



Title

“Troublemakers in search for belonging”

- Newly arrived pupils in a Oslo school

By Christian Slaaen

SVF-3903

Master of Philosophy in Visual Cultural Studies

Department of Archaeology and Social Anthropology

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

University of Tromsø

Spring 2011

Acknowledgments.

Thanks to all the all the pupils and employees at Sogn School!

Thanks to Lisbeth Holtedahl and my supervisor Trond Waage for comments and help.

Thanks to Mike Code and Jonas Ørnes Andersen for comments.

Thanks to my classmates for a great time and feedback on both the film and thesis.

Thanks to coffee and snus. You made me come through this challenging time and have been faithful friends in good and bad times.

Table of content

CHAPTER 1: FIRST DAYS OF FIELDWORK	1
1.1 NOT A SCHOOL FOR ANGELS.....	1
1.2 THE SCHOOL.....	3
1.3 THE SECOND DAY AND MY FIRST IMPRESSION.	4
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES.	6
2.1 SCHOOL AND INTEGRATION.	6
2.2 SITUATIONS, STATUSES AND ROLES.	8
2.3 IDENTITY.	9
2. 4 SOCIAL CIRCLES AND SOCIAL FIELDS.	11
CHAPTER 3: THE GROUPS IN CLASS.	13
3.1 <i>THE BROS.</i>	14
3.2 <i>THE PING-PONGERS.</i>	16
3.3 <i>THE SERBS.</i>	18
3.4 THE SPANISH SPEAKERS.	18
3. 4 JOINING THE PING- NONGERS.	20
3.4.1 JOINING <i>THE SERBS.</i>	21
3.4.2 THE CAMERA EFFECT	21
CHAPTER 4: TROUBLEMAKERS	22
4.1 THE TROUBLEMAKERS ON FIRE.	22
4.2 GENDER & SCHOOL TROUBLE	25
4. 3 WHAT IS TROUBLEMAKING?	29
4. 4 US AND THEM IN A SCHOOL OUTSIDE THE REAL WORLD.	30
4.4.1 ANDRE AND SIFAW LOOKING BACK AT TROUBLEMAKING.	30
4.4.2 JAVOR LOOKING BACK AT TROUBLEMAKING.	31
4.5 A GAME OF IDENTITY WORK.	32
4.6 IN SEARCH OF RECOGNITION.	34
4.7 SOCIAL CIRCULATION.....	36
CHAPTER 5: ARENAS FOR IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND BELONGING.	37
5.1 JAVOR AND DIMITAR IN THE CANTINA.	37
5.1.1 <i>THE SERBS</i> AND THEIR CANTINA FRIENDS.	37
5.1.2 DIMITAR AND JAVOR COMPARATIVE IDENTITY WORK.....	40
5.2 JAVOR AND SOCIAL ARENAS OUTSIDE SCHOOL.	43
5.2.1 HANDBALL PLAYER AND FRIEND.	44
5.2.3 A HOME WITH WIRED BELONGING.	46
5.3 SCHOOL AND MARGINALISATION.....	47
5.4 SIFAW AND THE PING PONGERS.....	48
5.4.1 SIFAW AND ANDRE.....	51
5.5 PING-PONG.	52
5.5.1 THE GYM.	54
5.5.2 DIANA’S PLACE.....	55
5.5.3 THE BEACH AND THE NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE.....	56
5.5.4 IMMIGRANT IDENTITY IN THE CITY.....	57
5.6 BEING A MOROCCAN AND BEING PART OF A GROUP.	58
5.7 THE REQUIREMENT TO COPE WITH SCHOOL.	60
5.8 SIFAW'S PROMISE.....	63
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	63
LIST OF LITERATURE	67

Chapter 1: First days of fieldwork

1.1 Not a school for angels.

“When you enter the hallway you’ll not always believe you’re in Norway”.

I entered Sogn School right after Easter. The principle wanted me to observe the school a bit and talk to different people, before finding a class or group to follow. I met the principle at her office and had a small chat. When it came to the pupils, she told me that there were three main problems they faced at this school. First off all, she stated that many students wanted to work instead of going to school. Second, several students had a problem with drugs. Third, many students lacked what she called “*social competence*”. With social competence she meant students who did not know how to behave in school. I left her office and walked around in the school area. The school consisted of many big buildings and I felt like walking through a labyrinth. This school was known to be “multicultural” were over 50% of the pupils had minority background, so I looked at the people who passed me by. Most people I saw did not look like native Norwegians, so I got my expectations confirmed at once. In one of the hallways near the cantina, I saw an office with the sign: “Minority advisor”. I checked in and greeted a middle-aged woman who sat behind a desk. I presented myself and asked about her work. She mentioned subjects like forced marriages and “*double identities*”. She told me that many girls struggled with forced marriages. They left school for summer vacation and got married before the next semester began. I asked the advisor what she meant about double identities. She gave me two examples. First of all, some minority girls had a problem with make up. They came to school in the morning and put make up on in the bathroom. But before going home, they had to remove the make up again. The advisor explained that the girls’ parents did not allow make up. Her second example was about boys. The advisor said that some minority boys could look very western, because of the way they dressed. Then she said: “*But when you get deeper into them, then you’ll find that the culture is there, they want to control the girls*”. According to the advisor, both girls and boys found themselves between an overlying majority culture and their own minority cultures. In this situation they had double identities. A lot of questions can be asked from this small chat with the “minority advisor”. What does her examples say about the kind of integration that is taking place? What

values are seen as right and wrong? Do minorities see themselves as people with double identities?

As I understand her examples, both the girls and boys had differing sets of expectations connected to their roles as a student and a family member. Dressing in “western” clothes and applying make up can be seen as ways of fitting in with others at school. At home they faced other expectations. They needed to maintain their belonging to their families by respecting these expectations. When it comes to integration, having different forms of belonging is often seen as problematic. The Advisor saw dressing in a western styles and control of girls as a contrasting way of being, it was an issue that she was employed the work with. The advisor’s comments illustrate how identities are at work through similarity and difference. She identified the boys as *similar* to the Norwegian majority population based on the way they dressed. But on the other hand, she identified them as *different* to the Norwegian majority population based on their attitudes that were seen as oppressive towards women. The Minority Advisor claimed that when you got to know the boys better, you would find that the *culture* is there. In their book, *Culture and generation – processes of adaptation among Somali’s and Tamil’s in Norway*, Fuglerud and Ingebritsen points out that the emphasis of culture as the main obstacle when it comes to integration, has made it difficult to acknowledge more empirical nuanced research on how cultural factors actually affects the life situation of immigrants. (Fuglerud & Engebrigsten, 2009: 37). The authors emphasise that we have to understand that minority culture is not being played out in a neutral cultural setting, but in the meeting with Norwegian cultural premises. “*To understand how the cultural factor works in minority-milieus, you must take into account how fractured surfaces are made in the meeting with the Norwegian.* (Fuglerud & Engebrigsten, 2009: 14). The example with the minority advisor says something about the relationship between the majority culture and minority; where power is a central aspect. In his book, *is a multicultural school possible?* Asle Høgmo states that the relationship between the majority and the minority is seen as a cultural hegemony “...*were the majority’s knowledge, norms and values are parent to the minorities.*” (Høgmo, 2005: 13) In this way, the majority has the definitional power. Forced marriages and double identities are categorisations that are based upon Norwegian values to identify minorities’ ways of being, where the school advisor represents the definitional power. The school had established its own office for minority children. I’m not saying weather this is a good or bad thing, but it is still a way of categorising and treating *them* as different from *us*, where the main problem is not connected to Norwegian culture, but to the minority culture.

Before I left the advisor's office, she told me that, "*This is not exactly a school for angels,*" and "*When you enter the hallway you'll not always believe you're in Norway*". Those two statements revealed the reputation of the school and a stigma connected to the minority pupils. It was a school that did not remind you of Norway because of the large degree of minorities. At the same time, it was not a school for angels. If I add those to statements up, I can interpret her saying as: Minorities are not exactly angels to deal with. In my fieldwork at this school, I ended up following some of these minority pupils who were not considered as angels, or lacked what the principle called "*social competence*". I left the office with full confidence that I was still in Norway.

1.2 The school

Sogn is a big school in the centre of Oslo. It's known to be multicultural, where over 50% of the pupils have minority background. The school has over 2000 students and 300 teachers. The school area is also impressive with 52.000 square meters divided on 9 big buildings. The school focuses mainly on educations that directly qualify you to enter the job marked. But the school also have courses directly linked to immigration. If you arrive in Oslo between the ages of 16-20 year old, you will start in one of the Norwegian Language Programmes at Sogn School. After finishing the Norwegian Language Program (NLP), and passing the required national tests, the immigrant can apply for further education. Those students, who have finished the NLP, but still do not feel ready to enter regular higher education; can apply for a year at a programme called *Transitional Preparing School*, which I will refer to as TPS in this paper. TPS is a special programme that is lasting for 1 year, where the intention is to develop the pupils' skills in Norwegian language and general knowledge about the Norwegian society. All the students were new in the class from August. Some knew each other from before, while most were strangers to each other. TPS is open for those who have been to the NLP at Sogn School, but also for those who have been at special language programmes at elementary level in other schools. TPS is open for youth between the ages of 16 to 20 years old. In this way, the class is not like regular school classes were you find like-aged students. At the same time, the classes at this programme represent immigrants from all over the world. TPS is made up of three classes, where I ended up following one of them. The class I followed was made up of 19 pupils representing 17 different nationalities. The immigrants had been in Norway between 1 to 3 years. For a young student of Visual Anthropology who wanted to study identity construction and integration among young immigrants, this context proved to be more

complex than what I had expected. Before I get into my theoretical perspectives, I will present an observation from my first day in the class I ended up following.

1.3 The second day and my first impression.

It was the second day of fieldwork, and the first day I joined the class. The lesson was about Second World War. I was sitting in the back of the class observing. The teacher, an Italian woman named Violeta, had already given me information about some of the students. I was sitting behind one of them, “*the hopeless project*” Sifaw. He was an 18-year-old boy from Morocco, with dark hair, urban dress-code and skinny built. After most of the students had found their seats, Bernard came in the door. He was a Polish boy at the age of 16. He had short blond hair, was short of growth and wore a grey hood. He sat down next to Sifaw. Violeta got the class going and talked about the war. Sifaw and Bernard, the neighbours in class, started their own conversation. Soon they began to throw small objects at a boy who sat in the front of the class. His name was Dimitar, a 20-year-old Serbian. He was tall and physically well built, wore jeans and a leather jacket. Dimitar threw things back at Sifaw and Michal. Dimitar always checked where the teacher was looking, before he threw things back. Sifaw and Michal were not that careful. Soon Dimitar’s neighbour in class joined in. His name was Javor, who was also Serbian and 20 years old. He wore jogging pants and a handball jacket, he was also tall and physically well built and I believed at once he was Dimitar’s brother. The four boys kept throwing stuff at each other, back and forth. Violeta saw them and told them to stop it. They stopped for a short while, but as soon as the teacher stopped paying attention to them, they started throwing again. Violeta caught them again and demanded them to stop. But the peace only lasted for a short while. Violeta finally got fed up and threatened with an angry voice to send them to *the milieu-group*¹ if they did not stop. The boys calmed down now. Violeta was angry and the teaching stopped for a while. Then she put on a movie about Hitler. While the film was screening, Sifaw every now and then commented loud: “*What a motherfucka!*” or “*Fuck you, bitch*”. After the film, Sifaw and Bernard kept on talking loud to each other. Violeta got angry again and asked them to leave the class at once. Sifaw and Bernard immediately apologised. They promised to calm down and proposed they could move away from each other. Violeta accepted the deal and the class continued without more interruptions for the remaining 10 minutes. After the class was over, most students left

¹ The *milie-group* was an organisation at the school that worked with pupils with all sorts of problems, and they worked with building a safe and including milieu at the school. In the class I followed, the boys who made trouble was sent to the milieu group as a punishment.

for break. But Sifaw stayed behind to talk with Violeta. She motivated him to keep focus on a big test he would have on Monday. She said; *“You have to remember where the test location is, have a quiet weekend, don’t party, wake up early, have a good breakfast and do as best as you can on the test. Or else you will not come any further next year”*. She was smiling and laughed a bit, but Sifaw face turned more serious when she mentioned that he might not get further next year. He said he would do his best and left class.

During the break I talked to Violeta at her office. We looked at a paper with pictures and names of all the students in class. She told me that, *“Here is the crème of foreigners, those who actually want something”*. Based on my observation of the troublemakers, I was a bit surprised she said that. But on the other hand, this class was *supposed* to have the ones who wanted to perform well in school. The pupils in this class had applied to get a place here. They wanted to strengthen their skills to perform well in further education. By categorising the pupils as those who wanted something, Violeta expressed what she expected of the pupils as well. She continued to point at pictures of students and talked about them. There was a good mixture of backgrounds. When it came to the boys, there were two from Poland, two from Serbia, and one representative from Germany, Portugal, Morocco/Norway, China, Cuba, Ghana, Pakistan/Norway and Egypt. When it comes to the girls, there were one representing each Lithuania, Syria, Spain/Norway, Honduras/Norway, Thailand, Russia and Uganda. When I write that some of them represented two countries, it is because they had Norwegian passports, but had not grown up in Norway. Most of the pupils had come to Norway because their parents had got work here. Some had come because of marriages, and a few were refugees. Violeta told me her class always represented the newest trends in immigration patterns. Before she used to have mostly Pakistani and Somali people in class, but now the new trends were people from Eastern Europe. She pointed at the Ghanaian boy and said: *“He is a great boy, so good, and his mother has full control with him”*. She pointed at the boy from Cuba, and the girls from Spain and Honduras, *“They are so pretty you know, just look at them”*. Then she pointed at Bernard, the boy who made trouble with Sifaw, *“He is a problem child.”* She shook her head and explained that he was impossible to deal with. We continued to talk, and it became clear that she distinguished between good and bad students when it comes to behaviour. She also distinguished between those who were good in school and those who struggled. From the teacher’s perspective, behaviour and knowledge were important criteria’s for identification. The teacher talked warmly about the good students and expressed

frustration with the troublemakers. In my notes from that day, I wrote that Sifaw was a “troublemaker”.

Chapter 2: Theoretical perspectives.

I came to Sogn school without having a class or group to follow, but was introduced to TPS after I arrived. My aim was to *discover* different forms of belonging by participating with the immigrant pupils in their everyday life. The applied method was participant observation, with the use of a video camera. I will discuss the methodological points through the text, and not have an own chapter on methodology. I find it important to emphasise that both watching my tapes, and presenting clips to my classmates have developed my understanding and analyses of this material. As David MacDougall writes:

“Through selection, framing also distils and concentrates experience. By isolating observations, it reveals commonalities and connections that may have gone unnoticed before. These may be the characteristics mannerism of a person, or how a particular cultural theme emerges repeatedly in different context”. (MacDougall, 2006: 4).

2.1 School and integration.

The pupils I followed were in a situation of adaptation to a new country, new school and new classmates. On a general level, I wanted to learn how young immigrants integrated in the Norwegian society. The concept of integration can seem unclear and confusing, as it is talked about in different ways in media, politics and social science. Integration in general terms are about people and their adaptation to their surroundings. When it comes to immigrants, Fuglerud & Engebrigsten argue that we have to understand that there are different ways of being integrated. They point out that different groups of immigrants have different requirements to meet, which in the Norwegian context, is seen to be a successful adaptation to society. They further point out that in most discussions and debates, integration is not separated as an analytical tool and as a political project. As an analytical tool it refers to the variation in the processes and forms of belonging, which ties human beings generally to their social surroundings. As a political project, it is a goal of changing people who are seen as different in certain ways. (Engebrigsten & Fuglerud, 2009: 11-13) The political goal of

integration is perhaps most of all found in the school system. In the modern society, the role of the school is perceived to be critical when it comes to integration and identity construction. “*School is without doubt the most important tool for society when it comes to integration with the purpose of shaping children into members of society*” (Fuglerud & Engebrigsten, 2009: 88).

My approach to integration will be based on Fuglerud and Engebrigsten’s analytical perspective. I will look into how the young pupils in the class established different forms of belonging. Since the school is perceived to be crucial when it comes to integration, I wanted to find out what role to school played in this process. To say something about the schools role, I also had to consider other social arenas. When it comes to surroundings, I will make use of social fields to analyse how different social arenas influenced the processes of belonging. I am mainly interested in the social arenas were young pupils establish belonging to other young people, so I will not go much into family situations, but focus on friendships and young pupils relations to each other. According to Turid Aasebø, the school is connected to both the schools *qualification project* and the students’ own *youth project*. (Aasebø, 2010: 374). According to Aasebø, the *youth-project* is about the students’ identity project, which is based on age and gender in connection to establishing friendships and social relations with other young people. The qualification project is the schools institutionally defined task for society. (Aasebø, 2010: 374). There may not be any conflict between the two projects, but as the example above with troublemaking, and the statements made by the Minority Advisors, the *qualification project* and the *youth project* can be met with different sets of expectations. When it comes to belonging, I am first of all interested in the *youth project*, and the connection it has to school. Aasebø mentioned age and gender as criteria for identity in the *youth-project*, but in my material, especially language and former education were also important.

The pupils in the class I followed had not known each other for a long time, which means that social relations were in a process of being established. In other words, the social relations had to be attached to meaning. I will look into these relational processes, to discover how different form of belonging was generated. This brings me to Barth’s model of social organisation, which is in line with Fuglerud and Engebrigsten’s analytical perspective on integration. Barth wanted to create a model, which could be used to explain the processes that generate social form. “*Form is social life constituted by a series of regularities in a large body of individual*

items of behaviour". (Barth, 1966: 33) The regularities in social life are what we can call *patterns*. They can be observed and described. What Barth wanted with his model, was to present a way to explain how observable patterns were generated. "*The most simple model and general model available for us is one of an aggregate of people exercising choice while influenced by certain constraints and incentives*". (Barth, 1981: 34). For Barth, patterns are generated through processes of interaction. In their form, they reflect the constraints and incentives under which people live. By looking at processes, Barth argues that we can be able to understand "*the variety of complex forms which it produces*". (Barth, 1981: 35). With process, as an analytical tool, Barth refers to it as "*... something that governs and affects activity, something that restricts and canalises the possible courses of events*". (Barth, 1981: 35).

When it comes to my material, Barth's generative model is useful to approach different forms belonging. In that sense, integration cannot be seen as something you either are or not, which is often the way integration is talked about in media and politics. When immigrants are measured to what degree they are integrated according to different standards set by politicians, we miss out on important knowledge about how integration actually takes place. In my material, this process included complex identity negotiation, where the forms of belonging that were generated differed among the pupils. In other words, I discovered different forms of integration. If we are to understand the complexity in integration processes, we have to consider the social person.

2.2 Situations, statuses and roles.

Barth makes use of situational analyses developed by Goffman in his model. This includes looking at individuals as social persons made up of different status sets. Different social situations have different rules of relevance when it comes to interaction. As with Sifaw, who I presented in the first chapter, he behaved differently in class than at the gym, or home with his parents. The different ways of being in different situations can analytically be described as a social status. "*A status is socially defined aspect of a person which defines a social relationship and entails certain rights and duties in relation to others*" (Eriksen, 2010: 53). A social person is made up of and defined by, the sum of these statuses. The rights and duties connected to a status can be established and negotiated, and thereby be maintained or changed. As with Sifaw in the example in chapter 1, I can identify his status in the class as

pupil. But at the same time, I can identify his status as a friend. The troublemaking activity reveals that there are different sets of expectations connected to the two statuses, and there are negotiations about which rules of relevance that is important, in others words, which status that should form the basis of interaction. The performing part of the status is called the role, in other words, “...*the actual behaviour within the limitation set by the status definition*” (Eriksen, 2010, 54). How the role is played is based on how the actor interprets his status. In that sense, the role and the status is never identical, and a status may vary to what degrees rights and duties are specified in different situations. When different actors meet, with their interpretation of the rules of relevance, they have to negotiate the premises for interaction, what Goffman defined as *the definition of the situation*. (Goffman, 1959 in Barth, 1981: 36).

The classroom is supposed to be a place for learning activities, but at the same time, there are several other activities that are generated in the classroom, like the troublemaking I presented in the example above. The school is not hegemonic when it comes to defining situations and statuses. The students themselves are active actors in this process. On one side, the statuses as pupils and teacher are supposed to guide the activities that take place. The status as a pupil is defined by the school system, with specified rights and duties. But on the others hand, the pupils establish friendships in class, and thereby they also have the status as friend or classmate. The role of friend and the role of student may go hand in hand, but this must not be the case. The statuses I found in class, and how the roles of these statuses were played, were important for exclusion and inclusion in different situations and activities. In other words, the roles that were played in class were important for how social networks were generated, and how belonging was established within these. It is important to keep in mind that the concept of status and roles are abstract analytical tools. In my material, statuses and roles are useful for comparing actors` different behaviour in different situations. But when it comes to belonging, which is more based on personal feelings, the concept of identity is useful.

2.3 Identity.

Where status and roles are abstract analytical tools, which make it possible to analyse interaction in terms of rights and duties, identity is more useful to talk about feelings of belonging, as identity is about the individuals` own experience of himself and others. Identity is connected to the role an actor play, by how the performance of that role is perceived in the relation between the individual and others. For Richard Jenkins “*Identity is our understanding*

of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and others". (Jenkins, 1998:5). To talk about identity, we also need to talk about identification. Jenkins defines identification as "*The ways in which individuals and collectivises are distinguished in their social relation with other individuals and collectivises.*" (Jenkins, 1998: 5). Identification is process where differences and similarities are made relevant in situations. These dialectical processes of understanding our self and other, will bring about both agreement and disagreement of who the "others" and "we" are. Identities always have to be established and are always negotiable. (Jenkins, 1998:5). Even though identity is relational, Hylland Eriksen's makes it clear that we cannot say that we are our relations. He states that it is the interaction between your *embodied potentials* and the relations that you are part of that brings about a personality. (Eriksen, 2010: 42). In the example I presented above, Violeta identified the pupils according to both behaviour and personal skills. Being good in school are qualities that matter for your identity, and ways of being identified. But at the same time, the relations you are part of will affect how these qualities are appreciated, and to what degree they are made relevant in situations.

In the class I followed, there was easy to identify difference, as age, gender, nationality, language, style, personal interest and school behaviour differed. The more interesting it is to look at how people find or construct similarity to other people. This process can be called comparative identity work, where individuals and groups match and contrast themselves to others. By matching, we define ourselves as the same as the other. By contrasting, we define ourselves as different from others. But what criteria we make relevant in matching and contrasting is situationally defined. (Eriksen, 2010: 55). I discovered that the different groups in the class I followed defined themselves as a "we". But the "we" in the different groups was based on different aspects of their identities. Some were a "we" based on common language, others on preferred activities, as ping-pong or troublemaking. All the groups had others they on differed criteria contrasted from.

I will look into how comparative identity work was done in the class I followed, and what it meant for establishing belonging. This is important to social circulation. By social circulation I look at how different social identities were made relevant in different situations, which mattered for inclusion and exclusion in activities. Some social identities had more potential for participation in several activities, while others were more limited. As the pupils all belonged to different sets of groups and relationships, both in and out of school, different

social identities were made relevant. Identity can then be treated as *flexible* or *situational identities*. In that sense, we have to understand why some social identities are seen as more relevant than others in different situations? (Eriksen, 2010: 43). According to Hylland Eriksen, the general answer to that question is that a certain social identity gets precedence, when it is either forced upon you from the outside world, or can offer resources the other identities cannot dispose of. (Eriksen, 2010: 43). Being a troublemaker can both be an identity that is forced upon you, but at the same time, being a troublemaker can offer resources like friendships and recognition.

2. 4 Social circles and social fields.

I discovered that most of the pupils in the class I followed belonged to a group, which generated activities, both in class and during breaks. According to your social position in class, these activities were more or less open for participation. To analyse the potential for social circulation in different activities, I had to discover what activities that were generated and who that were included. To approach that, I have been inspired by Hanne Haavind's article *Masculinity by rule-breaking: Cultural contestations in the transitional move from being a child to being a young male* (Haavind, 2003). She and her colleagues did fieldwork in a school class that represented several different ethnic backgrounds. Haavind's research aimed at explaining rule-breaking activities. That means activities that included breaking established rules and norms, both in and out of school, among some of the boys in class. Haavind and her fellow researchers discovered that the students operated in what they defined as *social circles*. Social circles are analytical tools which help to describe how a social landscape is structured. Haavind defines social circles as "*a loose collection of interrelationships that are maintained by a set of day-to-day activities*". (Haavind, 2003: 92) She continues to write that "*A circle will contain major friendships, but not everyone is a close friend of everyone else. The existence of circles is maintained with reference to a shared "we", in contrast to everyone else as the others*". (Haavind, 2003: 92). Haavind states that the glue in each circle is participation in shared activities, where some activities are more open than others for participation. Haavind sees social circles as transitional devices the pupils use grow by, or transfer themselves from being a child to a young male. As I see it, there are some contradictions in Haavind's definition of social circles. She first states that a social circle includes a loose collection of interrelationships, and then states that a circle will include *major friendships*. It does not make sense to me how major friendships can be a loose

collection of interrelationships. Haavind writes that within a social circle, “*some are central to what is going on, some are possible participants and still others are not included at all*” (Haavind, 2003: 91). Even though Haavind here states that a social circle will include actors with different degrees of participation, she also says that some are not included at all. If someone is not included at all, how can he be seen as part of the circle? Haavind’s social circles remind us in many ways of what we usually call groups. To approach groups and their potential for belonging in the class I followed, I have been inspired by Haavind’s social circles, as a way to analyse the relationship between actors, activities and belonging. As the circles are based on the relationship between actors and activities, there are different criteria made relevant for participation in each circle. As my material will show, the criteria for participation in some activities were well established, but in other activities the criteria were under negotiation and more undefined. In Haavind’s material, the social circles were to a large degree set, as she followed a school class that had been together for several years. According to Haavind, a social circle was *maintained* by a set of day- to- day activities. Thereby, participation in activities seemed to *confirm* group belonging. Her social circles, as I understand it, are made up of people who are together both at school and during the spare time. But in my material, the pupils had not known each other for a long time. In that sense, the groups were to a less degree well established. Participation in shared activities was not just a way to confirm group belonging, but also a process of negotiating identities in search for belonging. Adding to that, when I joined the pupils outside the classroom, I discovered that some groups ceased to exist, while others were maintained. That means that the groups had the potential to change, as the criteria for participation and the rules of relevance differed on different social arenas. In that sense, Haavind’s concept of social circles loses its relevance when I step out of classroom. *The Serbs* were a group at school, but on the spare time they were part of different social arenas including different actors and activities.

A concept that is better developed to analyse how social belonging is generated on different social arenas for my material, is Reidar Grønhaug’s social fields (Grønhaug, 1975). Those who share the same definition of the situations in the different social arenas are part of the same social field. The rules of relevance that are established on one social arena are important to understand actual behaviour on other social arenas. In other words, the different social arenas are interlinked. Grønhaug states that, “... *a concrete system or “field” of social organisation is constituted by series of interrelated elements of multiple individuals’ interaction and communication*”. (Grønhaug, 1975: 3). To analyse how the pupils generated

different forms of group belonging, I have to discover the range of the social dynamics that influenced on change and maintenance of the rules of relevance for group interaction, which can be done by discovering the social field actors are part of. Instead of looking at loose collection of interrelationships, I can discover the social dynamics and values that mattered for belonging. Social fields can be isolated, as they each have “*distinctive patterns of organisation, values and symbols, tasks, challenges that need to be solved, forums, situations, network, groups and rules for inclusion and exclusion*” (Halvar Vike, 2010: 216).

Following the dynamics between the actors determines the scale of the social field. For Sifaw and his friends, the rules of relevance differed on different social arenas, as they were making trouble in class and played ping-pong during breaks. But still, these social arenas were part of attaching meaning to their relation. Social fields are systems of meaning that are developed ongoing. In this thesis, I will try to discover this system of meaning, which mattered for different forms of belonging. A social field can include relations on both micro and macro level, as the field has different scales. In that sense, social fields work well to discover how both internal and external relations influence dynamics in a social organisation. As my material will show with the two Serbs I followed, their relationship to Serbia was made relevant in their interaction on different local arenas. Grønhaug’s social fields have the potential to do complicated and ambitious analyses, but for my research I will make use of social fields first of all the discover how meanings were attached to relations on different social arenas, and thereby be able to discover the fields relevance when it comes to generating belonging.

Chapter 3: The groups in class.

During the first weeks of fieldwork I did not manage to see any clear groups in class. I was too overwhelmed by all the impressions I got during the first days. One of the reason I found it hard to figure out whom were friends with whom, was because I was stuck in the classroom. I had nothing at hand that helped me to interact with the pupils. I did not have a role they could relate to. When the pupils went for breaks, I was not able to join them. Those who interacted with each other in the classroom, were generally those who sat next to each other, and I could not tell if they were a group or not. But I did observe that troublemaking divided the boys and girls when it comes to behaviour in class. There were some boys who

stood out as troublemakers. I brought with me the camera to school, and presented the film project. From that day, as a cameraman, I was able to join several of the students during breaks, and then I discovered patterns of whom that grouped together. I will get more back to the camera effect later. The groups and activities at school reflected different social positions in class. I discovered that the activities were mainly distinguished between those who behaved as troublemakers and those who behaved as disciplined students. In that sense, they had different ways of interpreting their statuses in class, which gave different incentives and restrictions to what kind of activities you could take part in. I discovered four groups in the class, which I will briefly present now. I will get more into detail about *The Serbs* and *The Ping-Pongers* later, as they are my main focus in this research. The names of the groups are made by me; these were not names they used themselves.

3.1 *The Bros.*

One group included five boys who were taking school seriously. I will call this group *The Bros.* These boys were Ahmed (16) from Egypt, Janvier (16) from Ghana, Andreas (16) from Germany, Kim (18) from China, and Aon (18) from Norway/Pakistan. They all communicated in Norwegian with each other. The group was to a certain degree restricted by gender, but neither ethnicity nor age was criteria for inclusion. But still, the youngest boys were the ones who kept most together. The pupils in class at the age of 16 came from elementary school, so this was their first year at Sogn School. The older students in class had been to Sogn School for one or two years already. The fact that this group included a majority of pupils, who were all new at Sogn School, is probably no coincident. But still, not all the young boys in class were included in this group. Kim was also less active than the others, and Andreas spent time with *The Serbs* on some occasions. The main activities that bound these boys together were school related. In class they often worked together in group-work. During breaks they either went to the same spot in the cantina, or to the library. In these places they usually talked about schoolwork, football and x-box games, or played with mp3 players and mobile phones. Even though these boys were the main actors in this group, the activities they initiated and took part in were to a large degree open. Most others who wanted to could join in, as long as they participated in the same activities. This happened every now and then, but not to a degree that changed the form of the group. The boys within this group can all be identified as good students. They played the role of student and the role of classmate without any conflict. Violeta called these boys “*the nerds*” or “*the little chickens*”. This was not a

negative identification, but rather a way to identify them as young and ambitious in school with a humoristic tone. It is worth noticing that the identification as *nerds* and *little chickens* has to be seen as a contrast to others in class. During one of my conversations with *The Bros*, all of them claimed that school in their home country was much stricter than here. I asked, “Do you think it should be stricter here as well?” Ahmed replied, “Yes, it should, it is too much trouble in the class. Javor and Dimitar, they would have been beaten by my teacher in Egypt, they should have been sent to my school there”. These boys were not fans of troublemaking in class. *The Bros* matched each other as the boys who took school seriously and behaved in class, while contrasting themselves to the troublemakers. I noticed that *The Bros* used to call each other “bro”. During another lunch break, I asked what “bro” meant. Ahmed explained, “If you meet somebody, it’s like,” what’s up bro?” I asked again, “So you can say bro to everybody you meet?” Ahmed replied, “No, no, just those who are your friends”. I continued to ask, “Who are your bro’s in class?” I took a while before Ahmed answered. “It is I, Janvier...” Ahmed stopped for a moment, before he pointed his finger at Andreas, “and Kim”. He did not mention Aon, who was away for the day, but I believe he was simply forgotten. I asked them who the other groups in class were. They mentioned Sifaw, Bernard and Andre as one, and Javor and Dimitar as another. Then they mentioned the Spanish-speakers, whom they called “*The Spanish Mafia*”. It became clear that the boys were aware of the other groups in class, and could identify themselves as different from them. In that sense, they had established a shared “we” as “bro’s”. Ahmed had clear ideas about groups in class, but to what degree these groups were fixed is another question. At the library when doing schoolwork, *The Bros* were often joined by two of the girls, Lisbeth (16) from Uganda and Achara (18) from Thailand. As the school related activities to a large degree were open, the group could expand in different situations. *The Bros* had conversations and discussions were they talked about, and compared each other’s home countries. They also compared to Norway and Norwegian people. The social field they were part of included both local and global relations. Still, the relation to their home country did not matter for group inclusion at school, but their identity as ambitious pupils did. Outside school, each of the group members was part of different social fields. In other words, their group was based on the school as a social field. They did not hang out together after school, even though most of them claimed they had few friends and often felt alone. I never got to know why, but I learned that they all lived in different places in Oslo.

3.2 *The Ping-Pongers.*

The second group in class was *The Ping-Pongers*. The main actors in this group were Sifaw (18) from Morocco, Andre (18) from Portugal, Bernard (16) from Poland and Diana (17) from Lithuania. *The Ping-Pongers* sat together in the back of the classroom and played ping-pong or smoked cigarettes during breaks. They all communicated in Norwegian with each other. In the classroom, the boys in the group were known to be troublemakers. Diana balanced her role, by participating in some troublemaking, but to a less degree than the boys. Diana was the only girl in class that were in a group with just boys. She behaved in a way that contrasted from the other girls. Diana could be loud and rude, something the other girls never were. She was also Andre's girlfriend. They openly expressed their love in class by sitting together while kissing and cuddling. The teachers called them, "*The ones in love*". Andre and Diana were seldom present at school and this worried the teachers. Sifaw and Bernard were the main troublemakers, and they would seldom pay attention to the teacher or do any school work. In the classroom, *The Ping-Pongers* made trouble as a group, but as often together with *The Serbs*. By just observing classroom activities, *The Serbs* and *The Ping-Pongers* could seem like one group. But during breaks, they never interacted with each other. *The Ping-Pongers*, especially the boys, were occupied with music as well. They all liked hip-hop, and spent much time listening to music, both in class and during breaks. Their style of dressing was also inspired by hip-hop. Their group included different partners in different social arenas. During breaks, the group expanded to include Sifaw's girlfriend and her sister, who were part of another class at TPS. After school, the group participated together on a day-to-day basis on different social arenas. But after school, Bernard was generally not part of the group. When I talk about *The Ping-Pongers*, the group had different actors on different social arenas. As *The Ping-Pongers* shared activities in several social arenas outside school, they were part of a larger social field than most other groups in class. The social field they were part of have to be considered to understand their group dynamics, as I will show in my empirical data. *The Ping-Pongers* talked about themselves as a "we", and contrasted themselves to the others in class who were not seen as their friends. During an interview/conversation after the semester was over, I asked Andre and Sifaw about their relationship to the others in class.

Christian: *You were a group in class, but what separated you from the others students?*

Sifaw: *That we did not hang out with the others?*

Christian: *Yes.*

Andre: *It is hard to say...*

S: *For me, maybe the same for Andre, I don't like to have many friends.*

A: *It's not that we don't like to have many friends.*

S: *Yeah, it's not like that, but they like to do other things that we don't like.*

A: *It's not that we don't like it, but we don't do the same things as they do, right?*

S: *Yes.*

C: *Like how?*

A: *What shall I say? We don't hang out in the same places.*

S: *And we don't think they want to hang out with us.*

A: *It's not like that.*

S: *Yes, I think so.*

A: *If they don't want to hang out with us, I don't care.*

C: *What do you mean that they don't want to hang out with you?*

S: *I mean, like Max and the others, they don't like to hang with us.*

C: *Why do you think that?*

S: *Because I think so. If they like to hang with us, they will come and take contact with us, like friends. "Are you going out? Can you meet with us?" Bla bla bla. They don't ask at all. I don't need more friends.*

The *Ping Pongers* had established a shared "we" in contrast to the others in class. But they did not mention anything about school ambitions or troublemaking, but simply claimed that they did not do the same things or hung out in the same places as the others. Hanging out, as I understand it, is simply being together with others in some form of activity, may it be schoolwork or a party. Hanging out is something people do as friends. Andre and Sifaw seemed to be unsure about how and why the organisation in class had developed as it had. They disagreed about the reason they did not hang out with others, as Andre emphasised hanging out and doing the same things, while Sifaw emphasised that the others did not want to be with them. Sifaw's statement can be interpreted as a feeling of being excluded. On a later occasion, when they had to write an article about Second World War, Sifaw complained to me that the others did not include him. None of the "good students" would work with him, and it seemed to annoy him. For me, it was obvious that they did not want to work with him, as he was known to be a troublemaker in class. This can reveal that Sifaw did not identify himself first of all as a troublemaker in class, as I will get back to in chapter 5. As a group, the

criteria or rules of relevance for hanging out, was based on doing the same things in the same places.

3.3 *The Serbs.*

The third group included the two Serbian boys: Dimitar and Javor. I will call them *The Serbs*. They usually spoke in Serbian with each other. Their group was more complex than the others, mainly because their activities included both schoolwork and troublemaking. Depending on the situation, they could play the role as either good students or troublemakers. In this way, *The Serbs* social position in class can be seen as *in between*. This group was also the only one where national identity mattered for group belonging. Even though the two Serbs seemed like the best of friends at school, they did not hang out after school. They did not even consider each other as friends outside school, as I will get back to in chapter 5. When talking about a “we” at school, *The Serbs* meant each other, and they clearly defined themselves as different from most others at school, as my empirical data will show. But even though they expressed that they were different from most others, their actions and participation in activities revealed more. They would often interact with *The Ping-Pongers* when it comes to troublemaking, with some of the girls in schoolwork and conversations, and some of *The Bros* in the cantina. In other words, they were involved in different activities that linked them to different partners, and thereby had a large potential for social circulation. Still, their group never expanded to include others, and they often kept to themselves. I will get more back to this in chapter 5.

3.4 *The Spanish Speakers.*

The fourth group was made up by whom I will call the *Spanish speakers*. The group included the two Spanish-speaking girls, and the Cuban boy from class. They sat close to each other in class and participated together in schoolwork. They usually talked in Spanish to each other, which irritated the teacher, because she meant they would learn Norwegian well enough. During breaks they met other Spanish-speakers from other classes and hung out with them. The Spanish language was the main criteria to join the group and the activities taking place. Their social identity as Spanish-speakers worked as a gathering force. Like *The Serbs*, language was important for belonging. They were all good students, but did not participate much with the other who did not speak Spanish. The Cuban boy did on some few occasions

hang out with *The Bros*, but mostly kept with the other Spanish speakers. I do not know if they spent time together after school.

The rest of the students did not belong to any clear groups in class. The girls from Thailand and Uganda kept together in class, but usually separated during breaks. The Thai girl would generally join another Thai girl from another class, and the Ugandan girl would on her side join with other African girls from other classes. The rest of the girls in class had no observable relationship to others in class, with the exception of a Russian girl, Polina, who joined in with *The Serbs* in some schoolwork. Among the boys, there was just one pupil, Mike (16) from Poland, who was not much included in any of the groups, He was a very good student, but did not participate much with the others. During the last months of school, he became more and more absent. Even though both he and Bernard were Polish and 16 years old, they contrasted from each other by their relation to school, and never talked together. From my short presentation of these groups and pupils in class, there were different criteria made relevant for group belonging. Language, national identity, being in the same class, shared activities, their relation to schoolwork, age and gender mattered in different ways for the different pupils. Still, the general pattern seemed to be that those who had the opportunity generated groups based on shared language, while others generated groups based on other social identities.

In class I became mainly interested in *The Serbs* and *The Ping-Pongers*. There are several reasons for this. First of all, they were the ones who included and invited me to join them in activities first. Secondly, I discovered that troublemaking influenced the classroom situations and the relations among the pupils. Troublemaking, not schoolwork, was the main activity to understand what generated social organisation in the classroom. It was an activity all the students and teachers had to relate to. Troublemaking happened almost everyday, but differed in its form and by the number of participants. The behaviour in troublemaking is interesting in many ways. First of all, it is a behaviour that is unwanted in the classroom; it shows defiance against the established rules and norms. The school is supposed to shape pupils into members of society, but when the pupils show resistance to school, the qualification project can be seen as not fully successful. When it comes to integration, Sogn School had a reputation for troublemaking that was connected to the large degree of minority pupils. As the Minority Advisor said, "*This is not exactly a school for angels*". I discovered through my fieldwork, that most of the pupils, both good students and troublemakers, claimed that "*foreigners*" were

the reason for all the troublemaking at school. Further, both good students and troublemakers looked forward to start in new schools with less degree of “foreigners”. They believed it would be less troublemaking than. I was surprised that even those who made trouble claimed that other foreigners were no good, because of troublemaking. In other words, a stereotype of “*foreigners*” as troublemakers were both produced and maintained by immigrants and minority pupils, while Norwegian pupils were stereotyped as ambitious students who did well in school. When troublemaking was generally seen as a negative thing, the interesting question will simply have to be: Why did they do it? I will approach that question in the next chapter, and look into what troublemaking meant for identity construction and group belonging.

Before I get into trouble, I will now briefly present how I became a *participant* in the two groups I ended up following more closely during my fieldwork.

3. 4 Joining The Ping- Pongers.

I had made some attempts to get to know people during my first week of fieldwork, but without any success. Then I decided to bring the camera with me. I explained to the class about the film project I wanted to do. Then I handed out a contract that the students had to sign, if they wanted to be included in the film project. Sifaw spoke out loud from his desk. “*Ohh, we are going to make a hell!*” After class, Sifaw approached me. “*Ey, do you want to join us to play table tennis?*” I joined Sifaw together with Bernard, Andre and Diana. I had not yet greeted all of them. During our walk towards the ping-pong tables, Sifaw presented himself to me. He said he was a Moroccan, and that he and the others used to play ping-pong. He lighted a cigarette and asked if I smoked. “*No, I’ve just quitted snus*” I said. “*I know some people who both smoke and snus, and that is no good,*” Sifaw replied. He told me that he did not smoke much anymore, because he was training a lot at a gym with Andre. They all played table tennis while smoking at the same time. I had to play too, but lost all matches. When Andre was not playing he usually kissed and stood by Diana. She did not play ping-pong, but stood by to watch. It felt a bit awkward for me to see Andre and Victory being so intimate. I was not used to lovers being so intimate in the open. On the way back to class, Sifaw met his girlfriend. They kissed and chatted while I walked behind them. Bernard came up next to me and started to talk. He did not say much about himself, but asked me about the film and

camera. I followed them back to class and sat down in the back together with them. It felt good for me to be in class now, I had been included by a group and I had a role to play as a cameraman. This meeting was inspiring, and I considered this a group to follow more closely.

3.4.1 Joining *The Serbs*.

It was not only Sifaw who reacted to the camera. The two Serbs were eager as well. When I filmed in class, *The Serbs* wanted to have fun with the camera by making weird sounds and faces. At first this confused me and I found it irritating. I wondered how I could make a film about them when they kept on joking in front of the camera, or “*making hell*” as Sifaw called it. At that moment, I did not think of their joking as a way to establish contact with me. But I later learned that having fun through pranks was important in how they got to know others. But I did not share their rules of relevance, as I saw their behaviour as troublemaking and rather tried to avoid filming it. I had observed *The Serbs* in class for a while. They seemed to be very social as they joked around with most people. I found them funny and interesting, even though I was a bit annoyed by their pranks in front of the camera. After about two weeks in the class, we went to the court to witness a trial. I walked there together with Sifaw and Bernard, whom I had spent most time with until now, but they were early sent out of the courtroom because of bad behaviour. I had forgotten to take off my hat, so the judge warned me too, something the class found very amusing. During the break I ended up having lunch together with Dimitar and Javor. I had the confidence to sit down with them, because they had played a lot with the camera. We sat down around a table and chatted a bit. I told them about the film idea and my education, and they shared information about themselves. I learned that Dimitar had higher education from Serbia. He told me he had taken courses to become a flight mechanic. Javor also told me he had higher education from Serbia. Both said they wanted to study more in Norway. I liked to be in their company and the chemistry between us was relaxed. They had much humour, laughed a lot and the conversation flowed well. They were very polite and seemed interested in my presence. I believed that these two guys were friends both at school and during the spare time and though they would be great characters for my film and research project.

3.4.2 The camera effect.

From having no students to follow, I had now established contact with all the boys in class who were seen as troublemakers. Bringing with me the camera gave me a new role to play. I

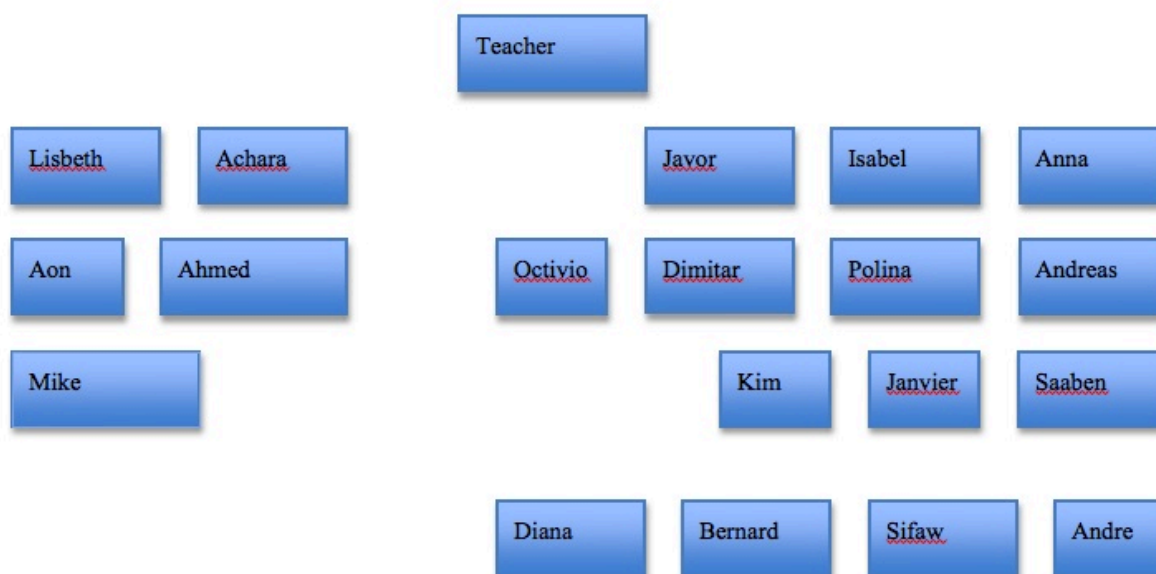
had been spending time in the class without being able to talk with anybody, but bringing the camera triggered interest from these boys. The camera became my ticket to join in with them. I had a tool that enabled me to play a role that the students could relate to, and found interesting. When doing fieldwork, especially with a short time range, getting access to groups is not easy. I was neither a pupil, nor a troublemaker, nor an immigrant nor any of the other roles that were relevant for the young pupils. The first week of fieldwork, I was just able to join the teacher and other employees. They related to me as university student, and that status worked well to interact with them. But I was afraid that the pupils in class would identify me as one of the adults, and thereby make it more difficult for me hang out with them. Bringing the camera changed the situation, and gave me access to interact with the pupils. This is also a point Trond Waage makes in his article, *“Seeing and describing. Towards a shared anthropology with visual tools”*, when it comes to getting access to young people (Waage, 2011). The camera worked as an activity that we all could share: making a film. My new role as a cameraman enabled me to join them in their activities, but the film making also worked as an activity they could participate in. Ilisa Barbash and Lucian Taylor write in *Cross-cultural filmmaking “Documentary filmmaking is by nature collaborative. Quite simply, its impossible to make a film about other people completely on your own.”* (Barbash & Taylor, 1997: 75). Some would probably criticize me for interfering in their daily life, as the camera brought about new forms of behaviour. Still, without the camera, my presence would have affected their daily life too. But with the camera, I could be accepted and included.

Chapter 4: Troublemakers

4.1 The troublemakers on fire.

It was nature-science lesson. The class had a young Norwegian girl as a substitute teacher. The theme was heredity and environment. The teacher asked the class if they knew anything about the subject. Dimitar raised his hand and said, *“If your dad is insane, you will become insane too”*. Laughter spread around the classroom. The teacher showed them an animation film about the subject and all the pupils paid attention. After the film, she handed out a paper they had to work with. While she was talking about it, Sifaw and Bernard started to have their own conversation. Dimitar and Javor did the same. None of them paid attention to the teacher anymore. But the teacher soon got annoyed by their noise and asked the boys several times to

keep quiet. They did, but only for a few seconds. The teacher went around to the students and helped them in their work. Javor then walked down to Sifaw, and asked him for a cigarette. Javor had a lighter and wanted to fire up a cigarette in class. Sifaw did not give him one, so Javor went back to his seat. Then Sifaw took his lighter up, and fired up a piece of paper. He dropped it on the floor and blew it forward towards *The Serbs*. It ended up under the desk of Kim, one of *The Bros*, who was placed in the middle of the classroom. Javor and Dimitar sat in the front, while Sifaw and the others in the back.



Dimitar picked up the smell, noticed the smoking paper and made Javor aware of it. Javor had found a lighter and fired up some small pieces of paper with Dimitar, but they put the fire out before it got to serious. The teacher noticed. *"It smells burned in here!"* She looked around for answers, but nobody replied. Javor and Dimitar found a plastic pen and burned it. Most of the class had noticed it by now. They laughed carefully, and seemed to find it amusing. But Kim did not, as he was caught in the crossfire. He said, *"Stop it!"* But the troublemakers would not listen. Dimitar and Javor found another piece of paper and put fire on it. The boys were full of energy now, and I got excited as well. They carefully watched the teacher and put the fire out before she could see them. Then it knocked on the door. One of the school advisors came in. The advisor and employees from the milieu-group regularly dropped by the classes, to check how things were going. She greeted the teacher before noticing the smell. *"It smells burned in here, and if some of you know anything about this, you have to tell me. Ok?"* Nobody replied this time either, and the advisor soon left. Andre and Diana came into class,

late as usual, and found their place in the back. Bernard walked up to the sink. He washed his hands and wrapped a lot of paper around his arm like a bandage. Dimitar and Javor both pointed and laughed at Bernard, who went back to his desk. Sifaw informed Andre about the situation. Andre then took his lighter up and put fire on Bernard's paper bandage. The teacher suddenly came rushing down towards them, and the fire was put out quickly. She told them to stop it. They all refused to have done something wrong. *"Have you seen me do something wrong?"* Sifaw asked with a serious tone and a strict face. *"No, I didn't see you"*, she replied. *"No, I didn't do anything!"* Sifaw claimed. She left them and went over to the students who did work. Andre and Bernard opened the window next to Andre's desk. They lighted a new piece of paper on fire. It created a lot of smoke as they let the piece burn longer than before. The teacher rushed down to them again. They threw the burning paper out the window and quickly sat down at their desks. Before she could say anything, Bernard asked her, *"What have I done? I've done nothing!"* The teacher looked out the window, *"But I can see there is a burning paper down there"*. *"It was not me, I was just looking out the window"*, Bernard said. Andre sat quiet and did not say anything. Javor and Dimitar observed the situation and laughed. The teacher stood still and stared at them with a strict face. The rest of the class paid attention to the situation. Not a sound was made. The teacher shook her head and continued to work with the other students. The advisor and a woman from the milieu group, Camilla, entered the classroom. It still smelled burned. The advisor called for attention and said, *"If somebody knows anything, they have to come and tell us!"* Camilla continued, *"This is serious, I hope that you are grown up enough to tell us about this"*. The advisor followed up, *"This is serious, if you don't talk, we have to contact the police"*. *"The smoke-detector could have gone off"*, warned Camilla. As they got no answers, Camilla and the advisor soon left again. The boys stopped playing with fire, but kept on talking and playing with each other. The teacher did not approach them anymore.

The example above first of all proves that troublemaking was an activity that was generated through interaction between certain boys. The whole situation started up by an initiative from Javor. Sifaw fired up a piece of paper developed the idea. It ended up with participation from all of the troublemaking boys. But only these boys joined, none of the other pupils. In this way I discovered that the students positioned themselves in different ways, both in relation to the teacher, but also in relation to the each other. *The Serbs* and *The Ping-Pongers* made trouble, while all the others kept quiet. The good students played their role as pupils with the right and duties connected to that status, while *The Ping-Pongers* and *The Serbs* did not play

the role of a pupil, as their behaviour broke with the rights and duties of that status. The relevant status in that situation was the status as friend or classmate within a certain set of relations, where participation in the troublemaking seemed to be expected. In other words, there was a role conflict in the classroom, where the pupils played by different rules of relevance. The role of the troublemakers influenced on the role of the other pupils, as when the teacher and the advisors asked who was responsible for the burning. None of the pupils said anything, even though the advisor expected them to tell. Even though Aaron reacted to the burning, and asked them to stop, none of the others backed him up. The troublemakers could interrupt the teaching and make noise, which obviously distracted the other pupils. But at the same time, none of the other pupils said anything against the troublemakers. The troublemaking activity structured the classroom as social positions. The troublemakers did not seem to care about school sanctions, but rather had fun with each other by breaking the rules. Still, the rules were broken in a creative ways and brought about laughter; they had fun with each other. In this way, troublemaking can be seen like a game between some of the boys, where the rules for playing were in contrast to those of the school. The adults became actors in *their* game. The teacher, advisor and Camilla from the milieu-group, all had to give up, and the troublemakers did not get caught and were in that sense victorious.

4.2 Gender & School trouble.

How can troublemaking be understood? Before I continue with my own material, I will present research that was done by Hanne Haavind and Turid Skarre Aasebø. Both their articles deal with school-trouble activities, and they have inspired me in how to approach my own material. I will present some of their main points, as their material is relevant for comparison with my own.

Turid Skarre Aasebø analysed in her article *Kjønn og Skoletrøbbe*² (Aasebø, 2010) how complicated processes were gender, dominance, power and marginalisation between the students created terms for each pupil's social position. These processes developed a classroom culture that to different degrees made it possible for the pupils to take part in the expected learning activities. Aasebø claims that to understand the actions of the pupils, we have to define the context in which these actions take place. In other words, we have to analyse what kind of social arena the classroom is, and identify the processes that go on

² In English: Gender and school-trouble.

between the students. Her material in the article is based on fieldwork that was done on a 9th grade class, which means pupils at the age of 14-15. In her article, she analyses how troublemaking was part of forming the classroom culture, where the relationship and alliances between the troublemaking boys and the other pupils were decisive for the classroom culture. According to Aasebø, the main division among the students in class were between those who were seen as popular and not. The troublemaking boys were the most popular ones, and their activities became a hegemonic and dominating part of the classroom culture, as the students who wanted to be popular had to be in line with the troublemakers. The most popular girls supported the troublemakers by defending them against the teachers, but also by helping them with schoolwork. Aasebø claims that the girls were part of building up the troublemakers' power in class by supporting them. She understands troublemaking in terms of gender relations. Through resisting and enduring the punishment school gave for bad behaviour, the boys developed what Aasebø calls *an oppositional masculinity*. (Aasebø, 2010: 375). But when it comes to explaining troublemaking, she claims it can be understood as a struggle for those that will define the territory of the school.

Even though Aasebø discovered how the alliances and relations between the troublemakers and the other students were decisive to understand the classroom culture, she does not explain why troublemaking was generated in the first place. From the examples I have presented above with my material, the boys could seem to have an *oppositional masculinity* and competed for the definition of the school's territory by behaving according to their own rules of relevance. But to understand why troublemaking happened, I had to discover their intentions, motivations and meanings attached to the activity. Aasebø's intention was to do a classroom study, but as my material will show, following the students on other social arenas as well, will strengthen a particular classroom study. She shows how the students negotiated social positions in class, which influenced on the pupils roles, as the pupils had to find a way to balance between the *youth project* and the schools *qualification project*. But we never learn why some boys and not others chose the path where they developed their *oppositional masculinity*. As I see it, some central processes are undiscovered.

As I presented in the introduction chapter, Hanne Haavind also wrote an article about rule-breaking behaviour among boys in school. (Haavind, 2003). She and her colleagues followed a class over a 2-year period. The class they followed included pupils with several ethnic backgrounds. The pupils were followed both in and out of school. Through her research,

Haavind discovered that three social circles structured the social landscape in the classroom. The first circle was called "*The Comrades*". This circle included boys who were tied together with troublemaking. The second circle was called "*The Best Friends*". This circle included boys who initiated activities and a sense of "we" without relying on troublemaking. The third circle was for the girls. Haavind does not go into this circle much, but simply writes that all the girls related to this circle. The social circles were first of all gendered divided. Haavind states that the different activities that took place were more or less open for participation. The troublemaking activities were closed for certain actors, while the school related activities were more open for participation. In the article, Haavind's main focus is on the boys, where rule-breaking behaviour is seen as the main criteria that divided the boys in class. You had to prove yourself to be included in the social circle of "*the comrades*". Haavind found that troublemaking among the boys "*...turned out to be a collective way of producing masculinity in their transitional change of subjectivity by age – out of middle childhood and into their teens*". (Haavind, 2003: 89). She discovered that the rule-breaking boys in class were involved in a lot of illegal activities, both in and out of school. Haavind shows that participation in the activity was both expected, and part of shaping the actors identity. Through troublemaking, "*... you are part of something you could not make happen individually. When it happens, whoever takes the initiative or the lead, all the participants have to make themselves equal in the shared action*". (Haavind, 2003: 95). As I read Haavind, participation in the activities is a way to *confirm* whom you and your friends are, in other words, group belonging. If the individual does not participate or make himself equal in the shared activity, he will lose his place within the social circle. Haavind states that when an individual is making trouble, he is doing it for the others, by "*...showing off his ability to do something he thinks they all share*". (Haavind, 2003: 96). In that sense, rule-breaking is the right thing to do for these boys, because it is expected of you as a friend. She also states that the troublemaking activities were actions that gave thrills. It was an activity they found exciting and fun. Haavind emphasises how troublemaking was part of confirming group belonging to others, and she emphasises how troublemaking gave a feeling of excitement. Both of these points are relevant for my material, as the examples I presented above showed. But in my material, the participation in troublemaking did not bring about a shared "we", as I will get back to.

Since rule-breaking activities were only for some boys, Haavind asks why it was for some boys and not others. The main difference between those who broke the rules and not, was

according to Haavind connected to their relations to adults. “*The Comrades*” rejected adult regulation, and handled consequences of their actions among themselves as a group. As I understand Haavind, the others pupils were to a larger degree regulated by adults, both teachers and parents. Haavind also discovered that both the social circles of the boys were made up of Norwegians, and that the “*foreigners*” in class never got fully included in any of circles. The activities in social circle of “*The Best Friends*” were generally open to everyone. Even though both the *Best Friends* and the *Foreigners* stayed out of trouble, the *Foreigners* never got included in the inner social circle of the “*Best Friends*”. Haavind shows that the exclusion from social circles was connected to different family backgrounds and expectation within Norwegian and “*foreign*” families of what it meant to grow older. One of the main differences was in how mutual friendships were supported by parents. The Norwegian boys had open private homes, where the whole group could come on pizza parties and random visits. The “*foreign*” boys did not have this opportunity at home. Haavind also discovered that the meanings and interpretations of what it means to be a teenager differed among the Norwegians and the “*foreigners*”. Haavind states that, “*The masculinities at work were stuffed with globalised markers of age and gender, rather than being differentiated by ethnicity*” (Haavind, 2003: 99). She points out that the way Norwegian boys dressed and related to popular culture “...could all be identified as American and corresponded to the local notions of an “*All American*” teenage boy.” (Haavind, 2003: 99). In this way, the boys had a set of codes and cultural tools that were adapted from American culture to handle identity negotiation and social inclusion. The difference among the Norwegian and “*Foreigners*” was that, “*The global markers of being a teenage boy are based on commodities that are more available to the Norwegian boys than to the immigrants, due to the difference in family economy*”. (Haavind, 2003: 99)

Unlike Aasebø, Haavind does include other social arenas to explain social form at school. Still, troublemaking is first of all explained as a form of masculinity, that express their transition out of middle childhood and into there teens. Haavind makes a small point that this form of masculinity is preferred when other ways to “grow” as a young male is blocked, as success in academic work and sports. For my material, I don’t look into how the boys grow as males, but I emphasise more than Haavind, the processes that restrict the potential to participate in the learning activities to understand troublemaking. Both the authors discovered how troublemaking as an activity that confirmed group belonging among certain boys. But in my material, troublemaking has to be understood as something more than a confirmation of a

shared identity and group belonging. Even though I share Aasebø and Haavind's understanding of troublemaking as a form of masculine behaviour, as all the troublemakers in the class I followed were boys, masculinity will not be my main focus. By observing how troublemaking was done, and by participating with the two groups of troublemakers in their daily life, both in and out of school, I discovered that troublemaking has to be understood as more than an oppositional masculinity. The class I followed differs from both the class Haavind and Aasebø did fieldwork in. The classes they followed, were age based and lasted for years. They also had classes with both minority and majority pupils, while I had only minorities. Through the following analyses, I will compare my material to the research that was done by Aasebø and Haavind.

4.3 What is troublemaking?

Troublemaking was a relational activity as it depended on certain actors to be present for it to happen. But in the class I followed, why did some turn out to be troublemakers and others not? What did the identity as a troublemaker mean for social belonging? Before I can answer those questions, I have to take a step back and ask: What is a troublemaker? Haavind uses words like “*anti-social*” and “*defiant behaviour*” (Haavind, 2003: 93). Aasebø on her side uses words like “*anti-school ways of being*³” and “*bullyboys*”. (Aasebø, 2010: 380). All of these categorisations demonstrate a behaviour that is seen as contrasting to what is expected at school. According to the online Cambridge Dictionary, a troublemaker is “*someone who intentionally causes problems for other people, especially people who are in a position of power or authority*” (Cambridge Dictionary Online).

According to The Cambridge definition, the *intention* of troublemaking is to cause problems for others. In this way, a troublemaker is doing something wrong against someone who is doing right. But troublemaking can also be understood as someone who is doing right by doing wrong. (Haavind, 2003: 90). That means that the intention of the action has to be more than just causing problems for someone in a position of authority, as both Haavind and Aasebø found in their research. In my material, troublemaking can be seen as a game between the boys, where they tested out and learned to get to know each other. Their behaviour and activities cannot be seen without taking into account the role of the school. With Grønhaug's way of isolating social fields, I can analyse the intentions behind activities as both motivated

³ My translation.

by the actors, but also by the structures on a bigger scale. Troublemaking is a way of organising personal relationships through complex identity negotiations. Troublemaking behaviour can be seen as valuable resource when it comes to belonging among boys. In that sense, troublemaking can be seen as the right thing to do. The challenge is to identify what the actors gained from troublemaking. To do this, I have to identify the processes that generated this form of behaviour.

4.4 Us and them in a school outside the real world.

After the school year was over, I had informal interviews with Andre & Sifaw and Javor. I asked them about the troublemaking activity. I'll present the conversation we had.

4.4.1 Andre and Sifaw looking back at troublemaking.

Me: You made some pranks and stuff in the classroom. Do you have any thoughts about that?

A: What it is, Christian....

S: It was not only us who made trouble in the classroom.

A: There are many youth, right. Who are at the Norwegian program or the transitional, right. Who have not started at upper secondary school, right...

S: Like normal school.

A: Yes, normal school. They think they can do as they want and don't have to learn, because they are not in normal school. That happened to us, and is still happening. For example, if you ask me if I am going to make a lot of trouble next year, I will say no. How about you?

S: No. I will be honest. I will not have any friends from school...

A: Because there are a lot of youth who enter the Norwegian program and transitional, and they feel like...

S: You know, when you make trouble, when you are known with other fools in the classroom, if they make trouble and if you are friends with them, you make trouble. If you go to another school, and know nobody there, just some who are quiet, you will not make trouble.

A: But one thing I tell you Christian, those fool in class, those are found everywhere in the world. Not just at Sogn.

S: In a way you can say it is normal. It is many who go to school and make trouble, not just us.

Looking back at their school year, Andre and Sifaw both interpreted different perspectives on troublemaking. Andre explained that they did not consider themselves to be in a normal school, they did not take it serious. As I interpret Andre, since they did not perceive it to be a normal school, it was not seen as social arena for learning, but rather playing games. This helps to explain why Andre and Diana was so much absent from school. They were looking forward to next year, when they could start at a normal school. Sifaw on his side expressed the belonging part of troublemaking. He explained that when those who were your friends made trouble, you had to make trouble too. Sifaw confirmed that troublemaking was a shared activity among friends. In other words, by making trouble they maintained their friendship. Still, *The Ping-Pongers* and *The Serbs* did not identify each other as friends, even though they all participated in troublemaking. Sifaw also claimed that next year, when starting at a new school, he would not make trouble anymore, as he would not get any friends who were troublemakers. They connected the troublemaking to Sogn School, while other schools were seen as different. On an earlier occasion, Andre told me that he would apply for electro, a school to become an electrician, next autumn. He said, “*I’m looking forward to it, there will be no more trouble and absence from school*”. He claimed that Sogn School was no good for him, and that he wanted to go to a school with more Norwegian people, and less foreigners. I asked why? “*Because it becomes trouble with all the foreigners, especially with all the Polish people at the Norwegian Language Programme*”. Troublemaking was connected to the large degree of immigrants, who did not take school serious. But this was the social arena they were part of. Both Andre and Sifaw were troublemakers and immigrants, but obviously had an ambivalent relation to their former activity. As I interviewed them, Andre and Sifaw started to have a conversation on their own about troublemaking next year. Both agreed that they would not make trouble anymore. *The group* agreed that it was time to change the rules of relevance. Haavind and Aasebø’s research showed that troublemaking was a way of confirming belonging, but in my material the pupils had a more ambivalent relation to troublemaking. Adding to that, the school was not seen as normal, it was something outside the real world.

4.4.2 Javor looking back at troublemaking.

C: *How did you make trouble in class?*

J: *In different ways. People, who are going to see this film, will see what that is fun and how a normal class in the transitional programme is. I don’t have to explain any more, the pictures will say everything. A picture says more then thousand words, right?*

C: *Yes. But you guys made some trouble every now and then...*

J: *Yes, we make trouble in almost every lesson. Yes, that is how it is. We can do it, so we do it. So that is great. We do it because the milieu-group is fun; it is nice to talk to them. And... Camilla, Jonas, I don't remember the last two in the milieu-group, but they are great people, so it is nice.*

C: *So it is no problem being sent out of class?*

J: *No, no.*

C: *Would you say that making trouble makes you have something in common in class?*

J: *Yes, you can say it like that. We get to know each other. How will the other react when I make trouble? Will he tell the teacher, or go along with me? You see how people think and how they are. It's possible, and that's the most important.*

C: *Are you more together with those who make trouble?*

J: *Yes. Because you are with those who are the same as you. Who act like you, and also makes trouble.*

The interview confirmed that troublemaking was a shared activity among the boys, but Javor talked about the activity more as fun thing to do with friends. This builds up under my argument that troublemaking can be seen as game. Even being sent to the milieu-group was seen as fun. In this way, the sanctions he got for troublemaking were perceived as part of the game, and worked more as a reward than a punishment. According to Javor, troublemaking was also a way to identify the people that were the same as him. In that sense, troublemaking did not just confirm belonging to friends, it was a way to negotiate friendships as well. Through troublemaking he found out who was who, and relations were organised and given meaning. Javor also related to the school as something different from normal school. He did not take the class serious; of reasons I will get back to. Javor emphasised both the emotional and the relational side of troublemaking, which mattered for identity negotiation and belonging.

4.5 A game of identity work.

Troublemaking happened in class almost everyday. It was an observable pattern of interaction. But the troublemaking activities varied with respect to time, the number of participants and degree of rule breaking. The general pattern was that the more participants who joined in, the more intense the activity got. Their activity was creative, in the sense that

they often found new pranks to do, or new games to play. The troublemaking activities were seldom planned. The actors improvised and the game was made as they played. I will present a new example with troublemaking, to highlight some important points I discovered.

It was a nature science lesson and this time they had their regular teacher, a young male from Rwanda named Felix. All the troublemakers were present. The class started up with Felix handing out a test they had last week. Dimitar got a B on his test. He argued with the teacher that he should have gotten an A, like his friend Javor did. The teacher tried to explain him the reason, but Dimitar continued to disagree with the decision. As Felix started to teach, all of the students paid attention for the first 10 minutes. Then Sifaw and Bernard started to joke with each other. They talked loud and stopped paying attention to class. I was sitting next to them. Dimitar came and sat down next to me. He showed me his test and expressed he was not satisfied with the grade. He also claimed that the test was way too easy. Dimitar pointed his finger towards Bernard and Sifaw who were making noise, "*Have you seen, what idiots, the biggest idiots in here*". Sifaw noticed that Dimitar looked at him and threw a magazine out the window. Dimitar laughed. Sifaw continued to throw stuff out the window and Dimitar got interested. He went over to the bookshelf, picked up some books and sent them to Bernard, who passed the books on to Sifaw, who passed the books further out the window. After a while, Dimitar seemed bored and went back to his desk. Then Sifaw and Bernard started to throw small objects at Dimitar. Javor joined in and helped Dimitar to throw things back. Their activity became more and more intense. The longer they continued without being noticed by the teacher, the bigger risk they took. In the end the teacher saw them and asked them to calm down. Felix went down to Bernard and Sifaw and talked with them. In this case he succeeded in calming them down. In troublemaking scenarios, Sifaw and Bernard were usually the ones who got the blame, while *The Serbs* got away with it.

The situation shows that the boys were first playing with each other, before they turned rivals. But their rivalry can also be seen as a game, as they did it with humour and laughter. The fact that the activity escalated when Dimitar joined in, show how they performed for each other and presented themselves as creative, brave and funny. Like Haavind described, the emotional element of excitement could be observed as well. Dimitar went from seeming disappointed after getting his test, to be full of energy and laughter when joining the game. Even though Dimitar left, the game continued, but in a new form. They were rivals, where Bernard and Javor joined in on each side. Like Haavind showed in her article, when one took the initiative

for troublemaking, the others had to join in. But in this case, it was more than just joining in with your friends, it was also a rivalry between *The Serbs* and whom Dimitar called “*the biggest idiots in here*”. The fact that they took a bigger and bigger risk of getting caught, also shows how none of them would perform lesser than the other. In that sense, their game was competitive. This behaviour can be seen as a form of masculinity, like Haavind and Aasebø described. But they were as much oppositional towards each other as they were to the school rules. Their rivalry could be observed on several occasions. One time Sifaw threw a piece of wet paper, which landed on Dimitar’s neck. Dimitar dragged the wet piece of his neck while water dripped down on his leather jacket. Dimitar made a face so grim that I started to laugh out loud in class. Dimitar was about to rise from his desk to revenge Sifaw, but Violeta stopped him. During the lesson, Dimitar tried on several occasions to get his revenge, but was always stopped by Violeta. Eventually, Dimitar said to Sifaw that he would beat him up in the break. But nothing happened. Sifaw came victorious out of the game. He took a chance by throwing the wet paper, was not caught by the teacher, and neither got any revenge from Dimitar. The troublemaking can be seen as a game where identities were negotiated, but never agreed upon. In one situation they could collaborate as one group, but in the next situation compete as two groups.

4.6 In search of recognition.

It was the last hour of the school day. Half of the students were missing, but all the troublemakers were present. The teacher, Violeta, said that those who wanted could go to the library and work with a paper there. At once Sifaw, Bernard, Javor and Dimitar raised their hands and let the teacher know they wanted to go. I followed them with the camera. They walked down the hall and stopped in front of a door. Sifaw opened it fast and slammed it hard back again. All of them ran fast around the corner while laughing, I ran as well. Further down the hall they started to play fight with each other. Sifaw did a couple of impressive kicks in the air. I asked if he knew any fighting-arts. “*I was doing Taekwondo for four years in Morocco, I almost had a black belt.*” Bernard suddenly started crossing the floor “walking” on his hands. The others watched him and said “*wow!*” This “*wow*” was something the boys said in many situations when people did something special, or tried to impress the others. The “*wow*” was a way of ironically being impressed. Sifaw spoke on about fighting, but got interrupted by Dimitar saying, “*wow!*” Sifaw then said to me “*Yes, shall we film some Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee?*” “*Yes, let me see*” I replied. Sifaw performed some high kicks against

Javor who was stepping backwards. Javor made his hand into a gun and pretended to shoot Sifaw in the head. From behind, Michal came and jumped on Sifaw's back. Sifaw shook him off and Bernard ran away, but Sifaw turned the attention against Bernard and the boys went over to him. They lifted Bernard up in the air, while he was struggling to get down. They carried him around while laughing. *Lets carry him to Violeta*" Sifaw said. Before dropping Bernard, Sifaw smacked him on the ass. Michal walked away while feeling his recently beaten ass, before he ran to the wall, jumped on it and touched the roof with his hand. Sifaw said, "wow" before he jumped on the wall and performed a better trick. Javor and Dimitar did not comment upon it, they stood next to each other and spoke in Serbian. Sifaw called for *The Serbs* attention and jumped on the wall again, but *The Serbs* gave him no response. Javor then led them into them into the library to watch some videos on Youtube. When they left, Sifaw stopped in front of the library door and grabbed it with his hands. Javor was already a few meters down the hall and said "No!" Still, Sifaw slammed the door hard, and they all ran fast down the hallway. They entered the classroom, where the rest of the pupils were working. Dimitar walked up and talked to Violeta, before he went down to Sifaw and said, "It is ok, we can leave." They left the classroom while the rest of the students stayed. I left with them too. We walked towards the subway station and crossed a bridge. They started to slide on the wet bridge with their shoes. Everyone tried to slide longer than the other. We entered the subway and sat down together. Usually this would not happen, as they preferred different subways to get home, but my presence with the camera gathered them. When it was time for Dimitar to get off, Sifaw reached out his hand and said, "Here, take my hand bro!" Dimitar looked at Sifaw, laughed at him and refused to give him his hand. Before Dimitar stepped out of the subway, he slapped Bernard on the forehead. All the boys laughed, with the exception of Bernard.

The example above illustrates how the school was used as an arena to play games, where the boys presented themselves for each other through pranks and the use of their bodies to perform tricks. Through their self-presentation, as I interpret it, they attempted to get each other's respect and recognition, but were to different degrees successful. As the example shows, it was generally Sifaw who made the biggest effort, but Bernard was eager as well. *The Serbs* were calmer and more relaxed. They responded by the "wow!" when Sifaw and Bernard performed their tricks. Sifaw tried to get the others recognition by showing off his skills, but he did not get much feedback. The whole sequence of the events that took place shows that the roles they played were unclear. The two groups merged in some situations, and

separated in others. Sifaw always tried to get along with *The Serbs*, but they could easily turn their back against him, like the situation when Sifaw reached out his hand at the subway. In any situation, *The Serbs* could exclude the others by getting into conversations in Serbian or ignore the others activity. In this way I discovered that there was a hierarchy among the boys, where *The Serbs* were the leading figures. Sifaw was recognised at times, while Bernard efforts were mainly ignored. In Haavind's research, the boys who took the initiative to make trouble, did it to show off his ability to do something he thought all the boys shared. (Haavind, 2003: 96). The can be said about Sifaw and Bernard effort, but they never got the recognition they searched for. They did not share the same rules of relevance. Troublemaking was identity work, but they never established a shared identity. By following the two groups outside the classroom, I discovered that group belonging was negotiated on other social arenas.

4.7 Social circulation.

In Aasebø's research, the troublemakers in class were dominant in the way that all the other pupils had to be in line with them to be popular. In the class I followed, there was no connection between being popular and troublemaker. During the three months I spend with the class, I observed how each of the troublemakers positioned themselves in class, when the other troublemakers were absent from school. If one of the troublemakers, no matter whom, were without the other troublemakers, he would not make any trouble in class. *The Ping-Pongers* depended on each other, or *The Serbs*, for social circulation. They did not interact with any of the other groups. Even though this changed with Sifaw at the end of the semester, as I will get back to. But during breaks, *The Ping-Pongers* could find others to play ping-pong or have a smoke with. Their social identities had limited potential for social circulation in class, but during breaks the potential was bigger. *The Serbs* differed from *The Ping-Pongers*. Even though they were troublemakers, *The Serbs* could join the activities of the other groups. *The Serbs* could hang out and play with some of the girls, or they could hang out with some of the "Bro's". Their social identities, as both troublemakers and good students, had bigger potential for social circulation in class than *The Ping-Pongers*. But during breaks, they usually kept to themselves.

I wondered why did Dimitar and Javor contributed to troublemaking when they were eager to perform well in school as well? When it comes to *The Ping-Pongers*, I wondered why they

did not perform in school. Finally, I wondered why *The Serbs* and *The Ping-Pongers* got together through troublemaking, but no other activities. I had to join them outside the classroom to get answers.

Chapter 5: Arenas for identity construction and belonging.

In this chapter I will step out of the classroom and look at other social arenas that are important for discovering meaning making and identity construction. My main focus will be on Javor and Sifaw. These were the two guys I spend most time with during fieldwork. Sifaw and Javor were actors in different social fields, both at school and during the spare time. These social fields are important to understand how belonging was generated. The main difference between *The Serbs* and *The Ping-Pongers*, was that *The Serbs* based their relationship on the school as a social arena, while *The Ping-Pongers* build their relationship on several social arenas, and thereby a larger social field. By joining the two groups both at school and during the spare time, I also discovered processes of marginalisation that are important to understand troublemaking and forms of belonging.

5.1 Javor and Dimitar in the cantina.

The main activities for Dimitar and Javor outside the classroom were hanging out in the cantina, and every Tuesday goes to a nearby MacDonald's or Kebab shop. There was one particular table in the cantina they always sat down at. They usually ate a lot of food and often put their money together to buy as much food as possible. They explained their eating habits because of training after school. Dimitar went to a gym to lift weights, and Javor played handball.

The cantina proved to be the central arena for understanding the relationship between *The Serbs* and others. Through participating with *The Serbs* in the cantina, I discovered how processes of inclusion and exclusion in activities were relevant for creating belonging. *The Serbs* were either spending time with a few others in the cantina, or by themselves. The different actors present in a situation generated different forms of activities.

5.1.1 *The Serbs* and their cantina friends.

I asked Javor during an interview after the semester was over, how he and Dimitar had met each other. Javor told me that he had met Dimitar last year in the cantina, while they were attending the Norwegian programme. At that time they were not in the same class. Javor said:

“It happened in February, last year. He (Dimitar) came to the cantina and asked for a chair, “Can I sit here?” My friend who sat next to me, said the chair was taken and that the one who sat there was just buying some food. Then he (Dimitar) said, “Yes, that is ok. I will just sit for two minutes before I leave”. My friend Jay, I think he was from the Congo, said, “Dimitar, you are sitting at my seat”. I said, “Who is Dimitar?” “I am Dimitar”, he said. I told him nothing about myself. He (Dimitar) started to yell, after about two minutes, at Jay, because he (Jay) could not make his mp3 player work. Then I said, “Oh, a classical Serb, when your not happy you start to yell”. Then he (Dimitar) said, “haha, where are you from?” Then I said, “I’m from Serbia too”. Then he said, “Oh yes, then we can continue to talk in Serbian”. After that we almost never spoke Norwegian, even though we were in company with Jay and other friends who came from abroad. No, we spoke in Serbian. And the others don’t understand. If they want too know what is going on, then sometimes we explain a bit in Norwegian. In August this year we got the letter that said we were going to start in the same class at the Transitional. Yes, and we went together the whole year. Ohh yeah.”

Javor’s story show how being Serbs became the relevant identity for establishing a friendship. The fact that they were both Serbs changed the definition of the situation. From all of them speaking Norwegian, Javor and Dimitar started to speak in Serb to each other, despite the others presence. *The Serbs* created inclusion among themselves through the use of language, and the others were excluded from participation. But by establishing belonging to each other through language, they participated less in the activities of the others as well. Even though *The Serbs* did not have the same partners in the cantina this year, as last year, the process of inclusion and exclusion presented above, were still present with their new partners.

Dimitar and Javor were on some occasions joined by Andreas and Mike from their class in the cantina. The main activity among these guys was the use of mobile phones and mp3 players. Haavind found in her research that popular culture offered a set of codes and cultural tools the pupils used to handle identity negotiations. (Haavind, 2003) In my material, popular culture and modern media technology played a central role in the cantina interaction. They used their mobile phones and mp3 player as entertainment and means for conversation. They translated

language, listened to music, watched YouTube or played games. When one had presented a video or a song, one of the others would recommend a new song or video. This was an activity they all could share, despite different cultural backgrounds and lack of a common language they knew well. The activity was including and opened for participation. But even though the others were present, Dimitar and Javor would often get into conversation with each other in Serbian. Andreas would in these cases put his headphones on, listen to music or watch YouTube by himself. Dimitar and Javor seldom explained what they talked about, and no one asked either. *The Serbs* conversations were a closed activity, in the sense that the Serbian language was required to participate.

The Serbs could quickly switch from participating in the shared activity of electronic devices, to have their own conversations. When their Serbian identity was made relevant, it worked excluding to others. I do not know how Andreas felt about that, but as the semester went by, Andreas began to hang out more and more with *The Bros*, who also had a permanent place they always went to in the cantina. Like *The Serbs*, the use of mp3 players and mobile phones was a central activity. But unlike *The Serbs*, *The Bros* communicated only in Norwegian. Their activities were in that sense more including and open for participation, and can explain why Andreas began to spend more time with them. I spent time with *The Bros* too, and I remember the revealing feeling of being able to understand and communicate in a shared language. I often felt excluded when *The Serbs* started to speak their own language. I do not know if it was *The Serbs* intention or not to exclude others, but that was the consequence of their actions. *The Serbs* were the ones who defined the situations at their table, and the situations changed quickly as *The Serbs* varied between including and excluding activities. *The Serbs* were behaving in the same way with others in the cantina, as with Sifaw and Bernard in troublemaking. They could quickly switch from being participants in activities, to enter their own through language. *The Serbs* and *The Ping-Pongers* both participated in troublemaking, but never hung out during breaks. In Haavind's research, she presented how ethnic markers mattered for inclusion and exclusion. (Haavind, 2003). In my material, *Javor and Dimitars* Serb identity was relevant for their group belonging, but worked to exclude others who did not share the same identity.

5.1.2 Dimitar and Javor comparative identity work.

I followed *The Serbs* with the camera both in class and the cantina. Javor and Dimitar found the filmmaking interesting, and they always invited me to join with them. During the first time of my fieldwork, they kept on speaking Norwegian when I was around. In an attempt to get to know *The Serbs* better, and follow them outside school as well, I asked if they would like to be the central characters in my film. They both liked the idea and said, “*Yes, you are with us all the time now!*” The filmmaking became an activity we shared, and *The Serbs* included me by talking in Norwegian. The conversations we had made me able to discover identity negotiations that were important to understand *The Serbs* relationship to each other, others and the school in general. I’ll present some situations to illustrate their comparative identity work.

As I spent time with *The Serbs*, a pattern emerged in our conversations. Dimitar was mainly the more talkative of the two boys. He generally led the conversations, while Javor kept quieter. *The Serbs* usually talked about subjects related to Serbia or expressed negative comments about the school and other people. Dimitar and Javor talked about Serbian music, history, football team, Balkan people, Serbian beer, food and more. An example is during one of our lunches. Dimitar asked me if I knew Serbian music called *Turbofolk*. I had no idea, and Dimitar gave me the headphones to his mp3-player and played some songs. I listened and politely said I liked it. Javor and Dimitar eagerly talked about other bands from Serbia and showed me more music from the mp3-player. These electronic gadgets were not just being used in preference with global popular culture, but also as a tool to communicate and present Serbian culture to me. In most of our meetings in the Cantina *The Serbs* were eager to talk about Serbia, and present themselves as Serbians. Especially Dimitar, he was always the most eager one to talk about Serbia, and seemed to be proud of being a Serb.

The Serbs were as eager to talk negative about school and other people. One time in the cantina, Dimitar noticed some workers from the milieu-group. He made a grim face and said, “*This is the way he looks*”. Javor laughed and agreed. Dimitar made his body big with his arms, “*this is the other guy, and he thinks he is so strong*”. Dimitar told me he had been sent to the milieu-group several times for troublemaking. “*All we do is sit and chat... idiots*”, Dimitar said. Once at MacDonald’s, *The Serbs* told me about the English classes, which mixed students from the three classes at the TPS. The class was known for troublemaking. I

wondered why? Dimitar explained, “ *You put together Polish people from class A, and a Moroccan, some people from class B, some from class C, and in addition a couple of Albanians. That means trouble*”. “*Albanians?*” I questioned. “*It is two Albanians in that class, they are totally* (Dimitar lifted his finger to the head like a gun and pretended to pull the trigger) *idiots... they're all like that.*” They continued to talk about the English teacher who was a woman from Romania. They called her “*gipsy*” while laughing out loud. “*She is angry because all Norwegians associate Romania with Gipsy's. You know, those who sit on the street and...* (Dimitar folded his hand like a cup and waved it forth and back) *they are all from Romania, Gipsy's!*” Javor laughed and repeated the word “*gipsy*”. Dimitar continued to explain to me that most Romanians were bitter towards Serbia, because Serbia came out better on most living standard statistics. Back at the school, we passed some girls wearing a Hijab. Dimitar rushed passed the girls and looked back at Javor with a grim face. He then turned to me, “*Arabs, they smell so badly, I don't know why, maybe they eat badly*”. After a short visit to the library, I followed Javor back to the classroom. Suddenly he speeded up his walking tempo. “*Come on, let us hurry on*”. He pointed back at a group behind us with his eyes and said, “*They smell so much, and I can't stand it*”.

On another occasion in the cantina, I gave Dimitar and Javor the microphone and the headphones to the camera. They started to act like television reporters and talked about the school. I asked, “*Dimitar, now that you have the mic, tell me about the school you are in*”. “*For one year.... Shit happens*”, he replied. Javor followed up, “*Just walk around with the camera and look*”. Javor continued to say, “*Zoo, is the Norwegian word*”. Both laughed at Javor description of the cantina. Dimitar said, “*There are many types of animals here*”. Javor continued, “*We have a lot of different animals. If you look to the right, then you find the monkeys. If you look at that side, you will find chimpanzees and stuff*”. Dimitar grabbed the microphone and said, “*When you look behind me, you'll find old idiots, which we call teachers. And it is so boring, so boring.*” They played more with the camera, before Javor said, “*If you look in the cantina, it is only 5 percent who is Norwegian. Everybody else is a foreigner, that is* (Javor makes a weird face and sound). Dimitar then noticed a girl and said, “*Look, she is a Norwegian. Anna!*” They called the girl over and Dimitar presented her, “*She is 100 percent Norwegian, but she speaks Serbian. She has learned it in Serbia.*”

Even though *The Serbs* became open to me with their categorisation of others, I became more and more provoked. Since I spent so much time with them, and they openly shared their

attitudes with me, I believe they thought I shared their attitudes. But the opposite was true, the more I got to know them, the more I felt distanced to them. One of my motivations for doing this fieldwork was to break down stereotypes of immigrants. But in this case, Dimitar and Javor built up under their own ways of being stereotyped in the Norwegian society, as racist people. But my own feelings also revealed something essential about groups and belonging. From my first time with *The Serbs*, I got the feeling of belonging and inclusion. But now I felt discomfort and distance. My emotions affected my actions, even though I tried to be “neutral”. I started to feel more comfortable and at ease with both *The Ping-Pongers* and *The Bros*. In that sense, my own feelings revealed processes of inclusion and exclusion. I felt excluded by *The Serbs* in terms of Serb language as racism, and inclusion with *The Bros* and *The Ping-Pongers* in terms of Norwegian language and positive attitudes towards other people. After a while I felt fed up with *The Serbs*, and I started to be more with *The Bros* and *The Ping-Pongers*. But I still kept in touch with *The Serbs*, especially Javor.

The examples above illustrate well how identities are at work through comparison of similarity and difference. Dimitar and Javor matched each other by relating to their Serbian background, but at the same time, they constructed their own similarity by defining everybody else as different. The difference was however generally expressed as something negative, often with a racist undertone. Their negative attitudes were not expressed about other people in general, but they stereotyped the people in their school surroundings. These attitudes surprised me at once. In the class I observed how Dimitar and Javor got along well with most of the pupils and teachers. Javor even had long conversation after school with Felix, his Rwandan math teacher, about the difficulties he faced with his new life in Norway. *The Serbs* did not act racist when they were together with others, but it was generated through their interaction as a group. Still, they were overbearing at times with *The Ping-Pongers*. With Their behaviour and attitudes can be understood in terms of their definition of the situation. *The Serbs* found themselves in a new school in a new country, with others who also were newly arrivals. In that context, where people come from all over the world, with different age, language and cultural practises, situations were to a large degree undefined. *The Serbs* came from a school system in Serbia, where social forms were established, to a new school where social forms were being established. This situation can be said to be characterised by *liminality*. (Turner, 1969 in Eriksen, 2010:146). *The Serbs* had to cope with a situation of insecurity and unpredictability. Hylland Eriksen states that, “...it is an empirical fact that humans all over the world seek stability, continuity, safety and predictability, something that

usually is maintained through place of belonging, boundary making and collective memories anchored in place". (Eriksen, 2010: 18). Dimitar and Javor's identity as Serbs offered their relation some of what they had lost from Serbia, a feeling of belonging, safety and predictability. *The Serbs* way of contrasting to others through negative stereotypes, show how they created boundaries to others. Hylland Eriksen sees this as a typical form of identity construction. Through simplifying what is on the other side of the boundary, your own identity construction and its boundaries are made clearer and more bounded. (Eriksen, 2010: 50). Dimitar and Javor clearly generalised others at school, at the same time as they presented themselves first of all as Serbs. In that sense, they over communicated their status as Serbs and established a feeling of belonging. The differences between them were under communicated, as my empirical data will show.

5.2 Javor and social arenas outside school.

Javor and Dimitar relationship was based on their identity as Serbs *in the school context*. Outside school, Javor operated in different social fields that were important for his identity construction and feeling of belonging. But none of these fields included Dimitar. I had made a deal with Javor to join him and film his handball practise. The club he played for was located in Drammen, a 30 minutes bus ride from his home. On the way, I asked him about friendships at school. Javor said, *"Violeta once asked me how many friends I have in class. I replied that friends is a plural word, I only have one"*. Javor said he considered Andreas to be his only friend. *"I can send Andreas a message and ask if he wants to go to the cinema, he will reply yes, and show up"*. This came as a surprise to me. I was sure that Dimitar was the one he considered his friend. *"What about Dimitar?"* I wondered. *"I might be with Dimitar once a month, he only wants to go to the disco or stuff like that. I say it's fine, but I have to go to training first, and I come home late in the evenings. Dimitar does not understand that, and we get little time to hang out"*. I became a bit confused by his answers and asked, *"What do you consider as a friend?"* *"A friend is someone who takes contact with you, keeps in touch and supports you"*, Javor replied. *"What does it take to become a friend with you in class?"* I asked him. *"They have to think like me and use the head like I do. Like me and Dimitar, we automatically became friends"*.

Javor contrasted himself to Dimitar, as they had no activities they shared outside school. Javor claimed that Dimitar did not understand his way of prioritising. Andreas on the other hand,

was a person Javor could join after school. Still, as I have shown, Andreas was often excluded when being with Javor and Dimitar at school. But even though Javor said Andreas was his only friend, he also said that he and Dimitar had “*automatically*” become friends. I asked Javor later about this “*automatically*” established friendship. Javor seemed to find my question weird, and said that since they were both Serbian it was obvious they would become friends. He said it was expected. Being a Serb in school can be seen as a status with certain rights and duties connected to it. Javor’s relationship to Dimitar was ambiguous. He related to Dimitar as a Serb, and saw him as a friend through that status, but outside school he did not consider Dimitar as a friend. In school they “used the head” in the same way, but outside school they “used the head” in different ways. In other words, different social identities were made relevant on different social arenas. Javor’s Serb identity did not matter to the same degree when it came to social network and feeling of belonging outside school. The activities *The Serbs* shared at school were seen as boring, in other words, activities that were not preferred. Outside school, Javor participated in activities that he did prefer. One of these activities was handball.

5.2.1 Handball player and friend.

Javor was involved in handball activities almost everyday. He played for a team, but also worked as a handball coach for younger girls and as a referee in handball matches. At the same time he attended a course to become a licensed coach. This course demanded him to read a lot, attend meetings and pass an exam. I asked Javor about handball in an interview. “*What does it mean for you to be able to play handball here?*” Javor replied, “*It means everything. Almost everything. The training, being a coach, judging matches, that is what I usually do, so it means everything. Handball is what I know, so it is what I do. All day after school I’m in the hall (the handball location), training or judging matches.*” I asked him if he had any dreams in handball. Javor said, “*Not as a player, but maybe as a coach, and maybe as a referee. Many say that I can, so I will do my best. I will become a good referee here in Norway, a handball referee.*” I asked if he had any other dreams. “*No, none.*” When I joined Javor to his handball training, I learned that all the other boys were native Norwegians. Javor considered his handball mates as his friends, as he told me in the interview, “*Most of my friends are at the training. I play handball with them. I become friends with them through playing handball. It’s nice with them, really good now. I will travel with them to Croatia in*

August. We have a run-up (to the handball season). They have accepted me as a friend, so I'm happy".

Javor perceived himself first of all as a handball player and identified himself with his handball mates. Javor felt belonging in the handball-milieu, and had several roles he could play. These were roles that offered him both social network and paid work. Javor had been a handball player, coach and referee in Serbia too, and he could make use of these roles in Norway as well. For Javor, the social field of handball had more to offer him than school when it comes to belonging. Handball was motivating, he could perform and take part in activities where he was both skilful and faced challenges. Through handball he found like-aged team-mates. Even though the others were Norwegian, Javor could play a role that matched him to the others, as a handball player. For Dimitar, his Serbian identity was important for his search for belonging both in and out of school, while Javor's identity and skills as handball player was more important. In the interview I asked Javor, *"Do you have contact with the Serbian milieu in Norway?"* He replied, *"No, no. I don't. I try to get in contact with Norwegians and other foreigners who have arrived. Some are Serbians, yes"*. Javor referred to his Serbian friends who just spent time with other Serbs, *"I don't do that, I think it is stupid in way. You are in Norway and want to learn the language, and everyday you are with other Serbs, that does not work"*. But Javor's Serbian identity was made relevant in his handball club as well. His coach was Croatian, and they spoke the same language. Javor believed that the other Norwegian players accepted him well, because they were already familiar with the handball coach as a foreigner. After a handball practise, the Croatian handball coach offered to drive us to the train station. He bragged a lot about Javor and thought he could be a great player for the club. Javor told me that he and the coach had become good friends, and talked much to each other. Even though Javor claimed he preferred to establish relations with Norwegians and other foreigners, his Serbian identity and language connected him to others from the Balkan area. I asked Javor if he spent any time with his teammates apart from handball, he said he never did. He told me that he still found it hard to be with Norwegians, because of the language. Javor missed his social life from Serbia. I asked him in the interview, *"How has your life changed after you moved to Norway?"* *"It has changed a lot. I cannot explain it, but it's not like in Serbia. There I call my friends, "shall we go to the disco or to the pub", every week. It happens again and again. Here in Norway I have partied 2 or 3 times. It's not like I used to do. I have to calm down for a while, then I'll be ok"*. I asked him later in the interview, *"What do you do when you visit Serbia now?"* Javor replied, *"I just*

party, sleep and spend time with friends, what I miss here in Norway". "You miss that here?" "Yes, I don't have friends here like I had in Serbia. I have to combine a bit. To party here, you got to have money".

When it comes to friendships and belonging, it is not enough to consider Javor's life in Norway, as he "combined". He travelled regularly to Serbia and kept in touch with his friends there. Javor's social field when it comes to friendships included both Serbia and Norway. Javor told me he looked forward to going home to Serbia on vacations. But still, things had changed for Javor in Serbia too. I asked Javor in a conversation, "*Do you have a lot of Serbian friends?*" Javor referred to a conversation he had with Felix, his teacher in Maths at school. "*Felix asked me why I travelled to Serbia when I had to buy presents to all my friends there? Who are my real friends there?*" Javor lifted his hands out from his body. "*Before I was just simple Javor, a simple handball player and a simple handball coach, that was it*". Javor continued, "*When Javor have moved to Norway, suddenly everybody cries*". He said that now, people suddenly wanted to be his best friend when he came back to Serbia, and he did not like that. "*We meet and sit down to drink beer, but when the bill comes, then everybody looks away, and guess who have to pay,*" The rules of relevance considering friendships and belonging was interlinked between Serbia and Norway. These interlinked fields were also present in his home.

5.2.3 A Home with wired belonging.

I had arranged a deal with Javor to watch through some of the clips where I had filmed him, and we agreed to meet in his home. The first thing I noticed was how small the apartment was. It had a small living room, a small kitchen and two bedrooms. I asked Javor in the interview, "*How do you live here compared to Serbia?*" Javor explained, "*Here in Norway I live in a small apartment, 36 square meters, not that big. We are four people who live there, so it gets chaotic when everybody is home. In Serbia I have a big house, three floors, several bedrooms and rooms to relax in. So now it is a bit hard. I have to adapt. But it is ok. I live and that's most important*".

Javor lived with his brother, two parents and for the moment a long time visitor. He said his mother was applying for a new job, so they could move to a bigger house. Javor claimed he would go insane if they had to stay in the apartment much longer. There was a computer in

their living room, which was important for Javor. He played computer games over the Internet together with other people from the Balkan arena. When he played x-box he did the same thing. He used Skype and Facebook to keep in touch with his friends from Serbia. Hanne Haavind showed in her research how the minority children lived in homes that were not open to have friends on visits. When I asked Javor if could bring friends home, he sighed and said, “No”. I asked Javor if he ever felt alone, and he replied, “No, never. Thanks to modern communication. Skype, Messenger and Facebook. Then you always have contact with friends. They are of course in Serbia, but when you speak for three and half hour in front of the PC, that is great!” From his small apartment in Oslo, Javor could maintain everyday his relations and feelings of belonging with his friends in Serbia, through conversations, chat and PC-games on Internet. In the days of modern communication, the feeling of belonging is wired as well.

5.3 School and marginalisation.

On all of the social arenas I joined Javor outside school, he was never behaving as a troublemaker. Javor and Dimitar relationship and behaviour have to be seen within the school as a social arena. Dimitar and Javor shared more than their Serbian identity, as they were both frustrated with the school system. When I joined Javor to handball training, he told me about his frustration with school. Javor said that the level in class was too low and he felt bored all the time. “That’s the reason we make so much trouble”, he explained to me. He continued to say, “Because of the class and everything, I get so frustrated at times, I just want to hit a punching bag or something. But I get my frustration out by going home to Serbia”. Javor told me that the Norwegian language was the only thing he found difficult. “Violeta said I would get problems to pass a test because me and Dimitar always speak Serbian with each other. But I have A in nature science, A in math, A in... and C-D in Norwegian, so I will be ok”. Javor continued, “I don’t get my courses from Serbia approved, I have to take a difficult language test to be able to get into a University. But first I have to take three new years of upper secondary school. I won’t be finished until I am 24 years old, and I’ll be 30 before I finish University”. Javor shook his head and his body expressed that he was frustrated.

Both Javor and Dimitar felt marginalised by not getting their education from Serbia approved. They were frustrated of having to start all over again, and compared themselves with the younger pupils in their class, who had no higher education from before. *The Serbs*

relationship and behaviour in school have to be understood both in terms of their identity as Serbs and their marginalised position. Age and knowledge were important aspect of their identity that was made relevant in school. I asked Javor in the interview how he would describe himself in class? Javor said, *“I don’t know. I’m in charge. I like to be in charge. That is I. I’m the boss in class. I asked, “How are you boss in class?” Javor replied, “I’m not Boss, just joking. But, two-three of us are the eldest, who are three years older then the others. And the others look to us, we who have experience from upper secondary school. They look to us to see what is going on and how things are done. We are an example on how they should be in School”*,

Their troublemaking activity in class can be seen both as coping with boredom as they felt overqualified, and as presenting themselves as elder and smarter then the younger pupils, by demonstrating that they did not have to pay attention in class. In Haavind's research, age mattered for troublemaking activities. Even though Dimitar and Javor were not in a transition from middle childhood to their early teens, they were elder then the others in class. Both *The Serbs* got good grades, but they laughed at the younger students who had to struggle hard to get it. Even though both *The Serbs* and *The Bros* wanted to succeed in school, age and level of knowledge separated them, in addition to the Serbian identity and language. *The Ping-Pongers* were partners in troublemaking, but *The Serbs* and *The Ping-Pongers* participated in the activity with different meanings and motivations. *The Serbs* participated from an over-qualified position, while *The Ping-Pongers*, represented by Sifaw and Bernard, participated from under qualified position, as I will show.

5.4 Sifaw and the Ping Pongers.

Sifaw was the first person that took contact with me in the class. But it took me a while to get to know this group. Andre and Diana were seldom present at school, and while Bernard seemed interested in the first weeks, he soon kept distance to me and did not want to be filmed. I later learned that he did not want to be filmed, because he was afraid that his mother would see him behaving in a bad way. Sifaw on the other hand, seemed to like being filmed and me. But Sifaw’s interest soon became a problem for me, as he called for my attention in class to be filmed while doing pranks. One time, Sifaw put two coins in his eyes and yelled loud out in the class, *“Hey Christian, film this!”* By filming Sifaw I was afraid of contributing to more noise and trouble, so I stopped filming him in class. As Sifaw made trouble, Bernard

refused to be filmed and with Andre and often Diana absent from school; I began to spend more time with *The Serbs*. But Sifaw reacted that I only filmed *The Serbs*. During a lesson he called for my attention, "*Hey, why are you only filming them?*" I did not give him an answer, but started to film Sifaw more when he did not make trouble. Sifaw stopped using the camera to make pranks, and I responded by filming him more. By more or less a coincidence, I was able to join Sifaw after school, which changed my relation to him. I was filming *The Serbs*, Bernard and Sifaw having fun on the hallway and we all left for the subway together. Sifaw and I got off at the same station.

Sifaw asked me, "*Are you going home?*" I saw his question as an opportunity to get to know him better. I replied, "*Yes, if I am not to hang out with you guys though?*" "*Come on, join me, I am going to meet my girl for a coffee or something*", Sifaw said. As we walked along the street, Sifaw started to talk to me. "*Do you go out in the weekends?*" "*Yes, I usually do*", I replied. "*With friends?*" Sifaw asked. "*Yes, with some friends. How about you?*" "*Yeah, I usually do. But I don't go to places were people fight and stuff, I don't like that*," replied Sifaw. "*Yeah, I agree*," I said. "*You know, at Karl Johan, after just 15 minutes there is always a fight there*," Sifaw told me. We talked about some different clubs we liked going to, before Sifaw changed the subject. He told me that he often spoke Polish with Bernard. He had learned Polish by sitting next to him in class everyday. In terms of integration this is interesting, because it shows how belonging is generated in different forms according to the relations you are part of. Sifaw had several Polish friends, and a Polish girlfriend as well, and now learned the language. "*Do you know many languages?*" I asked him. "*I speak two languages from my home country, Norwegian, French, English and some Polish*". I told him I was impressed and that I only knew two languages. Sifaw said, "*When I came to Norway, I thought Norwegian was shit-difficult. My father told me that I had to hang around either Moroccans or others who could speak Norwegian, in that way I would learn*". Sifaw asked me about my family. I told him I had a brother and a sister. Sifaw told me he had 4 younger brothers, 1 older brother and 1 older sister. Some were living in Norway, while the others were living in Netherland and Morocco. We continued to walk and met his girlfriend, her sister and another Polish guy. None of them knew me, so I presented myself as a filmmaker in Sifaw's class. They talked to each other in Polish. Suddenly Sifaw said he wanted to go home, so we left them. I did not really understand why we left, as I don't speak Polish, but I later learned that the place I met them by, was near a place they used to buy illegally imported cigarettes and beer. I believe they did not trust me enough to tell me about that place, at that

time. As we walked on the way back, I asked Sifaw about Andre. *“Why does he never come to school?”* *“He has moved in with Diana you know. She lives about 28 minutes with buss from school. They just lie in bed and watch movies and stuff”*, Sifaw explained. *“Hehe, that sounds good enough”*, I replied. *“Yes, but school is the most important you know”*, Sifaw told me with a serious face. *“Yeah, that’s true”*, I replied. I asked him what his parents did. *“They work”*, Sifaw said quickly. *“Ok.. with what?”* It took a while before he replied. *“My Mom works in a cantina”*. *“What about your dad?”* I questioned again. *“He is the chief of a cleaning business. He tells people what to do and keeps control if it’s clean enough and stuff”*. Sifaw explained. *“That sounds good”*, I replied. Before we went in each our direction, we agreed to meet again later to have a coffee or do something else.

This was my first meeting with Sifaw outside the school. Sifaw’s presentation of self in this situation surprised me. His behaviour was different than from school, he talked serious and acted more as an adult, there were no pranks, insulting or joking around. Sifaw was a social person, he knew how to talk and relate to many different people. Often when we went places, he always met people he knew and talked with them. Sifaw also found his way to relate to me, we talked about common interest, like going out in the weekends. In this situation, Sifaw played a new role, which I had not seen in school. I believe Sifaw presented him self in a way that he thought I would like, in other words, with the qualities he believed I would see as respectful. He wanted me to know that his parents both had work, and that his father was the chief in the cleaning business. He was more than just a washer, which is an occupation that is often connected to immigrants in Norway. I also tried to act in way that Sifaw could relate too, by being laid back and interested in his activities.

After getting fed up with *The Serbs*, Sifaw felt like a fresh breath in my fieldwork. This meeting with Sifaw both triggered my interest to get to know him better, and made me able to develop my relation to him at school. As I spent more time with *The Ping-Pongers*, I asked Sifaw and the others if they would like to be characters in my film. They all agreed and liked the idea, with the exception of Bernard. I asked them if I could film some of their spare time activities, and they invited me to join them to the gym. Our relationship developed, and I was able to join them on several social arenas, the camera was again the ticket in. After a while, I invited Bernard and Sifaw to watch some of the clips. After watching the clips, Bernard said it was ok for me to film him in certain situations. From keeping a distance to me, Bernard was now relaxed with my presence, I believe I had gained his trust. Sifaw did not say much about

the clips, but though it was cool. I will present the social arenas were I joined Sifaw and the others, but I will first let Sifaw and Andre tell the story of how they became friends.

5.4.1 Sifaw and Andre.

This is from the interview I had with them after the semester was over.

Andre: *We met for the first time at school, right? Last year...*

Sifaw: *Yes, and him that bastard, he does not like to get new friends, so he was racist towards me. (Sifaw laughs out loud)*

A: *I was not racist towards you.*

S: *No, we got to know each other at Sogn School. We were in the same block, right? Block X, on the Norwegian Programme. There we got to know each other, and then we started to play ping-pong together. After that I asked him where he was from. "I'm from Portugal". I was from Morocco. That is close to each other, so we became friends.*

A: *This year we started in the same class and we began to hang out together.*

S: *Now we have become, you can say, best friends.*

A: *His girlfriend hangs with my girlfriend.*

S: *Like that, four friends. Friends forever. I wish that.*

I asked Sifaw on another occasion about Diana. He met her last year in the Norwegian Language Programme. Diana had joined the class later than the other pupils. After the teacher had presented Diana to the class, Sifaw had risen up from his desk and presented himself. Diana had sat down next to Sifaw. They became friends from that day. Diana met Andre through Sifaw, whom she soon fell in love with. Sifaw had his girlfriend, whom he had also met at school, and she became friends with Diana. The two couples had then started to hang out together. This year, Sifaw, Andre and Diana had started in same class, and met Bernard.

Both *The Serbs* and *Ping-Pongers* had established their friendship at school, so the school was an important arena for establishing friendships and belonging to other young people, who were in the same situation, as newly arrived immigrants. But *The Ping-Pongers* had developed their friendship on different criteria and activities than *The Serbs*. Sifaw was the main actor, as the group had got to know each other through him. While *The Serbs* had developed their relationship on their Serbian identity, Andre and Sifaw had developed their

relationship by playing Ping-Pong. Sifaw emphasised the similarity between him and Andre, as Morocco and Portugal was seen as close to each other. Even though Portugal and Morocco geographically is not that close to each other, the important point is that they emphasised that they came from places that was identified as *similar*, whether true or imagined. Like *The Serbs*, they emphasised their similarity, but on different criteria.

5.5 Ping-Pong.

In the classroom, Sifaw and Andre had their own locker with their names on it. Sifaw and Andre had the only keys. Inside they kept the ping-pong rackets. Bernard had also started to play ping-pong with them, but he had no key and no name on the locker. Usually *The Ping-Pongers* played against each other, but others would come and play too. There were three-four boys who often joined in, and a few more that came to watch or have a cigarette. They had small chats with each other while playing and got to know people. In the school context, the ping-pong arena included different activities, partners and roles to play than the classroom. They were no longer troublemakers, but ping-pong players.

I asked Andre and Sifaw about school and ping-pong in the interview we had after the semester.

Me: *What was the strongest motivation for going to school?*

Sifaw: *To learn.*

Andre: *Haha!*

S: *And friends too... Not just friends, it is important to learn at school.*

A: *That is true.*

S: *You can't just go to school and have friends and play ping-pong.*

A: *That was our motivation, to play ping-pong.*

Me: *Why did you start to play ping-pong?*

A: *Because it can be found everywhere, and when we came to Sogn, for example, we could not speak well Norwegian, but we could play ping-pong, and that we could do well. You feel like home.*

S: *And it does not get boring during breaks when you play ping-pong.*

A: *You know nobody, you can't talk to anyone, but ping-pong, that is a way to talk to another person, understand?*

According to Andre and Sifaw, ping-pong was both a fun activity during breaks, and a way to get to know other people, which did not require a shared language. In this way, playing ping-pong was an including activity. Playing ping-pong offered a set of roles and rules to follow that made interaction possible among pupils who were strangers to each other. Through playing this game, they could establish relations to other people. They had something in common as ping-pong players.

I observed the boys play ping-pong several times. They played with eagerness and were very competitive. Sifaw and Andre were the main rivals, while Bernard tried to challenge both of them. Sifaw called himself “*the master*” in ping-pong. If Sifaw did not win, he always wanted a rematch and became more aggressive. If Andre played too well, Sifaw would insult him and make comments to stress him. Even though the break was over, their eagerness in ping-pong often made them continue to play. Coming back to class was not highly prioritised, but winning in ping-pong was. This is contrary to what Sifaw claimed in the interview, that school was more important than friends and ping-pong. The interview was done after the school year was over, and Sifaw had become more occupied with school by then. The interview was also done while I was filming them, and Sifaw presented himself to an audience he did not know (Arntsen & Holtedahl, 2005). I believe Sifaw wanted to be identified as someone who prioritised school, as he often told me that he was. But by observing Sifaw, he prioritised school by coming everyday, but he did not take part in the learning activities in class. When they played ping-pong, I observed how they performed tricks as well while playing. Especially Sifaw, he could throw the racket high up in the air and catch it again, or jump with both feet up on the ping-pong table and do a spin with his body before landing on the ground. These bodily expressions are hard to describe in words, while the visual medium of film has a greater potential for presenting these empirical observations. This way of presenting themselves and creating relations through ping-pong and creative use of their bodies, can be compared to the troublemaking activities in class. Neither troublemaking nor ping-pong depended on conversation or a shared language, but mostly creative use of their bodies and the surroundings. Both troublemaking and ping-pong were games they played, were they could have fun and make use of their skills in interaction with others. The competitiveness that was seen in troublemaking was also present in playing ping-pong. While Sifaw never got much recognition by *The Serbs* in troublemaking, he got recognition and positive feedback on his performance and skills in ping-pong. In schoolwork,

Sifaw did not get recognition or positive feedback for his efforts, but he did get positive feedback and recognition from Andre and Bernard in troublemaking. Even though the classroom and the ping-pong arena were two different social arenas with different roles to play, their behaviour and ways of interacting with each other through games, competition and creative use of bodies carried a similar pattern.

5.5.1 The Gym.

Going to the gym was Sifaw and Andre's main activity after school. Here they worked out, lifted weights and swam in the pool. Next to the pool was a ping-pong table and they played here as well. By observing them in the gym, it became clear that Sifaw was the most eager one in all these activities. He trained harder than Andre, and performed impressive dives from the diving board. The competitiveness and creative use of their bodies was also present in their interaction at the gym. Sifaw also made jokes about the guards by the pool. He passed one of them, and commented upon his yellow life vest. He called him a duck and made duck-sounds, while Andre laughed. Like in troublemaking, Sifaw got recognition and brought about laughter by breaking the norms of expected behaviour. I asked Andre at the gym how they had ended up becoming members. He told me that a friend at school had informed them about the place. He and Sifaw had gone to check it out, and then signed up a membership. From that day, they spent 4-5 days a week at the gym. The gym was a central social arena where Sifaw and Andre developed their friendship and feeling of belonging outside school. Andre and Sifaw talked a lot about training at school, and negotiated everyday when they could go to the gym together.

After each work out, Sifaw ate food rich in protein. He wanted to build his muscles and become stronger. Sifaw often talked to me about training and eating habits, as I was going to another gym and trained too. I asked Sifaw why he trained so much. He replied that he was drinking and smoking, so he needed to work out to keep good health. Still, I don't believe that is the whole truth. There is a strong element of masculinity connected to the gym. Sifaw did not just want to stay healthy, he wanted to be strong and build muscles. In class he ate protein rich food to prepare for training, and he had relatives who went to Sweden to buy cheap protein-powder for him. During a conversation in school we talked about training, and Sifaw said he considered eating Creatin, which is a legal product that makes the muscles grow faster. In class, Sifaw and Bernard would often read magazines about training, and look at

pictures of well-trained men, and they often compared Polish and Moroccan sports figures. One time in class, Sifaw and Bernard were comparing each other's stomach muscles. Sifaw beat his stomach hard to prove he was fitter than Bernard. Being well trained seemed to be an important part of Sifaw's masculine identity. While Javor had his handball, Sifaw had the gym and ping-pong as important arenas for identity construction and feeling of belonging.

After Andre had established a romantic relationship with Diana, and even moved in with her, he went less to the gym than before. When Sifaw and Andre negotiated which days to work out, Diana always had her say. Several times this ended up with a conflict between Sifaw and Diana. She wanted Andre to be with her and claimed they had made deals that Andre needed to respect. Andre never disagreed with Diana, despite Sifaw's wish to go to the gym. Sifaw had then started to go more on his own, but Andre was still joining, but to a less degree than before. Diana's relationship with Andre influenced the rules of relevance for the group. At school, Diana did not seem to have a strong role in the group, but on the spare time her role was more influential, as I will show.

5.5.2 Diana's place.

Diana lived in an apartment about 20 minutes by bus outside the Oslo city centre. Her father rented the basement apartment in a big house. Diana's father had work in Norway, but often went back to Lithuania for long periods to work there as well. Since Diana often had the apartment to herself, the group spent a lot of time there. They had parties and movie nights. A five minutes walk from the house was a big beach. Sifaw and his girlfriend spent much time with Diana and Andre there. I joined them several times. Diana's place was important for the group, as they had the place and the opportunities to share activities. This social arena was important for identity construction and establishment of rules of relevance for the group. I felt this within my own body. The first time I joined them to party in Diana's flat, I was more or less forced to smoke cigarettes. The actors present at the party were myself, Sifaw, Andre and Diana. Shortly after we had arrived at Diana's place, she commanded us all to go outside and have a cigarette. Since I don't smoke, I politely refused Diana's offer to have a cigarette. But she did not accept that, and did not give up before I eventually smoked. When I was with Sifaw and Andre, I did not have to smoke, but when Diana was present, I always had to smoke. I later learned the Sifaw's girlfriend and her sister also had started to smoke after they became part of the group, the same with Bernard. For

Diana it was important that we all participated and did the same things. The group established their feeling of belonging by making sure that everybody would join in and participate in the same activities, may it be drinking beer, smoking, watching a film or sunbathing. As I see it, by doing the same things, they matched each other and kept together as a group. But participating in the same activities, were often connected to ambiguity. Sifaw had an ambivalent feeling towards smoking. He felt bad for it and wanted to quit, but as long as the group was together, he kept on smoking.

5.5.3 The beach and the Norwegian language.

The group spent a lot of time at the beach near Diana's place. Andre and Sifaw were found of swimming and enjoyed relaxing in the sun. The first time I joined them to the beach, Sifaw had brought with him a marker pen and wanted to make graffiti on the pier. Diana saw him, took the pen away and yelled at Sifaw. She told him this was not his pier, and that he needed to respect that. Sifaw laughed, but dropped the idea of making graffiti. Diana often yelled at the boys when they wanted to do pranks, and tried to stop them. Unlike the teachers, she was often successful in her efforts. Soon after we arrived at the beach, Sifaw and Andre jumped in the water. They swam far out to a pole, and raced back again. Then they started to dive from the pier. The diving was a performance, just like at the gym. For each time they dived, they were creative with their bodies and presented a new type of dive. The playfulness, creative use of their bodies and the surroundings and the competitiveness were part of their interaction here as well as in the other social arenas. Apart from having fun in the water, we relaxed in the sun and listened to hip-hop music. Once Diana left, the boys started to scream and have fun with some girls at the beach. The rules of relevance were different when Diana absent.

Once at the beach, Andre suddenly said, *"This reminds me of Portugal, I miss my mother"*. Sifaw said, *"Yeah me too, I miss Morocco"* Andre continued, *"Let us stop talking about that, it will only make me cry"*. They continued to compare their countries, and emphasised to me that they both came from places with hot climate and beautiful beaches. They both identified themselves as "beach boys". They said Norway was too cold and that it rained too much here. At the beach we talked about the Norwegian language. They all felt that they were not good enough in Norwegian, and felt embarrassed and laughed at when talking to Norwegian people. Still, the Norwegian language was important for them as a group. None of them spoke English well. Diana told me, *"Now that we are together all the time, we only speak Norwegian to each other"*. Still, they had not learned Norwegian for a long time, and often

struggled to find the right words. Sifaw told me that I was of great help to them, as I could teach them new words. As they were together almost everyday, and mostly spoke Norwegian to each other, their national identities were made less relevant, they moved more towards a Norwegian social identity, at least in terms of language.

5.5.4 Immigrant identity in the city.

The first time Sifaw invited me to a party, we made a deal to meet in the city centre. It was Friday evening and I met them at the subway station. They both apologised to me at once and said we could not party at Diana's place. During the week they had a party in her place, and the music had been so loud that the house owner had called the police. They suggested we could drink in the park instead. "*We need to go and buy some beer*", Sifaw told me. I told them they could not buy beer now, since the beer sales stopped after 20.00. Andre looked at me, "*We are not going to buy it in the store, we are buying cheap*". I was a bit confused, but followed them. We took the bus a few hundred meters and walked up to a big block. We entered the building and walked up the stairs to the third floor. Sifaw took his phone and typed in numbers that Andre read up. I understood that they calculated the price for their future purchase. They found the price and Sifaw told me, "*You must stay here, you know, he doesn't like too many people*". I sat down on the stairs and they entered the apartment. They came back with two bags filled with beer and cigarettes. On the outside they told me it was a Polish man who lived there. He earned his living by selling cheap cigarettes and beer imported from Poland. "*He sits and plays Playstation all day long*" Andre explained me. "*Its not just here, many places in Oslo, shipments comes once a week*", he continued.

We then walked over to a park, sat down on a big skateboard ramp and started to drink beer. While we were talking, Diana called all the time. Andre got fed up, and did not want to talk to her anymore. He gave the phone to Sifaw, who did the talking. Andre explained to me that he was just supposed to buy some things, and then come back to Diana. Now she was mad at him for being away for so long. After talking to her, Sifaw said we had to leave, and that Diana had told them to bring me with them. "*Do you want to?*" Sifaw asked. "*Ok, I'll go*" I replied. On the way to the bus, Andre told me, "*You know Christian, Me and Sifaw, we have been in some adventures here in Oslo*". They both told me a story, very eagerly, about a time they had been in a park. A man had come down to them and started to make trouble. Sifaw had then called a friend and asked for help. His friend had arrived shortly after and threatened the man

with a gun. The man had broken down on the ground and begged for mercy. They laughed a bit while telling the story, and told me that they had not expected their friend to bring a gun. Sifaw then told me that he was a different person when he was younger. “*I wore big hip-hop clothes and I carried a gun too*”. “*But I’m not like that anymore, I’m 18 years old now. I don’t want my parents to cry because I end up in jail*”. They told me several stories of violence and gang activity in Oslo. But they were always clear that being a gang member was not good. They said that many young “*foreigners*” became gang members, but Sifaw called them “*stupid*”. He meant they were just being used by the gang leaders to do the dirty work, and ended up destroying their life and be sentenced to prison.

I was surprised about how much information they shared with me. They brought me with them to the place they had bought illegally important beer and cigarettes, and told me stories from their “*adventures*” in Oslo. Integration is about adaptation to your surroundings. Andre and Sifaw had to deal with their surroundings and negotiated their identities through the experiences they had made. Sifaw had been part of a gang milieu before, but claimed he had changed now. The milieu they were part of in the city offered some benefits, if you knew the right codes and people, as getting cheap beer and alcohol. In another case, Sifaw and I went to buy cigarettes in a kiosk. I bought a package of smokes for the normal price. Sifaw said that if he had bought cigarettes from the woman in the kiosk, she would have sold him cheap polish cigarettes. But I was not trusted as a Norwegian. The social identity as a “*foreigner*” offered some economical benefits. This was important for Sifaw and Andre, as they did not have much money, but could get what they needed cheap and have fun together. Javor said that he missed partying with his friends, and said that one of the reasons he did not party in Norway, was because it was too expensive. But by having the social identity as “*foreigners*”, and knowing the right codes and people, *The Ping-Pongers* were part of a social field that offered them economical benefits, where Norwegian were excluded. But as the story with Sifaw and his earlier gang background, the social arena had the potential for belonging in groups that was connected to crime and violence as well.

5.6 Being a Moroccan and being part of a group.

I joined the group on the national day, the 17th of May. I met Sifaw in the city. We walked around for a long time to find Andre and Diana. At the same time, Sifaw kept talking on the phone with a young man from Morocco who had moved to Oslo with his Spanish girlfriend.

We met Andre and Diana near a kiosk by one of subway stations. Sifaw gave the two of them a cigarette each and informed them that we had to meet his Moroccan friend. We went to another subway station where Sifaw met his girlfriend and her sister. Soon the Moroccan and his girlfriend came to. They all greeted each other, but did not talk much. We agreed we would go to a park to drink and chill out. Andre, Diana, Sifaw's girlfriend and her sister went to buy some cigarettes and beer, while I, Sifaw and the two newcomers took a walk in the city. Sifaw spoke much with the other Moroccan, while the Spanish girl and I walked behind them. Sifaw came back to me and said, "*We talk about school stuff you know, about nature science, I find it so much more interesting when I can talk about it in Arabic*". We met the others in the park. Diana handed out beer and cigarettes. Like before, I was forced to smoke again. The park had several benches. Andre, Diana, Sifaw's girlfriend and her sister sat at one bench. Sifaw sat together with the Moroccan and his girlfriend at another bench. After a while, Diana started to yell at Sifaw for not sitting with them. She said that Sifaw did not care about his girlfriend, since he did not sit next to her. Sifaw got mad at Diana and asked her to stop screaming. Diana then asked him to leave, "*You are with them now, not with us, so just leave!*" After a while Sifaw came over to the others and talked with Diana. The situation calmed down and they enjoyed themselves with burgers, cigarettes and beers. Suddenly Bernard showed up with another Polish friend, they were both drunk. Bernard said that they were looking for Norwegian people, who they wanted to fight. Sifaw and the others just laughed at him and said he was too much of a coward to do it. Some Norwegians passed us, and Bernard started to go against them to prove that he dared. Andre ran after him and pulled him back. Then the other Polish boy started talking loud about finding Norwegians to beat up. I felt a bit uncomfortable and said I came from Russia. Sifaw looked at me and then turned to the other Polish Boy. With an angry loud voice Sifaw said, "*If you are here to make any trouble or be unfriendly, you can leave now at once!*" They stopped talking about fighting Norwegians. Bernard soon passed out on the bench. They all started to get quite drunk, and I decided it was time for me to leave.

This situation in the park revealed how Sifaw's identity as a Moroccan was made relevant in the meeting with the other guy from Morocco. At school, Sifaw's Moroccan identity did not have any relevance for whom he established relations to. But in this case, he prioritised to be with the other Moroccan. He talked about school and behaved calm and grown up, like he did when he was alone with me. But Sifaw's prioritising the newcomers, made Diana angry. The rules of relevance for group belonging were under negotiation. As I've described, Diana was

always busy with making sure the group did the same things. This situation shows how their group and their relationship can be seen as vulnerable. The newcomers were seen as threat against the group, instead of possible new friends. As Sifaw balanced his role and spent time with both the newcomers and the group, the situation calmed down, at least until Bernard showed up. The way Bernard acted in the park had consequences for his inclusion in the group at school. Sifaw did not like Bernard's racist attitudes towards Norwegians, especially when I was around. The day after at school, Bernard was excluded from the group. It continued like this for several days. Even though Andre and Diana were absent from school, Sifaw did not hang out with Bernard. During that time, neither Sifaw nor Bernard made any trouble in class. I asked Sifaw why he did not talk to Bernard anymore. He said, "*You know, he is not completely right in his head, and all the racism and stuff is not good*". Sifaw mentioned the episode in the park and said he would not tolerate that. The rules of relevance for them as a group, was clearly negotiated both at school and on social arenas outside school, and it was affected by my presence. But after a while, Sifaw allowed Bernard to join him to play ping-pong. Bernard surprisingly beat Sifaw several times when they played, and as they continued to play they became friendlier with each other again. They walked together back to class, and Bernard was on fire. He screamed loud in the hallway, made the horse-sound he was known for and knocked on classroom doors before running away. Later that day, Andre and Diana came to school. After school we all took the subway together. I asked them what school they wanted to go to next year. Andre and Diana both mentioned the same school. Bernard said, "*Why do you want to go to that school, it is only potatoes there*". The others became silent. Potato is a way of being racist towards Norwegians, even though I had never heard that expression before. Bernard looked at me and said, "*Sorry, I'm sorry, I did not mean you, you are ok, it is just other Norwegians*". Sifaw then said, "*Bernard, explain to me now, why are you racist?*" Bernard told a story from when he was younger. He had been selling juice to people in his block. A Norwegian man had asked him to get lost and leave the building. He continued to say, "*I will leave Norway when I am done with school. Why should I stay here and always have to be told that I am not a Norwegian*". Bernard was again included in the group at school and had made his peace with me.

5.7 The requirement to cope with school.

In most of the social arenas where Sifaw and his friends interacted, they played games, had fun and were competitive. It could be observed in ping-pong, swimming, diving, insulting, work-

out, lifting weights, play-fighting or troublemaking. The use of bodies and games to play were important tools for identity negotiation and presentations of selves in the social field they were part of. But when these boys seemed to compete in most activities, why did they not compete in schoolwork? Why was troublemaking the preferred activity in the classroom?

Even though they made much trouble at school, Sifaw always claimed he thought school was important. When Sifaw got punished for his troublemaking in class, he could get furious. One time when the teacher said she would give him a bad mark, he raised his voice and angrily said, “*Just give me one, come and look how many I have from before!*” Other times he would run out of the classroom, or scream out that he would not come to school anymore. *The Serbs* claimed it was fun being sent to the *milieu-group* and did not fear punishment, while Sifaw seemed to take punishment serious. He was not afraid of getting caught by the teachers, but he strongly reacted when he got sanctions. At the end of the semester, the class had an important English test. Sifaw came late for the test, and was not allowed by the teacher to take it. He left the classroom at once without saying a word. I went out on the hallway and found Sifaw, who was standing in the hallway with his head down crying. I could not understand Sifaw’s way of behaving in school. Why did he make so much trouble and at the same time both say and show with his emotions that school was so important for him?

I tried to talk to Sifaw about it, but every time he just stated that school was important. The only hint I got, was when Sifaw told me that he was a Berber, and not an Arab. Sifaw explained to me that he could not write his own language, because it had been forbidden at his school in Morocco. Towards the end of the semester I decided to ask Violeta about Sifaw. I wondered why he almost never did any schoolwork and neither stopped making trouble. Violeta told me that Sifaw was never supposed to be in this class. He didn’t have the required skills. Violeta said from day one in class she had tried to figure out what was wrong with Sifaw. She had sent him to all kinds of advisors at school, but not one found out what to do. After a while, she had discovered that Sifaw had not finished elementary school back in Morocco. I asked why he was here anyway. She explained that it was a matter of failure in the system and stupid decision-makers. The papers they had gotten from Morocco on Sifaw had not been translated right. When they finally got the right translation, there was no other place to send him. He was not ready for “normal” school, and he was too old to be sent back to elementary school. Therefore the School Board of Oslo had decided to put him in this class, according to Violeta. She had for a long time talked about how she and her colleagues had to

adapt all kinds of reading and teaching to every class they had. “*We are all about adaptation,*” she told me. She explained that there was no curriculum or books being made for the pupils, as they were a special class. But when I asked if she adapted schoolwork to meet the level of Sifaw, she replied that she gave him the same tasks as everyone, and those who were the best students, simply could do more schoolwork than the others. Violeta said she had to care about all the students, and couldn’t spend all her time on a few ones. A dilemma many teachers face in the Norwegian school. I was a bit stunned by this, since she knew Sifaw did not have the required skills and at the same time went through lesson after lesson doing nothing, and often ended up being kicked out for trouble. But Violeta did support Sifaw a lot, and she tried to help him on several occasions. She arranged for Sifaw to start at a new school next year, where he would be on the same level as the teaching.

Sifaw could not have the status as a good student in class. He didn’t have the skills to perform that role. At the same time, admitting that he was a weak student was something he would not be identified as. At the end of the school year, when he got his diploma with his grades, he refused to show it to anyone, even though people asked him. In Aasebø’s class, school ambitions had to be expressed carefully to avoid getting unpopular. (Aasebø, 2010) In the class I followed, being a weak student seemed to be a sign of failure. This came out in a situation where Dimitar and Sifaw insulted each other. Sifaw claimed that Serbs in Norway did not do anything else but hang around in the streets. Dimitar on his side, insulted Sifaw back for being a weak student, “*How long have you been here at Sogn?*” He repeated the question several times. Dimitar had finished the Norwegian Language Programme in 6 months, while Sifaw had been there for two years. Dimitar used this to insult Sifaw for being stupid. Being a weak student was nothing to be proud of, but this was the feedback Sifaw got most of the time from the teachers. He was not good enough and couldn’t behave himself.

Being a weak student, even the weakest, in a class that had “*the crème of foreigners*” was difficult to deal with for Sifaw. He was one of the elder boys in class, but still he was the weakest student. In the school context he became a loser. In that sense, Sifaw was marginalised in the school system. Sifaw’s troublemaking can then be seen as doing right by doing wrong. He participated in the only activity in class that was including for him and that gave him recognition for his efforts, at least from the other Ping-Pongers. In the game of troublemaking, Sifaw could be creative and make use of his skills and body to interact with others, just like he behaved with his friends on most other social arenas. The difference

between Sifaw and the Javor, was that Sifaw participated in troublemaking from an under qualified position, while Javor participated from an overqualified position. Sifaw had different motivations and meanings attached to troublemaking than *The Serbs*. As I see it, Sifaw tried to get along with *The Serbs* and get their recognition through troublemaking, but his attempts were never recognised. His attempts rather made his school situation worse, as he learned less than the others everyday. Sifaw was not qualified to be in the class, Andre and Diana did not take school serious, and Bernard was embarrassed to speak Norwegian and felt excluded from the Norwegian society because he was Polish. In that sense, they all shared a feeling of being marginalised, but in different ways.

5.8 Sifaw's promise.

Towards the end of the semester Sifaw started to change. He became calmer at school, and started to talk more with the other students. I believe me and the camera was one of the reasons for this. Sifaw considered me as one of his friends. At school, I was also spending time with the good students and filmed them. Towards the end for the semester, Sifaw joined me when I filmed them and had conversations them. I believe the filmmaking worked as an activity that was possible for all of them to share, it opened the doors for interaction. During the last day of school, Violeta invited *The Bros* and some others to her home. I was invited too, and Sifaw picked up her invitation, and invited himself along. At Violeta's home, Sifaw expressed that he was not satisfied with his grades and promised he would do better next year. This was not just Sifaw's ambition, all of the actors in the ping-pong group saw next year as the time to do well in school, it was a group ambition as well as an individual. The teacher also believed that Sifaw would do better in school next year, as he would be in a class were he would be among the smartest. Violeta thought he could play the role as a good student there. I wish my fieldwork could last for another year, so I could see if their group was maintained and if the promise was kept.

Chapter 6: Conclusion.

My aim with this research was to discover how different form of belonging was generated among young immigrants. The school's role when it comes to integration, varied for the different actors, both in terms of establishing social relations, and in terms of acquiring

knowledge. My general finding is that young immigrants establish social relations to other young immigrants. For most of the pupils I got to know well, I was their only native Norwegian friend. Still, the different immigrant pupils generated groups and social relations based on different criteria as language, age, school ambition, gender, interests and nationality.

The Serbs had established group belonging based on their Serbian identity and language, but also a shared feeling of being marginalized. They felt too old and too qualified to be in the class. Both succeeded in schoolwork, but they were troublemakers as well. The troublemaking behavior was generated in the school context, and has to be understood in terms of their marginalized position. It was a way to have fun and cope with boredom in a school they did not perceive of as normal. *The Ping-Pongers* were both partners and rivals in the game of troublemaking. Through this game identities and social positions were negotiated, but the two groups never established a shared identity or any group belonging. Even though *The Serbs* seemed to be a strong group that had developed a close relationship, their relationship was not relevant outside school. Javor was part of different social fields where his Serbian identity meant less than in school when it comes establishing belonging. Dimitar and Javor's social field ceased to exist outside school. Dimitar was part of a social field where his identity as Serbian was made relevant for belonging. Javor's social identity outside school was first of all connected to the social field of handball. Within this field, Javor met other Norwegians, participated in activities he preferred, made use of his skills and earned money. Even though Javor preferred handball activities, and wanted to establish belonging with the Norwegian handball players, he was not able to establish friendships and activities like he was used to in Serbia. But Javor said he combined, as he could travel back to Serbia on vacations to do the things he missed in Norway. Both by traveling and through the use of Internet, Javor maintained his Serbian identity and feeling of belonging to his friends in Serbia. Still, the social relations he was part of in Serbia had been attached new meanings after he had moved to Norway. He was seen as a more wealthy person and faced new expectations, which frustrated him. The social fields he was part of were interlinked, and brought about complex identity negotiations and a feeling of belonging that was often connected to ambiguity.

The Ping-Pongers were the only group in class that was part of a social field that included social arenas outside school. Sifaw and Andre had met each other and developed their relationship by participating in ping-pong. They had each found girlfriends who became part of their group, which influenced on the rules of relevance. Sifaw and Andre went several days a week to the gym, and the whole group, with the exception of Bernard, hung out in the city, gathered in Diana's flat and went to the beach. They negotiated shared identities by making sure they would all participate in the same activities. They were part of a social field where they had the opportunities and the places to be together on a daily basis, where meanings were attached to their relationship in an ongoing process. I discovered that their ways of interacting on several social arenas included creative use of their bodies and surroundings to play games and present themselves. The boys were also often breaking norms and rules to bring about laughter. This way of behaving was important for their identity work and group belonging. Their behavior in troublemaking was in many ways similar to the their behavior on the other social arenas. They played games, were competitive, used their bodies in creative ways to present themselves and negotiate identities. Troublemaking was not first of all an oppositional masculine behavior, but can rather be understood as a game the boys played in their search for belonging. Still, the actors in the group participated in troublemaking with different meanings and motivations. They were perceived of as lacking "social competence". But Sifaw did not lack social competence; he lacked the required skills to take part in the learning activities. Sifaw participated in the only activity in class were he could make use of his skills and get recognition from his friends. Andre and Diana were not lacking the required skills to take part in the learning activities, but they did not feel they were in a normal school, and did not take it serious. Bernard felt excluded from the Norwegian society and did not want to be in a school were he had to learn Norwegian language and culture. But through troublemaking he established belonging with *the Ping-Pongers*. *The Serbs* and *The Ping-Pongers* often shared the troublemaking activity, but they never established belonging to each other, as they participated with different rules of relevance, meanings and motivations. Even though Sifaw made trouble everyday, he had ambiguous relation to the activity. He wanted to succeed in school, and refused to be identified as a school loser. Still, Sifaw became more marginalized in the school system everyday, as I never participated in the learning activities. At the end of

the semester, the group as a whole claimed that they would stop making trouble and do well in school next year. Sifaw was going to begin in a special class, were he would have the required skills to participate in the learning activities. Andre and Diana were going to enter normal upper secondary school, while Bernard was unsure what to do. As other social arenas than school seemed to be the most important for them as a group, it would be interesting to follow the group for another year and see if the group was maintained or not.

List of literature.

Arntsen, B., & Holtedahl, L. (2005). Visualizing Situatedness – The Role of the Audience/Reader in Knowledge Production. In E. S. Gerrard (Ed.), *Challenging Situatedness. Gender, Culture and the Production of Knowledge*: Delft:Eburon.

Aasebø, T. S. (2010). Kjønn og Skoletrøbbel. *Norsk Pedagogisk Tidsskrift*, 5, 371-383.

Barth, F. (1981). Models of social organization *Process and Form in Social Life. Selected Essays of Fredrik Barth* (Vol. 1, pp. 32 - 47). London: Routledge & Kegan.

Cambridge Dictionaries Online.

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/troublemaker>

Eriksen, T. H. (2010). *Samfunn*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Eriksen, T. H. (2010). *Small places – Large issues. An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology* (3 ed.). New York: Pluto Press.

Grønnhaug, R. (1975). Macro Factors in Local Life. Social Organization in Antalya, Southern Turkey *Part of Magister dissertation in Social Anthropology* (pp. 1-36). Bergen: University of Bergen.

Haavind, H. (2003). Masculinity by rule-breaking: Cultural contestations in the transitional move from being a child to being a young male. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 11(2), 89-100.

Høgmo, A. (2005). *Er en flerkulturell skole mulig*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag AS.

Ilisa, B., & Lucian, T. (1997). *Cross-Cultural filmmaking*. Berkely & Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Ingebrigsten, A., & Fuglerud, Ø. (2009). *Kultur og generasjon: Tilpasningsprosesser blant Somaliere og TAMILER i Norge*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Jenkins, R. (2008). *Social Identity* (Second ed.). London: Routledge.

MacDougall, D. (2006). *The corporal image*: Princeton University Press.

Vike, H. (2010). Reidar Grønnhaugs metode. *Norsk Antropologisk Tidsskrift*, 21(4), 211-222.

Waage, T. (2011). (accepted article) Seeing and describing. Towards a shared anthropology with visual tools. In H. D. Christensen, T. Kristensen & A. Michelsen (Eds.), *TRANS VISUALITY – Dimensioning the visual in a visual culture*. . Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

