such cases. They wanted to give their side of the story or shed more light on what they perceived as NAV/SAA’s mandate, which they felt was often misconstrued by fellow social workers not working within the public social welfare administration. There is thus a possibility of the data produced through these interviews being skewed in favour of the perspectives of social workers who are less critical of and more loyal to NAV/SAA’s practices in cases involving homeless EU migrants; their reflections might also have been shaped by their awareness of my closeness to some of the situations discussed. The great majority of interviews took place at the social workers’ offices; only one preferred a café. They were recorded and transcribed by me – with one exception, where an assistant did the transcribing.

#### Approaching texts ethnographically

Texts – comprising policy documents and legal sources related to the social welfare legislation, written decisions in cases where migrants applied for public social assistance (articles 1 & 3) and written sources on the development of the parallel social welfare system in Oslo (article 2) – have played a significant part in the knowledge production of this thesis. First, they provide important contextual information on how the restrictedness of welfare rights for homeless EU migrants, as well as their precarious inclusion in the welfare system,

has come to be configured. Texts were thus my primary source of data for analyses on the intertwinement of social welfare policies and management of ‘undesired’ migrants in the Norwegian context. As pointed to in chapter three (see also article 3), textual sources have been approached ethnographically in the sense of my interest being in how policies and legislation are ‘constitutive of and constituted by [...] way[s] of thinking and imagining social reality’ (Coutin & Fortin, 2015, p. 79; Drangsdal, 2021; Karlsen, 2015, 2021). Accordingly, and second, I paid ethnographic attention to how texts, ‘the law’ in particular, mould and mediate practices and relations ‘on the ground’ (Coutin & Fortin, 2015) – specifically in creating processes of welfare bordering. Similar to Karlsen (2015, p. 90), I both discussed specific texts with interlocutors, such as decisions in cases or formulations in legislative documents and tried to catch references to texts when doing participant observation. These approaches proved fruitful for my endeavour to comprehend how the ‘doing’ of social work intersects with the Norwegian (welfare) state’s management of ‘undesired’ migrants. Relatedly, it enhanced my understanding of how migration policy is thus also ‘being made’ in encounters between social workers and migrants with precarious citizenship statuses and not solely through the development of legislation and policy documents.

A note on the issue of language

The issue of languages used during my fieldwork, and how this impacted the knowledge produced, warrants specific consideration. Norwegian is my mother tongue, and I speak English well – but with the exception of having rudimentary French skills, I do not speak nor understand Romanian, Polish, Spanish or any of the other languages that were the native languages of the migrants with whom I interacted. Accordingly, I had no trouble following and participating in conversations, situations and meetings where Norwegian and English were the languages employed, which generally included all settings only social workers were part of or more formalised meetings, such as the meetings of the municipal-run collaboration unit. Many migrants were well versed in English, and there is thus no doubt that the data produced through participant observation are skewed in favour of the experiences and perspectives of these migrants. However, I often spent time with migrants whose English was elementary, and as several of the ethnographic accounts included in this extended abstract bear testimony to, in such situations, we also communicated through other migrants, social workers with additional language skills or by using various translation apps – if needed. While far from aiming to downplay the relevance of mastering a shared language well, much of what I was interested in – such as where people slept, when they had arrived in Norway,

how they earned their money, which other services they used – was possible to talk about even if we were not equally fluent in our shared language. Special challenges arose when I took part in conversations or meetings between migrants and social workers who shared a language that I did not master. Although I was sometimes given interpretations during the conversation, it was more common that the social worker gave me a résumé of the conversation's content afterwards. We sometimes together decided that continuous interruptions for my benefit were not appropriate given the planned topic for the conversation or for trust-building if the conversation took place between persons who had not previously met or who did not know each other well. In other situations, the social workers got so swept up that they forgot to interpret. This meant that I could not ask for more information or clarifications while the encounter was happening and had to rely on what was recounted to me in hindsight. I have no reason to believe that social workers left out information or details on purpose in such situations, but this nonetheless resulted in accounts being given from their perspective, which were 'thinner' than would have been the case if I had been able to understand what was said.

Not having a shared language that we both mastered well also meant that I was not able to engage in informal in-depth research conversation on the lived experiences of social service provision with some of the migrants I came to have close relationships with. This was the main reason for inviting them to participate in the interpreted interviews, which I had with six interlocutors, two of them together. I consciously chose professional interpreters with no affiliation to any of the services I spent time at, anticipating that this would allow for our conversations to flow freely, which proved to be the case.

My way of managing the 'language issue' during fieldwork implies that some of the data was produced through several layers of oral interpretations or written translations, including fieldnotes, excerpts from research interviews or conversations and other texts that have been translated from Norwegian to English by me in this thesis. A consequence of these processes is that I generally have not paid analytical attention to the exact phrasing of utterances or specific words being used. I now turn to an elaboration on the analytical process of my work in general.

The analytical process

My account of how analyses were conducted during the research process is not one of structure and rigorous 'strategies'. It is rather one of experienced 'messiness' (Howell, 2011; Hume & Mulcock, 2004), 'revelatory moments' (Trigger et al., 2012), the following up on –

and dismissal of – ideas and hunches (Okely, 2012) and the continuous interaction between theorisation, methodological approach and data production (Hilden & Middelthon, 2002; Okely, 2012; Wadel, 2014). Processes of analysis thus took place both during fieldwork and when writing up the articles constituting this thesis.

Ethnographic fieldnotes have been my main source of data, while transcripts of interviews and the texts accounted for earlier have also played a major part. In the field, I would keep my pocket-size notebook with me. Whenever I had a free moment, I would jot down observations not only of situations but also the physical environment, experiences of activities I took part in, conversations I listened in on or participated in and questions that arose that I, for one reason or the other, was not able to ask there and then and wanted to follow up on. I attempted to take note and make record not only of my interlocutors' emotions but also of my own, such as when either of us were feeling uncomfortable, angry, frustrated, surprised, sad or happy in a situation – or when we were uncertain of what to do or how to proceed – all of which was the case in my relationships with Florentina and Lisa, accounted for in the introduction to this chapter. These particular records have proven especially helpful for reflecting on my own positionality and situatedness in power relations, which I will do more explicitly later in this chapter, but also, I believe, for being able to offer more contextually sound analyses of my interlocutors' practices, experiences and perspectives.

I planned to type up my handwritten notes for them to be more easily searchable but realised quite early on that this was unfeasible given the amount of time spent in the field. I was not in a situation where I could devote evenings and weekends to this endeavour – nor was it practical to carry my computer with me in settings where I could have used 'free' time to type up notes. While some notes have been digitalised, I mostly resorted to keeping them handwritten. At times I had the opportunity to write them in full detail at once. At other times, I took brief notes, writing out details when I could find a suitable place at the facility I was hanging out at – or at a café, on a bench outdoors, or while taking public transport, on my way to or from fieldwork settings and situations.<sup>20</sup> I would generally keep my notebook visible in meetings or settings where only social workers were present, which I also intended to serve as a reminder of my researcher role. In agreement with the service centres where I did participant observation, I did not generally take notes in surroundings where I could not explain to all present why I would do so. This decision was made in recognition of the potential for creating insecurity and distrust amongst those using the facilities. I return to the

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<sup>20</sup> When I finalised my fieldwork, I had 54 closely written notebooks from participant observation and an additional two where I kept notes regarding the settings and surroundings of the formalised interviews.

possible dilemmas implied by this decision, pertaining to my role and the issue of consent specifically, below.

The empirical themes that came to be the topics of the three articles in this thesis emerged through different processes. The first (article 1), how social workers not mandated with administering public social welfare provisions are entangled in practices and processes of welfare bordering, materialised slowly through numerous fieldwork observations and research conversations – but also because these situations resonated with my own unease when practicing social work, as accounted for in chapter one. The second theme (article 2), the emergence and dynamics of a parallel social service system directed at homeless EU migrants in Oslo, arose following an afternoon spent with Bogdan, a Romanian Roma man visiting several services. In article 2, I describe this as a ‘revelatory moment’ (Trigger et al., 2012), which echoes how anthropologist Judith Okely (2012) discussed knowledge derived from ethnographic fieldwork as often being acquired and produced through ‘accident’ (p. 23). The last one (article 3), what social workers in the public welfare administration understand to constitute an emergency in cases involving homeless EU migrants and how particular ideas of the deservingness of welfare surface in their assessments and reflections, developed from being puzzled by specific situations I followed during fieldwork. This included reading written decisions from NAV, SAA or the county governor’s office juxtaposed with policy and legislative documents, succeeded by a more traditional thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews with these social workers.

During all processes, there was a continuous interplay between theorisation, the methodological approach and data production. When planning and commencing my fieldwork, I was informed by the literature on ‘irregularised migration’ in Norway and had some knowledge of the scholarship on ‘methodological nationalism’ within social work, which undoubtedly contributed to shaping my focus while in the field. My fieldwork observations focussed the topics and questions of the interviews. Conversely, the interviews made me more conscious of themes to pay particular attention to when continuing with participant observation, such as how the parallel social service system in Oslo appeared to be differently configured for – and thus experienced by – migrants. During the entirety of my fieldwork – but particularly when engaging in formalised research conversations, as accounted for above, as well as in two designated staff meetings at the place where I spent most of my time – I discussed observations with and received feedback on tentative analyses from my interlocutors. Towards the end of the period of participant observation, I took part in several workshops on ‘bordering practices’ in the social service sector (see Persdotter et al.,

2021, p. 96). My ethnography led me to an interest in this perspective, and participation in these workshops encouraged exploration of the relevance of ‘bordering’ as a thinking tool when analysing the data so far produced – which took me to the discovery of the notion of ‘welfare bordering’. This discovery focussed my gaze further during the remainder of the fieldwork. Upon completion of the fieldwork and when writing up the articles, I continuously moved back and forth between my fieldnotes, interview transcripts and other texts – and the literature I aimed for my work to be in dialogue with, including its thinking tools. The final analyses and arguments of my articles were created through this process. The fine-tuning of analyses and sharpening of arguments took place in dialogue with my supervisors; through feedback received when presenting my observations at research conferences, to social workers I had done participant observation with, in research groups I am part of and to fellow PhD students; and as part of the peer-review process.

The reliability and validity of knowledge produced through ethnographic fieldwork is ensured through transparency regarding how the data researchers base their analyses and arguments on was constructed, as well as through ‘thick descriptions’ in the sense of locating interlocutors’ utterances and actions in both their situational and larger sociolegal contexts (Fassin, 2012; Hilden & Middelthon, 2002; Howell, 2001; Okely, 2012; Ortner, 2006). This chapter has so far been devoted to the former; I have detailed and critically discussed my methodological choices and approaches. Substantiating the plausibility of the study’s analyses through ‘thick descriptions’ is the key reason for including additional ethnographic accounts as well as excerpts from other parts of my data material in this extended abstract – making it possible for readers to engage more critically with the interpretations and arguments presented in the articles. A ‘rigorous reflexive process’ (Hume & Mulcock, 2004, p. xxiii) in terms of locating the researcher in relation to the field and discussing how their positionality, including situatedness in various power relations, impacts the knowledge produced, is also central to assessments of validity in ethnographic studies. I turn now to reflections on these matters pertaining to my work.

### **Positionality and power relations in fieldwork**

Scholars have pointed to how ‘the ethnographic project’, while having an ambition of producing knowledge inductively, is also one of acknowledging that the researcher never enters the field devoid of preconceptions. Rather, they enter with previously acquired information and experiences, including scholarly knowledge and theoretical presuppositions

(Hilden & Middelthun, 2002, p. 2475; Howell, 2011). Others have accentuated how one's located position in terms of gender, class, age, ethnicity, race, educational background, sexual orientation and marital status, amongst others, impact how ethnographers' encounters with and understanding of the field are shaped and, closely related, how a researcher's positionality and situatedness influence which arenas and information they get access to as well as their fieldwork experiences in general (Bourgois, 2003; Drangsdal, 2021; Okely, 2012). The point is that where one 'sees' from – both theoretically, physically and in terms of being situated in our bodies – matters; 'no one reads [or sees] from a neutral or final position' (Clifford, 1986, p. 18). This also implies, naturally, that knowledge produced through ethnographic fieldwork can only ever be partial (Clifford, 1986; Hume & Mulcock, 2004). By this, of course, I do not mean that 'it is impossible to know anything certain' about the experiences and practices of one's interlocutors (cf. Clifford, 1986, p. 7). Nor do I presume that I am in a position to fully recognise or understand where I see from – or, equally important, how I was seen by social workers and migrants. Rather, I seek to make transparent aspects of my positionality and situatedness that I believe have shaped the knowledge produced in this study, for readers to be able to engage more critically with my work. In chapter two, as well as in this chapter, I reflected on epistemological and theoretical presuppositions deriving from my scholarly and professional background and how these have formed my study. In what follows, I shall pay attention to how aspects of 'who I am' and the power relations in which I am situated, as a trained social worker who has worked in a similar field to that which I study specifically, may have influenced the knowledge produced.

The social worker–researcher: Managing fieldwork relations

The role played by my training and professional background within social work with regard to this thesis's knowledge production is many-faceted and multi-layered. I shall first address matters pertaining to my interactions with migrants.

Returning to my relationship with Florina, questions, also of an ethical character, arise regarding the possibility of creating expectations of me being able to contribute to the betterment of her situation (see, e.g., Bendixsen, 2019; Jacobsen, 2015; Karlsen, 2015, on such quandaries in research with migrants with precarious citizenship statuses in general). While my social work background was not an issue with Florina or other migrants I spent time with in similar situations and settings, my way of asking questions or relating to other professionals might have enhanced such expectations. As the introduction to this chapter also shows, I was conscious of continuously clarifying my role as a researcher, perhaps trying too

hard at times – but cannot rule out that a hope of me being able to contribute positively to the outcome of applications was a reason for migrants allowing me to ‘tag along’ to and participate in encounters with the public welfare system. On the other hand, there is clearly also an ethical dilemma inherent in *not* contributing one’s knowledge and expertise if this could better one’s interlocutors’ situations. As exemplified by the account of my relationship with Florina, I did regularly offer my insights into ‘the system’ as well as policies and legislation, finding it highly unethical not to do so, especially in her situation, where such information quite literally was a matter of life and death. Okely (2012) discussed how anthropologists may choose to use their expertise of various kinds ‘as some exchange and reciprocity for the hospitality, shelter and knowledge they [have] been given’ (p. 148). While not always as consciously, such sentiments also contributed to how I manoeuvred the social worker–researcher role during fieldwork.

There are no easy or straightforward solutions to quandaries such as those reflected on here. I wrestled and dealt with inhabiting such ‘awkward social spaces’ (Hume & Mulcock, 2004) as best I could throughout my fieldwork – if feasible, seeking advice from both the social workers I interacted with and my supervisors when I was uncertain of what to do. In terms of the knowledge produced, and while I do not believe in the existence of such a thing as ‘nonobtrusive participant observation’, there can be no doubt that a consequence of my ‘intervening’ in certain situations – and of me discussing these dilemmas with social workers – was that I, at times, actively constructed the situations that I aimed to study and that shaped this thesis’s analyses (Hahonou, 2019; Okely, 2012; Oeye et al., 2007).

Turning now to the issue touched upon earlier regarding my potential ‘home blindness’ (Gullestad, 1991) due to having a common (professional) knowledge base and sharing a fundamental understanding of concepts with the social workers I interacted with during fieldwork, I do, in hindsight, acknowledge this as a real concern. I am convinced that an ethnographer without my background would have seen other things and asked other questions. Despite my conscious attempts at doing ‘naive observations’ (Wadel, 2014) and asking ‘banal questions’ (Lien, 2001), I was, when detailing rough notes or rereading fieldnotes, often struck by what I had taken for granted – for example, when it came to observations of how ‘house rules’ were enforced or the relationships between social workers mandated with administering public social welfare provisions and those who are not. Due to my long-term presence in the field, I was mostly, though not always, able to return to ‘unresolved’ observations and questions when doing further participant observation or in the interviews. What I am less concerned about than I was initially is whether my fieldwork has



yielded new and relevant insights into the topic of my study. I experienced that my professional background also contributed to building trust with social workers, such as when negotiating access to the field, and that it allowed me to probe deeper into topics such as how ‘the law’ shapes and mediates practices and relations in encounters between social workers and migrants than would have been the case if I’d had no previous knowledge of social work in this particular field or of the legislation.

Lastly, I will draw attention to the ‘vulnerability’ of my interlocutors. The migrants I interacted with do fall within the category ‘vulnerable groups [sårbare grupper]’, requiring heightened ethical awareness on the part of the researcher – as pointed to in the approval letter from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (Appendix 2; see The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees [NESH], 2022). I have addressed dimensions of this both in terms of my compensating them economically for their time in recognition of their general marginalised economic situation and the measures I took to lessen the chance of them consenting to interviews because of the money, as well in the above reflections on how to ‘use’ my social work expertise in particular situations. My later discussions of consent, anonymity and representation will address the matter further. Here, however, I want to accentuate the ‘vulnerability’ of the social workers I spent time with, while not arguing that they should be considered vulnerable per se (cf. Oeye et al., 2007). When doing participant observation, and particularly if I witnessed situations where conflicts had arisen with guests due to management of queues or enforcement of house rules or if I had taken part in meetings where sensitive matters on which social workers had conflicting views were discussed, I was on several occasions approached by interlocutors who worried about how I ‘evaluated’ their professionalism or how they would be portrayed in my thesis. This was also a topic of the two already mentioned designated staff meetings at the place I spent most of my time, where we mainly discussed my observations – but also social workers’ experience of being ‘researched on’. Although I was never requested to leave anything out from my notes or the thesis in general, I acknowledge that ‘participant observation is capable of producing vulnerabilities and hurting professionals’ (Oeye et al., 2007, p. 2304; see also Hahonou, 2019) when the purpose of the study includes exploring professional practices, such as is the case for my work. During fieldwork, I addressed this concern by continuously discussing my role and being available for questions and clarifications while underscoring that my subsequent and final analyses would not necessarily be in agreement with my interlocutors’ experienced intentions of their practice or what they expected to be the ‘results’ of my research. Also, these matters will be deliberated on in more depth in my discussions of consent,

anonymisation and representation. First, however, I turn to the related topic of how positioning the thesis within critical social work scholarship influences the knowledge produced.

The critical researcher

From the very start, I was encouraged by the NGO running the service centre where I spent most of my time during fieldwork, and the social workers there, to share my observations with them. They stressed that they were especially interested in ‘feedback’ of a more critical nature. A main reason for inviting me to do research with them, I was told, was a wish to learn and reflect on their own practice – especially since they considered working with migrants who have restricted welfare rights to be complicated and unknown professional territory. Anthropologist Eric K. Hahonou (2019) described how he, during participant observation at a health facility in Niger, felt ‘trapped in a loyalty dilemma’ (p. 194). On the one hand, he was observing situations and practices he did not condone, and on the other hand, he was worried about denouncing interlocutors who had welcomed him to the facility and allowed him to carry out his study. Despite the social workers’ pronounced openness to a critical gaze, I have wrestled with a related ‘loyalty dilemma’, albeit not so much during fieldwork as when presenting my observations and analyses in various fora and when writing up this thesis.

As discussed in chapter two, an aim of my work is to encourage reflection amongst social workers in Norway and within the Norwegian social work profession at large on the exclusionary potential inherent in its self-identification as a national welfare state profession – and thus, on how social work(ers) are implicated in processes of welfare bordering. I have, however, been wary of my analyses coming through as too simplistic, recognising from my own social work background the profound challenges and complexities of balancing care and control at different levels of practice and in different fields of practice. Nevertheless, when the ‘doing’ of social work becomes ‘complicit in furthering structural inequalities’ (Karlsen, 2021, p. 4) and potentially creates harmful situations for migrants, such as the humanitarian administration of time (see article 2), it must be scrutinised (e.g., Dahlstedt, et al., 2020; Healy, 2014). In line with my epistemological stance and positioning within critical social work, however, in my analyses, I have striven to locate social workers’ reflections and actions within their situational and sociolegal contexts. My intent is to accentuate the ‘array of overlapping macro-, meso-, and micro-level processes’ (Willen, 2007, p. 28) that shape my interlocutors’ practices and experiences, rather than portraying individual social workers as

the ‘problem’ (cf. De Genova, 2002). I have similarly aimed to show the multilayeredness characterising social workers’ experiences of working with homeless EU migrants and, accordingly, the convictions, doubts and dilemmas – at times despair and distaste – coming through in their reflections (cf. Fassin, 2012; Oeye et al., 2007).

When researching and critically scrutinising the restricted and fragile inclusionary policies and practices towards migrants in precarious positions, there is a risk of undermining their limited but potentially vitally important possibility of inclusion in public social welfare provisions and the very modest humanitarian services available to these migrants (Karlsen, 2021; Ticktin, 2011). This may contradict the ethical obligation of researchers not to ‘do harm’ (NESH, 2022). Accordingly, I strive to present observations and arguments in ways that cannot be misused by policy-makers or other actors, acknowledging that how one’s research is used is not something a researcher may fully control – especially in a politicised field such as migration policies and management (see e.g., Bendixsen, 2019; Drangland, 2021; Jacobsen, 2015; Ticktin, 2011). My thesis nevertheless asserts the importance of examining what is at stake in these policies and practices, especially when producing hierarchical conceptions and experiences of human worth within Norway’s borders.

### **Further ethical reflections: Consent, anonymisation and representation**

On the vexed issue of participant observation and consent

Researchers are ethically obliged to obtain informed and voluntary consent from one’s interlocutors (NESH, 2022). Anthropologist Christine Oeye and colleagues (2007) discussed the complexities of this demand when conducting participant observation, based on their experience from research in a psychiatric ward in Norway. They proposed that ‘[p]articipant observation creates a problem for obtaining informed consent, because informed consent is an individual-based ethical guideline and participant observation is based on observing interaction between participants, which makes it a collective approach’ (p. 2304).

Accordingly, they suggested, ‘the individual-based ethical principle of informed consent and voluntariness seems utopian when employing participant observation, which is a method based on how informants and researchers influence and construct each other’ (pp. 2304–2305).

While I strove to comply with all formal demands from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) as well as other bodies mandated with ethical approvals of research projects (see Appendixes 1, 2, 3 & 4), I acknowledge the relevance of Oeye et al.’s (2007)

concerns for my fieldwork. An issue that arose at its onset was confusion on the part of the involved NGO, me and the advisor at NSD regarding how to meet the terms set out by NSD themselves. The terms concerned not accessing any kind of confidential information about persons who had not explicitly consented to take part in my research during fieldwork (Appendix 2). This seemed an impossible task when doing participant observation at a social service centre welcoming up to 180 persons in one day, and it resulted in me not participating in internal staff meetings and being careful to not listen in on some of the conversations between social workers at the service centre during my first weeks there. The conundrum was resolved by the Regional Committees for Medical and Health Research Ethics (REK), who are mandated with making exemptions regarding access to confidential information in research projects and who assessed my position and obligations differently than NSD (Appendix 2). I followed REK's advice of not including confidential information regarding persons who had not (yet) consented to take part in my study in my fieldnotes, as well as signing nondisclosure statements at all the facilities where I did participant observation.

As already mentioned, information was posted about me and my project at the service centres where I spent time during fieldwork. I would normally introduce myself as a researcher when first meeting a person – be it a migrant, social worker or someone I met when following interlocutors to encounters with the public welfare system – and ask for their consent to take part in meetings, conversations and other kinds of interactions. While stressing the voluntariness of my presence on their side, I cannot rule out that some felt obliged to consent. In the case of social workers, this might be because of strings attached to NGOs and leaders of facilities, who were the ones granting me access; migrants may have harboured similar feelings of obligations, especially in situations where social workers asked for their consent on my behalf due to us not sharing a common language. Concerning the issue of *informed* consent, and while trying my utmost to explain the nature of participant observation, the unpredictability, 'messiness' and explorational purpose characterising the approach (Hilden & Middelthon, 2002; Howell, 2011; Hume & Mulcock, 2004) made it close to impossible to ensure that interlocutors were fully informed about what participation in my study implied at all times (cf. NESH, 2022). Admittedly, this was not always clear, even to me. Adding to this is the fact that some of the migrants were unfamiliar with the concept of research itself, such as was the case with Mariana (see chapter three), and also the 'messiness' of relationships during long-term participant observation, where strong attachments are formed (Bourgois, 2003; Karlsen, 2015; Hume & Mulcock, 2004) – as in my relationships with Florina and Lisa. The latter may have contributed to obscuring the fact that I had my

researcher hat on in all situations during fieldwork, also when not ‘demonstrating’ it by having my notebook visible, including in situations such as when I accompanied Florina to the hospital. What this ultimately means is that even if I followed all formal ethical procedures and interlocutors gave their consent for participation and reaffirmed it at several stages of the research process, including during interviews, the final responsibility of ensuring that them being part of my study does not imply unreasonable disadvantage and discomfort (NESH, 2022) rested, and still rests, with me. I discussed earlier in this chapter how I manoeuvred issues of positionality and my situatedness in power relations during fieldwork. I now turn to the quandaries I have dealt with when writing up this thesis, specifically related to anonymisation and the issue of representation.

On anonymisation and representation

Researchers must ensure that anonymity is protected when it has been agreed upon or otherwise is prudent. (NESH, 2022, p. 23)

To not disclose the identity of interlocutors while at the same time remaining committed to the ‘ethnographic stance’ of producing knowledge and understanding through thick descriptions and contextualised analyses is a particular challenge in studies like mine (Vike, 2001). Even when removing or altering what I, on a case-to-case basis, have deemed nonessential information – such as age, gender, number of children, country of birth or specific workplace – potential contextual identifiers have undoubtedly remained in my text. Thus, there is a risk of ‘deductive disclosure’ (Karlsen, 2015, p. 98), particularly for persons who were part of the situations or settings described or whom I met in specific fieldwork locations. In the case of social workers, I dealt with this dilemma by highlighting this eventuality when discussing their participation in my research.<sup>21</sup> With regards to both migrants and social workers, in a few particularly sensitive cases, I have created characters based on accounts from several interlocutors (see, e.g., Drangland, 2021; Karlsen, 2015) or given them different names in the different articles so as to lessen the risk of deductive disclosure. For the same reason, I have chosen not to name the particular NGOs I engaged

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<sup>21</sup> A while into my fieldwork, I also added a phrase on this in the information and consent form (in Norwegian only): Til sosialarbeidere: Da dette er et fagfelt der mange kjenner til hverandre, hverandres organisasjoner og hverandres bakgrunn og synspunkter kan det være mulig at dine kollegaer eller nære samarbeidspartnere vil kunne gjenkjenne deg i deler av den skrevne teksten.

with or service centres I spent time at. The latter was, however, never a requirement on their part – I was, at times, even challenged on whether this was really necessary (cf. Vike, 2001) – and it is probable that those who are familiar with the services and my fieldwork will recognise particular facilities based on my descriptions.

A more pressingly felt dilemma when writing has, however, been the question of representation. By this, I refer to ‘the danger of (re)producing stereotypes’ (Drangslund, 2021, p. 97; see also Bourgois, 2003, pp. 11–15). In particular, I have wrestled with this concern regarding my choice to consistently deploy the term ‘migrants’ to depict those of my interlocutors who have very limited rights to assistance from the Norwegian welfare state. In the introductory chapter to this extended abstract, I reflected on my reasoning behind this choice. I am nonetheless wary of my potential contribution to the ‘politics of otherness’ (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p. 17) and especially to substantiating the taken-for-grantedness of ‘the national order of things’ (Malkki, 1995) and, relatedly, the naturalising of migration-related differences (Dahinden, 2016). As already alluded to in previous parts of this text, I have dealt with this quandary by, on the one hand, thoroughly examining the sociolegal processes and frameworks *producing* the restrictedness of welfare rights to ‘homeless EU migrants’ and, on the other hand, drawing lines to the historical control of poor people’s mobility and relating to discussions on recent changes in the welfare state. These debates will be taken further in the concluding discussion of this extended abstract.

Returning to my reflections on the ‘vulnerability’ of the social workers I spent time with (cf. Oeye et al., 2007), I have also struggled with the dilemma of whether my descriptions and analyses of their practices and arguments could be misread and thus dismissed as ‘negative stereotypes’ or ‘hostile portrait[s]’ (Bourgois, 2003, p. 11) on the part of social workers, as well as actually contributing to simplistic stereotypes amongst the larger audience of my work. This has been a particular concern with regards to social workers employed in NAV, who, in the Norwegian public, *are* undoubtedly often portrayed as the ‘bad guys’. While yet again asserting the importance of scrutinising practices that may contribute to inequalities and differentiations of moral worth within Norway’s borders, I have endeavoured to avoid simplistic and stereotypical portrayals by both locating social workers’ reflections and actions within their situational and sociolegal contexts and by illuminating the profound doubts and dilemmas many experienced and deliberated on. I have also striven to show the diversity of voices amongst social workers and the nuances in their reflections, while foregrounding the significant part they nevertheless play in – at times ‘dehumanizing’ (cf. Anderson, et al., 2009, p. 13) – processes of welfare bordering.

## Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have detailed my methodological approach in terms of describing and critically discussing how the data on which I base my analyses and arguments was derived and constructed. A particular aim has been to make transparent how my methodological choices have influenced the knowledge produced in this study. Along with detailing and reflecting on all parts of my fieldwork, specific attention has been paid to my core methodological approach of participant observation. I have also discussed matters of my own positionality and research ethics, focusing especially on how my former training as a social worker who has worked in a similar field to that which I study has impacted knowledge production.

## 5 A presentation of three articles and the linkages between them

In this chapter, I present the articles published as part of my thesis and highlight the linkages between them. All articles are informed by my fieldwork in its entirety. However, as will become clear, different parts of my data material play different roles in the individual articles. Each article responds to all four questions of investigation – and thus to the overall query of the thesis – albeit in diverse ways and to various degrees. I present the articles in the order in which they were written.<sup>22</sup> The articles are single authored by me.

### Article 1. Social work and welfare bordering: The case of homeless EU migrants in Norway

Misje, T. (2020). Social work and welfare bordering: The case of homeless EU migrants in Norway. *European Journal of Social Work*, 23(3), 401–413.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2019.1682975>

This article explicitly addresses methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002) within Norwegian social work. It contends that the taken-for-granted relationship between professional social work and the nationalised Norwegian welfare state has an exclusionary potential that is rendered visible in social workers' encounters with migrants with precarious citizenship statuses. Social work's historically grounded self-identification as a welfare state profession thus implicates social workers in drawing up the boundaries of the welfare state and, consequently, I suggest, in processes of 'welfare bordering' (Guentner et al., 2016).

Empirically, the article zooms in – perhaps surprisingly – on the role and perspectives of social workers who are *not* mandated with administering public social welfare provisions, comprising social workers employed by NGOs, hospital social workers and municipal outreach workers. The article shows how these social workers view and habitually have employed rights-oriented public social welfare provisions as a main tool when working for the betterment of people's precarious situations, creating bewilderment, dilemmas and bordering practices when their accustomed role of linking people with the public welfare system is hampered by homeless EU migrants' restricted welfare rights.

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<sup>22</sup> Article 1 and article 2 form part of special issues in the *European Journal of Social Work* and *Nordic Social Work Research*, respectively. My supervisor Erica Righard was one of the guest editors in both special issues. She took no part in the editorial processes concerning my articles.



Ethnographic attention is directed to how social welfare policies, the Norwegian Social Welfare Act (2009) specifically, both operate as and create internal bordering practices (cf. Bendixsen, 2018b; Guentner et al., 2016) – as well as to how being implicated in and subjected to such practices is experienced. I first argue, through an analysis of policy documents related to the act, that homeless EU migrants are increasingly ‘illegalised’ in the social welfare legislation despite being ‘legal’ according to immigration law and the EEA agreement. Second, I show how these increasingly restrictive welfare policies contribute to social workers’ entanglement in bordering processes. The manifold dilemmas brought about by the ‘middleman’ position of social workers not themselves mandated with administering public welfare provisions, in this nexus, are accentuated.

My analysis of social workers’ entanglement in practices of welfare bordering takes the story of Marian, a Romanian man who after having undergone a planned surgery at a hospital in Oslo, applied for – and was denied – public social assistance, as its point of departure. While it is narrated primarily from the involved social workers’ points of view, the account also provides an ethnographic ‘portrait’ (Willen, 2007) of the lived experiences of social service provision to homeless EU migrants in Norway.

Drawing on Marian’s story and involvement in similar cases and situations during fieldwork – as well as formalised interviews with social workers in the NGO sector (23), hospital social workers (3) and municipal outreach workers (3) – the analysis foregrounds how these social workers’ practices in encounters with homeless EU migrants take the shape of both enacting and contesting the internal borders produced by the restrictedness of welfare rights. I suggest that social workers *enact* the border by not referring migrants to, and often not informing them of, the public social welfare system. The reasoning behind such practices is manifold, at times contradictory, and includes ethical considerations – an experienced lack of knowledge of relevant legal provisions combined with an impression that the social welfare legislation is applied inconsistently in these cases – and social workers’ own positions on immigration issues.

Social workers do, as in the case of Marian, also negotiate for inclusion of homeless EU migrants in public social welfare provisions – which I propose could be understood as *contesting* the border. When doing so, they generally highlight the exceptionality, precariousness and emergency state of particular, individual cases. My analysis shows, nevertheless, that social workers also in such situations get entangled in welfare bordering by considering political viability and the sustainability of the welfare state when making decisions on whose and which cases to negotiate for – prioritising only the precarious and

exceptional ones. I conclude, therefore, that practices of negotiating for inclusion of homeless EU migrants in public social welfare are most aptly understood as ‘disruptions’ (Bendixsen, 2018b) or ‘destabilisations’ (Nordling, 2017), in that they make ‘a statement towards justice at some levels’ (p. 300) – however, they are not challenging the migrants’ general exclusion from public social welfare services per se. In the Norwegian situation, homeless EU migrants are, in effect, left dependent on charity-based social service structures, reproducing the exclusionary national framing of public welfare policies. This parallel social service system is explored in the thesis’s second article.

## Article 2. Queuing for food and playing lottery for beds: A parallel social service system and the lived experiences of humanitarian service provision to homeless EU migrants in Norway

Misje, T. (2021). Queuing for food and playing lottery for beds: A parallel social service system and the lived experiences of humanitarian service provision to homeless EU migrants in Norway. *Nordic Social Work Research*, 11(2), 103–116.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2020.1857820>

This article takes an afternoon several months into my fieldwork that I spent with Bogdan – a Romanian Roma man navigating several NGO-run social services in Oslo to cover his basic needs – as its starting point. The afternoon with Bogdan caused me to reflect on the time many migrants in situations similar to his spend queuing for basic services, how spread out the services are within the city and how opening hours and house rules impact their everyday lives – triggering a further investigation of what I contend is most aptly conceived of as a *parallel* social service system directed at homeless EU migrants in Oslo. As opposed to what is the case for persons who have comprehensive rights to assistance from the Norwegian public welfare system, the NGO-run humanitarian services making up the parallel system do not function as a supplement to public welfare for these migrants but are, in effect, the only social services available to them. Moreover, they primarily aim to alleviate precarious situations by covering basic needs and are meted out through benevolence, charity and compassion, rather than comprehensive, inclusive social rights – constituting, in sum, an exception to how the Norwegian welfare state normally frames and deals with suffering (cf. Bendixsen, 2018a; Karlsen, 2018).

The article's aim is twofold. I first analyse how the social service system is configured, its emergence and its dynamics. The introduction of two grant schemes during the last decade – one national and one municipal, aimed primarily at NGOs assisting homeless EU migrants – is examined. Both schemes are part of larger strategies for 'handling' this group of migrants, which combine humanitarian initiatives with control measures, the latter clearly intersecting with concerns of migration management. The notion of 'humanitarian exceptionalism' (Bendixsen, 2018a; Ticktin, 2005) is employed as an analytical optic to capture the duality and entanglement of care and control thus characterising the Norwegian (welfare) state's relationship with homeless EU migrants. Drawing also on existing scholarship on how the needs of those deemed not to 'belong' to the welfare state are (to be) cared for (Djuve et al., 2015; Bendixsen, 2018a; Karlsen, 2015, 2018), I suggest that the emergence and dynamics of the parallel social service system directed at homeless EU migrants in Oslo derive from conflicting and intersecting policies meant to ensure that migrants will not starve or freeze to death – while at the same time marking them as 'undesired' by barring their access to the ordinary comprehensive Norwegian welfare system. Hence, the (welfare) state maintains its dual commitment to ensuring survival – verifying the nation's self-image as caring and compassionate – and controlling migration.

Next, I explore the lived experiences of service provision through these limited parallel structures, tracing both the intended and unintended consequences of humanitarian social service provision (Barnett, 2013; Ticktin, 2014) to homeless EU migrants in Oslo. The analysis draws on data derived from participant observation at NGO-run social services available to these migrants, including when I accompanied migrants as they moved between the facilities and within the city in general, as well as formalised interviews with 16 of them. I show how the social service structures simultaneously alleviate migrants' precarious situations and, when considered as one totality or system, serve to regulate their time and movement. The latter, I contend, is configured through service providers' strategies for restricting access and queue management, brought about by the scarceness of resources and limited availability and, hence, through intentions of securing fairness. Due to the various services emerging as rather instantaneous responses to precarious situations, in combination with the logics, interests and goals of the different NGOs running the services not necessarily being in alignment, they come through as a patchwork system rather than as a coordinated effort.

The notion of the 'humanitarian administration of time' is introduced to call attention to how the parallel social service system, and its 'good intentions' (cf. Ticktin, 2014), thus

produce ‘unintended’ consequences in terms of having a regulating, even disciplining, function in migrants’ everyday lives. My analysis accentuates how the parallel system in general, and the temporalities of it specifically, is differently configured for – and thus experienced by – migrants, depending on gender, ethnicity, network in Norway, aspiration for their stay, financial obligations, previous experiences with sleeping rough and access to public spaces, as well as how these factors often intersect. I suggest that the migrants most in need of humanitarian services are most affected by the humanitarian administration of time.

While the article foregrounds migrants’ experiences and accounts, it also pays attention to the unintentionality of the regulating role that humanitarian services play in the everyday lives of homeless EU migrants in Oslo, on the part of the NGOs and social workers administering the services. I also point to dilemmas experienced by social workers with regard to ensuring fairness in what they generally perceive to be an intrinsically unjust context. However, and whereas the manner in which the social service system conditions migrants’ time and movement might not be intentional per se, I argue that the picture is not clear-cut when considering the parallel social service system in light of Norway’s general policies towards ‘undesired’ migrants. I propose, rather, that the ‘logic of exceptionalism’ (Ticktin, 2005) underpinning the parallel system and producing the humanitarian administration of time – in terms of limitation of content, ambitions and availability of social services – *is* intentional and intersects with the Norwegian (welfare) state’s concern with migration management. The configurations of the parallel social service system directed at homeless EU migrants in Oslo – while clearly alleviating precarious situations – hence produce bordering practices and processes in having a regulating, even disciplining, function in migrants’ everyday lives and in marking some people as undesired, only eligible for very modest forms of services, distributed as ‘sovereign gifts’ (Karlsen, 2018). The humanitarian administration of time, I conclude, feeds into the totality of policies and strategies ultimately meant to discourage people from coming to Norway or encourage them to leave.

### Article 3. The precarious inclusion of homeless EU migrants in Norwegian public social welfare: Moral bordering and social workers’ dilemmas

Misje, T. (2022). The precarious inclusion of homeless EU migrants in Norwegian public social welfare: Moral bordering and social workers’ dilemmas. *Critical Social Policy*, 42(3), 448–468. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F02610183211036580>

The thesis's third article furthers the exploration of Norwegian welfare policies' intertwinement with migration management in returning to the social welfare legislation and zooming in on how social workers in the public social welfare administration manoeuvre in this nexus. Whereas the analysis and discussion of policy documents related to the Social Welfare Act (2009) in article 1 centres on the 'illegalisation' of homeless EU migrants in the social welfare legislation and foregrounds these migrants' overall exclusion from the welfare state, article 3 nuances this picture. I direct attention to how migrants, rather than being completely excluded, *are* included in public social welfare through specific emergency provisions solely meant to relieve acute suffering.

Drawing on Karlsen's (2021) discussions of how these processes are configured for migrants with precarious citizenship statuses in general in the Norwegian setting and deploying her notion of 'precarious inclusion' as an analytical lens, I first shed light on the *simultaneity* of inclusion and exclusion characterising the (welfare) state's policies and practices towards homeless EU migrants, which is also pointed to in my analysis of the 'NGOised' parallel social welfare system in article 2. Their inclusion in emergency provisions specifically aimed at migrants with precarious citizenship statuses constitutes, the article contends, yet a strategy, or instrument, for the Norwegian (welfare) state to maintain its double commitment to ensuring basic social protection, thus retaining its humanitarian self-image and migration control. I demonstrate how the provisions both *operate* as internal bordering practices in barring homeless EU migrants' access to ordinary social assistance, which is far more comprehensive, and *create* bordering practices by producing forms of inclusion grounded in 'humanitarian reason' (Fassin, 2012) and characterised by restrictedness, unpredictability and insecurity. Thus, such provisions are susceptible to social workers' assessments of deservingness of welfare, which the article conceptualises as 'moral bordering' (Karlsen, 2021). In doing so, I question the assumption of inclusion being 'a straightforward solution to the injustice caused by exclusion' (Karlsen, 2021, p. 4), which arguably constitutes an underlying contention in article 1, accentuating, rather, how migrants' precarious and *differential* (Könönen, 2018) inclusion in the welfare state not only produces a hierarchy of social rights within Norway's borders but also is reflective of – and shapes – hierarchical conceptions of human worth (Mayblin et al., 2020).

Following from this, I explore how social workers in the public social welfare administration navigate the legislation. My analysis draws on data derived from 11 in-depth interviews with social workers mandated with providing services under the Social Welfare Act (9), assisting in appealing rejected applications for social assistance (1) and working in

the appeal body of such cases (1) – as well as from notes and case documents concerning situations I followed during my fieldwork, such as that of Marian, discussed in article 1. I point to how the social workers find governmental guidelines, regulations and circulars to be rather clear on who should *not* receive ordinary social assistance but, conversely and in contrast to what is the case for the ordinary emergency provision in the social welfare legislation, report lack of guidance on which situations should qualify for emergency support in cases involving homeless EU migrants. This warrants a closer examination of social workers' assessments of what constitutes an emergency situation in these cases.

My analysis shows that particular ideas of the deservingness of welfare surface in social workers' assessments and reflections. Migrants in danger of freezing or starving 'to death' or enduring other kinds of bodily suffering are in line with what is found in other studies of access to welfare for migrants with precarious citizenship statuses (Fassin, 2012; Karlsen, 2021; Ticktin, 2011) deemed the most rightful receivers of emergency support grounded in humanitarian reason. As Marian's story highlights, perceived blamelessness for one's predicament nonetheless emerges as a prerequisite for a situation to be considered an emergency. Migrants understood to be responsible for their own ailment in terms of crossing borders without means for subsistence or in bad health are not deemed legitimate recipients of even very limited forms of public welfare but are rather conceived of as 'welfare tourists'. The analysis hence unravels taken-for-granted ideas of sedentarism and territorial belonging (Righard & Boccagni, 2015), or 'territorialised deservingness', in the social workers' assessments, as well as how such preconceptions, which I argue are reflective of the methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002) at work within Norwegian social work, impact their practices. Moral concerns with 'sick' or 'poor' people's movements across borders in particular seem to influence social workers' assessments of which – and whose – situations are considered an emergency. The article accordingly demonstrates that social workers in the Norwegian public welfare administration find themselves guarding the borders of the welfare state (Synnes, 2021), a position that, for most, is fraught with doubts and dilemmas, especially since they 'as social workers' are accustomed to be able to help in situations they identify as desperate. For others, this is seen as a natural, uncomplicated part of their job.

My analysis also suggests that social workers' ideas of territorialised deservingness contribute to, in subtle ways, the further differentiation between and hierarchisation of homeless EU migrants in terms of who are deemed legitimate recipients of emergency support. Migrants understood as (potentially) 'productive' in terms of contributing

economically to society, including through unregistered work, are considered more 'belonging' to the nationalised Norwegian welfare state than others and hence worthier of public social services grounded in humanitarian reason than migrants who beg, i.e., Romanian Roma. While not in a blatant or straightforward manner, racialisation thus appears to play a part in social workers' assessments of deservingness of emergency support – or processes of moral bordering. Consequently, I propose that the deliberations on and assessments of cases involving homeless EU migrants by social workers in the public social welfare administration signal a willingness, albeit fraught with 'despair and distaste' (Oeye et al., 2007), to differentiate between the worth of human lives within Norway's borders – reflective of the Norwegian (welfare) state's position and policies towards 'undesired' migrants at large. This, the article concludes, is a challenge for a profession priding itself with working for inclusion and social justice for all. This challenge is in need of both further research and sustained critical reflection from within the Norwegian social work profession itself.

## 6 Concluding discussions

This final chapter starts by returning to the core query that my thesis seeks to explore: How does the ‘doing’ of social work in encounters with persons who have limited rights to public social welfare intersect with the Norwegian (welfare) state’s concerns with migration management in general and internal bordering processes specifically? I summarise and discuss the study’s key observations and arguments relating to all four questions of investigation:

1. How is the intertwinement of social welfare policies and management of ‘undesired’ migrants, particularly homeless EU migrants, configured and produced in the Norwegian setting?
2. How does this intertwinement shape the ‘doing’ of social work in encounters with homeless EU migrants?
3. How do social workers experience working with migrants whose access to public welfare in Norway is severely restricted?
4. What are homeless EU migrants’ lived experiences of social service provision in Norway?

Next, the exceptionality often attributed to ‘the migrant’ and to how *cross-border* mobility is understood to be managed by (welfare) states in existing scholarship (cf. Dahinden, 2016) – my own work included – is investigated in some depth. I end by highlighting the thesis’s main contributions, paying particular attention to the value of bridging insights from the scholarly fields of migration studies and social work research, and what the study’s ethnographic approach adds to the existing knowledge on social work and migrants with precarious citizenship statuses.

### Social work(ers), homeless EU migrants and welfare bordering in Norway

The observations and arguments of the three articles forming part of this thesis accentuate the manifold – seldom straightforward and sometimes conflicting – ways in which Norwegian social welfare policies and the (welfare) state’s concerns with migration management are intertwined, and thus how welfare policies and provisions both operate as and create internal bordering practices. Second, the articles show how this intertwinement frames and moulds the configurations of social service provision to, as well as ‘doing’ of social work with, homeless EU migrants in Norway. In sum, my work brings forth how both social workers mandated



with administering public social welfare provisions and those who are not get implicated in and contribute to the ‘internalization of borders’ (Persdotter et al., 2021, p. 97) and ‘welfare bordering’ (Guentner et al., 2016) specifically. In individual situations and cases, social workers contest the borders the Norwegian (welfare) state draws around ‘social rights and public welfare provision’ (Guentner et al., 2016, p. 392), as highlighted in article 1. Nonetheless, while such actions constitute ‘a statement towards justice at some levels’ (Nordling, 2017, p. 300), they do not challenge the migrants’ general exclusion from public social welfare services per se.

However, this study also shows that homeless EU migrants are not simply excluded from the country’s welfare system but rather precariously included (Karlsen, 2021) through policies and provisions directed at ensuring bodily survival. In effect, homeless EU migrants in Norway are left dependent on charity-based social service structures to meet their basic needs. The restrictedness, unpredictability and fragility inherent in this form of inclusion contrasts with principles of social justice, entitlements and equality – principles that are considered cornerstones of the Norwegian welfare state.

The particular way of combining measures of care and control in social welfare policies directed not only at homeless EU migrants but also at migrants with precarious citizenship statuses in general allows the Norwegian (welfare) state to simultaneously manage migration and retain the nation’s self-image of being caring and compassionate (Bendixsen, 2018a; Karlsen, 2021). Welfare policies that are both exclusionary and inclusionary, then, implicate individual social workers, as well as the social work profession, in the differentiation of human worth within Norway’s borders and accordingly in processes of welfare bordering – or internal migration control.

In contrast to other professions – health professions specifically (see especially Aarseth et al., 2019, but also, e.g., Aftab & Lenge, 2021; Hofstad, 2021) – there has so far been few reflections on, let alone protests against, becoming implicated in processes of internal migration control from within the Norwegian social work profession (see, however, Näsholm, 2018; Scheistrøen, 2015; Vollebæk, 2018, for notable exceptions). I propose in this thesis that social workers’ entanglement in welfare bordering, and the hitherto limited reflections and objections voiced against this development from individual social workers and the profession at large, should be understood in light of social work’s historically grounded (self-)identification as a welfare state profession – in the particular Norwegian setting. As is the case for many European countries, the professionalisation of social work in Norway took place in tandem with the emergence and expansion of a nationalised post-WWII welfare state

project. Arguably, as part of this development, the profession became “‘hostage’” to the “‘welfare state’” (Wallimann, 2014, p. 23) and its ‘doing’ became ‘a product of the welfare state’ (van der Haar, 2015, p. 265) in specific national contexts. Scholars have also suggested that the relationship between the welfare state and the social work profession is especially tight-knit in the Norwegian situation, although it remains underexplored and taken for granted (Levin, 2021; Lødemel, 2019).

My work demonstrates how the close interrelationship – even interdependency – of the Norwegian social work profession and the national welfare state works to exclude homeless EU migrants from the mainstream social work field of practice and mandate, including (facilitation of) access to the comprehensive and rights-oriented public social welfare provisions characteristic of the welfare state. As long as those deemed members of the welfare state mostly equated those residing inside Norway’s borders, the exclusionary potential inherent in social work’s self-identification as a welfare state profession, arguably at odds with its position as a human rights profession, remained obscured. With increased migration and border crossing, however, social workers in various welfare provision settings are confronted with the existence of people who are in precarious situations but lack access to public welfare inside Norway’s borders. This study accentuates the many multifaceted dilemmas such encounters evoke for social workers in the Norwegian context. Meeting people in precarious situations, who often are visibly poor and live in destitution, while being unable to resort to rights-oriented public social welfare provisions to better such situations, appears to create bewilderment and professional insecurity amongst social workers.

This thesis’s investigation of the sociolegal production of internal borders and consequently of precarious citizenship statuses, of which social workers and social work practice thus are part, moreover point to how homeless EU migrants are subjected to processes of ‘illegalisation’ and ‘deportability’ (De Genova, 2002) despite having formal entitlement to cross-border mobility within Europe (cf. e.g., van Baar, 2014). These migrants are arguably not equally exposed to the risk of actual removal from Norwegian territory as rejected asylum seekers and other third-country nationals such as Joy (see chapter one), whose situations most commonly have been discussed in this terminology in the Norwegian context (Bendixsen, 2017; Jacobsen, 2015; Karlsen, 2021). EU migrants can, however, be deported, so-called rejected or expelled for reasons such as overstaying the initial three months without registering with the authorities, not being able to present a valid travel document or being considered a ‘serious threat to fundamental societal interests’, including if they have committed petty theft, as accounted for in chapter three (Immigration Act, 2008,

Sections 121 and 122; cf. Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet, 2013). Homeless EU migrants are therefore marked ‘as belonging to certain categories who should leave the territory’ (Bendixsen, 2018a, p. 167) in legislative and policy documents, through the configurations of the social services and provisions in which they are included and through social workers’ assessments and practices. Moreover, ideas of territorial belonging as a prerequisite for the deservingness of public social welfare, including ‘the spatial fixation of them as intruders’ (Karlsen, 2021, p. 140), seemingly make them and their precarious situations more legitimate to disregard both for the welfare state and the social work profession. Thus, as my analyses of the lived experiences of social service provision to homeless EU migrants in Norway show, and particularly with regards to how the parallel social service system regulates their everyday life, these migrants also find themselves in an ‘ongoing state of temporariness and uncertainty [...] [learning] to live, or rather survive, in the here and now’ (Karlsen, 2021, p. 113). However, my analyses show that such experiences are configured differently for different migrants. The regulating and disciplining dimensions are most harshly felt by those most in need of (humanitarian) social services.

### Charity and the policing of the poor: Something old or something new?

In addition to what has hitherto been foregrounded, all three articles do, in various manners, problematise the exceptionality often attributed to ‘the migrant’ and to how *cross-border* mobility is understood to be managed by (welfare) states in existing scholarship (cf. Dahinden, 2016) – my own study arguably included. A constant struggle in my work has therefore been, as alluded to several times in this text and in the words of Anderson (2019), how to ‘recognise the key role of the nation state without falling prey to methodological nationalism’ (p. 5). While asserting that ‘the national order of things’ (Malkki, 1995) produces specific ideas of and demarcations between the ‘belonging’/‘deserving’ and the ‘nonbelonging’/‘undeserving’ *within* Norway’s borders, I nevertheless ask whether the processes of welfare – and moral – bordering that homeless EU migrants are subjected to may also be interpreted as both indicative of wider transformations of the welfare state and as a continuation of the manners in which the Norwegian state, *and* social workers, historically have marked ‘the boundaries of organised social solidarity’ (Lorenz, 2006, p. 16; cf. Bendixsen & Wyller, 2021a; Karlsen, 2018). These are questions that this thesis cannot fully answer and that need further investigation and research. In what follows, I will nonetheless make some reflections.

Scholars debate whether the Norwegian welfare state, together with its Nordic counterparts, ‘is under siege’ (Bendixsen & Wyller, 2021b, p. 6; see chapter three). While recognising and critically interrogating the many neoliberal reforms of later decades, comparative welfare state research nevertheless seems to indicate that neoliberal policies have yet to *fundamentally* transform or undermine its historic ideals, characteristics and principles (Bendixsen et al., 2018, p. 10; see also e.g., Kamali & Jönsson, 2018; Vike, 2015). Whether the substandard health and social services offered to migrants with precarious citizenship statuses signal a (re)introduction of poor relief systems and charitable approaches to – and hence an undoing of – the welfare state in general (cf. Karlsen, 2018) should nonetheless be given close attention in future research. Accordingly, I subscribe to the concern voiced in a recent edited volume on the duality of openness and restriction in approaches to migrants in the Nordic countries:

Continuing down the pathway of differentiating between people living within a particular territory will necessarily contribute to dismantling the welfare state as we know it, in terms of its ideals of universality and its contribution to reducing social inequality.  
(Bendixsen & Wyller, 2021a, pp. 192–193)

However, as pointed to earlier, the drawing of boundaries between the ‘belonging’/‘deserving’ and the ‘nonbelonging’/‘undeserving’ is not a novelty brought about by contemporary mobility of ‘the poor’ across national borders, nor is social work(ers)’ partaking in such processes and practices (Cuadra, 2015; Persdotter, 2019; Persdotter et al., 2021). On the contrary, this kind of boundary making, based on ideas of ‘territorial belonging’, has long historical roots in Norway, stemming from the local anchoring of social protection systems for the poor. Social work scholar Lars Inge Terum (1996) described the pre-welfare state poor-relief system thus:

This local anchoring [of the poor-relief system] led to early differentiation between the *native [innfødde]* poor and the poor who were *strangers [framande]*. The Poor Law system [Fattigvesenet] was to take care of the poor in the local community, not of those coming from other parishes. Geographical mobility did therefore create problems for the Poor Law system. (p. 29, original italics, my translation)

A consequence was that poor people were ‘sent home’ to the parish or municipality where they ‘belonged’, often against their wishes (Terum, 2003, p. 51). The ‘final safety net’ of today’s welfare state, i.e., public social assistance, is similarly locally anchored in being a municipal responsibility provided through local NAV offices (see chapter three).

Correspondingly, the Social Welfare Act Circular specifically states that challenges arise for NAV if they receive requests for assistance from people not registered as inhabitants of the municipality or city district where they hand in their application, since they are meant to receive help where they are formal residents (Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet, 2012). In Oslo, several municipal low-threshold services are accordingly tasked with aiding people ‘in need’ in reconnecting with the municipality or city district where they belong, including paying for them to travel ‘home’. Thus, social work was from the outset – and continues to be – ‘casted to match with mainly sedentarist notions of society and people’ (Righard & Boccagni, 2015, p. 236), i.e., assumptions that sedentariness is the norm and mobility an abnormality, not restricted to ideas of belonging to *national* territories). Relatedly, as argued by Persdotter et al. (2021, p. 97), ‘the history of local and central government social protection systems for the poor, is closely wedded to the history of the control of the geographical mobility of the poor’. This has implicated social workers administering these systems in such forms of control long before today’s increased mobility between nation-states – and continues to do so in the context of poor or otherwise marginalised people who are deemed belonging to the nationalised welfare state, and not solely in the context of international migration.

Dilemmas of balancing care and control are also not specific to social work in the context of migration but rather intrinsic to the historical mandate of the profession. Social work scholar Allison D. Murdach (2011) proposed that this stems from the profession’s ‘attempt ‘to serve two masters: the good of the individual and the welfare of the community’ (p. 283), while Lorenz (2006) discussed the tension of being poised between ‘a dual mandate from service users and from the state’ (p. 15; cf. Staub-Bernasconi, 2014, 2016). When social work is performed within the framework of ambitious and comprehensive welfare states such as the Norwegian one, this balancing act takes a specific shape as it is influenced also by the normative ambitions of the nationalised welfare state – displaying ‘a valuation of certain ways of life’ (Bradshaw & Terum, 1997, p. 249), such as being in paid employment or economically active (Ylvisaker & Rugkåsa, 2020). This may play into the way social workers in the public social welfare administration seem to differentiate between and hierarchise homeless EU migrants in terms of who are deemed legitimate recipients of emergency support – as discussed in article 3. Studies show that the ‘undeserving poor’ – especially the mobile poor, such as vagrants, travellers and indigenous Roma – historically have been subjected to particularly harsh forms of control in Norway, often in the name of care (see chapter three).

Accordingly, it is pertinent for the Norwegian social work profession to scrutinise and monitor carefully whether its entanglement in processes of welfare bordering risks also

resulting in the (return to the pre-welfare state's) 'policing of the poor' (Bendixsen & Wyller, 2021a, p. 192) and reflect on potential implications of such a development for a profession mandated with promoting and realising human rights principles – for all.

### **The thesis's key empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions – and some final reflections on its implications for social work(ers)**

The main ambition of this thesis is to address the overall knowledge gap related to the topic and dilemmas of social work with, as well as social service provision to, persons whose migratory-legal positions limit their rights to public welfare in Norway. While significant research exploring the experiences that migrants with precarious citizenship statuses have had with the Norwegian welfare system has been carried out during the past decade, these studies have primarily focussed on rejected asylum seekers and the health-care system. My work adds to this scholarship by offering observations and analyses from the empirical context of encounters between social workers and homeless EU migrants in various social service provision settings. While contending that there are many similarities in the Norwegian (welfare) state's approaches towards these migrants and other migrants with precarious citizenship statuses, the study demonstrates that processes of welfare bordering nonetheless are shaped in specific ways for the migrants of concern in this thesis, particularly due to their so-called EU citizenship. Norway being part of the EU's single market leaves the (welfare) state with less latitude in terms of developing restrictive national migration policies and legislation directed at these migrants compared to third-country nationals, encouraging more subtle ways of governing – such as the humanitarian administration of time. The thesis thus also complements the growing body of literature that critically discusses how the increasing intertwining of welfare policies and migration management in general lead to complex hierarchies of welfare rights and differentiation of moral worth within the borders of particular nation-states. Further research is needed into how processes and practices of welfare bordering are configured for and experienced by migrants with migratory-legal statuses other than those paid attention to in Norwegian scholarship so far, this thesis included, as well as in other welfare state settings. This will deepen our understanding of whether and how the configurations of the welfare provision–migration management nexus discussed in this thesis is reflective of more fundamental changes in the Norwegian welfare state and social work(ers)' specific roles in this conundrum.

Another key contribution of my work is adding to the recent efforts that have been made to connect insights from migration studies, border studies in particular, with social work scholarship (see especially Persdotter et al., 2021). While this in my case primarily has stimulated an accentuation and critical discussion of the methodological nationalism at work within social work theory and practice, zooming in on the Norwegian situation, bridging these two fields of scholarship has allowed me to question and nuance the exceptionality often attributed to ‘the migrant’ and to how *cross-border* mobility is understood to be managed by (welfare) states in migration research.

The ethnographic approach of the study constitutes a novelty in the scholarship on the social work–migration management nexus. I propose that this approach offers much-needed insight into how being entangled in and subjected to – at times ‘dehumanizing’ (cf. Anderson, et al., 2009, p. 13) – processes of welfare bordering is *experienced* by both social workers and migrants. Reconnecting to Willen (2007) and the critical phenomenological perspective underpinning the entirety of my work, my aim is that the detailed ethnographic portraits and descriptions this thesis provides may work to

sensitize policymakers, politicians, and potentially even broader public audiences to the challenging, often deeply anxiety-producing, at times terrifying consequences that laws and policies frequently generate. (p. 28)

I am, however, under no illusion that this is an uncomplicated ambition or straightforward task, especially in today’s political climate, where the interrelationship between migration and the sustainability of the Norwegian welfare state is continuously being debated. Moreover, knowledge production within the field of migration has challenges of its own, as poignantly put by anthropologists Christine M. Jacobsen & Marry-Anne Karlsen (2021) in their introduction to an edited volume on the temporalities of irregular migration, where they also acknowledged the multiple temporalities of scholarship:

Faced with ‘urgent matters,’ often framed as some form of crisis, scholars of migration may indeed experience that the ‘slow’ knowledge they produce is ‘out of sync’ with the ever-changing terrain of mobility and migration control. (p. 15)

The statement has certainly proven its relevance for this study, as my fieldwork was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic and the current war in Ukraine – both of which have influenced patterns of mobility within Europe, states’ strategies for migration

management and availability of welfare services for migrants with precarious citizenship statuses; the COVID-19 pandemic has had particular consequences for the persons of concern in my work.<sup>23</sup> This should, however, not discourage us from continuously exploring and trying to make sense of the entanglement of human mobility, (national) borders, welfare rights and social work – quite the contrary.

An important task for the Norwegian social work profession should accordingly be to acknowledge and engage critically with the exclusionary potential inherent in its self-identification as a welfare state profession, discussing its contentious role in the welfare provision–migration management nexus. Key questions are whether new professional tools and practices, which are less tied to the welfare state, will be developed and what this might eventually imply for the profession and the welfare state at large. Herein lies the potential for increased collaboration between social work practitioners and researchers.

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<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., (in Norwegian only):

[https://vartoslo.no/bostedslos-raymond-johansen/oslo-kommune-sender-200-bostedslose-rumenere-til-romania/223569?fbclid=IwAR3Xq60Yv-GzI8Xy8zIC9iibNQCDYgfb4NH\\_CQDubfIbmqlUuMpcM2tb1\\_Y](https://vartoslo.no/bostedslos-raymond-johansen/oslo-kommune-sender-200-bostedslose-rumenere-til-romania/223569?fbclid=IwAR3Xq60Yv-GzI8Xy8zIC9iibNQCDYgfb4NH_CQDubfIbmqlUuMpcM2tb1_Y)  
<https://www.nrk.no/norge/sarbare-grupper-mistar-helsetilbodet-1.14952789?fbclid=IwAR0zMwMhVL-fpyGW0Gv3CZMi09GB357OVGeDzeB2mO8Talda6a6RJOPy1hE>  
<https://bystemmer.no/2020/04/nar-kan-vi-komme-tilbake/?fbclid=IwAR25xbfrJRF7yW6o7-E8YxtWGWByKzeNsA0WYpcmKty47BAIxrIYemI3zfU>



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## **Appendixes**

## *Article 1*

Misje, T. (2020). Social work and welfare bordering: The case of homeless EU migrants in Norway. *European Journal of Social Work*, 23(3), 401–413.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2019.1682975>

### Abstract:

This article contributes to the emergent European-wide conversation questioning the nation-state as the given unit of analysis for social work theory and practice through exploring encounters between migrants with precarious citizenship statuses, specifically homeless EU migrants, and social workers in Norway. It contends that the Norwegian social work profession has yet to engage critically with the exclusionary potential inherent in its self-identification as a welfare state profession. Paying attention to how homeless EU migrants are increasingly demarcated as ‘illegal’ in Norwegian welfare legislation, I argue for the aptness of employing the analytical lens of ‘welfare bordering’ when analysing encounters between these migrants and social workers. Building on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, the analysis further suggests that even social workers not mandated with administering public social welfare provisions get entangled in welfare bordering, at times enacting the border themselves. While social workers actively attempt to contest the exclusionary mechanisms of the welfare state in individual cases, such attempts might not challenge the migrants’ general exclusion from public welfare services per se, leaving homeless EU migrants in Norway dependent on welfare structures based on empathy and charity rather than realisation of rights.

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## *Article 2*

Misje, T. (2021). Queuing for food and playing lottery for beds: A parallel social service system and the lived experiences of humanitarian service provision to homeless EU migrants in Norway. *Nordic Social Work Research*, 11(2), 103–116.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2020.1857820>

### Abstract:

This article analyses humanitarian social service provision to homeless EU migrants in Oslo, Norway. Most of these migrants have no or weak affiliations with the formal labour market, resulting in restricted rights to public welfare services. Recent years have seen an upsurge of humanitarian services such as basic healthcare, food, shelter, and sanitary facilities, provided through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Nevertheless, availability is limited; thus, with the intention of securing fairness in a context where resources are scarce, service providers create strategies for restriction of access and queue management. The different services are spread out within the city, making migrants spend considerable time moving between them in their struggles to get basic needs met. Taking an afternoon spent with Bogdan, a Romanian man navigating several services, as my point of departure, I explore how humanitarian social service provision to homeless EU migrants simultaneously alleviates migrants' precarious situations and regulates their everyday lives. The concept of the *humanitarian administration of time* is introduced to call attention to this duality. A main contention is that a parallel social service system, taking on a bordering function, is emerging in Oslo.

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### *Article 3*

Misje, T. (2022). The precarious inclusion of homeless EU migrants in Norwegian public social welfare: Moral bordering and social workers' dilemmas. *Critical Social Policy*, 42(3), 448–468. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183211036580>

#### Abstract:

This article discusses public social welfare provision to homeless EU migrants in Norway. Most of these migrants have no or weak affiliations with the formal labour market, resulting in restricted rights to public social assistance. Drawing on the concept of *precarious inclusion*, I suggest that rather than being simply excluded from public social welfare, homeless EU migrants *are* included in the welfare state but in fragile and insecure ways through provisions directed at safeguarding bodily survival. I understand these limited inclusionary policies and practices as forming part of the Norwegian state's management of 'undesired' migrants. Building on interviews with social workers in the public social welfare administration, I reflect on how assessments of cases involving homeless EU migrants signal hierarchical conceptions and differentiation of human worth within Norway's borders and how *territorial belonging* emerges as a prerequisite for 'deservingness' in social workers' accounts.

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## Appendix 1: Information posted at fieldwork locations

### **Research project**

My name is Turid Misje and I am a PhD candidate at VID Specialized University in Oslo. I am conducting research on encounters between social workers and migrants who are in Norway but who do not have many rights in the country's welfare system. I am here to learn about this issue. I will also ask some of you individually if you want to contribute to the research project by allowing me to be present in conversations and meetings you have with social workers here and other places, and by asking to interview you.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact me when I am here, through phone 48234036 or through email [turid.misje@vid.no](mailto:turid.misje@vid.no)

You may also contact anyone working here if you have questions.

Thank you very much for your valuable contribution to this important research project!

Best wishes from Turid Misje



Turid Misje  
Boks 184 Vindern  
0319 OSLO

Vår dato: 21.07.2017

Vår ref: 54536 / 3 / AGH

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

## Tilbakemelding på melding om behandling av personopplysninger

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 26.05.2017.

Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

54536	<i>Meetings on the margins: Irregular migrants and 'regular' social workers</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	<i>VID vitenskapelig høgskole, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
Daglig ansvarlig	<i>Turid Misje</i>

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget [skjema](#). Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en [offentlig database](#).

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 30.06.2021, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Dersom noe er uklart ta gjerne kontakt over telefon.

Vennlig hilsen

Dag Kiberg

Agnete Hessevick

*Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.*

---

Kontaktperson: Agnete Hessevik tlf: 55 58 27 97 / [agnete.hessevik@nsd.no](mailto:agnete.hessevik@nsd.no)

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering



### FORMÅL

Prosjektets formål er formulert av forsker slik: "The overarching objective of my PhD project is to explore encounters between social workers and irregular migrants within the context of the Norwegian Welfare State. These migrants live within Norway's borders but lack formal access to the country's welfare services due to their irregularised immigration status. My particular interest relates to how social workers in various welfare state settings understand, shape and (re)negotiate professional roles, identities and values in situations where migrants clearly are in need of social welfare services but where their access and rights to such services are limited and contested. At the same time, I aim to study how the migrants experience and understand such encounters."

### UTVALG OG REKRUTTERING

Utvalget er sosialarbeidere ansatt ved NAV og et lavterskeltilbud i Oslo og irregulære migranter som bruker disse tilbudene.

Personvernombudet forutsetter at frivillighet, taushetsplikt og konfidensialitet blir ivaretatt under rekruttering av utvalget. Det innebærer at du ikke kan få tilgang til taushetsbelagte opplysninger om eller kontaktopplysninger til irregulære migranter før de selv har samtykket til å delta i prosjektet, eller samtykket til at du kan ta kontakt.

### DATAINNSAMLING OG DATAMATERIALETS INNHOLD

Datainnsamling vil gjennomføres ved lavterskeltilbud for irregulære migranter som gis av både Oslo kommune og ikke-statlige organisasjoner. Du vil gjennomføre observasjoner av og intervjuer med både irregulære migranter og ansatte/sosialarbeidere. Datainnsamlingen foregår over 1-1,5 år.

Personvernombudet forutsetter at alle nødvendige tillatelser foreligger før datainnsamling starter, herunder tillatelse fra de aktuelle institusjonene der datainnsamlingen foregår.

Personvernombudet har mottatt temalister for intervjuer. Du oppgir at intervjuguide ikke vil utarbeides før et stykke ut i feltarbeidet. Vi ber om at intervjuguider ettersendes til [personvernombudet@nsd.no](mailto:personvernombudet@nsd.no) i god tid før intervjuene gjennomføres.

### TAUSHETSPLIKT

Personvernombudet forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres innenfor reglene om taushetsplikt. Det innebærer at du som forsker ikke kan få tilgang til taushetsbelagte opplysninger verken under observasjon eller under intervjuer, uten at det innhentes samtykke fra den som har krav på taushetsplikt til dette. Du bør drøfte hvordan datainnsamling kan skje innenfor reglene om taushetsplikt med institusjonene der du skal samle data.

Vi anbefaler at du rutinemessig minner ansatte/sosialarbeidere på deres taushetsplikt i forkant av intervjuer.

Vi anbefaler at du er spesielt oppmerksom på at ikke bare navn, men også identifiserende bakgrunnsopplysninger må utelates, som for eksempel alder, kjønn, tid, diagnoser og eventuelle spesielle hendelser. Dere bør også være forsiktig med å bruke eksempler under intervjuene.

#### SÅRBAR GRUPPE

Irregulære migranter befinner seg i en svært sårbar situasjon. Når man forsker på sårbare grupper, har man et særskilt ansvar for å ivareta informantenes interesser. Belastningen informantene utsettes for må stå i et rimelig forhold til den samfunnsmessige og vitenskapelige nytten av studien.

Vi anbefaler at du setter seg inn i NESH sine etiske retningslinjer om forskning på sårbare grupper: <https://www.etikkom.no/FBIB/Temaer/Forskning-pa-bestemte-grupper/Sarbare-grupper/>.

#### SENSITIVE OPPLYSNINGER

Det behandles sensitive personopplysninger om etnisk bakgrunn eller politisk/filosofisk/religiøs oppfatning og det kan framkomme opplysninger om helseforhold. Det må utøves særlig forsiktighet ved behandling av sensitive personopplysninger, både når det gjelder etiske problemstillinger, innhenting av data og informasjonssikkerhet underveis.

#### INFORMASJON OG SAMTYKKE

Utvalget informeres skriftlig og muntlig om prosjektet og samtykker til deltakelse. Informasjonsskrivet er hovedsakelig godt utformet. Vi ber imidlertid om at følgende endres/tilføyes:

- dato for prosjektslutt må oppdateres til 30.06.2021
- det bør presiseres at om migrantene velger å delta eller ikke, eller trekker seg underveis, vil dette ikke få noen konsekvenser for de tjenestene de mottar.

Personvernombudet minner om at det er forskers ansvar å påse at informasjonen blir formidlet på et språk som deltakeren forstår. Forskeren må forsikre seg om at deltakerne har forstått hva deltakelse i prosjektet innebærer og deltar frivillig. Vi legger til grunn at informasjonsskriv oversettes til andre språk dersom nødvendig, og at det gis muntlig informasjon (og i så fall innhentes muntlig samtykke), dersom dette er mer hensiktsmessig.

#### INFORMASJONSSIKKERHET

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at forsker etterfølger VID vitenskapelig høgskole sine interne rutiner for datasikkerhet.

#### PROSJEKTSLUTT

Forventet prosjektslutt er 30.06.2021. Ifølge prosjektmeldingen skal innsamlede opplysninger da anonymiseres. Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes. Det gjøres ved å:

- slette direkte personopplysninger (som navn/koblingsnøkkel)
- slette/omskrive indirekte personopplysninger (identifiserende sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f.eks. bosted/arbeidssted, alder og kjønn)
- slette digitale lydopptak

## Turid Misje

---

**Fra:** Turid Misje  
**Sendt:** tirsdag 12. september 2017 11.20  
**Til:** k.w.ruyter@medisin.uio.no  
**Kopi:**  
**Emne:** PhD prosjekt  
**Vedlegg:** Project description PhD project final versionTurid Misje.docx

Hei og takk for hyggeleg samtale i dag 12.09.2017.

Som avtalt sender eg deg prosjektbeskrivelsen min, sjå vedlegg. Her står ikkje problematikken som er utgangspunktet for kontakten med REK skildra i detalj, difor skriv eg som avtalt ein paragraf om det her.

Prosjektet mitt handlar om møter mellom sosialarbeidarar og personar som ikkje har so mange rettigheter i det norske velferdssystemet, inkludert profesjonell praksis i forhold til denne gruppa og sosialarbeidarar sine refleksjonar rundt dette. Dette vil gje meg eit inntak til korleis sosialarbeidarar sine møter med denne gruppa eventuelt påverkar utøvelse av og syn på sosialarbeidarrolla og profesjonelle verdiar. Eit lavterskeltiltak som vert drive av har vorte spurd om om ynskd og vera med i prosjektet. Det som handlar om tilstedeværelse og deltakande observasjon ved tiltaket i deira opningstider har som nemnd vorte godkjend av NSD.

Eg ynskjer i tillegg til dette å vera tilstades på tilsette sine møter i forkant og etterkant av opningstidene, og det er dette henvendelsen til REK gjeld. Dette er etter det eg har fått opplyst ein arena der samtalar og diskusjonar som er relevante for mitt forskingsfokus skjer. Det eg då er interessert i er sosialarbeidarane sine samtalar og refleksjonar rundt samtalar dei har hatt og hendingar som har skjedd i løpet av dagen, det er ikkje snakka om innhenting av taushetsbelagde opplysningar som skal brukast som forskingsdata. Eg ber heller ikkje om tilgang til eventuell skriftleg dokumentasjon/journalar. Men, det vil ikkje vera mogleg å vera til stades utan å høyra om enkeltindivid, som kan innebera å få tilgang på taushetsbelagd informasjon, i visse tilfelle kan det handla om helseopplysningar. Eg vil presisera at ingen av dei tilsette ved tiltaket er helsepersonell. Det er ikkje praktisk gjennomførbart å innhenta samtykker frå alle som er innom tiltaket i løpet av ein dag, då dette kan vera opp til 180 personar.

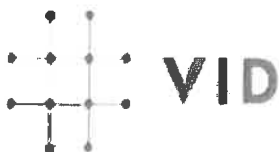
Eg forstod på deg at du meiner at det ikkje skal vera naudsynt eller hensiktsmessig med ein søknad om dispensasjon frå taushetsplikta i dette tilfelle, og ber som avtalt om ei skriftleg stadfesting på dette og di vurdering av korleis det kan løysast. Eg har som avtalt kopiert inn !

! slik at dei også får svaret frå deg.

Ta kontakt dersom du skulle trenga ytterlegare informasjon, dokumentasjon.

Beste helsing

Turid Misje  
PhD stipendiat



Senter for diakoni og profesjonell praksis  
VID vitenskapelige høgskole  
[turid.misje@vid.no](mailto:turid.misje@vid.no)  
Tlf: +47 22 45 19 94/ +47 48 23 40 36

 please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.



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## Turid Misje

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**Fra:** Knut W Ruyter <k.w.ruyter@medisin.uio.no>  
**Sendt:** tirsdag 12. september 2017 12.06  
**Til:** Turid Misje  
**Kopi:**  
**Emne:** RE: PhD prosjekt

Til Turid Misje,

Takk for samtale tidligere i dag og oversendt prosjektbeskrivelse og forespørsel.

REK er gitt myndighet til å gi dispensasjon fra taushetsbelagte helseopplysninger i annen forskning enn helsefaglig og medisinsk forskning.

I dette tilfellet ber man ikke om tilgang til noen bestemte kilder for taushetsbelagte helseopplysninger. Forsker skal være tilstede på ansattmøter hvor slike opplysninger kanskje kan bli nevnt og dermed overhøres. Det kreves ingen dispensasjon fra taushetsplikt fra REK for å kunne delta i slike møter.

Vi anbefaler at , regulerer forskerens deltakelse i møter ved å gi tillatelse til at forskningen kan gjennomføres i institusjonen, at forsker avgir taushetserklæring (til institusjonen) og at eventuelle helseopplysninger som overhøres ikke kan omtales eller inngå i forskningsarbeidet.

Med hilsen

Knut Ruyter  
Avd. direktør  
REK sør-øst

>

## Appendix 3: Information and consent form

### **Request for participation in research project**

#### **Purpose of the study**

This is a study about encounters between social workers, and migrants who are in Norway but who do not have so many rights within the country's welfare system. I wish to explore how both social workers and migrants understand such meetings. I am particularly interested in how these meetings potentially influence social workers' views on own mandate and professional role and identity, and in how migrants experience such encounters. There exists very little knowledge about these important issues today, especially from a Norwegian context.

#### **What does participation in the project imply?**

The study's main methodological approach is participant observation. I will ask to take part in meetings and conversations between social workers and migrants when and where these happen. In addition, I will conduct interviews. The questions will concern experiences with such meetings, focussing on both positive and challenging experiences. I will mainly collect data through taking notes by hand. When interviewing I will use an audio recorder.

#### **What will happen to the information about you?**

All personal data will be treated confidentially. I will be the only one having access to this information. In the written dissertation all information about you will be anonymised and it will not be possible to recognise you.

The project is scheduled for completion by June 2021. After this the data will be anonymised.

#### **Voluntary participation**

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made anonymous.

To migrants: Whether or not you want to take part in the study, or if you say yes first and then decide to withdraw, will not have any consequences for which kind of help you will be able to get in Norway.

If you have any questions about the study: Please contact me, Turid Misje, phone number: 48234036 or email: [turid.misje@vid.no](mailto:turid.misje@vid.no). I am a PhD candidate at VID Specialized University and this study is my PhD project. My academic supervisor is associate professor Marianne Rugkåsa, at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences.

The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

### **Consent for participation in the study**

I have received information about the study and am willing to participate

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(Signed by project participant, date)

## Appendix 4: Power of attorney from migrants (in Norwegian)

### FULLMAKT

Jeg, \_\_\_\_\_, født \_\_\_\_\_ gir med dette PhD student Turid Misje fullmakt til å kontakte Sosial og ambulant akuttjeneste samt sosialkonsulenter i XX og ved XX som har vært involvert i min sak, for å få informasjon om vurderinger av min sak/mine søknader. Om aktuelt kan også NAV, Pasient- og brukerombudet i Oslo og Akershus og Fylkesmannen i Oslo og Akershus kontaktes. Dette som del av Turid Misjes forskningsprosjekt om sosialt arbeid og migranter med få rettigheter i det norske velferdssystemet.

Jeg gir likeledes de overnevnte tillatelse til å dele sine vurderinger av min sak og søknad(er) med Turid Misje, og til at Turid Misje kan få kopi av skriftlige vedtak i min sak. Jeg er klar over at informasjonen skal brukes i forskningsøyemed og at Turid Misjes samtaler med de overnevnte instanser ikke vil påvirke utfallet av min sak/mine søknader. Jeg har blitt informert om at i det skriftlige resultatet av forskningsprosjektet vil all informasjon om meg bli anonymisert.

Jeg har fått forklart dette dokumentet og målet med det muntlig, på mitt morsmål rumensk.

Oslo,

Signatur

Muntlig oversatt av sosialkonsulent \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5: Interview guide, migrants (in Norwegian)

**Intervjuguide migrantar** (vil tilpassast noko til kvar enkelt person basert på min kjennskap til han/henne gjennom feltarbeid)

*Informasjon om prosjektet, anonymitet, konfidensialitet, frivillig deltaking, at korvidt han/ho deltek ikkje har betydning for kva hjelp han/ho kan få eller ikkje i Norge (jfr. skriftleg informasjonskriv)*

### Bakgrunnsspørsmål

- Kva land er du fødd i?
- Kva land reknar du som ditt heimland?
- Alder?
- Har du barn? Kor mange?
- Har du ein partnar/er du gift?
- Kan du fortelja meg om kva som er grunnen til at du er i Norge?
- Når kom du til Norge (først gong)?
- Kor lenge har du vore her (denne gongen)?
- Er det andre land du har budd eller vore i over lengre tid?
- Har du budd eller opphalde deg over lengre tid andre stader i Norge?
- Er du her aleine eller kom du saman med vener, familie?

### Om livet i Norge

- Kan du fortelja meg om dagen din i går? (Her vil eg stilla utdjupingsspørsmål for å få ei so detaljert forteljning som mogleg). Påfølgande spørsmål avheng litt av kva som gjem fram gjennom dette spørsmålet.
- Me har jo møttest på [namn på stad]. Kan du hugsa korleis du hørde om/fekk vita om denne staden?
- Kan du fortelja meg litt om kva det er som gjer at du kjem dit? (Kva brukar du staden til?) *Spør eksplisitt om han/ho har fått hjelp utover mat, søvn, dusjing osv* (NB! dette spørsmålet vart lagt til etter ein del intervju)
- Er det andre stader du går for å eta, sova, vaska klede, dusja (Dette spørsmålet vil tilpassast litt)
- Finst det stader (utanom desse) der du kan setja deg ned for å kvila/slappa av?
- Kvar søv du? (om det ikkje er kome fram før)
- Kan du fortelja litt om korleis du tener pengar i Norge?
- Er det noko du set særleg pris på ved livet i Oslo/Norge? (Kan du fortelja meir om dette?)
- Er det noko du synst er særleg vanskeleg ved livet i Oslo/Norge?
- Er det noko du savnar som kunne ha gjort det lettare for deg å opphalda deg her i Oslo/Norge?

- Har du nokon gong erfart at det er stader i Oslo der du ikkje har fått lov å koma inn eller å opphalda deg? (Kan du fortelja meg meir om dette?)
- Utdjupande spørsmål knytta til køsystem, køståing, venting, opningstider, reglar ved tiltak dersom det ikkje har kome opp tidlegare i intervjuet.
- Om han/ho har budd/vore i andre land over lengre tid, spørsmål knytta til samanlikning av livet i Norge/hjelpetilbod i Norge versus andre land.

Er det noko du har lyst å seia som eg ikkje har spurd om?

## Appendix 6: Interview guide social workers general (in Norwegian)

### **Intervjuguide sosialarbeidarar** (vil tilpassast noko til kvar enkelt arbeidsplass)

*Informasjon om prosjektet, anonymitet, konfidensialitet, frivillig deltaking (jfr. skriftleg informasjonsskriv)*

#### Bakgrunnsspørsmål

- Utdanning og arbeidserfaring
- Kor lenge har du jobba her
- Kva var det som gjorde at du hadde lyst å jobba her/ kvifor søkte du jobb her

#### Om arbeidsplassen

- Kan du fortelja meg om arbeidsplassen din, tilbodet dykkar, og kva du tenkjer er målsetjinga med arbeidet de gjer her?
- Kva tenkjer du er hovudrolla di som sosialarbeidar her?
- Kva har endra seg, om noko, sidan du starta å jobba her?
- Kva er likt med arbeidet sidan du starta?
- Kva er det du likar best ved å jobba her?
- Kva synst du er mest utfordrande?

#### Om gjester/brukarar/klientar (ikkje enkeltpersonar)

- Kan du fortelja litt om dei som brukar [namn på arbeidsplass]? (Kva er fellestrekk? Kva er skilnader?)
- Kva brukar dei plassen til? (Fellestrekk? Skilnader?)
- Kven tenkjer du at har mest bruk for denne staden, kvifor?
- Kva er den største skilnaden på å jobba med dei brukarane som de kallar tilreisande og dei som blir kalla bofaste/dei gamle gjestene/dei faste gjestene? (Og tenkjer du at dette er eit relevant skilje å gjera? Kvifor? Kvifor ikkje?)
- Kva er det oftast dei fastbuande ynskjer av deg som sosialarbeidar? Dei tilreisande?
- Kven tenkjer du på som [namn på arbeidsplass] sine viktigaste samarbeidspartnarar? I kva situasjonar er de/du i kontakt med dei? Når henviser du? (Skilje mellom grupper som brukar [namn på arbeidsplass]?)
- Erfaringar med samarbeid med NAV, inkludert SAA

## Særleg om gjester/brukarar/klientar med få rettigheter i Norge

- Kan du fortelja litt (meir) om det å jobba med gjester/brukarar/klientar som ikkje har so mange rettigheter i det offentlege velferdssystemet? (Kva er særleg utfordrande? Spannande?)
- Er det noko hjelp du tenkjer at dei som er tilreisande burde få i Norge som du tenkjer dei ikkje får i dag? Kvifor? Eller er det noko dei får du tenkjer dei kanskje ikkje burde ha fått? Kvifor? (Er det noko du ikkje tilbyr fordi du tenkjer at dei likevel ikkje vil få det?)
- I kva situasjonar er det med rettighetsstatus/opphaldsstatus relevant?
- Er det noko type kunnskap du synst du treng/manglar når det gjeld å jobba med denne gruppa?

## Om opningstider, køordningar, reglar

- Kva er opningstidene dykkar?
- Kva begrensingar, om nokon, har de når det gjeld kor mange som kan bruka tilbodet dykkar/for lenge dei kan bruka det?
- Hender det at det er fleire som vil bruka tilbodet enn de har rom for? Korleis handterer de det?
- Kva tenkjer du om køsystemet de har her per i dag? Korleis opplever du å handheva det?
- (Korleis opplevde du køsystemet de hadde tidlegare, med to ulike køar?)
- Kan du fortelja meg om eventuelle «husreglar» her? Kva er dei viktigaste reglane? Korleis opplever du å handheva desse? Er det rom for skjønnsutøvelse?

Er det noko du har lyst å seia som eg ikkje har spurd om?

Om relevant: Spørsmål knytta til å vera sosialarbeidar med felles land/språkbakgrunn med brukarar/gjester – kva fordelar og kva utfordringar er knytta til dette?

Utdjupande spørsmål knytta til skjønnvurderingar (eventuelt vurderingar av særleg sårbarhet/ikkje sårbarhet) i situasjonar eg har vore del av når eg har gjort deltakande observasjon og der dei som har vore del av situasjonen er kjend med mitt prosjekt og mi rolle.

Utdjupande spørsmål rundt enkelt-migrantar sin situasjon der migranten har gjeve samtykke til dette. Desse vil tilpassast det einskilde intervju.

Hugs temaene:

Skjønn, unntak

Sårbarhet

Mulighet til «politisk påverknad» - å seia frå oppover

## Appendix 7: Interview guide hospital social workers (in Norwegian)

### **Intervjuguide sjukehusosionom** (vil tilpassast noko til kvar enkelt arbeidsplass)

*Informasjon om prosjektet, anonymitet, konfidensialitet, frivillig deltaking(jfr. skriftleg informasjonskriv)*

#### Bakgrunnsspørsmål

- Utdanning og arbeidserfaring
- Kor lenge har du jobba her
- Kva var det som gjorde at du hadde lyst å jobba her/ kvifor søkte du jobb her

#### Om arbeidsplassen

- Kan du fortelja meg om arbeidsplassen din, tilbudet dykkar, og kva du tenkjer er målsetjinga med arbeidet de gjer her?
- Kva tenkjer du er hovudrolla di som sosialarbeidar her? Kva er hovudarbeidsoppgåvene?

#### Om gjester/brukarar/klientar (ikkje enkeltpersonar)

- Kan du fortelja meg litt om erfaringar du har med å jobba med pasientar som ikkje har so mange rettigheter i det norske velferdssystemet?
- Finst det ulike kategoriar innanfor denne gruppa slik du ser det?
- Kva er den største skilnaden på å jobba med desse pasientane versus dei som har rettigheter?
- Kva er det oftast dei med rettigheter ynskjer/treng av deg som sosialarbeidar? Dei som ikkje har so mange rettigheter?
- Kven tenkjer du på som dine viktigaste eksterne samarbeidspartnarar? I kva situasjonar er de/du i kontakt med dei? Er det nokon skilnad på dette ifht pasientar som ikkje har so mange rettigheter? Fortell
- Kan du fortelja litt (meir) om det å jobba med gjester/brukarar/klientar som ikkje har so mange rettigheter i det offentlege velferdssystemet? (Kva er særleg utfordrande? Spennande?)
- Er det noko hjelp du tenkjer at dei som ikkje har so mange rettigheter i velferdssystemet per i dag burde få i Norge som du tenkjer dei ikkje får i dag? Kvifor? Eller er det noko dei får du tenkjer dei kanskje ikkje burde ha fått? Kvifor? (Er det noko du ikkje tilbyr fordi du tenkjer at dei likevel ikkje vil få det?)
- I kva situasjonar er det med rettighetsstatus/opphaldsstatus relevant?
- Er det noko type kunnskap du synst du treng/manglar når det gjeld å jobba med denne gruppa?

Utdjupande spørsmål knytta til skjønnvurderingar i NN sin situasjon. Korleis opplevde du den situasjonen og di rolle, kva forventingar som var til deg, kva du kunne bidra med?

Er det noko du har lyst å seia som eg ikkje har spurd om?





## Appendix 8: Interview guide social workers NAV/SAA (in Norwegian)

### Intervjuguide sosialarbeidarar NAV/ SAA

*Informasjon om prosjektet, anonymitet, konfidensialitet, frivillig deltaking (jfr. skriftleg informasjonsskriv)*

#### Bakgrunnsspørsmål

- Utdanning og arbeidserfaring
- Kor lenge har du jobba her
- Kva var det som gjorde at du hadde lyst å jobba her/ kvifor søkte du jobb her

#### Om arbeidsplassen

- Kan du fortelja meg om arbeidsplassen din, hovudarbeidsoppgåvene dine, og kva du tenkjer er målsetjinga med arbeidet du gjer her?
- Kva tenkjer du er hovudrolla di som (sosial)arbeidar her?
- Kva er det du likar best ved å jobba her?
- Kva synst du er mest utfordrande?

Om arbeid med migrantar/menneske med begrensa rettigheter i velferdssystemet – her må eg prøva meg litt fram i forhold til kva som gjev mening for den eg snakkar med

- Kan du fortelja litt om di erfaring med å arbeida med personar som har begrensa rettigheter i det norske velferdssystemet? Og kva ligg egentleg i det i motsetning til det å ha fulle rettigheter?
- Veit du noko om korleis dei har kome i kontakt med kontoret dykkar – kjem dei sjølv, er det nokon som føl, kven? Korleis kjem dei i kontakt med deg (utdjupande spørsmål om å bli avvist i mottaket, får dei levert søknad – evt ta det seinare?)
- Skjer det ofte at du er i kontakt med menneske i denne «gruppa»? Har dette endra seg medan du har jobba her?
- Kan du fortelja litt om eventuelle variasjonar innan gruppa (EØS borgarar – variasjonar her også -, personar med endeleg avslag på asyl...). Har dette endra seg medan du har jobba her?
- Kva har dei du har vore i kontakt med ynskd hjelp til? Kva er grunnen til at dei har kome til dykk? Skil det seg frå dei med fulle rettigheter?
- Kva muligheter/begrensingar har du til å bistå? Er det mogleg å gje eksempel (utan å bryta taushetsplikta) der de har vurdert å kunna bistå, og der dåke har vurdert å ikkje kunna bistå? Kan du seia litt om vurderingane du gjorde?
- Kva verktøy/retningslinjer/rundskriv/kommunale føringar (formelle, uformelle) osb må du forhalda deg til i dette arbeidet? Har desse endra seg mykje medan du har jobba her? I kva retning? Instramming/auka mulighet til bistand?

- Opplever du å ha handlingsrom/rom for skjønnsutøvelse (er det større/mindre rom for det i disse sakene sette i forhold til dei med fulle rettigheter?) – Kva tenkjer du rundt dette? Har dette endra seg medan du har jobba her? (Prøva å få tak i dette om det er mogleg å vurdere situasjonen til ein person – ikkje først lovleg opphald/fast bopel, og vedkomande sine tankar om dette)
- Lovleg opphald, fast bopel – kan du forklara meg litt kva dette eigentleg betyr, korleis vurderer du dette? Tankar om endringa i rundskrivet og den nye veiledaren, at NAV skal ha større ansvar for å vurdere lovleg opphald for EØS borgarar, kva ligg i dette, har det ført til endringar i måten du jobbar på?
- Forskrifta – kva kan vera ein nødssituasjon? Eksempel (utan å bryta teieplikta). Kva type opplysningar, råd, veiledning kan vera aktuelt å gje?
- Kva andre instansar samarbeidar du oftast med i desse sakene? (kontakt med politiet, utlendingsmyndighetene, lavterskeltilbod (offentlege/frivillige) Kva er hovudskilnaden, om nokon, sette i forhold til dei som har fulle rettigheter?
- Utdjupande spørsmål om lavterskeltilbod og syn på desse si rolle – kunnskap om desse
- Kva er den største skilnaden på å jobba med dei som har fulle rettar og dei som ikkje har det Utdjupande spørsmål om tankar om sosialarbeidarrolla, mandat
- Er det noko hjelp du tenkjer at dei som er utan fulle rettigheter burde få i Norge som du tenkjer dei ikkje får i dag? Kvifor? Eller er det noko dei får du tenkjer dei kanskje ikkje burde ha fått? Kvifor? (Er det noko du ikkje tilbyr fordi du tenkjer at dei likevel ikkje vil få det?)
- Er det noko type kunnskap du synst du treng/manglar når det gjeld å jobba med denne gruppa?
- Har du nokon ynskje/mulighet til å melda frå «oppover i systemet» - politisk påverknad?

Er det noko du har lyst å seia som eg ikkje har spurd om?

