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“We can always return to the forest”

**Narratives of European labour migrants navigating the
informal rental market in Oslo**

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Abstract

The focus of this study is the housing careers, housing strategies and experiences of five European labour migrants who are currently living, or who have at some point, lived informally in Oslo. There has been little focus on the informal rental market in Norway and most studies rely on data from second-hand sources.

The experiences of the five informants range from being one out of a hundred in a crowded and substandard house to being able to stay long term in affordable and good-standard, informal housing. Their long-term migration strategies and the economic, social and cultural capital they have at their disposal does not only affect what apartments are accessible to them, but also how they make sense of the housing market as a whole and their agency within it. The empirical data in this study is gathered through semi-structured, qualitative interviews and with the use of narrative analysis, narratives like *the empowered tenant* and *the disempowered tenant* have been identified, following changes in their economic, social or cultural capital that change the power dynamics between the informants as tenants and their landlords. In addition, narratives touching on their perceived barriers of entering the formal rental market, the barriers of *ethnicity, a lack of income and the need for flexibility* and *the view of informality as effortless* has been discussed in the light of other relevant research on the structural barriers that labour migrants face on the formal rental market.

This study demonstrates that there are many structural barriers for European labour migrants to enter the formal rental market in Oslo and it opens up for others to profit off them.

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1. Theory

1.1 Introduction

The Norwegian housing market and labour migration

Norway has been described as a nation of homeowners (Sandlie & Seeberg, 2013). Looking at the way Norwegian housing policies are designed, it can be argued that renting a dwelling is seen as something that is temporary. People are expected to rent during early adulthood and through transitioning periods, like divorce, but not permanently (Søholt & Astrup, 2009). In Norway, good housing is viewed as fundamental for the citizens well-being and is one of the driving forces behind national housing policies (Woll, 2008). Norwegian housing policies are directed towards enabling that most residents will have the opportunity to, over time, be able to own their own housing (Samfunnsøkonomisk analyse, 2019). Nevertheless, transitioning from being a tenant to being a homeowner depends on factors like access to paid employment, credit history, housing prices and the desire for homeownership (Søholt & Astrup, 2009).

There has been a large increase in the prices on the housing market in Oslo during the last decades. As a result of this growth, it has become more difficult for many to buy housing in Oslo and many occupational groups working full-time, like teachers, nurses and workers in the service industry, struggle to buy their own housing in many areas of the city (Folkvord & Olguin, 2018; Gyberg, 2019; Stugu, 2017). Folkvord and Olguin (2018) argues that the housing market in Oslo is controlled by those who have the economic capital and when the price of housing increases, economic capital beyond what can be acquired by working is needed to buy housing. Alternatively, buying into the housing market can be financed through the sale of already owned property or through an inheritance, excluding those who are lacking these advantages (Stugu, 2017). Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) argues that labour migrants' strategies and challenges on the Norwegian housing market can best be understood as something that is incremental, where new strategies and challenges appear in line with the migrant's increased length of residence. Because transitioning into homeownership in Norway falls far beyond the strategies and desires that my five informants have expressed during this research process, I will not go in-depth into homeownership on the Norwegian housing market. It is not my place to speculate if this will happen for them in the future, or

homeownership in Norway is something that is unobtainable for my informants – even in the long run.

In 2019, only 23,2 % of Norwegian households rented their place of residence (SSB, 2020), which is a low number, compared to the number of tenants that exist in many other Western European countries. In Switzerland, about 50 % of the population lived in a rented dwelling that held a market price rent and in the Netherlands, the number was 30 % and in Sweden, 34 % of the population rented a dwelling that held a market price rent (The European Commission, 2019). In Oslo, number of tenants is higher than in the rest of the country and a total 31 % of the city's households rented their place of residence in 2019 (SSB, 2020).

In the private rental market in Norway, the level of rent is determined by the market and in Oslo, the level of rent is 30 % higher than the national average in Norway (Samfunnsøkonomisk analyse, 2019). Søholt and Astrup (2009) argues that because of the large focus on homeownership in Norwegian housing politics, less attention and governance has been placed on the rental market and as a result, the rental market developed semi-freely following principles of supply and demand. In Oslo, and many other densely populated areas, there are more tenants in need of housing than there are dwellings available. This gives the landlord a considerable freedom to pick and choose between potential tenants and it often results in the landlord picking the tenant who they perceive as being the safest investment. (Sørvoll & Aarset, 2015). Chisholm, Howden-Chapman, and Fougere (2018) argues that many tenants are more dependent on their homes than the landlords are to their rental income, which contributes to an unequal power distribution between the tenant and the landlord.

On the Norwegian private rental market, a rental agreement is made directly between the landlord and the tenant and commonly, the tenant sets aside a deposit equal to three-months' rent. A three-month notice period is common, but variations may occur. Following a change in Norwegian law, the current minimum length of a normal rental contracts is at least three years. Nevertheless, following this change it appears that three year long rental contracts has become the new normal on the rental market (Søholt & Astrup, 2009). Research shows that the length of the tenancies a tenant has correlates with the rental price they have to pay on the rental market and therefore, a new rental contract usually brings with it higher rent levels for the tenant. This is an indicator that price adjustments are often made when new rental contracts are made between a tenant and a landlord (Samfunnsøkonomisk analyse, 2019).

Oslo has a relatively small and means-tested social housing sector and less than 5 % of Norwegian households live in municipally owned social housing (Folkvord & Olguin, 2018; Gulbrandsen & Hansen, 2010). The Norwegian social housing sector is directed towards the most disadvantaged groups who struggle on the private housing market. Nevertheless, labour migrants can only be expected to obtain social housing to a very small extent because of the highly means-tested distribution of housing and the required residence time (Sørvoll & Aarset, 2015). Because this sector falls far from the focus point of this thesis, I will not discuss this sector in-depth, but rather describe some of its key features. The rent level in the Norwegian social housing sector is set to be close to the market value and therefore, subsidies for tenants are given through individually determined housing allowances rather than through general rent subsidies. In the social housing sector, there has been an increase in the use of short-term housing contracts, in line with the view of social housing as being transitional. This view follows from the idea that initially, everyone should be able to acquire housing on the private market and if necessary, by the help of housing allowances, grants and start-up loans (Gulbrandsen & Hansen, 2010; Sørvoll & Aarset, 2015).

Gyberg (2019) writes that those who are within the housing market can enjoy the stability of good and secure housing, while those who are outside of it must fight an increasingly tough fight to access the same security. People's housing and the conditions on the rental market have a big impact on people's quality of life and Søholt and Astrup (2009) argues that these conditions impact Norway's immigrant population to a greater degree than the majority population because they often remain in the rental market. One of my five informants is currently renting in the formal rental market in Oslo, while two more have previously rented formally. The EU's expansion east of 2004 and 2007 released the biggest wave of migration since the Second World War (Jon Horgen Friberg & Eldring, 2011). In this study, five labour migrants from Poland and Romania have been interviewed. The term labour migrant can be used for both those who settle in the country permanently and for those who migrate more temporarily (Sandlie & Seeberg, 2013).

Mahler (1995, p. 201) argues that "immigrants are especially visible on the informal rental market because of their ethnic visibility". When issues of informal housing are discussed in the Norwegian media, it is often related to labour migration. In 2008, a house in Drammen, where 22 Polish labour migrants were staying burned down, killing seven of them. This housing was of a substandard nature and the fire started in the old electrical system of the house (Sunde & Kumano-Ensby, 2015, 24th of February). In the years after, there has been a

bigger media focus on substandard housing and the people profiting off labour migrants, see for example Skyhøy leie for denne rønna [Skyhigh rent for this shack] (Haakaas & Hansen, 2019, 28th of November) and Tjente millioner på utleie av ulovlig brakklandsby [Made millions on renting out illegal barracks] (Ogre, 2019, 26th of November). In this study I aim to add a different perspective to informal housing by analysing the narratives and experiences of European labour migrants in Oslo.

1.2 Research questions

The overall purpose of this study is to create a better understanding of how European labour migrants are experiencing the housing market in Oslo. Using the informal rental market as a lens, I wish to examine their integration process and social mobility on the housing market in Oslo. It has been argued that there is a knowledge gap in the research on the housing and living conditions of labour migrants in Norway and that more research is needed to create a better understanding of their movements on the housing market (see Sandlie & Seeberg, 2013; Søholt, Ødegard, Lynnebakke, & Eldring, 2012; Sørvoll & Aarset, 2015). With this study, I wish to add to this knowledge by exploring labour migrants' own experiences on the informal rental market. The empirical research data is built on interviews with five European labour migrants who is living informally in Oslo or previously been living informally. This study has three research questions:

Research question 1: *How are European labour migrants navigating the informal rental market in Oslo and what is the importance of their economic, social and cultural capital in this process?*

With this question, I wish to examine how European labour migrants make use of the resources they have available to them when navigating the informal rental market and especially how they make use of their social and cultural capital at times when economic resources are lacking.

Research question 2:

How do European labour migrants live on the informal rental market?

As previously mentioned, more research is needed on the housing situations of labour migrants. With this research question I wish to look at the different ways of European labour migrants live informally in Oslo, exploring some of the diversity that exists in informal housing.

Research question 3: *What are their perceived barriers for entering the formal rental market?*

With this research question, I wish to find a bottom-up perspective on the barriers that European labour migrants perceived are pushing them out of the formal rental market.

1.3 Previous research on labour migrants and housing in Norway

While there has been done a great deal of migration, labour and housing research in Norway, I will briefly present a selection of some relevant research below that is relevant to my research topic and that I have drawn upon when working with this study. A great inspiration to this study has been Bente Puntervold Bø's thorough study of the living conditions of Pakistani, Indian, Turkish and Moroccan labour migrants in Oslo from 1980. Bø (1980) was one of the first researchers in Norway to study the effects of large-scale labour migration to Norway, using the housing market as a lens. In this study, named *Fremmedarbeidernes boligsituasjon i Oslo [The Housing Situation of Labour Migrants in Oslo]*, approximately 500 labour migrants were interviewed about their housing conditions, their settlement patterns and about the strategies they used to obtain housing in Oslo. Bø conducted a large study and it is therefore not possible to mention all her findings in-depth. Nevertheless, some key findings showed that many labour migrants were often to be found in central areas of Oslo that held a lower standard than the rest of the city and that nearly half of the migrants interviewed lived in housing obtained by their employer during their first period in Oslo. In addition, she found the labour migrants often opened up their homes to their newly arrived countrymen or otherwise helped them find housing in Oslo after their arrival. While the goal of my study is not to do comparative research, it is interesting to look at the similarities between the findings of Bø and the findings in this study, conducted exactly 40 years later.

Sørvoll and Aarset's (2015) report *Vanskeligstilte på det norske boligmarkedet. En kunnskapsstatus [Vulnerable groups on the Norwegian housing market. An overview of current knowledge]* has been very useful for understanding the housing market in Norway and structures and policies in place that ends up pushing out a number of vulnerable groups. In this report, Sørvoll and Aarset argues that more research on the housing careers and housing

situations of labour migrants in Norway is needed and comments on some of the difficulties of performing this study, namely that there is no official register of labour migrants who migrate between EEA countries, which makes it difficult to find a representative sample of migrants to do research on.

I draw upon Mostowska's ethnographic study of homeless Polish migrants in Oslo and their social networks (2013) and their social welfare capital (2011) in my understanding of precarious migrants' survival strategies. In addition, Friberg and Eldring's (2011) study of the working and living conditions of Polish labour migrants in Oslo, Djuve, Friberg, Tyldum and Zhang's (2015) study of Romanian migrants on the streets of Scandinavian capitals, as well as The Norwegian Institute for Human Rights' (2015) case study of the criminalisation of homelessness in Oslo have all provided great insight to the challenges that many labour migrants face in Oslo, but also to the strategies they develop to overcome them. In this study, I have also drawn upon Flåto and Johannessen's (2010) idea of "the harvesting economy" to make sense of some of the strategies that the five informants use on the informal rental market.

Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) and Søholt, Ødegard, Lynnebakke and Eldring's (2012) two studies on labour migrants' entry to the Norwegian housing market has been very useful to understand how the conditions on the labour and housing market affect the housing situations of labour migrants and the structural barriers that they face on a macro level. In addition, Søholt and Astrup's (2009) study on the discrimination of ethnic minorities on the rental market has been useful to illuminate some of the ways that labour migrants are pushed out of the formal rental market. Moreover, the study has given me a tool to ground some of the narratives of the informants in research.

As mentioned by Sørvoll and Aarset (2015), Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) and Søholt et al. (2012), more research is needed on the housing situation of labour migrants and this study aims to contribute to this knowledge. Much of the current research on the housing situations of labour migrants in Norway is built on data from second-hand sources and there is a lack of micro-level, qualitative studies that focuses on labour migrants' own experiences on the housing market in Norway and the barriers that they perceive. This study adds to the knowledge of the housing strategies on labour migrants on the informal rental market in Oslo and the economic, social and cultural capital that they make use of when doing so.

1.4 Key theoretical concepts

Housing career

A housing career can, at its simplest, be defined as “a description of the sequence of dwellings a household occupies during its history” (Pickles & Davles, 1992, p. 466), meaning a chronological order of where an individual or a household has lived during a period of time or during its history (Woll, 2008). It is important to note that a person’s housing career is not necessarily a hierarchical development from substandard to good housing or from renting to homeownership, but rather the process where an individual or a household adjust their housing to fit their current housing needs or because of outside factors (Pickles & Davles, 1992; Özüekren & van Kempen, 2002). I will be using housing career to describe the series of some of the very different housing that my informants have occupied during their time in Oslo.

Social dumping

Social dumping differs from work-related crimes because it mainly involves the exploitation of foreign workers, for example through paying them a lower salary than what is the standard in the industry or providing them with substandard housing. While social dumping is considered unethical, it is not necessarily illegal (Bjørnstad, Eggen, & Tofteng, 2016; Europa.eu, n.d.-b).

Informal activities

Informality can be described as being “unregulated by the institutions of society, in a legal and social environment in which similar activities are regulated (Castells & Portes, as cited in Durst & Wegmann, 2017, p. 284)”. When talking about the informal activities of people experiencing a lack of economic resources, it makes sense to talk about a harvesting economy. This economy, as suggested by Flåto and Johannessen to refer to the economic strategies of homeless people, “is a way of managing daily life in a marginalised position (2010, p. 91)” and falls under the informal economy. For people who live within the harvesting economy, their economic strategies and social networks reinforce each other. Essential to the harvesting economy is having a social network of people who are using the same economic strategies. Resources found are often scarce and must be distributed between their network before they disappear, following traditional hunter and gatherer principles. When resources, like money, favours, job opportunities or housing, are shared between people following the same economic strategies, it evens out some of the uncertainty of harvesting

precarious resources. Acts of bartering, illegal activities and gifts can also be included in the harvesting economy (Flåto & Johannessen, 2010).

Several of the informants in this thesis can be said to have had economic strategies that falls under the harvesting economy at times during their time in Oslo. When their economic capital is lacking, their social capital becomes thus more important for their survival. Using the example of opening their home as a strategy within the harvesting economy, some of the informants in this thesis have expressed that they have shared their home with people in their social networks who, at times, have been without housing to be able to rely on their social network for support when they have been in-between housing. When looking at the narratives of the informants in this thesis, it becomes clear that the aspect of informality has seeped into more aspects of their life than just housing.

Informal work

There is an important difference between a voluntary exit and a forced exclusion from the formal economy (Bromley & Wilson, 2018). A voluntary exit happens when the worker makes a voluntary move into the informal economy. Drawing on the example of Mariusz, one of the informants to this thesis, who is, after 15 years in Norway, for the most part working in the formal economy as a skilled craft worker. Nevertheless, during the end of the year, to increase his earnings, he performs some of his jobs informally for the clients he knows well, to avoid paying taxes on them, taking a voluntary, but temporary exit from the formal economy. A forced exclusion, on the other hand, happens when formal work is unobtainable to the worker, making the informal economy the only option as a place of work. Emilian, another informant to this thesis, is a good example of someone who has experienced a forced exclusion from the formal economy. After nearly 15 years in Oslo, he has not managed to obtain formal work and is therefore making a living doing street work (see definition under) and some short-term, informal jobs at construction sites with a low pay. Emilian does not speak Norwegian and a little bit English, which makes him very dependent on his Romanian network to be able to navigate the labour market to obtain formal employment, which he, so far, has not had any luck with. Nevertheless, these two terms are not mutually exclusive because the processes of the voluntary exit might happen at the same time as the forced exclusion. De la Rocha and Latapí warns that the voluntary exit must be used with caution, arguing that “for voluntary behaviour to take place it should be possible to have chosen otherwise” (as cited in Bromley & Wilson, 2018, p. 5). The poor and groups marginalised by their ethnicity, gender or migration are globally overrepresented in informal and precarious

work (Bromley & Wilson, 2018), suggesting that exclusion is a dominant factor behind informal work.

During the interviews, the informants in this thesis often used the term *black work* or *working in the black*, as well as *working without a contract* to refer to informal work.

Ion: (...) I was like (clicks tongue). Because it's also like, a lot of black work here and I had contact with a lot of these things.

This meant that they usually had a short-term, non-written agreement with their employer to perform a job, but they were not formally employed and therefore had few rights and they were paid their salary in cash.

Informal housing

Durst and Wegman warns against viewing informal housing as something that only occurs in less developed countries, arguing that when the existence of informal housing in developed countries is downplayed, researches are missing out on important knowledge that contribute to new and better housing policies. “More pragmatically, failing to acknowledge activities as informal often leads to unproductive efforts to ‘regulate’ them out of existence. The paradox here is that greater regulation often leads to more rather than less informality” (Durst & Wegmann, 2017, p. 283). As previously mentioned, unregulated, informal activities are not necessarily illegal. Following an increase of migration to Norway, researches has seen an increase in social dumping on the housing market (Sandlie & Seeberg, 2013; Søholt et al., 2012). Social dumping on the housing market can be tied to both unacceptable and illegal living arrangements. Some migrants are offered housing that is substandard to what the rest of the population is living with, while other migrants are living in conditions that violate national environment, health and safety rules (Sandlie & Seeberg, 2013).

Similar to the terms used about informal work, the informants in this thesis use the term renting *with a contract* or *without a contract* to refer to their formal and informal housing situations.

Mariusz: Informal? Well, I'm living without a contract because of, as I said, I don't mind these things, something which I'm thinking about, but situation cannot change because I... People don't want to live here, people want to make money here and fuck off.

When they are referring to renting *without a contract*, they are for the most part talking about renting a whole dwelling or a room or a bed in a dwelling, on a nightly or monthly basis without having signed a rental agreement that would otherwise give them legal rights as tenants. They pay their rent in cash to either the landlord or to a middleman and only very seldom do they pay a deposit. The dwelling is usually an apartment that sometimes, but not always, is of a substandard condition.

When it comes to housing, informality can take many forms. Durst and Wegmann (2017) highlights five interrelated, regulatory regimes to differentiate the categories of laws and norms that contribute to housing informality which again describes different ways of living informally: *the property rights regime, the property transfer regime, land-use and zoning laws regime, subdivision regulation regime and building code regime*. They argued that informal housing in the Global North has been overlooked in housing research and global statistics. Although these regimes are made looking at the US informal housing market, I will argue that some of these regimes are somewhat transferrable to the informal housing market in Oslo because, like in the US, informal housing seems invisible. Arnott, amongst others, argues that that “high income countries, including the US, have a zero per cent share of unauthorized (that is, informal) housing” and the UN-Habitat’s 2012–2013 State of the World’s Cities report exclude high income countries from their overview of countries in their count of people living in slum conditions (both in Durst & Wegmann, 2017, p. 282), overlooking the many informal living arrangement that exists in high income countries. This includes Oslo, which will become apparent throughout this thesis.

The property rights regime refers to laws that are in place to protect a person or an institutions’ property rights from an individual or a group who violates them though informally occupying their land or housing located on their land. The property rights regime might be the most well-known form of informal housing, following the scholarly focus on informal settlements in the Global South in housing research. Nevertheless, Durst and Wegamann (2017, p. 286) argues that “the varied typology of modes of living in defiance of property ownership seen throughout the Global South appears, on first inspection in the US, to collapse into but a single category of homelessness” and that it is essential to include the large and diverse category of homelessness to understand the different forms of informal living arrangements that are present on public land also in the Global North. The act of occupying vacant buildings through squatting and informal tent cities or small-scale tent settlements on public land are forms of informal housing under the property rights regime that

that are also present in cities the Global North. There are informants to this thesis who have stated that they have stayed in small informal settlements in the forest outside the city centre in Oslo at times where they have had few other options, which violates local regulations in Oslo that forbids tenting and overnight-stays without a permit in public parks, recreational areas, public roads and in densely populated areas as well as national laws against tenting in the same location for more than two nights in a row (Nordlie & Juven, 2013, 8th of May). There are also well known instances of migrants sleeping in cars on the side of public roads in Oslo (see Moland, Zondag, Heggheim, & Reisjå, 2016, 18th of April; Olsen, 2013, 16th of May), which would also fall under the property rights regime, but to my knowledge, none of the informants to this thesis have been a part of this. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Oslo has been critiqued for violating basic human rights, like the freedom of movement and the right to privacy, through maintaining these regulations and that they affect vulnerable migrants disproportionately (LDO, 2015; Norwegian Institute for Human Rights, 2015).

The property transfer regime involves laws that regulates property transfers. These laws are in place to protect or regulate the transfer of ownership between two agents, through an inherence process or through property sales. Using the inherence process as an example, laws governing property transfers can fail to address situations where the property owner has died without a will that can be proven in court, making certain inheritance processes informal, especially for property transfers outside the immediate family. In addition, property is sometimes sold outside the formal legal system, creating informality in ownership.

The land-use and zoning regime describes a housing informality that is more hidden from public view. The informality in the land-use and zoning regime is often interconnected with formal land ownership and refers to unpermitted use of the property. What I in a later chapter will describe as a middlemen, referring to migrants who rent a dwelling to sublet informally to newly arrived migrants in Oslo, falls under housing that is made informal by land-use and zoning laws. Other examples include formal housing that is illegally divided to units to fit more residents or newly constructed units on formally owned land that violates current land-use regulations.

Subdivision regulation regime. In the absence of laws to regulate the development of unincorporated land, local authorities have little power to impose developers to create good housing. Durst and Wegmann (2017) use the example of the development of the US colonias in the 1990s, where the lack of local subdivision regulations in the outskirts near the Texas-

Mexico border led to the development of thousands of dwellings in many cases lacked basic infrastructure like electricity, piped water and paved roads that was then sold to unsuspecting buyers. They argue that non-compliance of subdivision regulation rules still happens to this day in the US, but on a smaller scale and that this regime tends to breed other forms of informality because of the social dumping in housing it creates.

The building code regime refers to laws that are in place to manage the way building impose on their surroundings to protect those who own or those who use the building. Durst and Wegmann (2017) use the example of how a house that do comply with local building codes upon completion can, after years of neglect or insufficient and cheap maintenance work, fall out of compliance with current building code regulation laws and thus creating informality over time. Using an example from this thesis, two informants, Emilian and Ion, described a house located in Mortensrud in Oslo that was inadequately maintained over time and deteriorating. From their description, the house was in a bad condition and the owner would not have been able to rent it out on the formal rental market without renovating it first. Without having seen this house first-hand, it can be assumed that this house over time had started violating building regulations in Oslo, creating an informality that falls under the building code regime. In addition to this, the owner of the house rented out the house to a middleman, who again sublet the house informally to migrants in precarious situation and some night up to 60-70 of them, which undoubtedly violated local land-use and zoning laws, causing informality under two overlapping regulatory regimes.

Durst and Wegmann (2017) five regulatory regimes shows that housing informality happens in many forms, though only some forms of informality will be examined in this thesis, that is to say the housing informality experienced by labour migrants in Oslo. Informality caused by developers and landowners will as a result fall outside the scope of this thesis.

Precariousness

People in precarious situations refer to those who's world is affected by uncertainty and instability, often lacking predictability, job and housing security and material and psychological welfare (Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson, & Waite, 2014). There are many labour migrants that experience a highly precarious work situation in Western countries because of their loose connection to the labour market, little knowledge of the language and their rights and sometimes because their uncertain legal status (Standing, 2011). Vosko addresses the

complex multidimensional aspect of precarity by arguing that precarious employment is shaped by

... the relationship between *employment status* (i.e. self- or paid employment), *form of employment* (e.g. temporary or permanent, part-time or full-time, and *dimensions of labour market insecurity*, as well as *social context* (e.g. occupation, industry, and geography) and *social location* (or the interaction between social relationships, such as gender, and legal and political categories, such as citizenship) (2010, p. 2).

This shows that the interconnection of social and labour market issues together makes a person vulnerable for precarious experiences. I have been struggling to find a common definition of precarious housing that is used in housing research without much success. Nevertheless, in this study I will use the term to reflect how uncertainty and instability in housing and issues like the fear of eviction, housing insecurity, substandard housing, lack of written contracts and discriminatory practices leads to a precariousness in terms of housing. It is important to note that in the public debate in Norway, precarious work has also been mentioned when talking about groups like young professionals and freelancers that are often much better off than labour migrants in vulnerable positions (Kirkens Bymisjon, 2016), but in this study, I will only use the term to describe the experiences of labour migrants. It has been argued that the precariat is becoming an emerging new social class (Lewis et al., 2014; Standing, 2011) and even though that is an interesting debate, it falls outside the research focus of this study.

Street work

In the space of homelessness research, street work is often referred to as a series of informal, street-based activities that can include begging, collecting bottles, trading and selling goods and other forms of income-generating strategies. As a result of the EU expansions in the 2000s, the issue of the European poor who travel within the EU countries to engage in street work has been a topic of much debate for the last 15 years (Adriaenssens & Hendrickx, 2011; Djuve et al., 2015). While I acknowledge that the term might give the reader several other connotations, I will solely refer to street work as street-based and income-generating activities in this thesis.

The middleman

A recurring character in the narratives of the five informants is someone I have decided to call the middleman. The middleman, as described in this study, is someone who informally sublets a dwelling to migrant tenants who are otherwise experiencing barriers on the rental market.

Middlemen often have migrant background themselves and there is generally a profit to be made from this practice. This definition will be more thoroughly elaborated in chapter 4.

1.5 Theoretical framework

There are three relevant theories that together builds the theoretical framework of this study. First, I have used Engbersen, Leerkes, Grabowska-Lusinska, Snel, and Burgers (2013) typology of labour migration to comment on the migration strategies that the five informants that affects their housing choices, their housing needs, as well as their strategies on the housing market. Secondly, I have used Bourdieu's Theory of Capital as a tool to discuss the resources that the five informants make use of on the informal rental market. Lastly, I have used Chisholm et al.'s (2018) three dimensions of power as a framework to comment on the power structures that are in place between the migrant tenant and the landlord or middleman and how these structures shaped their narratives and experiences on the informal rental market.

A Typology of Labour Migration: The Differential Attachments of Migrants from Central and Eastern Europe

Engbersen et al. (2013) argues that it is challenging to understand the migration patterns from Central and Eastern Europe to Western and Northern European countries, especially after the two EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007. Some scholars, they argue, view these patterns as a new form of liquid migration, while others see them as continuing existing patterns of circular and settlement migration. To create a better view of the migration strategies of these migrants, Engbersen et al. (2013) have developed an empirically grounded typology of labour migration from Central and Eastern European countries based on two dimensions; the level of attachment the migrants have to their home country and the attachment they have to their host country. Building on this, they distinguish four ideal-type forms of migration patterns: *Bi-national*, *transnational migration*, *footloose migration*, *settlement migration* and *temporary, circular and seasonal migration*. My five informants can all be placed within this typology, although they do have characteristics that fall outside of these categories. I will use this typology when discussing the migration strategies of the five informants, strategies that impacts the way they navigate the Norwegian housing market.

Engbersen et al. (2013) typology of labour migration is built on the authors' own study from the Netherlands conducted between 2009 and 2011 in which they examine the labour market position and inclusion of labour migrants from Poland, Bulgaria and Romania. The study is based on interviews with 654 labour migrants from these three countries. Adding to the conceptual framework, Engbersen et al.'s typology also builds on four previous typologies of labour migration from Central and Eastern Europe that are both complementary and overlapping with their four ideal-types of labour migration.

The first of the four typologies of labour migration that Engbersen et al. builds their typology on is based on a study by Düvell and Vogel from 2006 where they distinguish four ideal-types of labour migrants based on interviews with 15 Polish labour migrants (in Engbersen et al., 2013), the second typology is based on a study done by Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich (2007) where they distinguish four ideal-types based on interview with 50 Polish labour migrants. In the third typology, Grabowska-Lusinska and Okólski builds further on the works of the first two typologies and is based on surveys in local communities in Poland, data from the Polish Labour Force Survey and a secondary analysis of several smaller research projects on labour migration in Europe (in Engbersen et al., 2013). The fourth typology, created by Trevena (2013), is based on a research study on high-skilled Polish migrants where three ideal-types were distinguished. To get a better overview of Engbersen et al.'s typology of labour migration, I have created a simplified version of their typology below.

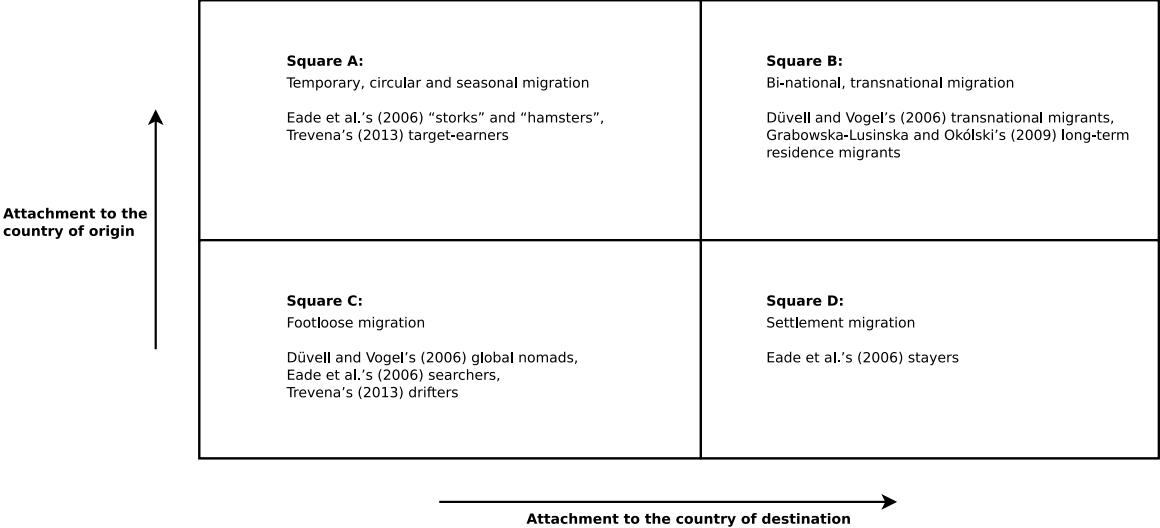


Figure 1: A simplified version of Engbersen et al.'s typology labour migration adapted by the present author.

Square A of temporary, circular and seasonal migration describes migrants with a strong attachment to their country of origin and a weak attachment to their country of destination. These migrants follow a circular, temporary migration pattern and includes typologies like Eade et al. (2007)'s *storks*, circular migrants often found in low-paying occupations, and *hamsters*, migrants who consider their move as a one-time investment to gather assets to invest in their home country. As well as Trevena (2013)'s *target-earners*, migrants who aims to earn large sums of money to invest in their home country.

Square B of bi-national, transnational migration outlines bi- and transnational migrants who have a strong attachment to the country of origin and a strong attachment to their country of destination. It also builds upon Grabowska-Lusinska and Okólski's *long-term residence* migrants, skilled or medium-skilled international labour migrants who, after staying in their country of destination for a long time, still retain strong bonds to their home country (in Engbersen et al., 2013).

Square C of footloose migration describes migrants who have a weak attachment to both their country or origin and the country of destination. It also builds upon Düvell and Vogel (2006)'s *global nomads*, that are highly mobile migrants with an international and worldly orientation who migrates between countries based on available work opportunities (in Engbersen et al., 2013). Eade et al. (2007)'s *searchers*, young and individualistic migrants who wants to keep their options open. They can be found performing both low- and high-skilled jobs. As well as Trevena (2013)'s *drifters*, describing migrants who are pursuing goals other than economic and professional ones and they often perform low-skilled jobs in order to travel and to see what else it out there.

Square D of settlement migration are migrants who are more permanent settled in their host country and therefore have strong ties to their country of destination and have weak ties to their country of origin. It builds upon Eade et al. (2006)'s *stayers*, migrants who have been living in their country of destination for some time and intend to stay there permanently.

Critiquing Engbersen et al.'s typology of labour migration: viewing home as physical place.

When looking at the narratives of my informants, I found that Engbersen et al.'s typology at times tends to have an exaggerated focus on home as a physical place. Cresswell (2004) opens up for a more complex and abstract view of place, arguing that "place is also a way of seeing,

knowing and understanding the world. (...) When we look at the world as a world of places we see different things” (2004, p. 11). Building on this, I would argue for a wider view of home that also opens up for viewing home as a sense of belonging and not just a physical place. Classifying migrants by the degree of their attachment to their home country can sometimes be challenging because the narratives of my informants show that their sense of home can be rooted in their communities and not just their home or host countries. To compensate for this, I will argue for the use of a more diasporic understanding of home and homeland. The term diaspora was first used when describing forcefully dispersed, close knitted groups like Jews and Africans and can be described as the “spreading out of certain communities from an original homeland to their regrouping and the formation of new communities in a “new” land” (Samers, 2010, p. 95). While the term is contested, Brubaker argues that diaspora communities are made up by elements of dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary maintenance (as cited in Samers, 2010). Recently, some scholars have argued for an expansion of the term diaspora to include migrant communities of labour, trade, imperial and cultural transnational connections (“Diaspora”, 2009).

While I am aware that defining all transnational labour migrant communities as diasporas might dilute the term, there are still aspects of the diaspora as a term that apply to the sense of transnational community, belonging and connection that exist between labour migrant groups across space. Cohen (2002) argues that in some cases, transnational labour migrant groups can be viewed as a diaspora if there is

... evidence of (a) a strong retention of group ties sustained over an extended period of time (in respect of language, religion, endogamy and cultural norms), (b) a myth of and strong connection to a homeland, and (c) high level of exclusion in the destination societies, a labour diaspora can be said to exist. (p. 57)

Building on the idea of a labour diaspora, Armstrong coined the term “proletarian diaspora” to describe groups with very little possibility of social mobility, communication skills and a constant mass of unskilled labourer in contrast to the more positive sounding “mobilized diaspora”, where the community member use their networks, language skills and other held assets to offer valued skills beyond their community (Cohen, 2002). My informant Rakib told me that most of his family and network are not living in the country he was born in or in Poland, where he has his citizenship, but they are rather scattered across the globe, giving the idea of home a new sense of meaning.

- Brit: Do you have frequent contact with your friends and family in your home country or in Poland?
- Rakib: To talk with family?
- Brit: Yeah, and friends.
- Rakib: Yeah, yeah. Always.
- Brit: Are they a bit all over the world?
- Rakib: Yeah, my family is... One brother is living in Canada, one is in London. One brother in Poland.

Putting a wider understanding of home to use, I will, when it is appropriate, use the degree of attachment to their diasporic community, rather than the degree of attachment to the country of origin, when placing some of my informants within Engbersen et al's (2013) typology of labour migration. Nonetheless, I will make it clear in the text when this has been done.

Bourdieu's Theory of Capital

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu suggested in his book *The Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (2002, originally published in 1979) that people's place within their social class in society is determined by the level of capital they hold. Bourdieu believes that capital can present itself in three different forms: economic, social and cultural and people hold power and privilege depending on their possession of these three. Through expanding on the idea of capital beyond what is only economic, Bourdieu argues that it is impossible to understand the structures in society without understanding capital beyond what is recognised in economic theory (1986). In short, economic capital points to someone's financial assets, while social capital points to their social networks and the resources they bring with them and cultural capital points to their knowledge and skillset. According to Grenfell (2012), Bourdieu's Theory of capital can be understood as to pointing to differences within social classes rather than between them.

Economic capital is capital that is "immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 16). This includes income, savings, real estate, material wealth and other assets. In Bourdieu's view, economic capital is the dominant type of capital because all other capital, when it comes to it, are disguised forms of economic capital "- but only in the last analysis - at the root of their effects" (1986, p. 24).

Social capital refers to a person's social networks, their trustworthiness and their social obligations. Bourdieu argues that the volume of the social capital does not only point to the size of someone's social network, but also on the kind of resources they can mobilize through it.

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21).

Social capital can also be used to secure employment through the use of social networks because it can be used to open doors into the labour market ("Social capital", 2006).

Cultural capital is amongst other things knowledge and skillsets, language, lore and taste and can dictate a person's place in the social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1986; *Social Theory Re-wired*, n.d.). It can be acquired through education or training, but it can also be inherited by one's family and the social environment of one's upbringing. Social capital can be institutionalised through formal education and it usually cannot be adopted by someone instantaneously, as opposed to what is possible with economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Economic, social or cultural capital can in certain conditions be converted into other forms of capital. Cultural capital and the skillsets and the knowledge it brings can give the holder access to certain social groups which again can increase their social capital. Similar, social capital can be converted to cultural capital through relational learning (Bourdieu, 2002; Pret, Shaw, & Dodd, 2016). While it is argued that converting economic capital to other forms of capital can be "complex and time-consuming" (Pret et al., 2016, p. 1006), it can be done. Using an example from this study, several informants have mentioned that at times, when they have the economic capital to rent a dwelling, they have taken in people in their social network to sleep on their couch when they have been in need of housing. Extending on Bourdieu's idea of capital slightly because money have not been exchanged directly for social capital, it can be argued that their economic capital in this situation has strengthened their social bonds and therefore their social capital.

Bourdieu argues that “In a general manner, it is the people who are richest in economic capital, cultural capital and social capital who are the first ones to head to new positions” (as cited in Grenfell, 2012, p. 130), pointing out that people who holds a lot of capital have the resources to be the first ones to gain access to new arenas and have an advantage when doing so. In *The Distinction*, Bourdieu (2002) use the example of how the newly rich often have plenty of economic capital, but little cultural capital and this lack of cultural knowledge can manifest in spending habits that can be viewed as tacky by others within their social class. Using an example that is closer to the lives of my informants, the labour migrants who are rich in cultural capital have the skillset to acquire information about the labour and housing market in Norway first-hand. They speak English or Norwegian and know where to seek out information directly from their sources, that being local trade unions, welfare services or the landlords themselves. Labour migrants who are lacking some of this cultural capital are therefore dependent on getting this information from second-hand sources, mainly through their social networks. Therefore, their lack of cultural capital makes their social capital thus more important. As a note, getting information from second-hand sources can make labour migrants prone to receiving misinformation about the labour and housing market and it can therefore make them vulnerable to exploitation.

I will be using Bourdieu’s Theory of Capital as a tool to discuss the resources of the five informants and how the capital they hold differ from each other. Furthermore, I will also look at how they use this capital to navigate the informal rental market in Oslo. While it’s well known that other scholars have expanded on the idea of capital (see for example Wright, 1997), I will work with Bourdieu’s original three forms of capital.

Chisholm et al. (2018)’s Three Dimension of Power as Manifested in Tenant-Landlord Conflicts

Drawing on Luke’s three-dimensional view of power, Chisholm et al. (2018) builds a framework to explain the underlying power structures between the tenant and the landlord that are present on the formal rental market. Using the example of tenants’ responses to substandard housing, or lack thereof, this framework highlights the underlying ways that landlords’ visible, hidden and invisible power prevents tenants from voicing their grievances. They argue that a power imbalance exists between the tenant and the landlord because the landlord is the one who has the ultimate control of the property and “because in most cases tenants have a greater dependence on, or attachment to, their home than landlords have to their rental income” (Chisholm et al., 2018, p. 4).

The first dimension of power they point out is the *visible power*, which is the most visible power structure. To understand this dimension of power, one must look at how “grievances are voiced, and who emerges victorious in disputes” (Chisholm et al., 2018, p. 9). Chisholm et al. argues that this power structure becomes visible when tenants tries to voice their grievances to the landlord and the landlords is unresponsive.

The second dimension of power is the *hidden power*, in which the hidden power structures at play keeps issues that arise during the tenancy from the agenda. There can be several reasons for this, Chisholm et al. (2018) argues. The tenant might have little faith that improvements will be made, that they are afraid of repercussions from the landlord or that the tenant has a close, personal relationship with the landlords and therefore refrain from voicing grievances.

The third dimension of power is the *invisible power*, which is the power structure that presents as natural. Chisholm et al. (2018, p. 13) asks “What grievances are not experienced as grievances?”, arguing that this dimension of power has shaped the tenants’ perception of their substandard housing and therefore, their housing problems are seen as less significant.

A more in-depth look at this framework, using the narratives of the informants to highlight the different power structures can be found in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I argue that these power structures are also present on the informal rental market because tenants living in informal housing are not necessarily less dependent on their housing than tenants living formally.

2. Methods

2.1 Introduction to the chapter

In this section, I will present the various methodological choices that has been made in this study. I will comment on the recruitment process of the informants and give the reader a short presentation of the five informants. I will also comment on the interview process, the difficulties of building trust amongst a vulnerable group and the difficulties of representation when working with a small selection of informants. As my analytic framework I have chosen to look at the stories of the informants through the lens of narrative analysis, which has give me a way of understanding how my informants make sense of the informal rental market and their place within it.

2.2 Recruitment and selection criteria

As Shaw and Gould (2001, p. 52) argues collecting data in qualitative research begins with the “negotiation of access”. Recruiting informants for this study has been a long and difficult process. During the beginning of the research process I wanted to come in contact with European labour migrants who is currently, or had at some point, lived informally in Oslo. I deliberately decided on these very wide criteria to try to recruit informants with a diverse set of experiences on the informal rental market in Oslo.

Because there is no available sampling frame for European labour migrants who have experienced substandard and informal housing, and it not often a status that is flagged publicly, I have put in a lot of work into the recruitment process. In this process, I have used a snowball sampling method to recruit informants that could provide the study much needed information on the informal rental market in Oslo. Snowball sampling is a form of convenience sampling where the researcher makes use of their professional and personal networks to help recruit respondents, and it is a form of non-probability sample. Furthermore, these respondents get asked to refer the researcher to others in their network who fit the criteria and who again, if they agree to participate in the study, gets asked to recruit more respondents (Bryman, 2016; Padgett, 1998). In this way, the snowball sampling method can be imagined as a downward rolling snowball that keeps growing as it touches more snow. During the recruitment period, I reached out to big parts of my network to see if they happened to know someone in the target group. This was a very long process, as most people in my network did not know anyone in the target group, while others knew people who had

lived informally, but had qualities, like their migration status, that excluded them from the study. Nevertheless, I initially made contact with three migrants who fit the criteria. Recruiting informants through middlemen in my own network meant that I also had people who could vouch for me and my trustworthiness during this process (Padgett, 1998). The three informants tried to put me in contact with other labour migrants who have lived informally, but many declined to participate in this study because they did not want to put focus on their living condition in fear of losing their housing. Nevertheless, I was, after some time, put in contact with two more informants who fit the criteria and was willing to be interviewed. This method gave me a total of five informants with a wide set of experience on the informal rental market in Oslo. Padgett (1998, p. 52) argues that in qualitative research a goal of selecting respondents for a sample is not to “maximize numbers, but to become “saturated” with information about a specific topic”. Keeping this in mind, a small sample of informants has given me the possibility of examining their narratives on the informal rental market in-depth.

The snowball sampling method has allowed me to make contact with a group that rarely is a first-hand source in housing research. Nonetheless, I am aware that a potential problem with my selection is that my informants might have introduced me to people who are similar to themselves, which is a common consequence of using the snowball sampling method (Bryman, 2016; Bryne, 2004). Regardless, I view the snowball sampling method as a necessary tool to get in contact with a vulnerable group that is otherwise difficult to make direct contact with. The interview process took place during a period of six months, from November 2018 to April 2019, shortly after I had made contact with them.

2.3 A short presentation of my informants

Name	Age	Citizenship	Gender	Work experience in Oslo (1)	Rental market experience in Oslo (2)	Number of years in Norway (3)
Mariusz	50s	Polish	Male	Formal and informal work	Informal	15
Anja	40s	Polish	Female	Formal work	Informal and formal	3
Rakib	40s	Polish	Male	Formal work	Informal and formal	8
Ion	30s	Romanian	Male	Formal and informal work	Informal and formal	6
Emilian	40s	Romanian	Male	Informal work	Informal	14

Table 1: a short description of the five informants. *For an in-depth description of the informants, please see chapter 3.*

(1) I have not seen the work contracts belonging to any of my informants, so I base the formality of their work experience in Oslo on the information they have given me during our interviews. I acknowledge that it is possible that they believe that they have been formally employed when they in reality have not, that some jobs are not necessarily just formal or informal, but somewhere in the grey area in between and that they might not have wanted to disclose the informal nature of previous jobs to me.

(2) The informants' rental market experience in Oslo are based on the information they have provided during the semi-structured interviews. The informants who have stated that they have lived formally have all signed a written contract with the homeowner and believed that they have lived formally. Because I have seen only one rental contract and visited just one apartment mentioned to conduct an interview with an informant, this information is solely based on their accounts. On account of not having seen these dwellings, I have not been able to assess if they meet Norwegian health, fire and safety regulations.

(3) All of the informants have had shorter or longer stays in their home countries during this time.

2.4 Anonymity and building trust

While quantitative research provides a sense of safety in numbers, it is important that researchers performing qualitative research to great lengths to protect the anonymity of the informants (Padgett, 1998; Shaw & Gould, 2001). I have given all the informants new names to keep their anonymity, as well as being deliberately vague with some of their identifying information, like their exact age, their place of work and the location of their former housing to further this anonymity. Therefore, I ask for the reader's understanding in this. The five informants have all expressed how important their anonymity is for their participation in this study and it has been a requirement for them before agreeing to be interviewed. Through anonymising the informants, the identity of their current and former roommates, colleagues and landlords are also protected. All the data in this study has been processed in accordance with NSD (The Norwegian Centre for Research Data) and current data protection legislation.

To build trust, I gave my informants space to voice any concern they had about my motives of conducting this study. One informant asked me if I actually could make a positive change for them through conducting this study or if I would use their marginalised position to further my own education and career. There was a recurring concern that an increased focus on informal housing would make it more difficult for them to keep living informally, in other words, that it would force them out of their homes. Others were scared that their friends and colleagues would find out that they were speaking about their living and working conditions and that they could be recognised in my finished thesis. This occurred for instance during my interview with Emilian. I was inquiring about what kind of work his friends did in Oslo and he answered me half-jokingly, but with a concerned undertone:

Emilian: (...) And of course, after this interview I will not have a friend anymore, haha!
(translated from Romanian)

I responded by pausing the interview to acknowledge his fears, but to also reassure him and to make it clear to him that he will be anonymised, that I would not include any information that can be used to identify him, including the locations of his former housing, and that he could withdraw from the interview at any time if he wanted to. After talking to him for a while and giving him space, he expressed willingness to continue with the interview. During this process, I answered the concerns of my informants as best as I could, and they all decided that they wanted to continue to be a part of this study.

2.5 The interviews

The interviews took place in two cafés in Oslo, in a meeting room at NOVA on a Sunday, in one of the informants' dwelling and at the home of someone an informant trusted. Knowing we could look like an odd pairing, I made sure to choose places where there was little chance for them to meet anyone they knew so they would not have to explain to their network how they know me. I spoke with the informants on the phone or met with them before I interviewed them. During these conversations, we talked about what would happen during the interview, about the anonymisation process and that they could withdraw their consent if they wished to do so. Sometimes, the interviews were scheduled only a couple of days or a couple of hours in advance. For some informants who held stable jobs, it was easier for them to plan the interviews in advance, but for two of the informants who were experiencing precarious working conditions, I periodically called them early in the day to see if they were able to meet for an interview the same day or if they had work.

I conducted four 1-1.5 hour long semi-structured interviews and one hour-long group interview which I recorded on an audio recorder and later transcribed. Riessman (1993) points to some of the challenges that can occur when presenting spoken qualitative interviews as a written text, arguing that this process “incomplete, partial and selective (p. 11)” because the way people really talk, their unique mannerisms, as well as their short pauses, their emphases and the hesitations in their speech all carry meaning. Some of this meaning can therefore be lost when transcribing an interview. To try to combat this during the transcription process, I made sure to preserve as much as the informants' meanings and mannerisms as possible in their speech by adding ellipses to mark unfinished sentences or pauses, as well as making a note of any gestures that was used to visualise a point during the interview that I later added to the transcripts. I have also made the choice to not correct malapropisms or grammar in the transcripts, but rather to add brackets with clarifying information when it has been needed. In this way, I hope to have preserved more of the meanings that has been communicated by my five informants, as well as having done their personalities and articular mannerisms justice.

I made an interview guide with questions touching on the topics that I wanted to cover during the semi-structured interview (Bryman, 2016). The questions can be grouped into three categories:

- Questions about their background (this includes questions about their citizenship, age, the languages they speak and their work experience),

- Questions about their housing (including questions about rent, the standard and housing contracts)
- Questions about their friends, networks and their strategies in Oslo.

For an in-depth look at the interview guide, please see appendix no. 2.

Semi-structured interviews are rightfully called “conversations with a purpose” (Burgess, cited in Bryne, 2004, p. 193), because it encourages the informant to tell stories and elaborate on topics beyond the interview guide. This was very helpful during my interview with Mariusz. During his 15 years in Oslo he had over time obtained a large social network and appeared to be quite resourceful, so some of the questions in my interview guide could not be applied to his experiences. The following is an excerpt from my interview with Mariusz:

- Brit: I have these standard questions and a lot of them doesn't fit for you because people I've interviewed before and people I've talked to usually have some roommates, but you prefer to live alone...?
- Mariusz: Yeah, or with a woman, but not with the people I'm working with. Unless I have to.
- Brit: So, you prefer to live independently?
- Mariusz: Probably most of the other people you've interviewed as well, or you don't interview, they are here as a season worker so they work here, they live here only when they're working and then they go to Poland and staying there for two weeks, after one month and they come back to work.
- Brit: Because it is more expensive to live by yourself, but it's something you prioritise spending your money on? To be able to live alone or with a woman?
- Mariusz: Eeh, again, I'm not working here, I'm living here. I want to live normal life.

Using semi-structured interviews as an interview form gave me the flexibility to add some structure to my interviews while also being able to explore the topics and narratives that were brought up during the interviews through additional questions (Bryman, 2016; Bryne, 2004).

2.6 Difficulties of representation: gender and language

I have, unfortunately, only one woman represented amongst the informants. I was put in contact with more women through my network and through my other informants, but they either declined to participate in this study, or they had qualities to them that somehow excluded them from being part of the target group, like having a status as an international student, not a labour migrant. According to West and Zimmerman, gender is never not present because “a person engaged in virtually any activity may be held accountable for performance

of that activity as a *woman* or a *man* ...” (in Hicks, 2015, p. 480). I acknowledge that this thesis therefore has a bigger focus on informal housing from a male perspective and that can be viewed as a weakness. The gendered aspect of informal living is an important topic that deserves attention and that I would like to research this in-depth in future work. Still, Anja, the only female informant in study, has addressed some important issues when it comes to gender, power imbalances and informal living. Her experiences are not necessarily representative for all women living in informal housing, however, her narratives are part of a bigger story of how it is to live informally as a woman in Oslo.

Another issue that came up when working with this study is language, or the lack thereof. All my informants, except for one, spoke English, which is part of their cultural capital and gave them an advantage when living in Oslo. Because I did not have an independent translator when working with this thesis, I had to conduct the interviews in English and was dependent on establishing contact with labour migrants who spoke the language. Speaking some English means that people can gather independent information about the housing market in Oslo, obtain information about their rights if needed, and it makes it easier for them to interact with people from outside of their social group (Sandlie & Seeberg, 2013). This means that most of my informants can be seen as less marginalised than labour migrants who do not speak any English or Norwegian and therefore are more dependent on information coming from their social networks. Still, a weakness in this study is that a majority of the labour migrants that I interviewed have a somewhat good knowledge of English and because of this, the main focus will be on the narratives of some of the less marginalised individuals in the target group. To add some additional narratives to this focus, I chose to include an interview with Emilian, an informant who does not speak much English. Because a lack of funds, I was not in a position where I could hire independent translators to accompany me during interviews and to subsequently validate the translation. Therefore Ion, another one of my informants and the person who introduced me to Emilian, was present during our interview and helped translate when needed. At the advice of NSD (The Norwegian Centre for Research Data), Ion was asked to sign a data processor agreement in three copies between himself as the data processor and my supervisor Jardar Sørvoll and I as the data controllers. Before signing, I went through the terms of the agreement together with Ion and he agreed to translate during the interviews if needed and treat all information that appeared during the interview as confidential.

In a study on the methodological challenges of cross-language research, Squires suggests that “when a translator performs a translation, they translate not only the literal meaning of the

word, but also how the word relates conceptually in the context” (2009, p. 278), claiming that researchers often minimise the impact that the translator had on the research data. I understand that using one of my informants to help translate when needed adds an extra layer of meaning to the interview because he is also in the target group and is shaped by his own experiences and because he already knows the informant being interviewed. Therefore, to avoid conflicting roles and to add transparency, I decided to make the methodological choice to redefine Emilian’s interview to be a group interview because both men are providing meaning to the interview. In addition, an advantage of using group interviews as a supplement to the one-on-one interviews is that it might add an additional dimension of information to the research. In this case that is the everyday-life of labour migrants in informal housing, through the use of body language, disagreement and shared perspectives between the two men (Frey & Fontana, 1991). When transcribing, I made a note in my transcripts if Ion stepped out of his role as a translator and added some short additional information to avoid attributing Emilian with statements and meanings that were not his.

Ion (speaking as himself): Actually, I know the person, so I can explain? He was from [country of origin], [profession]. Yes, I know about that person.

Identifying information removed.

2.7 Reflexivity in the research process

As Bryman (2016, p. 338) argues, “knowledge from a reflexive position, is always a reflection of the researcher’s location in time and social space”. It is therefore important to acknowledge that I, as the researcher, has contributed to shaping this study with my own experiences. As a researcher, I have a very different background than my informants. Being female, Norwegian and much younger than several of the informants, as well as having a higher socioeconomic status meant that I operated as an outsider during the interview process. While it is contested if similarities between the researcher and the respondent results in “good” or “bad” research (Bryman, 2016; Sandberg, 2010), I choose to see this as a strength of the research process. Being an outsider provides the informants with a safe space to demonstrate their extensive knowledge of the informal rental market in Norway (Sandberg, 2010). Padgett (1998, p. 24) argues that “a relationship of mutual respect need not to be based on sameness. The ultimate success of a qualitative study depends more on the skills of the researcher than on his demographic attributes”.

I have, during the interview process, taken notes after each interview to try to separate my own thoughts and impressions from the narratives of the informants. Sharing a section from these notes, I reflected over the fact that I had become less sensitive to substandard housing during the interview process. After my interview with Emilian, I wrote that I felt I was starting to become numb to all the stories I heard. Eight people sharing a 60 square meter apartment didn't shock me anymore. Quoting my own ironic thought, I wrote "Wow, you have so much space now". This numbness can be viewed as both as strength and a weakness. My shock and reaction can interrupt or shape the narrative flow of the informants, but my acclimation of substandard housing can also make me overlook important aspects of informality.

2.8 Narrative analysis

I have chosen narrative analysis as an analytic framework to examine how the informants to this thesis attach meanings and understanding to their experiences through the stories they tell (Wiles, Rosenberg, & Kearns, 2005). Stories are often told with a purpose and can say something about how the informant, being the storyteller, choose to represent themselves to their audience and about the social, political and structural conditions present in the social spaces that they navigate (Bryman, 2016; McCormack, 2012). A narrative turns a story into information for the storyteller's audience and when the same story is told in different ways, it creates different narratives. Wiles et al. (2005) use the example of domestic violence and how the perpetrator and the victim can present different narratives of the same series of events that makes up a story, highlighting different aspects of the same story. This is no different for my informants. When telling the stories of living informally in Oslo, they have different narratives and through their narratives they present not only their experiences to their audience, but also themselves (Frost, 2009).

Burke (1945, p. xviii) writes that

We take it for granted that, insofar as men cannot themselves create the universe, there must remain something essentially enigmatic about the problem of motives, and that this underlying enigma will manifest itself in inevitable ambiguities and inconsistencies among the terms for motives. Accordingly, what we want is *not terms that avoid ambiguity*, but *terms that clearly reveal the strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise*.

He continues arguing that the goal is not to analyse stories until they become free of all uncertainty and inconsistency because no two stories, experiences, or motives are exactly alike and therefore, descriptions and stories opens for interpretations. Following the argument of Burke, because narratives are open to interpretation, they are also are shaped by the interpreter. One of the roles of the researcher is to present the narrator to the audience through deciding on which stories to analyse and disclose to the reader and what questions to ask the narrator during the interview (Wiles et al., 2005). When performing a narrative analysis, Riessman argues that the researcher must ask the question of “why was the story told in that way?” (2001, p. 6), putting the story itself as the object of analysis. Narratives often presents information in some kind of structural order though a sequence of connected events: “this happened and then this related event happened” (Labov, as presented in Wiles et al., 2005, p. 90). These patterns can again be used to analyse how people tell stories and how people choose to present themselves, consciously or subconsciously, in their world. Through applying the narrative analysis approach to the transcripts from the semi-structured interviews with the five informants to this thesis, stories started to appear in between the chronological retelling of their former dwellings, proving that narratives can sometimes also spring out from questions that are not designed to require lengthy answers.

According to Sandberg, finding the truth when performing a narrative analysis is not always important. He argues that “Whether true or false, the multitude of stories people tell reflect, and help us understand, the complex nature of values, identities, cultures, and communities. Thus, “truth” may not be the best measure of interesting and theoretically relevant data” (2010, p. 448). Storytellers shape their narratives to fit their audience. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that some of the narratives shared by the informants in this thesis might be shaped to make themselves look better by highlighting or downplaying their own role in the stories they tell. Padgett (1998) warns against respondents’ biases in qualitative studies, pointing to two pitfalls that might appear during one-to-one interviews: that the informant, in an effort to please the researcher, provides them with the answers they think they want to hear or that informants withhold information or lie to avoid touching on difficult topics. Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that people connected to informal activities lie more than other groups because the context of the research interview can create a safe space for them to demonstrate their knowledge to outsiders (Jakobs, in Sandberg, 2010).

While there are various structural approaches to narrative analysis, I have chosen to use the dramatisation approach to analyse and make sense of the data, namely the interview

transcripts from the five semi-structured interviews and the two follow up interviews. This approach was developed by Burke (1945) as a method of analysing the dramatical resources that people make use of to tell a story. I have used this approach to identify the various, and sometimes conflicting, narratives that my informants use to make sense of their position in the informal rental market in Oslo. The dramatisation approach is a useful tool to analyse how different people or groups might tell stories differently and how they might emphasise different elements of a narrative (Wiles et al., 2005). It is used to identify the five key elements in a narrative: *the act* refer to what was done and tells the story of what happened, *the scene* tells where or when it was done and sets the background, *the agent* tells who performed the act, *the agency* how he or she did it and *the purpose* tells the story of why they did it (Burke, 1945; Riessman, 1993; Wiles et al., 2005). Together these five elements helps the researcher identify a narrative, but also, as Burke (1945) argues, the motive behind the act or the story. When analysing I will use these five elements as a tool to analyse the five informants' narratives, but also as a way to highlight the different parts of narrative structures when discussing the narratives in the light of the relevant theories.

3. Presentation of the informants

In this chapter, I will present the five informants thoroughly. Starting off the chapter, I will present the reader with a map of the informal dwellings mentioned in this study. Secondly, a subchapter of each of the five informants follows. In each subchapter, I will present an informant, go through their housing career in Oslo, comment on their migration strategies and then present their economic, social and cultural capital that they make use of when navigating the informal rental market.

When reading through this chapter, I ask the reader to remember that the information presented in this chapter is based on informants' own memory. At times, the informants did not remember how much they paid in rent or how long they lived there because the memories of their different dwellings at times merged together. Unless otherwise mentioned, deposits have not been paid.

3.1 Mapping the districts where the informants have lived informally

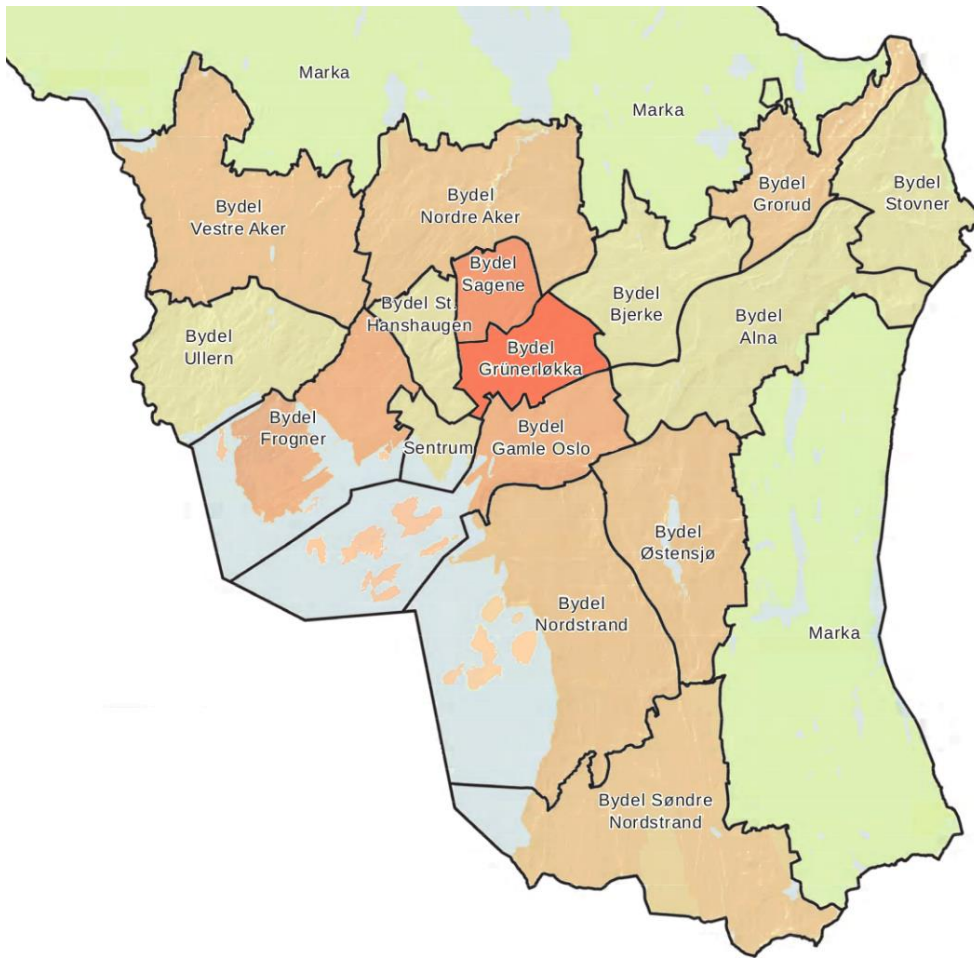
To give the reader a better visual understanding of the informal rental market in Oslo, I have adapted a map showing the districts in Oslo where the five informants to this thesis have said

to have lived informally. To protect the anonymity of the informants, I will not specify exactly where these dwellings are located, but rather point the reader to their general area. See the map on the next page. Please note that I have not included the informal camps located in the forest outside of Oslo as part of the data for this map.

An interesting thing to note when looking at this map is that many of the informal dwellings mentioned are located in central and high-cost areas of Oslo. Mahler argues that “if immigrants merely conformed to neoclassical economic rules, they would flow out of areas that they could not afford to live in (1995, p. 191)” addressing the fact that many labour migrants are dependent on living close to their place of employment because many do not enjoy the same flexibility as many locals. Following this argument, Aigner (2018) points out that neoclassical economic rules give an excessive emphasis on the individual freedom of choice and leave out other factors that influence people’s actions. It’s important to note that many of the informants in this thesis are working or have worked in the service and construction industry, which often are located more densely in central areas of the city. Rakib emphasised this. For him, it was important to live centrally so he could go home in between the jobs he had for the day and sleep. For Anja, living central and close to work meant that she could save 770 NOK a month on her monthly public transit pass and instead walk to work¹. Also, because she started work very early in the morning, she could save time on her commute, which meant that she could sleep in longer.

Yeah, but actually it came out that for example my colleague from work, he have to have place, I don't know, half an hour from the city centre and he's also paying 10,000 NOK. And yeah so... And you have to pay for the room even 7000, so I'm not sure if there are really big differences, so big differences, it's really hard to... If you don't have a car, and driving licence, you have to think about something inside the city and actually it's true that I like, I really appreciate that I have 10 minutes to work especially during the winter because it's really, yes I actually have, at the beginning of the week, I'm you know, can think a little bit and can be active somehow, but on the first day I'm dead actually.

¹ The price of a 30-day ticket in zone 1 for adults in April 2020 (Ruter, n.d.).



Map 1: Map showing the districts of Oslo. Modified and adapted by the present author. Plan- og Bygningsetaten. 2017. *Bydelskart for Oslo*.

Number of informal dwellings discussed in this study	
District in Oslo	Number of informal dwellings
Frogner	3
Gamle Oslo	3
Grorud	1
Grünerløkka	6
Nordre Aker	1
Nordstrand	1
Sagene	5
Søndre Nordstrand	1
Vestre Aker	1
Østernsjø	1

Table 2: a short overview of the informal dwelling discussed in this study

While this map is meant to illustrate where a small portion of the informal apartments in Oslo are located, it is important to note that this is not a complete map of the residential patterns on

the informal housing scene in Oslo. Nonetheless, my informants have explained that there are informal dwellings all over the city and not just in these districts.

3.2 Mariusz – the settlement migrant

I was put in contact with Mariusz through a person in my own network. She has known him for several years and Mariusz has previously done some renovations in her home. The interview was conducted in December 2018, in our mutual acquaintance's home, on a day where Mariusz didn't have any work planned. When I sat down and took out my voice recorder, he laughed and commented that it looked like a self-defence weapon while pouring himself a cup of coffee. Mariusz is in his 50s and has been living in Oslo for about 15 years, working as a skilled craft worker. He grew up in the western part of Poland and after a divorce, he decided to move abroad to look for new opportunities. He had heard about Norway on the news, he told me, and knew some people who had worked in Scandinavia. Mariusz came to Norway around the time Poland became a member of the EU in 2004, in a period where there was a high demand for skilled workers in the construction sector in Norway (Jon Horgen Friberg & Eldring, 2011). After two weeks of seeking employment, he got a string of short-term jobs doing various construction work where he gained a network in the industry. When the financial crisis hit in 2008, severely decreasing the price and demand for new construction projects (Jon Horgen Friberg & Eldring, 2011), Mariusz was already well integrated in the construction sector, having earned a reputation as a hard worker on various projects. He explained it to me like this:

Eh, I'll tell you like this, since I start working and that was... 34 years ago I started on *byggeplass* [construction site], but when I was 20, after military service, then I start work in one company, I work there for two years, and since then it was very... few times I have to seek work. People are calling me because I'm recommended.

According to Friberg & Eldring (2011), labour migration streams that have been thought to be temporary often end up being of a more permanent nature. "I'm not working here, I'm living here. I want to have live a normal life", Mariusz told me, emphasising that his move to Norway was not a one-off venture to accumulate capital, but rather a new beginning.

3.2.1 Mariusz' housing career

Mariusz has moved a lot within Oslo during the last 15 years and many of his places of residence do not seem all that memorable to him. He told me that he has never had a rental contract while living in Oslo and that he usually pays his rent in cash. "I don't care about

formal and I don't care about money, I'm just living. It's going to hit me in the back one day, but...”, explaining that he if there would be a problem, he would deal with it then. When Mariusz first moved to Oslo in the mid-2000s, he stayed on a private camping site near the forest for the first three months while working various short-term jobs. After about three months he got employed by a property investor to renovate a newly bought apartment in Vestre Aker district. As Mariusz explained it, the investor was in the business of buying “ruins”, renovating them and selling them with a profit. It was a big apartment over two floors, he said, with four bedrooms, two bathrooms, a living room and a kitchen. After renovating the kitchen, bathroom and one of the bedrooms, he moved in while working on the rest of the apartment. As he remembers it, he was paid 9000 NOK a week and after he moved in, 2000 kr for rent was deducted from his salary every week. Mariusz was working in the black on this apartment and did not have a work or rental contract while living there. Mariusz lived in the apartment for about a year before finishing the renovations and moving out.

Then he lived with a girlfriend for some months, he told me, before he moved into a very small apartment in Sagene. “Mini bathroom, mini soverom [bedroom], mini... Everything was from *Mummitroll [The Moomins]*”, Mariusz explained to me, saying that the whole apartment was smaller than the large kitchen we were sitting in during the interview. The apartment was owned by a friend’s father-in-law and because of the substandard nature of the apartment, it could not really be rented out. Mariusz paid 1500 NOK a month in rent, informally, and lived there for a couple of months until a neighbour reported to the authorities that someone was living in a substandard apartment in the building and he had to move out. When I asked him what he felt about that, he told me:

Well, I would need to find another place. It happens everywhere, yeah. (...) Neighbours don’t like it when another neighbour have it better than you yeah.

Mariusz was forced to leave his apartment and slept on his friend’s sofa for a period before he moved into his girlfriend’s apartment in Grünerløkka. She owned the apartment, he said, and he contributed with the costs, about 8000 kr a month, as well as some renovation work. After 4-5 years of “a kind of normal life”, as he explained it, they split and he moved out. In 2007, Mariusz got formally employed for the first time. “Nah, everything was black until, I think, 2007, as far as jobs, I start paying tax”, he told me. However, while his employment situation formalised, his living situation continued in its informal nature. He explained to me that he was living “short periods, different places”, and moving often. Sometimes he rented

apartments for short periods and other times he stayed with friends. He explained to me that the amount of rent he paid, if he paid any at all, depended on his everchanging salary.

Mariusz: That... Everything depends on the job and how much money you get, but I'm trying to help people, so people are trying to help me as well, so it was not that...

Brit: So, you felt that if you were suddenly without an apartment, you would have someone to call or?

Mariusz: I never think about that. I can always return to forest. I like... It's not a problem.

Currently Mariusz is living alone in a studio in Sagene where he pays about 6000 NOK in rent a month. He does not have a rental contract but has been residing there for about four years. "It's just normal apartment", he tells me, "Where people live". Mariusz says he knows the owner of the studio very well and seems secure in the fact that he gets to stay there. At least for the time being. When I asked him if he believed his housing situation had improved over the last 15 years, he explained that "I don't have big needs, I'm not looking for... You know, condo somewhere på Aker Brygge, so for me, it's all right".

3.2.2 Placing Mariusz within the Differential Attachment of Migrants from Central and Eastern Europe typology

It makes sense to describe Mariusz' attachment to Norway as strong, placing him within the quadrant D of *settlement migration* in Engbersen et al's typology on the Differential Attachment of Migrants from Central and Eastern Europe. During our interview, Mariusz emphasised that he was living in Norway and not just working here, having created a life in Oslo during the 15 years he had spent there. He had fathered a child here, he told me, and was still in contact with his ex and her family. Engbersen et al's (2013) own study on Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian labour migrants' position in the Netherlands shows that settlement migrants are more likely to have a child in their country of destination, either with a local partner or a partner from their home country, and less likely to have children in their country of origin. Mariusz talked about being active in the music scene in Oslo and told me that most of his friends were not in the construction business, but working in various other industries. "I don't divide people into Norwegians, Swedish, Cubans, Argentinians, Chile, Peru because that's what my circle of friends is. It's just good people for me", he explained.

From our conversation, it seems like his attachment to his home country is weak. His motives are different from other labour migrants, he explained several times, "... they live here only

when they're working and then they go to Poland”, while he was not just in Oslo to work, he is here to live. Mariusz goes to Poland a couple of times of year, but often as a practicality. He was in Poland some time ago to get some medical treatment and is going back shortly after our interview to get a certification that he needs for his job as a construction worker, he told me, because both are a lot cheaper in Poland. Mariusz resembles Eade et al’s *stayers* that are “migrants who have been living in the host society for some time and intend to remain there for good” (cited in Engbersen et al., 2013, p. 963). While plans might change, Mariusz seems to have made a permanent move to Norway.

3.2.3 Mariusz’ capital

Economic capital

Mariusz explained several times that he is not “money focused”, referring to himself as a hippie. When talking about money, he seemed more interested in “making a living” than getting rich, but if he can save some money on housing he will. “Yeah, I’m not that stupid”, he told me. He has, with some help from his network, created a sole proprietorship and currently has a network of clients who contacts him if they need a handyman, a carpenter or a construction worker. “People are calling me because I’m recommended” he told me, explaining that he rarely has to ask for work anymore. When it comes to labour migrants, it makes sense to talk about their income security as part of their economic capital. Although this is stretching Bourdieu’s idea of economic capital, I would argue that Mariusz’ semi-steady income and his labour security, as in a steady access to work, can be viewed as a form of economic capital.

Social capital

Mariusz’ has expressed that he has a diverse social network in Oslo, not only in the construction business, but also in the music scene in Oslo. His friends have various backgrounds and skillsets and he makes use of his network when he is in need of housing, both when searching for informal housing and when he is in need of a couch to sleep on in periods in between housing, a favour he also repays when his network is in need. Mark Granovetter argues that within social networks, people have either strong or weak ties to others. Strong ties are held to family, friends and close colleagues, while weak ties are held between acquaintances or someone with a similar cultural background. Weak ties “functions most effectively when it bridges social distance (Ryan, 2011, p. 711)”. In this way, weak ties can serve as a bridge to other social networks, giving the holder access to resources beyond

their social group (Harper, 2016; Ryan, 2011). Keeping Mariusz' diverse social networks in mind, it can be assumed that his weak ties adds to his social capital. As previously mentioned, Mariusz is currently experiencing some form of labour security. "If I have too much [work], then I try to give it away", meaning that during times when his workload is too high, he distributes jobs between his network, which strengthen his social capital.

Cultural capital

Mariusz speaks several languages. In addition to Polish, he speaks Norwegian, English, Russian and some Spanish, he told me, and tells me that this gives him an advantage when it comes to finding work and housing, he is "automatically on another level". He was of part the first wave of poles migrating to Norway to work after Poland became a part of the EU in 2004 and when he arrived, he didn't have a social network here to support him. He was therefore dependent on his other strengths to navigate the rental and labour market. Massey claims that because the first stream of migrants from a particular area often have very few social networks to draw upon at arrival, they often gain more cultural and economic capital than migrants who follow later (in Mostowska, 2013, p. 1129), which seems likely in Mariusz' case.

3.3 Anja - the transnational migrant

I first heard about Anja through a friend of a friend. She is in her early 40s and has been working as a skilled worker in Norway for about four years. Anja grew up in a bigger Polish city and when a former classmate of hers, who was working in Oslo, offered her a job in a Norwegian company, she made the move to Norway. Following her move to Norway, her employer offered her housing in one of their buildings to help with the transition to Norway². Friberg & Eldring (2013) confirms that many companies in Nordic countries offer housing for new employees when they recruit workers directly from abroad, usually deducting the rent directly from their salaries. This can help make the transition easier for labour migrants who are lacking in social networks and knowledge about the local rental market in the country of destination.

² Due to the sensitive nature of Anja's experiences when living informally as a woman in Oslo, I will not go into details about her employment situation or her exact profession to protect her anonymity. According to Padgett, "sensitive topics must be handled with extreme care" in qualitative research, arguing that there should be placed a great effort in protecting the anonymity of informants (1998, p. 38). Nonetheless, I will disclose that she works for a medium sized Norwegian-owned company. This company is involved in multiple businesses in Norway, having employed plenty of international staff, mainly Polish. Through public sources, I have confirmed that this company does indeed own the property Anja claimed to have been living in and I have been shown the rental contract signed by her and her employer.

Anja is not happy with her job in Oslo, she tells me. She mostly does “help work” for her male colleagues, cleaning up after them and moving things out of their way. When she started working for her employer, she was paid minimum wage, she told me, and while her male colleagues’ wages increased over time, hers didn’t. “Yeah. Actually, it’s not so bad conditions, I know that there are a lot worse...”, she explained. Still, she is trying to find another job in Oslo, but it’s hard, she told me.

3.3.1 Anja’s housing career

When Anja first moved to Norway in 2016, she moved into an apartment in a house owned by her employer, located in the Frogner district of Oslo. There they housed some of their employees, as well some people in their network, she told me. The apartment had six rooms and seven people were living there together, with one bathroom and a kitchen in the corridor. “Actually, everything was rather old there”, she described the apartment, but she had quite a big bedroom that she didn’t have to share with anyone. Everyone took rounds to clean, so the place was clean and “actually quite nice”, she told me. Anja was charged 3000 NOK a month in rent to stay there and paid her employer in cash every month. She told me that she realised that this was a really good price, but “it came out that you are totally dependent on the landlord”. She told me the story of when she left for Poland for a few days, her employer called her and told her that he wanted to move her to move to another room in the building, saying that he would have her colleagues move her stuff before she got back because he wanted to “use the room for his workers”. She was moved to a much smaller room on the other side of the building and three men moved into her old room. The new apartment Anja moved into wasn’t so nice, she told me. It was dirty and there were cockroaches in the kitchen. “So, actually I decided to stop cooking when I was living in this apartment because it was impossible to cook something because cockroaches just jumped into your...”, she explained. Every new person who moved in tried to clean a little, but then they gave up, she told me, because it was “impossible to ask the other guys to clean”.

It was during that time that Anja got her first rental contract in Oslo, as a result of her needing to go to the doctor. At that time, she was only assigned a temporary identification number, which didn’t give her the right to a general practitioner (Helsenorge, 2016). During the process of changing her status, she needed to enclose a rental contract together with her application and was provided with contact from her landlord-employer. “It gave me the possibility to have this national number, so I’m glad it was... Anyway.”, she told me, although she acknowledged that the rental contract was created for her to be able to claim a general

practitioner, not do secure her rights as a tenant³. Anja lived in that house for two years, moving rooms several times, before she was asked to leave. During the end of her residency, her housing situation was characterised by a conflict with her landlord-employer and a great deal of uncertainty, she told me.

I think he was upset maybe before, because this is what you are asking about because I found that something, not everything is so like it should be, so I just was asking him about, for example bugs, if we can do something with it and the answer was "no and if you don't like it you can just move out". So, actually he started to be very upset and yes and I was in the situation that I moved on the third floor, but actually I have no idea how long can I stay there.

Anja moved out of the house on short notice and into her current apartment. She tried to find a small studio where she could live alone, she told me, but she ended up searching for housing together with two polish colleagues who were also in urgent need of housing. After a while they found an apartment in Frogner through Finn.no owned by a landlord who didn't mind having three tenants sharing a 30 square meter, one-bedroom apartment.

They wanted also to find something close to the centre and cheap and actually they decided that we are looking for two rooms and this is this place because I should have my room and they want to pay as little as possible so they will take bigger room together.

In this apartment, Anja slept in the bedroom while the two others slept in the combined living room/kitchen and as a result of its location, it was hard to keep warm during the colder months of the year. The bathroom was located through the bedroom, so the two others had to enter her bedroom every time they needed to use it, while she had to enter their bedroom every time she needed to cook or exit the apartment. This left less than 9 square meters of living space per adult if you exclude the bathroom. The rent was 12,000 NOK a month and they split it by three and all three signed their own rental contract with the landlord, Anja explained. After living in this apartment for some months, Anja became a victim of domestic violence from one of her male roommates.

They were drinking again and then he came to my room, I asked him to go out because I didn't

³ I have been shown the rental contract Anja was provided with and it appears as though the terms of the contract were not followed by either parts. The contract would have required her to take out a property insurance and pay a deposit equivalent to three months' rent, which she was not asked to do, and it would have hindered her landlords from moving her between various rooms in the house. The rental contract was written in Norwegian, a language Anja doesn't speak, making it seem like the contract was created only as part of her documentation process and was not meant to be treated as a legally binding contract.

want... I don't want to have many connection with drunk people. Yeah, because I'm from a family where there were a lot of alcohol so... So I told him that he should leave and he didn't wanted to and started to be really aggressive and I told him that if you are not going to leave, I'm going to leave and asked for this guy who was just smoking outside that he should do something with it because it's shouldn't look like this. (...) And every time he was yelling and swearing, I just couldn't sleep, and it came out that I was in shock. And I came... I was terrified in the morning, because you know, it was... It's in the place where you live and...

For individuals who experience abuse in their home, their place of residence ceases to be a place where they can exercise control, an experience that has been associated with being homeless at home (Mayock, Bretherton, & Baptista, 2017). Anja left the apartment and spent some days at a women's shelter. She was followed up by their day service, she told me, but she was also informed that because her relation to her abuser was not a familial or romantic one, she fell outside of their core target group and could not use their overnight shelter for more than a few days⁴. Anja spent about a month staying with people in her network in Oslo and, following the legal advice she got at the women's shelter, got in contact with her landlord. After first being hesitant to intervene in the situation, the landlord evicted her roommates, but afterwards gave them the new keys to the apartment seeing as their belongings were still in there after the agreed upon move out date. "So of course, so it was that he just decided to, you know... To leave me in the situation", leaving her to sort out their bills and deposit, while fearing that her former roommates would return to the apartment.

Currently, Anja is living alone in the same one-bedroom apartment. The roommate who was violent is currently living in Poland, but she fears that he will be back in Oslo. She got a small rent reduction from her landlord and is now paying 10,000 NOK a month. She explains that she prefers living alone given her often long work hours, but she fears that she might struggle to pay rent in the future. "The problem with this apartment on the market is that I should have definitely better job to live here. Because if it's like this, it's like every month I'm not sure if I will have work for another month, so it's like..."

⁴ Due to issues of limited resources and high demand, access to overnight-stays at women's shelters can be limited. Mostowska suggests that labour migrants' exclusion from low- and medium threshold services are often based on "prejudice and a lack of communication rather than the enforcement of explicit policy (2011, p. 40)", claiming that the gate keepers of threshold services at times apply different eligibility criteria between labour migrants and citizens because signs of membership in target groups might be interpreted different across cultures. However, having heard only her side, it is difficult to determine of this is the case.

3.3.2 Placing Anja within the Differential Attachment of Migrants from Central and Eastern Europe typology.

It can be argued that Anja's experiences can fit under Engbersen et al.'s (2013, p. 965) migrant typology under quadrant B of *transnational migration (with a bi-national orientation)* where the migrants have a strong connection to both their country of origin and country of destination. Her migration strategies are similar to Düvell and Vogels' typology of the transnational migrants, where the migrant is engaged in both their home and host societies (in Engbersen et al., 2013, p. 962) and Grabowska-Lusinska and Okólski's typology of long term residence migrants, describing migrants who have lived in their destination country for some time, but still have strong links to their country of origin. Anja has a strong attachment to her home country of Poland through her networks back home, a social network in Poland that she regularly visits and an engagement in Polish social and political issues. In Norway, Anja has obtained several different social networks that shares her interests, also outside of her place of work. She seems engaged in influencing her Norwegian workplace to become even better through membership in the local trade union and through sharing relevant information with her migrant worker colleagues. Basch, Schiller, & Blanc-Szanton (1994, p. 7) describes the transmigrant as someone who "develop and maintain multiple relationships – familial, economic, social, organisational, religious, and political – that span borders", which describes Anja very well.

3.3.3. Anja's capital

Economic capital

Anja was already employed when arriving in Oslo. She was recruited in Poland and started making an income right away after her move to Oslo. This means that she, unlike my other informants, did not experience a period of unemployment after first arriving in the city, which can be draining on someone's personal finances. As with Mariusz, her job gave her an income security which can be said to strengthen her economic capital when expanding on Bourdieu's idea of capital. However, unlike Mariusz', who is working from project to project, Anja is permanently employed. This gives her greater security when it comes to her employment situation and assurance that her paycheck will come at the end of the month, even if she is not always sure how much she will make.

Anja explained that she has encountered a gender pay gap in her place of work and she did not experience the same salary increase as her male colleagues. When she first started

working, she was paid the minimum wage in her sector and even though her wages have increased some, the wages of her male colleagues have continued to rise, while hers did not. Without knowing the exact numbers, it is safe to assume that as a result of a lack of wage increase, her economic capital will be smaller than the capital of many men working under similar conditions in her place of work.

Social capital

Anja was recruited to work for a Norwegian company through a former classmate of hers who was already working in Oslo. Although they were not close, knowing someone at arrival meant that she had a small network of one person in Oslo to draw upon if needed during her first days in the city. Over time, Anja became friendly with several of her colleagues, many who were living in the same house provided by her employer and some of them helped her transport wood to burn in the fireplace or second-hand items to furnish her room. Through the network made up by her colleagues, important information for labour migrants is shared, including information about the housing market (formal and informal), rent prices and what is good or acceptable housing. Anja is politically active and after moving to Oslo, she continued to engage in the topics she is passionate about. Through this work, she gained a social network of political activists from Norway and various other countries. She drew upon this network for shelter after becoming temporarily homeless after her incident of domestic violence, but also for social support. As with Mariusz, Anja's social network is not limited to migrant workers, but expands beyond her social groups. Erickson (2003) argues that having a diverse social network has a value in itself because it increases your chances of having the right contact when something is needed, which adds to their social capital.

Cultural capital

Anja does not speak Norwegian, but she does speak English, Polish and some Ukrainian. Mostly Polish, because that is the language that most of her colleagues speak, and she "not so much outside the work". Friberg & Eldring's (2011) study of the mobility, working and living conditions of Polish migrants in Oslo shows that migrants with good language skills are better positioned in the labour market in Norway. They can navigate through public bureaucracy, acquire information about their rights and more often negotiate terms with their employers. Anja has also acquired the skill of knowing where to find the right information in English from private organisations and public bodies and when the information is not available, she emails them requesting the information. This adds greatly to her capital, because not only

does this knowledge increases her cultural capital, but it also adds to her social capital when she shares this information with her colleagues.

3.4 Rakib – the footloose and temporary migrant

I met Rakib through another informant that he had previously shared accommodation with. Rakib was born in a South Asian country, but migrated to Poland in his early adulthood. After living and working there for many years, he acquired a Polish citizenship. Although Rakib was born outside of Europe, his Polish citizenship gives him the same right to free movement and to seek employment in EU/EEA countries as other EU-citizens working in Norway. It is because of his status as an EU citizen, and the set of rights that represents, I have chosen to include him as an informant. Rakib is a trained chef and has worked in several European countries, as well as in North America and aside from working for three months in a little town on the west coast of Norway, has lived and worked in Oslo since 2011. When he first moved to Oslo, Rakib worked as a chef in a well-known Oslo restaurant for about a year, but he has since worked several different positions in the foodservice industry. Currently he is not working as a chef because, as he points out, he is actually making a higher salary when working as a dish washer.

Right now, I'm working as a dish-washer. I'm not working in Indian restaurant because they are not paying good salaries. I can make more money than as a chef right now as a dish washer.

In his current job, Rakib has a contract for a 100% position, but in reality, he only works part-time. While he is paid for all the hours he is working, he is only asked to come into work when he is needed and is asked to leave early if it is quiet in the restaurant. This means that he might work up to 5-6 hours some days and other days he works a couple of hours more. Or less. To make up for his precarious work situation, Rakib also has two other jobs to make sure he gets a living wage. After we finished our interview, which took place on a Tuesday afternoon in March 2019 between the two shifts he had that day, the first thing he did was to pull out his phone to see if there was any work available to him.

3.4.1 Rakib's housing career

When Rakib first arrived in Oslo in 2011, he stayed with friends in their apartment in the Gamle Oslo district of Oslo for some months while being unemployed. The apartment consisted of two bedrooms and a living room and there were four people already living there. The rent for that apartment, he said, was 14,000 NOK a month, which was split between all five residents. Rakib paid his part of the rent in cash to one of the friends living there and got to stay in a small room alone, a room that could only fit one bed, he said. After he secured his first job with the help of his networks, Rakib moved to an apartment in Grünerløkka. This is the only apartment he has secured without relying fully on his social networks. While a friend found the apartment advertised on Finn.no, he confessed, he himself contacted the rental company, met with them and secured the apartment. The apartment was ok, he said, he had a rental contract and he paid a deposit. The apartment consisted of two rooms and he paid 11,000 NOK a month in rent. When I asked him if he was ever scared that he would not be able to pay rent, he answered “Yes, but I didn't have a choice”. Rakib confessed that he was scared that if he lost his job, he would not be able to pay for the apartment anymore, but he had some savings as a backup. After two years in that apartment, he had to move. He had lost his job and went into a little bit of a “finance crisis”, as he called it.

After he moved out of his apartment in Grünerløkka, Rakib stayed with a Norwegian friend for a couple of months while he looked for a job and paid him 3000 NOK a month in cash for rent. It was a five-bedroom apartment in central Frogner, with five people already living there, so Rakib slept in his friend's bedroom. After living there for 5-6 months, he told me that he moved out because his roommates barely cleaned up after themselves, making the apartment really dirty and because of a pest problem that the landlords didn't seem to put in too much effort trying to control. For a year, he sublet a small studio from a friend in a student housing building. The two signed a rental contract between them and Rakib paid his friend 6000 kr a month in cash. His friend had permanently moved out, but kept renting his housing unit so that he could sublet to Rakib because being a non-student meant that he wasn't actually allowed to live there⁵.

⁵SiO, the student welfare organisation that owns the building, allows student residents to sublet their housing, but only to other students and new sublessees must be approved by the organisation before they can move in (SiO, n.d.-b). Although Rakib was convinced that he was formally subletting this studio, the chances are that SiO was not aware that he was living there and would not have approved the sublet.

- Rakib: From there, I moved from there because of the transportation, I had two jobs and I'm supposed to go in the morning, breakfast serving in a hotel so it's a little bit far.
- Brit: Yeah, you must have started pretty early, right?
- Rakib: Yeah, early and I need to get rest. That's why I moved from there.
- Brit: And did you stay there for three months after terminating the contract or did you just go?
- Rakib: No, I'm... His friend moved in there, I didn't have a problem.

After Rakib moved out of the student housing, he moved back to the apartment in Frogner and lived there for two years, he told me. This time he paid 6000 NOK a month in rent and got his own bedroom and a rental contract. He moved out of the apartment in Frogner for a second time when a family member came to live with him, and he needed to find something bigger for them. They lived in a two-bedroom apartment in Sagene for a period, together with two adults and a child, and Rakib paid them 7000 NOK a month in cash to cover rent for him and his family member.

Currently Rakib is living in an apartment in Grünerløkka with two others and pays 5000 NOK a month in rent. While he does not have a rental contract at the moment, they are in the process of making one, he told me. When I asked him about the significance of having a rental contract, he explained to me that it was important to have his documents in order in case he lost his job and needed to get help from NAV, not because he felt housing insecurity.

3.4.2 Placing Rakib within the Differential Attachment of Migrants from Central and Eastern Europe typology.

Rakib is the informant who has been the most difficult to place within Engbersen et al.'s (2013) typology. During the interview, Rakib did not express much connection to Poland or to his country of birth. His family was scattered across the globe, he told me. He and his brothers all left their birth country at different times, one brother lives in Poland, another one in

In March 2020, a single furnished studio in the same apartment building cost about 6000 kr (SiO, n.d.-a), the same amount Rakib was paying in rent for living there, meaning that Rakib's friend most likely sublet his studio as a favour to his network, rather than to make a profit.

London and the third one is in Canada. Nevertheless, he talks to his friends and family on social media all the time, he said, but never expressed an intention of going back home, regardless of where that might be. Still, it seems like the majority of Rakib's network, both in Oslo and in Poland, is South Asian, and especially originating from his country of birth. Although his attachment to his home country seems weak, his attachment to what can be argued is a diasporic community seems very strong.

Rakib came to Oslo "looking for the best future", he explained. He wanted to make money and live a good life and he already had a network here to rely on. When I asked Rakib about his future plans, he expressed that there was little holding him in Oslo.

Rakib: It's who knows... Right now, I can say, you know. Right now, it's good. I don't have any problem with job.

Brit: But if it gets more difficult getting a job you might leave and go somewhere else?

Rakib: If I don't find a job, why do I have to stay?

Rakib has lived and worked in Poland, Canada, Norway and in South Asia after he left his country of birth as a young adult and there is reason to believe that his network would be able to help him secure employment and housing if he decided to start over somewhere else. Opportunities are not static and if his goal is to look for the best future, he might decide to migrate somewhere else in the future in search of a good life. Within Engbersen's (2013) of labour migration, I would argue that Rakib belongs somewhere between square A of *temporary, circular and seasonal migration* and square C of *footloose migration*. He has undoubtedly a weak attachment to Norway, his country of destination, which places him on the left part of the figure, but his attachment to his country of origin, on the other hand, will depend on if the emphasis is on his attachment to his diasporic community or to the countries he has previously considered home.

When looking at Rakib's migration strategies, he has some similarities to the migration strategies of Düvell and Vogel's *global nomads* (in Engbersen et al., 2013, p. 962), described as migrants who are very mobile, migrating between various countries for future work and Eade et al.'s (2007, p. 33) *storks*, described as circular migrants who are often performing low-wage jobs in their host country, like working in the food service or construction industry or as domestic workers. Storks are usually dependent on arranging accommodation and work through their migration networks upon arrival. Nevertheless, storks are described by Eade et

al. (2007) as being often seasonal migrants, usually only staying between two to six months in the host country at the time. Rakib, on the other hand, has a longer time frame, usually spending years in the countries he migrates to and while it seems like his migration strategies are not necessarily circular because he does not migrate between his home and host country (Samers, 2010), they are of a temporary nature. One of the most notable differences between the two typologies is that storks are more dependent on their migrant networks for arranging accommodation and securing employment than global nomads often are. During his migration process, Rakib draws upon strengths that are similar to both the strategies of the ideal types in quadrant A of *temporary, circular and seasonal migration* and quadrant C of *footloose migration*, namely his great mobility and his diasporic community that are be utilised for support wherever he chooses to migrate for work.

3.4.3 Rakib's capital

Economic capital

Except for some shorter periods of unemployment, Rakib has continuously been working 1-3 jobs at the time while he has been in Norway, adding to the unknown level of his economic capital. While we didn't go into details about the amount, Rakib mentioned that he had some "money backup" that he used to pay his rent in periods of unemployment. In Norway, Rakib claims that he has only been working legally and always with a work contract, which can give him more security in terms of salary and income, but also give him the ability to claim benefits in periods of unemployment. "If I don't get job, now I know I can go to the NAV and I can ask them for some *kurs* [work-training courses] and they can help. Now I know about that, they can send me some "kurs" and I can pay.", he told me. ⁶Staying within Bourdieu's three terms, Rakib's social welfare capital is also impacting his economic capital. According to Bourdieu, economic capital is "immediately and directly convertible into money (1986, p. 16)". Stretching this idea of economic capital, I would argue that the right to claim benefits, and the ability to carry out this process with NAV (the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration), is adding to the level of Rakib's economic capital.

Social capital

One of Rakib strengths is that he has a very diverse social network in Norway with friends from South Asia, Poland and from other European countries. Unlike the social networks of

⁶ Building on the idea of capital, Wright (1997) coined the term social welfare capital to describe a person's knowledge of welfare programs and their chances of obtaining benefits.

Mariusz and Anja, the majority of Rakib's network in Oslo are migrant workers. He explained that "some of the friends, they are working as a dish-washer, some of them are cleaning, some of the friends, they are working as waiters.". In Grenfell's terms (2012) social networks are built up social capital and as previously mentioned, Rakib relies heavily on his social networks when navigating the housing market in Oslo, they open their home to him when he needs to leave his current housing and they help him secure employment. Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) confirms that this is common, stating that many labour migrants from EEA countries already have a social network in the countries they move to, which is used to secure both jobs and housing. Rakib says he returns the favour when he can, asking around for available work, helping friends secure employment or letting them stay with him for a short amount of time, stating "If they need help, I always have to help them".

Cultural capital

Rakib says he only knows a little bit of Norwegian, but speaks quite a few other languages. He speaks English at an intermediate level, as well as Polish and three different South Asian languages. This makes him able to connect with and exchange information with various ethnic groups, adding to his cultural capital. During the eight years he has lived in Norway, Rakib has increased his knowledge about the formal rental market in Oslo. Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) argues that some knowledge of Norwegian or English is important to gain the trust of potential landlords and this is a part of a migrant's cultural resources when navigating the rental market. While he often ends up acquiring accommodation through friends, he has also successfully navigated the formal rental market once, acquiring an apartment through Finn. Rakib told me that while he doesn't feel excluded from the formal rental market, and often checks Finn.no when he is in need of new housing, the "important thing is that they are a little bit expensive", meaning that he usually ends up acquiring housing elsewhere. While it can be argued that Mariusz holds more capital that is useful in the Norwegian society, accumulated by his stable income, Norwegian language skills and Norwegian social networks, his housing in Oslo has been exclusively on the informal rental market, as a contrast to Rakib's housing career. This suggests that it is not only the lack of capital that makes labour migrants choose the informal rental market in Oslo, and that there are also other factors at play.

3.5 Ion – the circular migrant

Ion is a 30-year-old man who grew up in a small city in the southeastern part of Romania. The city he grew up in was close to a highway that connected two bigger Romanian cities. “We had the highway there and we are like the connection so it’s a small city, but we had a lot of things”, he explained. Ion identifies as a proud Gypsy. When telling me about the languages he spoke, he told me “This is my language, the Gypsy language. Not Romani language. (...) The language we are speaking are Gypsy language. It applies to every Gypsy, all over the world”⁷.

At 15, Ion left Romania to find work elsewhere. At the time, Romania was struggling with a youth unemployment rate as high as 20.16 % (TheGlobalEconomy.com, n.d.) and according to The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014), Roma youth are still less likely to be performing paid jobs than non Roma youth. Considering this, the decision to migrate to find work elsewhere must have seemed like a good investment in his future. After migrating, Ion did several short-time, undocumented jobs in Greece, Albania and Kosovo. “Yeah, all of the Balkan countries”, he told me, before he moved to Oslo in 2013. His brother-in-law had already lived in Oslo for a year and Ion made the move to join him. Ion has worked formally for most of the time he has been living in Oslo, only interrupted by some short informal jobs when he first arrived in Oslo and after he became unemployed. Nevertheless, he has continued to rent informally for most of his time in Oslo. For Ion, part of the reason behind this decision seems to be a matter of convenience, but there are also barriers for him to enter the formal rental market in Oslo as a migrant.

3.5.1 Ion’s housing career

After arriving in Oslo, Ion stayed in an informal settlement in the forest just outside of the city together with his brother-in-law for a couple of months. “Yes. It was quite nice. It was in the summer, so it was great”. Ion describes himself as a “social guy” and through the network he

⁷ Ion identifies as a proud Gypsy. In recent public discourse regarding the ethnic group, the use of the name Gypsy has slowly been replaced by the use of Roma. While the Council of Europe encourage the use of the name “Roma” to refer to “Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), (...) [also] including persons who identify themselves as Gypsies (Council of Europe, 2012, p. 4)”, Ion does not identify with this term.

Knowing this, I will be using both terms throughout this thesis. I will, following the Council of Europe’s recommendation, use the name Roma when writing about the ethnic group, and, following Ion’s wishes, use the name Gypsy when writing about issues regarding his own ethnicity.

gained after he arrived in Oslo, he managed to land a job with a formal contract through the social network he gained on the streets of Oslo. After securing a steady income, Ion moved to a small studio in the Grünerløkka district that he secured through his social network. The studio Ion moved into was about 20 square meters big and there were 15 people already living there.

Ten of them were gypsies, three of them were Romanians like... They were like thieves maybe. And three girls like they were... They were prostitutes. Yes, it was like really fun (said in with an ironic undertone).

They all slept on mattresses on the floor and Ion explained that because they were all rarely home at the same time, they often slept in shifts. He admitted that because people would enter and leave the apartment at all hours, “it was really hard to sleep there”. The studio they lived in had a small kitchen, but there were too many people living there to actually do any cooking. “Oh, it was like really bad conditions so I'm like... I don't know how to explain, it was like miserable”. Officially, there was only one tenant in the studio, but this person lived elsewhere and informally sublet the studio to newly arrived migrants from Romania. The tenant, acting as an informal middleman between the landlord and the subtenants, put one of the residents in charge of collecting rent from everyone and Ion paid 3000 NOK a month in cash in rent to this man, living there for a total of 2 ½ months⁸.

After leaving the studio in Grünerløkka, Ion moved into an apartment in central Gamle Oslo district together with two Romanian men who were working in the construction industry. The apartment was “quite nice”, he explained. It had three bedrooms and a combined living room and kitchen. Ion acquired this apartment through his ever-growing social network in Oslo.

Ion: I've met him in... There's like a Coop there in Tøyen. Very close to NAV and it was randomly, I like spoke with him. I said “I'm searching for a room” and he said “Ok, I have, I have a lot of space” so...

Brit: How did you know to ask him? Did you just ask everyone or?

Ion: No, no, no, no, but you can see the Romanians and it was like in the beginning and I spoke with everyone I saw and I saw that he was Romanian so I asked for a room. Because I didn't have a personal number, I wasn't able to rent a place.

⁸ Assuming that the number of tenants were stable throughout the month and that they all paid the same amount of rent, the tenant would collect a profit of 48,000 kr monthly on providing housing for people living precarious lives before the unknown level of expenses were paid. As far as I know, the landlord was not aware of the activity on his premise.

The two men who were already living in the apartment both had contracts with the landlord as far as Ion knew and he paid them 5000 kr a month in cash to live there. Ion liked them, but he had an issue with their recreational drug use in the apartment. He explained that he was often woken up by his roommates during the night because of their agitated and noisy behaviour, making it difficult to live there and Ion moved out after a few months. “But they were cool guys, yeah except in the night. They were like taking drugs.”

From Gamle Oslo he moved to his first and only formally rented apartment in the Sagene district in the northern central part of Oslo. Ion found a listing for the apartment online and got in contact with the owner, a German woman who needed to rent out her apartment for some months while she was out of the country. Ion is unsure if this woman was the owner of the apartment, or if she was just renting it, but they signed a rental contract between them and he paid in advance for the full 2 ½ months he lived there, he doesn't remember exactly how much he paid. Ion explained because he still had a steady job, he was comfortable paying for the whole stay in one payment and it gave the woman he rented from some security knowing she would receive the full rent. He was not asked to pay a deposit. “It was a very nice apartment there”, he remembered. It consisted of one bedroom and a combined living room and kitchen. Ion shared the apartment with a friend who was working as an electrician. His friend slept in the living room and Ion slept in the bedroom. According to Ion, the only problem was that the owner asked them to take care of her dog while she was away.

I'm afraid of dogs and while like... Really bad for me. And I was like... Locking my door to the bedroom and he was like barking and scratching the door and I was afraid to open the door. It was very fun (said with an ironic undertone).

Regardless of the dog, Ion liked the apartment and wished he could have stayed there longer. After leaving the apartment in Sagene, tried again to rent an apartment on the formal market, but the day before they were supposed to meet to sign the contract, the landlords asked to see a picture of him and withdrew the offer after he sent one.

I'm like really bad with these things... And you know, before you had to go to Skatt [Øst] office and stay there for five hours, (...) it was like really hard for me to do that. And after "Ok, ok I don't like your face" or something like that.⁹

⁹ Ion was not sure if the landlords withdrew the offer because of his ethnicity or if they had other reasons. Nevertheless, research shows that ethnic discrimination is present on the rental market, although some groups experience discrimination to a greater degree than others (Andersson, Jakobsson, & Kotsadam, 2012; Sørvoll & Aarset, 2015). A possible explanation for their rejection of him might have been that Ion's real name is a very common Romanian name and therefore, a picture of him might have alerted them of his Roma ethnicity in a way

After this experience, Ion went back to renting on the informal housing market. He had an Albanian friend who was in the process of moving into a one-bedroom apartment in the Nordstrand district and he was looking for a roommate. Ion had a girlfriend at the time, so he moved into the bedroom and his friends slept on the sofa. He explained that it was “a nice area and really quiet. No bus, no tram, no nothing. It was a bit far, but it was ok”. Officially, the apartment’s tenant was still residing in the apartment, but he had moved out some time ago and through informally subletting his apartment to Ion and his friend, he became an unofficial middleman between Ion and the homeowner. Ion’s monthly rent was 4000 NOK and he paid his rent for three months at a time, usually in cash. Since the tenant was still living there on paper, he would often receive letters and official documents by post, which annoyed Ion because he had to bring them to the tenant every time it happened. Ion lived at Nordstrand for 11/2 years before the landlord decided to sell the apartment and they had to move out. The tenant, who was making a profit from subletting his apartment to them informally, rented another apartment in the Gamle Oslo district and Ion and his roommate continued to sublet from him, paying the same amount of rent as before.

Following a conflict between Ion and his middleman, Ion left the apartment in Gamle Oslo and moved into a studio in the Frogner district. Someone in his network was renting the studio for a family member who wasn’t currently living in Norway and Ion moved in with a Romanian friend. Ion and the informal landlord in Frogner had a spoken agreement and Ion paid him 10,000 NOK in cash as a deposit and 5000 NOK a month in rent. Ion liked living in Frogner. It was central and the studio was close to public transportation. Ion explained that he “didn’t have much stress” with his informal landlord and he got his full deposit back in cash after moving out of the studio in Frogner.

In 2017, following a family crisis, Ion moved back to Romania and lived there for a year to be with his family. He was unemployed at the time and did not have any immediate job prospects available. After moving back to Oslo a year later, Ion is currently staying with two men in his extended network in the Grünerløkka district of Oslo. As a favor to a mutual friend of theirs, they let him stay with them for free. “It works in a different way. We are not Norwegians, so for example I help you once, you have to help me. Once. It works like that, it's like simple

that his name did not. Nevertheless, Grødem and Hansen points to fact that different ethnic and social groups are competing for the same apartments and when combined with the landlords’ considerable freedom to choose their own tenants, which often is results in them choosing the tenant that presents as the safest investment, leads to discrimination on the rental market (in Sørvoll & Aarset, 2015).

math, you know?”, Ion explained. The apartment was small, but it had two bedrooms and a living room where Ion slept. “They have the house, I can live there. Because yeah, were like friends and we make favours with each other in different ways”.

3.5.2 Placing Ion within the Differential Attachment of Migrants from Central and Eastern Europe typology.

Ion fits very well with typologies in quadrant A of *temporary, circular and seasonal migration*. His migration strategies are usually centred around accumulating capital. Ion seems to fit best with Eade et al.’s (2007) storks, who they describe as circular migrants who are usually found working low-paying jobs in their country of destination. They note that storks’ “commuting behaviour often becomes a long-term strategy and the means of survival (p. 34)”, which is true for Ion, who have been working outside of Romania since he was 15 years old, interrupted only by regular visits to see his family back home. Ion does not seem to have any plans on making a permanent move to Romania in the future. When asked, he joked about moving to the Philippines when he gets his pension, because “all the Norwegians goes there”, making it seem like his future plans are very open. The two other typologies in Engbersen et al.’s quadrant A of *temporary, circular and seasonal migration* on the other and, Eade et al.’s hamsters and Grabowska-Lusinska and Okólski’s arget earners, both put a great focus on the migrant having the goal of accumulating large sums of economic capital in the host country and then return and invest it in their home country , which does not seem to mirror Ion’s strategies.

3.5.3 Ion’s capital

Economic capital

Ion had been working formally for most of the time he had been living in Oslo. As with Anja, his formal job gave him an income security that strengthened his economic capital. During the interview, Ion told the story about how he had supported a friend who was expelled from Norway financially for some time. “I have been supporting him for like two years there in Albania. Of course, the life is not too expensive, but it's not very cheap so...”. While he never mentioned the amount of financial support, it suggests that Ion had some disposable income at the time when his was working formally. This shows that he already had an existing level of

economic capital. When Ion first arrived in Oslo, he did some informal work, mostly jobs for a moving company.

And like, like, black money. And you stay there maybe... Minimum 12 hours a day. So, it's like... You can take like 4000 [kr] today. If you work three days, it's 12.000 [kr]. In a month it's 50.000 [kr] or something. And you work maybe 15 days for this money. And you don't pay taxes. That's not a good thing but it's a lot of money, like salary.

While working informally for the moving company gave Ion high hourly salary, Ion explained that the working conditions were not good and combined with the long hours “it became harder and harder every day”. I have previously argued for a widened understanding of the economic capital of labour migrants and that their income security should be viewed as part of their economic capital and while workers in the informal economy often lacks protection, rights and representation, meaning that their income by definition becomes insecure (Chen, 2016), their social and cultural capital might help to bring back some of this security. Very much like it is in the formal economy, a person’s social and cultural capital can help make them attractive employees (Cheung & Phillimore, 2014; Knight & Yueh, 2008; Samaluk, 2016) and for workers in the informal economy, their social and cultural capital can help them secure current and future work to sustain an income. For Mariusz that meant that he had a network of clients that supplied him with new jobs, sometimes formally and other times informally, and for Ion, it meant that he had a network of potential employers in the informal economy where he could work for a period if needed. In his words: “If example, I'm to go to work, I have friends, I have friends. I can collect ten different guys who has a company or so to work and I can do that. But it's the same, like black work.”

Social capital

As Bourdieu argues, in certain conditions social and cultural capital can be converted into economic capital (1986), in Ion’s case, his economic capital spilled over into his social capital. As previously mentioned, Ion supported a friend financially for about two years and while this shows that he most likely had a sufficient level of economic capital, his actions also increased his social capital. Bourdieu (1986, p. 21) argues that

The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected.

Through helping his Albanian friend out, Ion gained a membership to his friend's social networks which increased Ion's social capital. When he moved back to Oslo after spending a year in Romania, his Albanian friend called on his network in Oslo and found somewhere for Ion to stay for free. "They have the house, I can live there. Because yeah, we're like friends and we make favours with each other in different ways.", Ion explained. The two men were already renting an apartment and they let him sleep on the couch as a favour to their mutual Albanian friend. On multiple occasions, Ion mentioned that he has a large social network. He refers to himself as a "social guy" and it seems like he has no problem getting in contact with new people. When he was in the need of housing, he "called some friends" and usually found somewhere to stay on short notice. Nevertheless, it seemed like most of his networks in Oslo are migrant workers, unlike the networks of Mariusz, Anja and Rakib, who had expanded their networks beyond the social networks of labour migrants. Migration researches often note that one should be careful to assume the strong durability of migrant networks because "migration throws people together" based on a shared ethnicity, nationality or status and rather than being a constant, these bonds are more dynamic in nature (Ryan, 2011, p. 714) as a result of a continuous migration, upwards social mobility and other factors. Ion explained that within his social networks, they are heavily relying on providing resources for each other, that be information, favours, housing and other resources. "It works in a different way. We are not Norwegians, so for example I help you once, you have to help me. Once. It works like that, it's like simple math, you know? (...) We have contacts all of us." Bourdieu (1986, p. 22) points to some of the same mechanisms when he describes social networks. They are not a social or natural given, but as a product of an "endless effort (...) which is necessary in order to produce and reproduce lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits"

Cultural capital

Ion speaks English, Romanian and Romani, in addition to Greek, Italian, Spanish and Albanian. He understands some Norwegian, but he does not speak the language. As a migrant worker in Europe, Ion's language skills has been crucial when establishing social networks and weak ties beyond his immediate ethnic group (Ryan, 2011), which, for a migrant worker, is a very important form of cultural capital.

While Rakib had little trouble acquiring new jobs after being laid off, Ion struggled to find formal work again, suggesting that he might be lacking some of the cultural capital that that

made Rakib a desirable employee, and without a reliable income, renting formally becomes impossible.

Ion has some knowledge of how to navigate the public bureaucracy in Norway, but this knowledge is learned through his social networks and not always correct. During our interview, he talked about how Romanians and Bulgarians have the right to claim a housing allowance and social benefits from NAV from day one in Norway, while citizens from other European would have to work in Norway for a period before being allowed to claim benefits.¹⁰

But you know, for the Romanians and Bulgarians, it supplies other rules, it's a law from maybe six seven years ago or maybe more who says that the Romanians and Bulgarians, when they come here they have the right to social... They have to apply to social help because they have to receive it. That means like house from NAV and some money 6000-7000-8000 kr. Even if they didn't work here one single day, that's a law. It's not like a rule, it's a law. It's written like this.

This is a contrast to Anja, who has the skill to acquire the right information directly from their sources, which gives her more cultural capital in this situation.

3.6 Emilian – the circular migrant

I was put in contact with Emilian through Ion, who knew him from the streets of Oslo. Emilian grew up in a small city in the south part of Romania in the 80s, a time where many Romanians suffered through a period of extreme deprivation as a result of the economic policies of president Ceaușescu (Bachman, 1989). Emilian has a wife and daughter in Romania and he has been working in Norway on and off for about 14 years to be able to support them. He came to Norway because he had heard there was a possibility to “earn something” if he came there to work. In Romania he had been doing work within the construction business, he explained, while in Norway he is supporting himself and his family

¹⁰ The information Ion got from his social network is not correct. Romanians and Bulgarians are granted the right to live, work, search for a job, study and retire in any EU/EEA country as EU/EEA nationals. This right is not exclusive for Romanian and Bulgarian citizens, but also applies to EU/EEA migrants from other European countries (Europa.eu, n.d.-a).

Housing support is usually granted through communal social housing or through housing allowances in Norway. Social housing in Norway is means-tested and one of the qualifiers obtaining social housing in Oslo is that you must have lived in Norway for at least two years and housing allowances are granted by Husbanken (the Norwegian State Housing Bank) and to be given a housing allowance, you must, amongst other qualifiers, already live in a dwelling that satisfy a certain standard and are not given to newly arrived migrants in Norway (Husbanken, 2019; Oslo kommune, n.d.).

by doing street work, as well as some short-term casual work in the construction business. He usually spent a couple of months working in Norway and then went back to Romania for a period to be with his wife and daughter. Emilian does not speak any Norwegian and hardly any English. He hasn't needed to so far, his network in Norway all speak Romanian. During the last 14 years, Emilian has also worked for short periods in Spain and Greece, following the job market. When I asked him, he told me that he spoke "maybe a little bit of Spanish", but no Greek. Still, Emilian always came back to Norway. He had contacts here and there was a possibility to make good money, as long as he struck lucky. Emilian is the only one of my informants who doesn't have a D number or a Norwegian national identity number. Even though he had been working here for nearly 15 years, his work had always been in the black. During our interview, we talked about his experiences in the construction business in Norway. He was paid in cash on a daily basis and he told me that he compared his salary in Norway to a Romanian salary, "of course, it was better here". Still, he admitted that he didn't know the Norwegian standards when it came to wages and benefits. When I asked him about it, he confessed that he was paid less than his colleagues from other countries. He was usually paid 700 - 800 kr a day, working very long hours, while his colleagues were paid a lot more¹¹.

3.6.1 Emilians housing career

When Emilian first came to Norway 14 years ago, he told me that he "paid rent in a place where there sleeps a lot of people". This was a small apartment located on the 4th floor of an apartment building in the Grünerløkka district of Oslo. It was, as Emilian remembered it, about 60 square meters big, with two bedrooms and a living room and 14 people were living there, paying 100 NOK a night in cash to do so. They all slept on mattresses on the floor during the night and in the morning, they left the apartment to, in a variety of ways, try to make ends meet. After four months in this apartment, Emilian had to move because the tenant was not able to renew the rental contract¹². Through the network he gained after moving to Oslo, Emilian was told about an apartment in the Grorud district, located in the outskirts of

¹¹ For transparency: As explained in chapter 1, Emilian does not speak Norwegian and only some English. He can therefore be viewed as a lot more marginalised than my other informants because he is fully dependent on his Romanian network to navigate Norwegian society, including the Norwegian housing sector. To avoid misunderstandings, Ion was present during the interview to help translate when needed to avoid attributing Emilian with meanings that were not his. Emilians narrative is an important addition to the story of informal housing in Oslo, which is why I have chosen to include it in my data even though it posed a methodological challenge.

¹² Emilian was usually unaware of who his landlords actually were. Because he was living informally, he never saw the contracts between the landlords and their tenants, and he never cared to ask. This means that he was often uncertain if the person he paid his rent to in cash was the apartment's contractual tenant or a middleman in between them.

Oslo, and he moved in. The setup was similar to the apartment he had lived in at Grünerløkka and he paid 100 NOK a night in cash to one of the men already living there. Emilian explained that the one-bedroom apartment was smaller than the last apartment he lived in, but he only had to share it with seven other people. Some of them were making a living off of street work, while others were “working with contract or something like that”, he wasn’t sure. Emilian only lived in the apartment in Grorud for 1 ½ months. There was a conflict between two of the residents which resulted in a fight inside the apartment, he explained. The police came and intervened and “no one was able to continue to stay there... living there”.

After leaving the apartment at Grorud on short notice, Emilian slept in an informal settlement in the forest outside of Oslo for about a week before he moved into a house near the forest in the Mortensrud district of Oslo. It was a five-bedroom house with two floors and the bedrooms and other communal spaces had been turned into dormitories. Emilian explained that the house was in a “very bad condition”. It was far away from the city centre, worn down and the landlord would hardly have been able to rent it out formally without renovating the whole building. There was a high turnover of residents in the house. Sometimes there were only about 30-40 people living there, but other times up to 60-70 people spent the night. The average number of residents was probably somewhere in between. Ion, who was present at the interview, also confirms the existence of this house¹³. While Emilian stayed there, there were about 45 people living in the house on average, but according to Ion, there had been up to 50-70 people living there at the most. Emilian explained that he paid 70 NOK a night in cash and he usually stayed in the same dormitory room together with about eight others. According to Emilian and Ion, the landlord rented out the house informally to a Romanian man who served as a middleman between him and the other tenants. The middleman decided how many people could stay there for the time being and collected rent from the tenants. Emilian never stayed a night without paying rent, even if he came there late¹⁴. I was told that the landlord wasn’t

¹³ Ion stated that he has visited several people living there and he had met with the property owner on several occasions in his office, accompanying friends who were doing business with him. I have tried to confirm details of their overlapping story as best as I can. Through sources that are publicly available online, I have been able to confirm that this landlord does indeed exist, as well as confirming their claims about his business, his profession, other personal identifiers as well as people in his network. To protect the identity of my informants, I have not been in contact with the landlord myself, so he has not been able to respond to these claims himself and to present his view of the situation, which is one of the reasons he is anonymised in this thesis.

¹⁴ The agreement between the landlord and the tenant must have been quite profitable for both parties. I have been told that the middleman paid the landlord 40,000 kr in rent for the whole house every month, while keeping the rest of the profit for himself. Assuming that there was an average of 45 tenants a night and that all paid 70 kr a night in rent, the middleman could have collected about 94,000 kr in rent monthly. Ion claimed that the house was partly paid for with “girls and drugs” and that the police had found drugs in the house previously. It was a rumour that they had also previously found a gun, but I have no way of confirming these rumours.

terribly concerned or interested in what was going on in his house. “He sounded like a normal guy who just wanted to continue with his business”, Ion explained. Nevertheless, after seven months of living in Mortensrud, Emilian and the rest of the residents were evicted after several official complaints coming from the neighbours in the nearby area.

After being evicted, Emilian bought a tent moved back to the forest for a long period. He was struggling to find a job and therefore wasn't making enough money to pay rent. He had contacts, he explained, and would be able to find somewhere to live on short notice, as long as he could pay rent. During this time, he also made several long trips to Romania to be with his family. After some time, Emilian was in a slightly better economic situation and moved into a house located in the Nordre Aker district in Oslo for a period. The house was rented by a prominent member of a non-profit organisation and who sublet informally to Romanian and Roma migrants for 70 NOK a night, housing up to 100 migrants some nights. Ion also knew of the existence of this house and confirmed the story. Emilian explained that the house consisted of eight bedrooms and two living rooms and there were 8-10 people living in each bedroom. The house had a high turnover of residents, but nevertheless, there were “people everywhere”, also in the attic. “No, there it were too many people and it wasn't like very clean. It was like... a mess”. There was a middleman living there who collected rent every night. If Emilian was broke, then “maybe a night or two, it was ok to stay without money”, but after he needed to pay back the amount he owed in cash.¹⁵ After about two years, the non-profit was forcefully evicted and Ion believes that the non-profit organisation does not currently accommodate migrants informally, stating that “he made his profit, he doesn't care”.

From Ullevål, Emilian moved to a smaller apartment in the Østensjø district in the outskirts of Oslo. In this apartment he had a lot more space, it was a one-bedroom apartment that he was sharing with just four other people. He thinks the apartment was about 50 square meters big and he paid 100 kr a night to the tenant, a man who was also living there. Emilian did not know the landlord, but he believes that he didn't know that they were living there.

Unfortunately, after 8-9 months, the tenant terminated the rental contract and moved back to

¹⁵ I have chosen to anonymise this non-profit organisation and its prominent member to once again protect the identity of my informants, but I have tried to confirm their story as best as I can. I have, using sources publicly available, been able to confirm that the organisation previously has been evicted from a rental unit for informally accommodating a number of migrants on the property, mirroring the claims made by Ion. In addition, there are repeated and public accusations of the non-profit operating in a financial grey area, which strengthen my informants' claims. However, I have not been in contact with the non-profit organisation or the prominent member to protect the anonymity of my informants, which means that they have not been given the opportunity to answer to these claims.

his home country. After moving out of the apartment in Østensjø, Emilian said he spent some periods working in Spain and Greece, as well as sleeping in the forest surrounding Oslo. He explained that he knew some of the people living in the settlements, many of them were Roma or Romanian, and he joined them at times when he did not have other options available to him. Emilian is currently sleeping in a settlement in the forest southeast of Oslo and makes an income of various street work activities. He expressed frustration over the fact that his living situation has declined since arriving in Oslo 14 years ago and blames it on the job current job market. If he could only get a stable job in the formal economy, he would be able to “make all the [legal] documents” and rent an apartment in the formal housing sector, making his existence less precarious.

3.6.2 Placing Emilian within the Differential Attachment of Migrants from Central and Eastern Europe typology

Emilian has undoubtedly a strong connection to his home country of Romania, where he supports his wife and children, and little attachment to his host country of Norway and even after migrating back and forth for nearly 15 years, he has worked in the black and still not gotten a National ID number. His migration strategies places him clearly within Engbersen’s (2013) quadrant A of *temporary, circular and seasonal migration*.

Emilian experiences fit exceptionally well with Eade et al.’s storks. Storks are circular migrant “tend to treat their migration as only a capital-raising activity (p. 34)” and are usually found performing low-paid jobs in the host country. Storks mostly arrange accommodation and jobs through their ethnic network and as a result, their social networks often have little diversity to them, which is true for Emilian. It is apparent that Romania is home for him, while Norway is just his place of work and when he has accumulated enough capital, if that ever happens, he will most likely stay in Romania with his family permanently.

3.6.3 Emilian’s capital

Economic

It is clear that Emilian has very little economic capital although he mostly talked about his expenses and little about his income. Unlike Anja, Rakib and Ion, who could rely on a security of income through their employment, and Mariusz, who could rely on an income through a steady access to work, Emilian supported himself and his family back home in Romania through some casual short term jobs in the construction sector and through street

work. In periods where Emilian could not afford the roughly 100 kr a night for informal accommodation, he slept in informal settlements in the forest surrounding Oslo. Emilian is currently spending more nights in the forest than previous years. He explained that it is because he is “not able to find a job to... to be able to rent a place”, not because the rental market is inaccessible to him, showing his economic capital is currently very small.

Social

When compensating for his lack of economic capital, Emilian’s social and cultural capital becomes thus more important. While he has not been making “good money” in Oslo, he has managed to acquire the resources needed to survive for almost 15 years in Oslo, which points to a certain social capital. Rowe and Wolch argues that “homeless persons enter social relationships on the same grounds that all others do”, but when reliable living and working conditions are lacking, these relationships often enters a more complex dynamic involving material, logistical and emotional support (in Flåto & Johannessen, 2010, p. 99). Based on what Emilian has shared, it seems like he has had somewhere to sleep every night, even if it was at times in informal settlements located in the forest. Emilian expressed that he “has contacts” and could find accommodation though his network quite fast if he had a job. Nevertheless, it seems like his networks in Oslo have little diversity to them, consisting to a large degree of Romanian migrants with a loose connection to the labour market that he has met on the streets of Oslo. Following Granovetter’s idea of weak ties (Harper, 2016; Ryan, 2011), Emilian’s weak ties will still act as a bridge between him and other social networks, but they will most likely only bridge the social distance between him and other social groups to a small extent, unlike the weak ties belonging to Mariusz. Bourdieu (1986) argues that the volume of an agent’s social capital is measured by not only the size of their network, but also the economic and cultural capital the network can provide, which in Emilian’s case is not a lot, based on the assumption that his social networks have little diversity to them. However, his social capital, while limited, helps provide him with the resources he needs to cover his most important needs.

Cultural

Emilian is lacking parts of the cultural capital that is important for labour migrants in Oslo. He does not speak Norwegian and only some English and a little bit of Spanish. Sandlie & Seeberg (2013) points out that for migrants, language skills are necessary to acquire information about their new environments to be able to, amongst other things, navigate the housing market. Because Emilian does not speak Norwegian and only a little bit of English,

he is dependent on acquiring this information from people who speak Romanian, which makes him vulnerable to misinformation. As a contrast, Anja and Mariusz both speak English and are able to acquire this information first-hand.

Emilian possesses little knowledge of the Norwegian rental market. For him, the lack of employment is the only barrier that keep him from entering the formal rental market and he expressed a wish to formally rent an apartment to have somewhere to stay a bit more permanent if he secures some employment and “gets all the documents (a D-number, a work contract etc.)”. Ion, on the other hand, was fully aware that for Emilian, there are more barriers that keeps him for entering the formal rental market, stating that “He think he can rent, but he doesn't answer the questions very well”. Sandlie & Seeberg (2013) argues that the strategies that labour migrants use on the rental housing market are shaped by their cultural resources (or their cultural capital when using Bourdieu’s terms). Information that is well known to locals, like how the rental market is organised, what the market rental price is and which steps to take to actually acquire a dwelling is often new to labour migrants. As previously mentioned, landlords have a considerable freedom to choose their own tenants, which usually results in them choosing the tenant that presents as the safest investment for them (Sørvoll & Aarset, 2015). Andersson et al.’ (2012) study shows that on the Norwegian rental market, a potential tenant with a low-status job and/or a foreign sounding name has less of a chance of obtaining a rental housing than someone of the opposite characteristics. Sandlie & Seeberg (2013) also points to language skills as being a necessary tool for obtaining the trust of potential landlords. In addition, Djuve et al.’ (2015) report shows that more than half of the Romanian and Roma street workers in Oslo report having experienced harassment, which is higher level than in the two other Scandinavian capitals. When keeping this in mind, it is very unlikely that Emilian will manage to enter the formal housing market with his current levels of capital. In his introductory essay to the Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (2002), Jakobsen states that to have capital is to hold power over those who are lacking it. In the Norwegian society, Emilian is lacking in both economic, social and cultural capital that is needed to succeed in the formal labour and housing market.

4. Narratives on the informal rental market

In between chronological retellings of their former dwellings in Oslo, narratives created to make sense of past events started to appear in between the different accounts. To categorise and to make sense of past events, happenings and interactions, people tend to “organise [their] experience and [their] memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on” (Bruner, as cited in Brown, 1998, p. 36). It is important to acknowledge each informants’ different migration strategies and capital, as defined in the chapter 3, when they are navigating the informal rental market. Their long-term migration strategies and the capital they have at their disposal will not only affect what apartments are accessible to them, but also how they make sense of the housing market as a whole and their agency within it. Riessman argues that that the narrative approach does not “assume objectivity but, instead, privileges positionality and subjectivity (2001, p. 3)”. As previously mentioned, Jakobs argues that there is no reason to believe that people connected to informal activities lie more than other groups during qualitative interviews (in Sandberg, 2010). Dean and Whyte argues that the goal of narrative analysis is for the research to ask “What does the informant’s statements reveal about his feelings and perceptions and what inferences can be made from them about the actual environment or events he has experienced? (as cited in Sandberg, 2010, p. 448)”. Therefore, a narrative analysis can help shed some light to how the five informants understand the informal rental market in Oslo.

4.1 Narratives of the empowered and the disempowered tenant

When working with this research data, two different, and sometimes overlapping narratives held by the informants about their own agency as tenants were identified: *the narrative of the empowered tenant*, where the informant was an active agent in their own narrative and *the narrative of the disempowered tenant*, where the informant had little agency to influence the events that unfolded around them. Riessman (1993, p. 65) argues that “narratives are laced with social discourses and power relations, which do not remain constant over time”. Over time, the narratives of my informants often shifted, following a change in their economic, social or cultural capital changing the power dynamics between the informant as the tenant and the middlemen/landlords. These shifts could be an upwards one, changing the disempowered to empowered or it could be a downwards shift, changing an empowered narrative to a disempowered one.

For a period, during her early days in Oslo, Anja conveyed the narrative of the *disempowered tenant*. When she moved to Norway, she was provided housing by her employer. At first, she explained, she was very happy with her housing, she had a big room that she stayed in alone and got along with her roommates. However, after some time, there is a shift in her narrative.

So, it was very strange for me because when you think and when you count it in Polish złoty, it [the rent] is quite a lot, but yes. But then I realised that it's really good price, but you have to... But it came out that you are totally dependent on... on the landlord. (...) So actually it came out that, when I was maybe in March next year, in 2017, I was in Poland for a few days and [middleman]¹⁶ just told me that... Asked me if I want to move out. And I was really surprised because he told me that... Actually the guys can just take my things and move me to another place so I ask him "can you please give me the chance to be there?", but it was no chance to object anyways so this is this.. How you have to pay for this dependence.

During a visit to her home country, Anja's middleman decided that he wanted to use her large bedroom as a dormitory and she was moved to another part of the house which was much dirtier and more substandard than her previous room. Anja continued her narrative by mentioning scenes where her middleman reacted with discontent to her actions in the house and with annoyance when she tried voicing grievances regarding the substandard nature of the apartment. The act of her narrative is how the middleman exercised the power he had in the dwelling to correct her behaviour. The motive behind the middleman's actions, she believed, was to get her to stop voicing grievances or to move out.

I think he was upset maybe before, because this is what you are asking about because I found that something, not everything is so like it should be, so I just was asking him about, for example bugs, if we can do something with it and the answer was "no and if you don't like it you can just move out". (...) And actually I also think that [middleman]¹⁷ and my colleague thought that I would resign very fast from this job because maybe he thought that it's too hard so yeah, so I think I had that feeling that he used the flat, the option of flat, to try to get rid of me from the job.

In Anja's narrative, she presents herself as an agent who is slowly losing agency in her own home. At the time, she had only lived in Oslo for a short period and had little knowledge of the local rental market. In other words, she had little cultural and social capital to obtain

¹⁶ Identifying information removed

¹⁷ Identifying information removed

housing elsewhere, making her very dependent on her middleman for housing. The driving factor behind her loss of agency is not only her objective situation of losing control, but also the feeling of not having the resources to retaliate against the middleman (Engelstad, 2005). The fact that her housing was also provided by her employer adds an extra layer of dependency because revolting against the middleman would not just put her housing at risk, but also her employment. The purpose of her narrative is to tell the story of how she paid the price of her independence, and by result her agency, to keep her low-cost housing. Anja's narrative touches on some of the instability that might occur for tenants on the informal rental market lacking the capital to be mobile and therefore becomes very dependent on their current housing.

It is well recognised within housing research that landlords generally hold power over their tenants. This power imbalance exists because landlords have the ultimate control of the property and therefore have a considerable freedom to choose the tenant that presents as the safest investment (Grødem & Hansen, in Sørvoll & Aarset, 2015). Furthermore, landlords often are less dependent on the regular stream of rental income than tenants are dependent on their homes and “private tenants cannot enforce their rights due to lack of information, the difficulty of managing the legal system, and fear of eviction (Chisholm et al., 2018, p. 3)”. There is no reason to believe that there is less of a power imbalance between the tenant and the landlord on the informal rental market, in the absence of formal rental contracts that states each parties' rights and responsibilities. As previously mentioned, the middlemen often take on the responsibilities of the landlord for labour migrants on the informal rental market in Oslo. Therefore, it makes sense to look at the middlemen as a form of informal landlords to my informants, especially when analysing their narratives as tenants. While I acknowledge that it is likely that a power imbalance between the middleman and the landlord also exist, it falls outside the scope of this thesis.

In traditional literature on power, there has been two contrasting views: power as domination, described as *power over something* and power as empowerment, described as *power to do something* (Haugaard, 2012). Chisholm et al. (2018) argues that the power imbalance in the relationship between the tenant and the landlord can be understood as power by domination, where “one actor has “power to” determine the course of events, or “power over” another actor (p. 4)”. Following the view of power as domination, Weber famously describes power as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance (Engelstad, 2005, p. 19)”. Building on this understanding of

power, several power theorists have argued for a second understanding of power, where concerns never reach the relevant decision-making areas and are sometimes even stopped even before they are voiced, and a third understanding, where people have accepted their role within a power structure seeing their submissive role as natural or because they see no other options (Chisholm et al., 2018).

Chisholm et al. (2018) argues that these three dimensions of power can be used as a framework to understand the power structures that are in place between tenants and landlords at the micro level on the formal rental market. Using the example of tenants' reactions to substandard housing, or lack thereof, reveals how these power structures in place can keep tenants from asserting their rights and improving their living situations.

The first dimension of power is the visible power, which is an easy recognisable power structure. Using the example of substandard housing, Chisholm et al. (2018) argues that this power structure becomes visible when the tenant raises concerns over substandard housing and the landlord is unresponsive. To understand this dimension of power, one must look at how “grievances are voiced, and who emerges victorious in disputes (Chisholm et al., 2018, p. 9)”. And while research shows that some landlords were responsive to the issue of repairs in substandard housing, tenants often lose these disputes by either having to continue living in poor quality housing or by having to leave their homes willingly or unwillingly when their landlords were unresponsive.

The second dimension of power depict the hidden power structures at play and in this dimension, the actor in power can keep issues off the agenda. Continuing with the example of substandard housing, there are many factors that keeps tenants from voicing complaints about their poor-quality housing. Chisholm et al. (2018) points to several reason for this: the tenant is afraid of possible negative repercussions from the landlord, the tenant has little faith in the fact that improvements will be made, the tenant have a close and sometimes personal relationship with their landlords or because they themselves have broken the terms of the rental contract.

The third dimension of power is the power structure is experienced as natural. In relation to substandard housing, Chisholm et al. (2018, p. 13) asks the question of “What grievances are not experienced as grievances?”, using the examples of tenants that have grown accustomed to substandard housing or who see no other better options for housing. In this way, the third

dimension of power has shaped their perception of their home and their substandard housing problems is therefore seen as less significant.

These three dimensions of power can be used to understand the relationship between the tenants and the middleman/landlord. Although this framework originally was created to understand tenant-landlord relationships on the formal rental market, I argue that these power structures at times are also present on the informal rental market. On the informal rental market, there are also a somewhat symbiotic relationship made up by tenants who are in need of housing and middlemen and landlords who are dependent on the rental income. Nevertheless, if the tenant sees few other options for housing when navigating the housing market, it might strengthen the existing power structures that place.

Using the example of Ion as *the empowered tenant*, he tells the story of how his Algerian middleman tried to evict him on short notice after they had what he describes as "some incidents". Even though the two of them had agreed upon a one month notice period the middleman wanted to end the tenancy instantly. "Yes, we are men, so I don't think he can do that", Ion explained, emphasising the honour of the informal gentleman's agreement between them. He told the middleman that if he called the police to have him removed, Ion would alert them to the fact that the middleman had provided NAV with incorrect information when applying for social benefits and alerting the police would cause him to lose them.

Ion: I said "Mister How-is-his-name-there, that's not the deal. You're supposed to tell you with one month before, I was supposed to tell you with one month... Even if we don't have a contract..." (...) And he brought some guys there and... Algerians and like, people there, but he was like, making big mistake because I cannot be like... Intimidated with these things and I'm like "This is the wrong house to come, my friends. I paid for this house. He has to pay me back for two months and I go. Otherwise I don't go. And then I stayed another two months... 2 ½ months there without paying anything cause he didn't respect the deal, I did it like that. So, I said "Ok, go to the police and I can go and speak with NAV... What happened. And for how long did you stay in Norway and how long did you stay in Algeria".

Brit: During that period, was he threatening you or?

Ion: No, he wasn't able to do that.

Brit: Because you had the upper hand?

Ion: Yes. So, I didn't care about his friends, about his...

The purpose in this narrative is addressing the power struggle between the tenant and the landlord. In Ion's narrative, he emphasised an informal gentleman's agreement between two equal actors that was in place instead of a formal rental contract and understood it as disrespect when this agreement was broken. Ion responded to this disrespect by staying an extra 2 ½ months in the apartment before he moved out – without paying any rent. In the narrative, Ion was so secure in his position that the middleman “wasn't able to” threaten him, even when he brought his friends to the apartment to intimidate him. Engelstad (2005) argues that to be able to be in control of others, one first has to be in control of oneself. Therefore, when the person in power loses their temper, it weakens legitimacy of their power and shows that they have nothing to fall back on but threats. Engelstad's argument shows that in Ion's narrative, the middleman had already lost the power in the tenant-middleman relationship and therefore had to result to threats, which were not taken seriously. If the change in power dynamics between the tenant and the middleman was caused by Ion's retaliation or if the power dynamics had already shifted before the story took place was not addressed in his narrative.

Mariusz also positions himself as an *empowered tenant* on the informal rental market. He started his narrative, stating “I don't have big needs, I'm not looking for... You know, condo somewhere på [on] Aker Brygge, so for me it's all right” (my translation in brackets)¹⁸. Here, Mariusz starts his narrative with positioning himself as a laid-back guy, or “a hippie”, as he referred himself earlier in the interview, who does not demand too much of his housing. Answering the question of if he ever had been provided with housing through his employer, he explained that he has before, but that he prefers finding his own housing to preserve his independence.

Mariusz: Yeah, but that was in last... It didn't last long because this kind of situation is not in the interest of the... You know, businessmen making business. They as keep you as long as they need you, right? If you're lucky, or most of the time people are honest and not trying to... I almost swore...

Brit: I don't mind.

¹⁸ Aker Brygge is a high-end residential area located near the seaside in Oslo.

Mariusz: ... not trying to... use you. They are kind of normal people it's all right, but still. When it's time to split, it's time to split. Right? So, I don't have bad experiences. Few.

Within the narrative of being an *empowered tenant*, he positions himself as an agent who is free to leave his housing before any troubles with his landlord-employer manifests. Tenants, in his narrative, are presented as disposable objects with little agency, which he distances himself from. Engelstad (2005) argues that power is the most effective when it is accepted and while Mariusz seem to acknowledge what is by Chisholm et al. (2018) described as the first and second dimension of power, he leaves before his landlord-employers can exercise their power over him to the full extent. When reading Mariusz' narrative, it is important to keep in mind the extra dimension of power that arises at times when Mariusz' landlord also has been his employer, which can strengthen the power imbalance that is already in place. As mentioned in a previous chapter, it seems like Mariusz has the economic, social and cultural capital to be highly mobile on the informal rental market and by making use of this capital, he challenges the power structure between the tenant and the landlord.

An interesting finding that appeared when analysing the narratives of the informants was that Emilian and Rakib presented no narratives addressing the power structures between their middleman or landlord and themselves. Additionally, the middleman and landlord were never active subjects in their narratives, but rather presented as passive objects in the story. When asking them to tell me about their former dwellings, I was presented with short answers that addressed the nationality of the middleman, which floor the apartment was located or, as Rakib summarised it short and concisely, "No, that apartment was friends' so I just paid for them". Making informed guesses as to the reason behind their lack of narratives that touched on the power structures within their dwellings, I believe that Emilian and Rakib had two very different rationales for this.

Emilian, being the informant with the smallest amount of economic, social and cultural capital in Oslo, might fall under what Chisholm et al. (2018) defines as the third dimension of power, where the power structure between the tenant and the landlord shapes the tenant's perception of their home and therefore, this structure is seen as natural and is rarely noticed. Chisholm et al. (2018, p. 13) notes that tenants affected by this power structure were often "accustomed to living in substandard housing and knew that there were no superior options available to them". Nevertheless, under the third dimension of power, tenants can still develop strategies

to still claim a spaces as their own, also in substandard housing. Fonseca (1995) touch upon one of these strategies, describing how privacy occurs in overcrowded and substandard living spaces when writing about her time staying with an Albanian Roma family in a crowded and semi-informal house in the outskirts of Tirana in Albania in the 1990s. She writes that

Some kind of privacy still existed in the house, like when the women, almost as though they all had agreed upon it, ignored many of the men for shorter periods of time, and vice versa. Similarly, no one spoke to a man in the morning before he had time to wash his face (and at that point, the women had been up for hours). It was as if they did not *see* him until he was ready to be seen. Privacy here was about imagined walls (my translation) (Fonseca, 1995, p. 35).

Using Chisholm et al. (2018)'s framework as a lens, Emilian's lack of narrative reflection on the power structures close to him might be a result of his current acceptance of the existing order of things and he has likely found strategies to cope with the situation. Therefore, the types of housing available to those with more capital resources might seem unimaginable to him, given his current situation.

Rakib, on the other hand, is a migrant who holds more economic, social and cultural capital than Emilian. Therefore, making use of this capital gives him more options when navigating the rental market looking for housing. As mentioned in chapter 3, Rakib has been employed for most of his time in Oslo and he has gained a large and diverse social network, as well as a knowledge of both the formal and informal rental market in the city. Making an informed guess as to why Rakib never touch upon the power structures within the dwellings in his narratives, I would argue that he has the capital to leave his housing if it becomes too inadequate. Although he, in his narratives, presents himself as an actor who do not require much of his housing, for example through statements like "I need a place only for the sleeping", my informed guess is that he has the capital to stay away from the really substandard dwellings in Oslo. In addition, his economic, social and cultural capital gives him the flexibility to be mobile on the informal rental market and therefore he is flexible to leave his housing before the power structures in his dwellings becomes too apparent and constrictive for him.

4.2 The role of the middleman on the informal rental market

A recurring character in several of the narratives presented by the five informants is someone who I have chosen to call *the middleman*. A middleman is a person who informally sublet a

dwelling to migrant tenants who, for various reasons, are experiencing barriers for entering the formal rental market and therefore, the middlemen bridges the gap between the informal migrant tenant and the landlord. From the narratives of the informants, some common characteristics can be pointed out:

- They are often of a migrant background and has resided in Norway for some time. Sometimes the middleman has the same country background as the migrant tenant.
- The middlemen are often the formal tenants and therefore have the legal right of disposal over the dwelling.
- They sometimes live together with their informal subtenants in the dwelling, but not always.
- For the migrant tenant, the middleman takes on the role of the landlord through exercising the control they have over the dwelling and through collecting rent.
- The motives of becoming a middleman seem to span from reducing their own living costs by sharing the living expenses to making a profit.

From my informant's narratives, it is not always clear if the homeowners are aware of the activity on their premise and I assume that the informal subtenants do not always know. Presumably, the landlords are sometimes aware of the activity on their premise and sometimes not. It is hard to determine how common middlemen are on the informal rental market in Oslo. Through interviewing the five informants to this thesis, I have anecdotal evidence of the existence of middlemen on the informal rental market in Oslo. This evidence relies heavily on the narratives and experiences of the informants, but nevertheless, as the middleman is a recurring character in their narratives, there is reason to believe that the middleman is a character one would encounter when navigating the informal rental market as a migrant worker in Oslo. A newspaper article from *Aftenposten* (Hofoss & Sigurjonsdottir, 2015, 28th of May) mentions a similar practice where a Romanian migrant, who fits the characteristics of a middleman, took on intermediary role and acted as a middleman between a landlord and the 25 - 40 Roma migrants who informally sublet his house in Oslo. Following the forced shutdown of the house by local health authorities, he became their spokesperson to the press, stating that it was a housing collective and that the landlord was a "a real

philanthropist offering people housing. In the three years I have worked with this, I have never met a person as good as him (my translation)”. While this article cannot be viewed as prof by itself, it adds to the anecdotal evidence supporting the practice of middlemen in Oslo.

Similar to what I have in this thesis have named *middlemen*, Sarah J. Mahler (1995) describes what she called *the encargado industry*, following her field work with undocumented South American and Salvadoran immigrants living in a Long Island suburb in New York. Mahler describes an informal housing rental market that functions parallel to the formal rental market, serving marginalised and undocumented migrants who are otherwise excluded from the formal rental market. The *encargado*, or *encargada* when referring to women, means “the person in charge” in Spanish. The *encargado industry* is run by Latin American immigrant entrepreneurs who leases a house from a, for the most part, white, American homeowner to then sublet parts of the house to newly arrived immigrant as a way of reducing their own living costs. Mahler argues that *the encargado industry* is driven by an existing residential segregation and the fact the newly arrived immigrants encounter one of the most expensive housing markets in the US. She tells the story of Brígida, who through becoming an *encargada*, used the pressure on her local housing market to her advantage.

While she worked hard to generate the money she needed to reunite her family, she was able to invest these surplus earnings by becoming an *encargada*, a sublessor. She rented a two-bedroom apartment for \$750 (plus utilities). She then sublet both bedrooms for \$300 each, so that she herself paid only \$150 per month. When the rent was raised to \$800, she added another person. Brígida now rents a house for \$1,000. She lived there with the three children and a married couple who sublet a bedroom. When I visited them one day, Brígida was orchestrating the renovation of the basement. Several single beds were lifted into the cellar, and Brígida proudly announced that renting a number of beds would substantially lower her rent burden. She is so buoyant that she convinces her listeners that this is not exploitive but merely a very clever means of improving her financial situation. Her most recent endeavour is to find a way to buy the house she is renting. As she figures, who pay so much rent and gain no equity? (Mahler, 1995, p. 188)

There are seemingly several similarities between the middlemen my informants have encountered in Oslo and the *encargados* in the US as described by Mahler, although some of the narratives told by my informants in Oslo makes it hard to separate the middleman from the friend, while other narratives seem to be less about entrepreneurship and more about exploitation. Emilian has rented dwellings through many middlemen during his almost 15

years in Oslo as a result of his exclusion from the formal rental market. Using the example of the one-bedroom apartment he occupied in the Østensjø district of Oslo, he paid a middleman 100 kr a night to stay there, sharing the space with two other Romanian men and the middleman himself. Assuming that all three men stayed there for the full month, the middleman would have made a profit of 9000 NOK a month. A search on Finn.no, done on the 12th of April 2020, shows that a one-bedroom apartment of the same size in Østensjø cost between 10,500 and 13,900 NOK a month¹⁹. If the level of rent for the whole apartment was of a similar size, the middleman would have been able to reduce his own living costs considerably and if he had any family in Romania to support, he would have been able to send them more money.

Mahler (1995) points out the role of the *encargado*, the middleman, is to bridge the gap between the landlord and the immigrant and in return, they gain a great deal of power within the dwellings they control. They have a considerable freedom to decide who to sublet to within a group who have few other options and they are able to decide the level of rent to collect from their immigrant subtenants. The *encargados* again, need to gather large sums of capital to rent a housing and they become the one who is ultimately responsible for the dwelling if something gets damaged.

Emilian also told stories of middlemen of a more exploitive nature. As mentioned in chapter 3, he stayed for a period in a house in the Nordre Aker district where prominent a member of a non-profit organisation acted as the middleman. Ion added to Emilian's narrative, he also knew of the existence of this house; he had been there several times to visit friends and the existence of the house was well known within their mutual social network. Emilian explained that the middleman took the profit for himself, he had a helper that went around the house every night to collect rent. Emilian emphasised that this house was a business, and not a charitable project. There were people living "everywhere", also in the attic. There were up to 100 people at times, they both claimed, and 8-10 people were staying in each room. "It was like... a mess", Emilian said, explaining that there were too many people in the house and that it became very dirty over time. It is impossible to estimate the middleman's monthly expenses related to the house, like the rent paid to the property owner, the electricity, a small salary for

¹⁹ I have no way of knowing that this apartment was actually acquired through Finn.no, the most well-known classified advertisement website in Norway, or not. The middleman could have found the apartment through a Facebook-group or through his extended social network. Nevertheless, the Finn.no search gives a pointer to what an apartment of a similar size would go for on the formal rental market.

his helpers and several other petty expenses that must have emerged. Nevertheless, he must have made a great profit collecting rent from the many inhabitants of the house. Assuming a low number 70 overnight-stays every night for a month, the middleman would have collected remarkable 147,000 NOK a month before he paid his expenses. Ion explained that the middleman knew that the house would be shut down by authorities, but “he made his profit, he doesn’t care”. People will always try to make money off the really vulnerable, he told me, “that will never stop”, and then asked rhetorically if it was better, after all, that it was him and not someone else who would take even more advantage of them. “It’s not that great, but it will happen”.

In Rakib’s narratives, on the other hand, it is difficult to distinguish if the people he lived with at times took on the role of the middleman, the *encargado*, or if their relationships were more balanced. In his narratives, he talks about staying with friends at times when he was struggling, like when he was not working full-time or when his daughter was living with him and his expenses therefore increased. During this time, he stayed with them informally for months on end and paid them his rent in cash. One might ask the question of the motive behind the actions of his network. Did they take him in to reduce their own living costs, taking on the role of the middleman, or because he was struggling? The concept of the harvesting economy might provide a different set of tools to explain the nature of their relationship. As previously mentioned, the harvesting economy is made up by a set of economic strategies where resources like information, money and housing are shared and distributed between individuals in a network who follows the same economic strategies. In the harvesting economy there is a short time between production and consumption and resources must therefore be distributed equally within the group before they disappear. Because resources are not distributed equally, sharing the available resources tackles some of the uncertainty that can occur for individuals within the group (Flåto & Johannessen, 2010). Provided that Rakib’s network follows some of the economic strategies that falls under the harvesting economy, a possible motivation behind their action might be to strengthen the bonds within their social networks so they can rely on the support of their network in they are in need of housing or other resources in the future. Nevertheless, while it is intriguing to question the power structures within their relationships, providing an answer is difficult because it would be based on guesses as to what the nature of their relationship was.

4.3 Narratives of work and the formal rental market

In this section, the informants' views on the formal rental market in Oslo are identified. In the narratives presented, they do touch on the formal rental market in Oslo and barriers and difficulties they experienced, as well as why someone would at times deliberate still choose the informal rental market when given the choice. Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) points out five structural barriers that labour migrants meet on the formal rental market in Norway. They argue that culturally and structurally, labour migrants in Norway encounters a nation of homeowners, and this does not necessarily overlap with their own migration strategies. Culturally speaking, most Norwegians have a long-term goal of owning their own housing when they enter the rental market and this goal is often not shared by the migrant unless they decide to settle in the country more permanently. As a result, labour migrants enter a housing market that is structurally organised in a way that does not necessarily meet their needs for cheap and flexible housing. The five structural barriers that Sandlie and Seeberg (2013, p. 26) points out are:

The minimum rental contract period. As previously mentioned, the standard minimum length of normal rental contracts is, with few exceptions, three years. This minimum rental contract period is in place to provide tenants on the formal rental market in Norway with housing stability and protect their rights as consumers. Labour migrants are, as Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) argues, often mobile. This can be a result of working short-term contracts or because of precarious working conditions. Others are unsure of their long-term migration goals and if they want to stay in Norway and bringer their families over or not. As a result, they point out that many labour migrants will therefore have the need for flexible bonds to the formal rental market in the form of short-term rental contracts.

Little transparency on the housing market. The Norwegian rental market is dominated by many small-scale landlords and rental housing is very often distributed through social networks. Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) argues that the rental market in Norway can therefore appear as not being very transparent for labour migrants with little social capital in Norway. In addition, they argue that many labour migrants are unsure of which steps to take to actually obtain available housing on the rental market.

Rental prices and the need for economic capital. Labour migrants entering the formal housing market in Norway need to set aside large sums of economic capital to do so. On the formal rental market, tenants need both economic capital to pay rent, as well as economic

capital for the deposit (which is often equal to the amount of three months' rent). Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) points out that this is often a challenge for labour migrants who holds a low salary or have precarious working conditions, in addition, labour migrants who are newly arrived in Norway will also struggle to meet these requirements as they often have little economic capital at arrival.

Discrimination. Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) argues that the attitudes that landlords have towards labour migrants in Norway affects their ability to enter the formal rental market. Sandlie and Seeberg points out two ways in which this discrimination might happen: landlords might fear that labour migrants have little interest in taking care of their housing because it is seen as temporary, that they will only rent short-term and that renting out their housing to labour migrants will open up for other migrants to move in informally. Moreover, studies like Larsen and Sommervoll (2011) (in Sandlie & Seeberg, 2013) have shown that migrants sometimes are asked to pay a higher rent than other groups as a result of an asymmetric power structure between the migrant tenant and the landlord.

Social dumping. In the absence of housing that fit the needs of labour migrants, a submarket of substandard housing will appear. In this submarket, housing is often of a lower quality and there is less housing stability. As previously mentioned, social dumping on the housing market can be separated into substandard housing, which is not necessarily illegal, and illegal housing. Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) argues that social dumping on the housing market is a barrier for the inclusion of labour migrants on the formal housing market in Norway.

Sandlie and Seebergs' five structural barriers partly overlap with the three main barriers that I have identified in the narratives of the five informants that touch on the formal rental market: *ethnicity, the lack of income and the need for flexibility* and *the view of informality as effortlessness*. Furthermore, I will comment on these three barriers using relevant research on the formal rental market. Although I acknowledge that my informants might have encountered more than these three barriers, it is important to note that the goal of analysing these narratives is not to identify all common barriers that labour migrants encounter on the rental market in Oslo, but rather to look at the five informants' subjective experience of the formal rental market in Oslo and how they view the barriers they have encountered.

4.3.1 Ethnicity as a barrier

Using an example mentioned in chapter 3, Ion told the story of how a potential formal landlord backing out of signing his rental contract after seeing a picture of him.

And I was like quite rude after that because they tell me "go there, bring this, bring this" and after that they asked me the photo say "Ok, I cannot offer you the apartment".

In his narrative, Ion explained that he got frustrated after he felt he went to great efforts trying to gather official documents that his landlords as to see, like his residence permit, his work contract and his proof of income, only to get rejected after they saw his picture.

It was like really hard for me to do that. And after "Ok, ok I don't like your face" or something like that?

Ion is still unsure as to why he was rejected, but commenting on this experience, I argued that his picture might have alerted the landlords to his Roma ethnicity in a way that his very common Romanian name did not. A common element in the narratives that touch on the formal rental market is how their ethnicity or their membership in a group that is often stigmatised was never a non-issue, but rather it was a visible trait that they brought with them when trying to connect with a potential landlord. As Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) notes, the majority of the Norwegian formal rental market is made up by many small-scale landlords and their attitudes towards the different groups of labour migrants affects these groups' ability to acquire housing on the formal rental market, resulting in discrimination on the rental market. Mariusz seemed aware of these attitudes and touched on how his Polishness and his cultural capital gave him an advantage over other labour migrants on the rental market in the act of one his narratives. In his narrative, he explained that he was aware that speaking Norwegian and English gave him an advantage over other ethnic groups on the rental market.

A big one. Big one. I'm automatisk at another nivå [automatically on another level]. Maybe people are afraid because of all this exodus from... Far away countries is making people more sceptic, but when it comes to East Europeans, especially Polish people, I think during those years, we gain respect. We gain respect if people here want to rent apartment and have choice between Polish people and another nation, they will choose Polish people. If they don't have own preferences or something.

He continued his narrative by explaining that he believed that the formal rental market is less accessible to labour migrants now than when he arrived in Norway 15 years ago due to the

increase of labour migrants in Norway fighting for the same affordable formal apartments. Nevertheless, he saw few solutions for diminishing ethnicity as a barrier on the formal rental market: "I'm not politician (...) It's a topic I will leave in capitalism". Mariusz statement can be read, although conscious or not, as a nod to the famous quote of Fredric Jameson, stating that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism" (in Beaumont, 2016, p. 79). The purpose of his narrative touch upon how Mariusz is conscious of the fact that he is living within the structures of capitalism and its supply and demand driven housing market. He makes use of the resources he has to stand out to landlords because it seems like he can hardly imagine a formal rental market that would work differently.

When Anja told the story of how she finally entered the formal rental market, she addressed something similar and highlighted that she also was very aware of her identity as Eastern European labour migrant in this process. She described the process of acquiring her first formal apartment as "quite hard" and although she got in contact with many landlords "there was little response and when someone answer email, they suggested that we are looking for too little flat for three people". Anja believed that one of the reasons why she managed to acquire her first apartment on the formal rental market in a price range she could afford was because her Norwegian landlord had previously worked in a field where there were many Eastern European labour migrants, making him less judgemental of labour migrants.

So, he was not so... It was normal. And he was just, he told us that he is waiting for one more family or I don't know, guy who is looking for a place and then he just write that it's ok, that we can take this apartment.

The act of Anja's narrative touches on how she is very aware of her identity as a Polish labour migrant when trying to enter the formal rental market. The results from a study by Andersson et al. (2012) shows that in Norway, there is a pattern where migrants and people with foreign sounding names have a less of a chance of getting a positive response from a landlords than someone with a Norwegian sounding name. Unlike Mariusz, she experienced her Polish identity to be a burden when trying to enter the formal rental market because her housing needs were presented as unrealistic and because she experienced her identity as a Polish labour migrant to be unattractive to landlords. As previously mentioned, the first migrants who arrived from a particular area usually had to do so without the support of social networks and as a result, they would gain a larger cultural and economic capital than migrants who arrived later (Mostowska, 2013). Mariusz moved to Norway right after Poland became a

member of the EU, while Anja arrived more than 10 years later. During his first 10 years, Mariusz might have had the chance to gather a level of economic, social and cultural capital that in some ways separated him from a group that is at times stigmatised.

Like Mariusz, Ion also touched upon what he saw as a hierarchy within different groups of labour migrants on the formal rental market. When he was asked if he felt that the formal rental market was accessible to him, he answered that

Yeah, in some ways, because for example when I was working, I had a nice contract to a nice company, and it was like very nice. But, in other aspects, I wasn't able to rent before like... A Polish guy or a Swedish guy, never. Because we are from Romania, so it becomes more difficult for us.

In the act of his narrative, Ion explains how he felt that he was never the first one in line on the rental market. He perceived the formal rental market to be accessible to him, but only in the absence of other labour migrant groups. In the agency of his narrative, he used the instruments of formal, long-term employment to appear attractive to landlords, but he perceived these instruments as never overshadowing his ethnicity. Previous studies on the Norwegian formal rental market have shown that many landlords are sceptical of taking on labour migrants as tenants (Sandlie & Seeberg, 2013) and for the last couple of years, there has been a harsh public discourse concerning Romanian migrants, both Roma and non-Roma, in Norwegian media (Andersen, 2018, 20th of June; Djuve et al., 2015), which might have had an impact in Ion's ability of acquiring housing on the formal rental market. Just a few years after Poland became a member of the EU in 2004, Poles became the biggest migrant group in Norway (Jon Horgen Friberg & Eldring, 2011), which means that the chances are that most landlords have some experiences with Poles in Norway, in contrast to what they might have with migrants from other "far away countries". Therefore, following the argument of Mariusz narrative, he believes that many landlords view Polish tenants as a safer investment than other migrants. Research from the UK shows that the majority of the population believed that migrants from Poland contributed to the country in a positive way, as opposed to migrants from Romania (Snoen, 2018). In addition, research from SSB shows that most Norwegians are sympathetic towards having immigrants in their immediate surroundings, provided that they speak Norwegian (SSB, 2018). As Andersson et al. (2012) study on the different forms of discrimination on the rental market shows, ethnicity and class are both interrelated in discrimination practices on the rental market. Not only did Ion belong

to an often stigmatised group, but he lacked the social and cultural capital that could separate himself from this group in the eyes of the landlord, a form of capital that Mariusz clearly had built up during his 15 years in Oslo, which Anja somewhat possessed.

4.3.2 The lack of income and the need for flexibility

A common theme in some of the narratives of the informants is how their housing is sometimes used as an instrument to counteract the effects of their precarious working conditions. While most tenants on the rental market decide on their housing depending on their income level, living informally seem to give the tenant the flexibility to move between housing at a faster pace if they were to lose their income. Living informally gives the tenant the flexibility to regulate their housing standard and with it, the level of rent they pay, depending on their current level of income. At times, when their level of income is fluctuating, decreasing their housing standard, and therefore the amount of rent they pay, seems to be used as a way of decreasing their financial uncertainty. Previous research shows that the lack of flexibility on the formal rental markets is one of the biggest barriers for labour migrants to enter the formal rental market in Norway (Sandlie & Seeberg, 2013; Søholt & Astrup, 2009). Many labour migrants are living precarious lives, working informally or with short-term job contracts, and the rental contracts on the Norwegian formal rental market are not necessarily reflecting the flexibility needed to manage circular, footloose or bi-national migration strategies. In additions, many of the informants pointed to their insecure salary as seen as a stress factor on both the formal and informal rental market.

Rakib seemed to use adhere to the strategy of moving housing when his working conditions became more insecure. In a narrative, Rakib expressed the difficulties of managing his housing when his income was fluctuating. During his years in Oslo, Rakib had only ever worked formally, he explained. Nevertheless, at the time of the interview, he was working three part-time jobs to get enough hours to make a living. Rakib had lived formally once, he explained, but had to move out because “I think it's... I lose a job and little bit of finance crisis”. He explained how it was difficult to for him to make an estimate of how much money he would make a month. “If you have a job. Regular job is big salary, you know how much you can spend for the apartment”. He felt that the main obstacle for him on the formal rental market was that the rent level was too high for him and during his housing career in Oslo, he often moved to find more affordable housing, depending on the level of his income. In this way, the informal rental market gave Rakib the agency to moderate the amount he spent on housing after his level of income in a way that the formal rental market did not. His lack of

secure employment and an insecure salary was seen as a barrier to secure housing conditions, that be on the formal rental market or the informal one.

Dwellings on the formal rental market were often viewed as expensive by the informants because often were unsure of how much money they would make each month. Anja shared this view. Although she at the time of the interview lived formally, she didn't have a fixed salary, so it varied every month. Currently, her rent was 10,000 NOK a month and after asking her how much of her income she spent on housing, she answered.

Now on housing? It depends because my income is changing. For example, I got 18,000, about 18,000 [NOK] in December and November is yes, big salary for everyone. I think it's 29,000 and in January... I don't know yet. Maybe it will be 20? Or 22? I don't know. So, it's... And I have to pay this 10,000 [in rent] now and more than 1000 for electricity, I think it's.... (...) I know, the costs are very interesting. (...) It's quite a lot because you have to eat something also...

This, she explained, was a stress factor. "I mean, I... Because everything is so short term and I am so much... I think everything is... depends on the work and the job". Although Anja had entered the formal rental market, she seemed very aware of the barriers that Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) described as the rental prices and the need for economic capital.

Emilian also seemed very aware of high rental prices on the formal rental market although he had never rented formally in Oslo. As discussed in chapter 3, he has struggled with having little economic and cultural capital in Norway. Emilian has not been able to gain formal employment during his 14 years in Oslo and had therefore survived solely on doing street work and working short-term, informal jobs in the construction sector. Nevertheless, he expressed a wish to live formally because living formally would give him a more "permanent" housing situation. The act of this narrative he made clear that if he in the future struck luck on the labour market and found long-term employment in Oslo, he would be able to rent formally. In this way, he viewed his lack of income as the only barrier between him and the formal rental market. In his narrative, Emilian explained that he would be able to "find like something like smaller and cheaper" on the formal rental market as long as he got a formal job. Ion, who was present during the interview, commented on this view, stating that "He think he can rent, but he doesn't answer the questions very well". Ion had, as previously mentioned, rented formally once before and in that process, he had experienced even more barriers that pushed him out of the formal rental market. While it can be speculated that Emilian would most likely meet many of the other barriers mentioned by Sandlie and Seeberg

(2013) if he was to try to enter the formal rental market, his narrative points to the ways he constructs the world around him and through it, the way in which he experiences the formal rental market. It can be argued that by the lack of capital is the first and most visible barrier that many labour migrants face on the formal rental market. When a migrant is lacking the economic capital to pay rent, other barriers, like the discrimination on the rental market might become less visible.

At the time of the interview, Emilian was sleeping in a settlement in the forest outside of Oslo because he wasn't making enough money to survive, to send money home to his family and also spend money on housing. It can therefore be argued that he, although not entirely voluntary, decreased his housing standard to continue to support his family and therefore made use of some of the same strategies as Rakib.

4.3.3 Informality as effortlessness

In many of the narratives of the informants, finding a dwelling that fit their housing needs was presented as easy on the informal rental market, as opposed to what it was on the formal rental market. Issues of location, rent level, as well as actually making the agreement with the landlord were presented as easy to solve and therefore, the informal rental market was at times seen as the easier option. Ion touched upon this effortlessness when answer talking about the formal rental market.

It's... Hard. It's really, really hard. In my case it was. I don't know how it's for others. (...) Yes, if you want to rent with contract, legally, maybe you can find something very far away, like Grorud and like further than Grorud and you need to drive a car to go there²⁰. It takes a lot of time. But if you want to live like here, close to centre, you have to rent like... How it's called? You have to rent without documents.

Renting informally, he explained, meant that “you don't break you head”, trying to jump through hoops to impress a potential landlord.

It's better to call someone and take a house [informally]. (...) Oh yeah, it's easier for me and in a way it's.... I don't care if that is a good guy, if it's bad, I don't care. Once I pay those money, it's my house so I don't care. I don't stress too much about these things.

²⁰ Grorud is a district in Oslo, located closer to the city borders than the city centre.

In Ion's narrative, he presents the view of the informal rental market as being effortless, as opposed to the formal rental market. Ion has a lot of social capital in Oslo, so as long as he has the economic capital to pay rent, he views the process of finding informal housing as easy. On the informal rental market, Ion views himself as an empowered tenant and he knows the rules of the game. He knows how the market is structured, how the agreements between the landlords and the tenants are made and how he can find somewhere to stay that fulfil his housing needs. Nevertheless, it can be argued that Ion is lacking some of the cultural capital needed to easily navigate the formal rental market, which is one of the reasons why he constructs the narrative of informality as effortlessness.

Mariusz constructs a similar narrative, arguing that the reason why he is living informally is that he does not care about formality. He explained that he was comfortable paying up to 7000-8000 NOK a month in rent and if the dwelling was formal or not was unimportant. Commenting on this, I asked him if he preferred living informally, because depending on the size, standard and location, he might be able to find studio apartments on the formal rental market that was in that price range or a little higher if he was lucky. He continued, explaining that:

Mariusz: I don't care.

Brit: You don't care?

Mariusz: I don't care about formal and I don't care about money, I'm just living. It's going to hit me in the back one day, but...

Brit: You'll deal with it when that day comes?

Mariusz: Right.

Similar to Ion, Mariusz presents the narrative of informality as effortlessness, that it is easy to live informally. As previously mentioned, he follows the narrative of being an empowered tenant who values his independence and entering a long-term contractual relationship with a landlord on the formal rental market might diminish this narrative. It is important to note that Mariusz has the economic, social and cultural capital that will make him attractive to landlords on the informal rental market, as well as on the formal one, which he seems very aware of. Therefore, living informally makes him free to leave his housing for better options before troubles manifests with his housing or with his landlord. After 15 years in Oslo, Mariusz appears to still bring with him elements from the harvesting economy on the rental market, where long-term planning is difficult. Within the harvesting economy, "resources are

left as they are, consumed in their original state as soon as they become available” (Sørhaug, in Flåto & Johannessen, 2010, p. 91). Because it is often difficult to know which resources are available in weeks, months or years from now, Mariusz appears to have come to terms with the uncertainty of informal living. Within the harvesting economy, Mariusz will be able to rely on his network for resources and support if problems should appear and it can be argued that his support, in addition to his economic and cultural capital might provide him with the stability that is sometimes lacking on the informal rental market.

A multilevel look at the barriers on the informal rental market

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) five structural barriers that labour migrants face on the formal rental market partly overlap with the three main barriers that I have identified in the narratives of the five informants. The barrier of *ethnicity* can be recognised in Sandlie and Seeberg’s discrimination barrier. *The lack of income and the need for flexibility* can both be recognised in the barrier of the minimum rental contract period and the rental prices and the need for economic capital barrier. Lastly, the barrier that is *the view of informality as effortlessness* can be recognised in Sandlie and Seeberg’s little transparency on the housing market and the barrier of social dumping.

In this way, all the informants have experienced barriers for entering the formal rental market in at least one way. This has been especially obvious when analysing the narratives of Emilian. Although it appears that he knows almost nothing about the formal rental market in Oslo, he still perceived the barrier that is the rental prices and the lack of income, using the language of Sandlie and Seeberg. In this part of the analysis, the goal has not been to identify all the barriers that labour migrants encounter on the formal rental market in Oslo, but rather to look for commonalities between the subjective experiences of the five informants on the formal rental market in Oslo and how they view the barriers that they have encountered.

5. Summary and concluding remarks

This study has explored the narratives of five European labour migrants who currently are or have previously been living informally in Oslo. In chapter 1, the theoretical framework for the study is presented and the three research questions for the study is identified. A short introduction to the housing market and labour migration to Norway is given and important key concepts for this study are explained. Three relevant theories that build the theoretical framework of the study, as well as previous relevant research on labour migration and housing are also presented.

Chapter 2 presents the methodological choices for this study. In this chapter, a brief presentation of the informants is made, as well as a summary of the recruitment process, the process of building trust amongst the informants and the interview process. The difficulties of representation and the reflexivity of the study are also examined. At the end of the chapter, the narrative analysis approach is presented as the analytical framework of the study.

In chapter 3, the five informants, their resources and strategies are thoroughly discussed. First, a map of the informal dwellings mentioned in this study is presented. Secondly, the informants' housing careers and migration strategies in Oslo are discussed, as well as the different ways they use their economic, social and cultural capital to navigate the informal rental market.

In chapter 4, the narratives of the five informants are identified. First, the narratives of *the empowered tenant* and *the disempowered tenant* on the informal rental market are identified and discussed in the light of Chisholm et al.'s (2018) three dimensions of power. Secondly, *the middleman*, a character that is present in many of the informants' narratives of the informal rental market is identified and discussed. Finally, three common narratives of the informants' perceived barriers for entering the formal rental market are identified and discussed in the light of Sandlie and Seeberg's (2013) five structural barriers that labour migrants meet on the formal rental market.

The aim of this study is not to make policy suggestions. Rather, the goal is to examine the narratives and experiences of labour migrants on the informal rental market on a micro level. As mentioned by Sørvoll and Aarset (2015), Sandlie and Seeberg (2013) and Søholt et al. (2012), more research is needed on the housing situation of labour migrants and this study aims to contribute to this knowledge.

As discussed in chapter 4, labour migrants in Oslo are experiencing barriers for entering the formal rental market. The informants have called for more affordable and flexible housing that fits with their migration strategies and this is something that should be explored more in future research. When starting this study, several of the informants expressed concern that an increased attention to informal housing in Oslo would make it more difficult to live informally and therefore they could end up losing their housing. My motivation for this study is not to ask for policies that would regulate the informal rental market in Oslo out of existence, but rather to look at the survival strategies of a vulnerable group that is

experiencing barriers for entering the formal rental market in Oslo. If such policies were implemented without there being realistic options for vulnerable migrants, these migrants would still need spaces to exist. If they cannot enter the formal rental market, other, even less suitable, informal spaces might appear. Or, to quote Mariusz, “We can always return to the forest”.

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Map 1:

Plan- og Bygningsetaten. 2017. *Bydelskart for Oslo*. Retrieved from:

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Appendix

Appendix 1:

Are you interested in taking part in the research study European labour migrants' strategies for navigation the informal rental market in Oslo?

The purpose of the project

Norway, and the rest of Europe has seen an increase in labour migration since the mid-2000s. Many European labour migrants struggle to access the Norwegian rental market because of the lack of one or several resources and ends up in substandard housing in the informal rental market, giving them little security when it comes to tenants' legal rights. This is a study of how European labour migrants navigate the informal rental market in Oslo and how social capital can be used when other resources are lacking. This is a study of how European labour migrants navigate the informal rental market in Oslo and how social capital can be used when other resources are lacking.

My three research questions are:

1. How are European labour migrants navigating the informal rental market in Oslo and what is the importance of their social capital in this process?
2. How are European labour migrants living in the informal rental market?
3. What are their perceived barriers for entering the formal rental market?

I am a master student in the program International Social Welfare and Health Policy at Oslo Metropolitan University and this project will become my master thesis. The project is also connected to the research institute NOVA, Centre for Welfare and Labour Research, as part of their focus on disadvantaged groups on the housing market. My supervisor and project leader is Jardar Sørvoll, a senior researcher at NOVA.

What's expected during the research study?

I am looking to talk to individuals who are currently or has previously lived in informal housing in Oslo or who are familiar with the topic through their profession in Oslo. I would like to talk with you for 1-1.5 hours about your experiences living and working in Oslo, with the possibility of future discussions. The interview can take place in a place you choose, like a café, a park or somewhere else. In the interview we will be talking about the places you have lived, your experiences with welfare agencies and your social networks in Oslo.

Participation, anonymity and reporting

I will ask for your approval to record our interview on a digital recorder. All the information you share with me will be held confidential. When I write my thesis, your personal information (like names, places and anything that would identify you or anyone you talk about in our conversation) will be anonymised so that no one reading the finished thesis will be able to recognise you or anyone you choose to talk about. You can withdraw from the research project at any time should you wish to do so, without giving a reason. This project has been notified to NSD (The Norwegian Centre for Research Data) and they have determined that the processing of the personal data in this project is in accordance with current data protection legislation.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end 15th of May 2019. Your information, like your contact information, the recordings and the transcripts from the interviews will be deleted after the project is finished.

Your privacy

I will conduct the interviews, transcribe them and be in charge of storing them securely and my supervisor, Jardar Sørvoll, and I will be the only ones who will have access to the data. Your name and your contact info will be saved on a list separate from the collected data. The audio files will be recorded on a voice recorder with an external memory card being encrypted and then deleted from the voice recorder. The recordings and the transcriptions will be stored in an encrypted folder.

Your rights

As long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- Access the personal data that is being processed about you
- Request that your personal data is deleted
- Request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected
- Receive a copy of your personal data
- Send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer at OsloMet or to The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing and storage of your personal data.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact

- Student and researcher: Brit Kjerschow Jevne by email: s320842@oslomet.no or by telephone/WhatsApp: +47 93837935
- Centre for welfare and labour research, NOVA via supervisor Jardar Sørvoll by email: jarso@oslomet.no or by telephone: +47 93224305
- The Data Protection Officer at OsloMet Ingrid Jacobsen by email: Ingrid.jacobsen@oslomet.no
- NSD — The Norwegian Centre for Research Data by email: personverntjenester@nsd.no or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17

Yours sincerely,

Project leader and supervisor

(Jardar Sørvoll)

Student and
researcher

(Brit Kjerschow
Jevne)

Jardar Sørvoll

Brit Kjerschow Jevne

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

I have received written and verbal information about the study European labour migrants' strategies for navigating the informal rental market in Oslo and I have been able to ask any question I might have, I agree to...

Participate in a semi-structured interview

Date: (day)/ (month) 2019

Place:

Signature: _____

Appendix 2:

Interview guide

General questions:

How old are you and where did you grow up? *Please tell me a little bit about the area you grew up in.*

How long have you been living in Norway and how long have you been living in Oslo? *Have you also lived other countries or cities during this time? Have you lived in any other countries besides your home country and Norway?*

Do you have a D-number or a Norwegian National Identity number?

What is your profession? *Can you tell me a little bit about your current job, what kind of jobs you have had in Norway?*

How are your working conditions? *Do you feel you get what you are entitled to in terms of pay, benefits, overtime, contracts, time off etc.?*

What languages do you speak? *What languages do you use the most living in Oslo?*

Network and apartments

Did you know anyone here before you moved to Oslo? *If not, how did you get to know people?*

When you first moved to Oslo, how did you find a place to live? *Through friends, through online ads, through your employer? Did you already have somewhere to live?*

Can you please describe all the apartments/places you have lived in Oslo, starting with the first one? *How was it living there, can you please describe it? Where in the city was it located? Did you have a written contract or were there spoken agreements? Did you know who owned the apartment?*

Do you feel that your housing situation has improved since your first apartment?

Has your employer ever provided you with housing? *If not, was that ever a possibility for you?*

Can you tell me a little bit about the people you lived with in these apartments? *Did you know them before you moved in? Did you stay in contact after? Were they in the same profession as you?*

Do you have frequent contact with friends and family in your home country and do you visit them often?

Can you please tell me a little bit about your network in Oslo? *Do your friends work in the same profession as you? Where are they from? Do you have family here? Do you have Norwegian friends?*

How much of your income do you spend on housing, including water and electricity bills? *Do you pay more now than what you have before? How do you pay your rent? In cash or through bank transactions? Who did you pay rent to? Did you pay a deposit? Did you ever pay all or part of your rent through services (small jobs etc.)?*

What is important for you when looking for housing? *Price, number of bedrooms, kitchen, location etc.*

Other information

Do you know where Sagene/Torshov/Kampen is? *If I asked you to meet me there, how would you go about finding it? Do you feel that you are good at navigating the city?*

If you needed to move in the near future, how would you go about doing that? *What about x years ago?*

Can you please tell me a little bit about how your friends/family have found places to live? *Have they moved around and found apartments the same way as you? Can you think of any stories that stands out? Have you helped them?*

Have you had any contact with NAV or gotten support through NGOs like Frelsesarmeen, Kirkens Bymisjon, Caritas? *Do you know what kind of help they can provide and from what you know, do you feel like it is relevant for your situation? Is there any kind of help you wish existed?*

Do you feel like the apartments on the private rental market is accessible to you? *If not, why? What can be done to make them more accessible? If you were to rent an apartment in the private rental market, how would you do that? Is it something you are interested in doing?*

Can you tell me a little bit about what you think about the rental market in Oslo, both the formal and informal? *What were your expectations of renting before you came?*

Are you planning on staying in Oslo for a long time? *Was that always the plan?*

What do you think could be done to improve the housing situation for migrants in your situation?

Before we finish, is there anything you wish to add? Or something you want to clarify?

Appendix 3:

NSD Personvern

30.07.2019 10:48

Det innsendte meldeskjemaet med referansekode 716508 er nå vurdert av NSD.

Følgende vurdering er gitt:

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet 30.07.2019 med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: nsd.no/personvernombud/meld_prosjekt/meld_endringer.html Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET Prosjektet vil behandle særlige kategorier av personopplysninger om etnisitet og alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 01.02.2020.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 nr. 11 og art. 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse, som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes uttrykkelige samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 a), jf. art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a, jf. personopplysningsloven § 10, jf. § 9 (2).

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om: - lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen - formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål - dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet - lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13),

innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13. Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32). Tolkene er databehandler i prosjektet. NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29. For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og eventuelt rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet. Lykke til med prosjektet!
Kontaktperson hos NSD: Belinda Gloppen Helle Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

NSD Personvern

07.01.2020 10:22

Det innsendte meldeskjemaet med referansekode 716508 er nå vurdert av NSD.

Følgende vurdering er gitt:

NSD har vurdert endringen registrert 07.01.2020.

Vi har nå registrert 31.05.2020 som ny sluttdato for forskningsperioden. Vi gjør oppmerksom på at ytterligere forlengelse ikke kan påregnes uten at utvalget informeres om forlengelsen.

NSD vil følge opp ved ny planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til videre med prosjektet!

Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)