

# “If we Throw the Roma out of the Tent, we Throw Jesus out of the Tent”: Reflections on the Role of Religious Actors in Roma Inclusion in Oslo, Norway\*

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*This article presents reflections on Roma inclusion in the context of intra-European mobility. It begins with accounts of visits to two religious actors running centres providing humanitarian assistance, social services, and opportunities to exercise religion to Roma and other migrants in Oslo, Norway: the Lutheran Church City Mission welcoming Roma migrants as guests in the City Mission Centre at Tøyen Church and the Pentecostal organisation Evangeliesenteret, where Roma migrants receive food and participate in religious gatherings at the Contact Centre. The article reflects on the modes of inclusion represented in these two accounts in relation to three different approaches to inclusion: EU Roma policy, the work of the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, and diaconal theology. The article ends with reflections on what inclusion might mean in the context of intra-European Roma mobility.*

**Keywords:** *Charity, Diakonia, Empowerment, Exclusion, Free Movement, Inclusion, Lutheranism, Migration, Mutuality, Pentecostalism, Transformation*

## 1. Introduction

Roma migrants travelling between European countries have featured in cities across Europe, especially since the European Union’s (EU) eastward expansions in 2004 and 2007. Free movement in the EU meant that the poor and unemployed segments of the relatively large Roma populations of countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia,<sup>1</sup> whose livelihoods already depended on mobility to a large extent, could “go

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<sup>1</sup> Despite difficulties in defining and counting Roma precisely, estimates by the Council of Europe, “Estimates on Roma population in European countries,” <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/publications>, accessed October 4, 2022, indicate that around 750,000 live in Bulgaria, 750,000 in Hungary, 1.85 million in Romania, and 490,000 in Slovakia, constituting 7%-10% of the population in each of the countries.

If we Throw the Roma out of the Tent, we Throw Jesus out of the Tent abroad «looking for greener pastures».<sup>2</sup> Citizens of EU countries can enter and stay legally in other countries in the European Economic Area (EEA)<sup>3</sup> for up to three months. To stay longer, they must register with the authorities, which requires documents proving employment or the possession of the economic means to sustain themselves.<sup>4</sup> Yet, in the receiving countries of their migration, Roma migrants have been met with hostility and exclusion.<sup>5</sup> Without the formal qualifications generally requested in the labour market, many engage in street work such as collecting and recycling bottles and cans, playing music, selling magazines, and begging that make them conspicuously visible in European countries with low poverty levels.<sup>6</sup> With EU regulations and public controversy leaving “a very limited scope for policymaking in relation to the street-working EU migrants,” what migration scholars Miika Tervonen and Anca Enache aptly called a “policy of no policy” has emerged in the receiving countries.<sup>7</sup> It has resulted in the relegation of service provision for these migrants to non-governmental organisations, a tendency exacerbated by changes to welfare legislation barring legal migrants from accessing public welfare

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<sup>2</sup> Ada I. Engebriksen, “Mobile Subjects: Power Relations and Tactics for Survival,” in *Movement and Connectivity: Configurations of Belonging*, eds. Jan Ketil Simonsen, Kjersti Larsen and Ada I. Engebriksen (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018), 53.

<sup>3</sup> The European Economic Area comprises the EU member states, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway.

<sup>4</sup> Can Yildiz, and Nicholas De Genova, “Un/Free mobility: Roma migrants in the European Union”, *Social Identities* 24, no. 4 (2018), 434, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2017.1335819>.

<sup>5</sup> Liz Fekete, “Europe against the Roma,” *Race & Class* 55, no. 3 (January/March 2014): 60–70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396813509196>. From Norway, see: Engebriksen, “Mobile Subjects”; Cathrine Moe Thorleifsson and Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Human waste in the land of abundance: Two kinds of Gypsy indeterminacy in Norway,” in *Indeterminacy: Waste, Value, and the Imagination*, eds. Catherine Alexander and Andrew Sanchez (Oxford: Berghahn, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Anne Britt Djuve, Jon Horgen Friberg, Guri Tyldum, and Huafeng Zhang, *When Poverty Meets Affluence: Migrants from Romania on the Streets of the Scandinavian Capitals* (Oslo: FAFO, 2015), 55–71.

<sup>7</sup> Miika Tervonen and Anca Enache, “Coping with everyday bordering: Roma migrants and gatekeepers in Helsinki,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 7 (2017): 1117, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1267378>. See also: Djuve, Friberg, Tyldum, and Zhang, *When Poverty*, 9–10; Turid Misje, “Queuing for food and playing lottery for beds: A parallel social service system and the lived experiences of humanitarian service provision to homeless EU migrants in Norway,” *Nordic Social Work Research* 11, no. 2 (September 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2020.1857820>.

services in some countries, including Norway, referred to as “welfare bordering” in the research literature.<sup>8</sup>

Access to public social services is restricted for people without habitual residence in Norway, even if they are legally in the country; migrants travelling itinerantly and staying temporarily only have social welfare rights in emergency situations.<sup>9</sup> The anthropologist and social worker Turid Misje wrote that they are “precariously included” in the welfare state – included, that is, “in fragile and insecure ways, through short-term provisions directed at solving emergencies and safeguarding bodily survival.”<sup>10</sup> “Itinerant Roma,” wrote the anthropologists Cathrine Thorleifsson and Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “are provisionally included and ascribed value by non-governmental organisations and concerned individuals.”<sup>11</sup> These organisations and their services constitute what Misje called “a parallel social service system.”<sup>12</sup> What is downplayed (but not unrecognised) by these authors is how many of the organisations including Roma migrants in Norway are religious actors.

We are engaged in research on the role of religion and religious actors in the everyday life of Roma migrants in Oslo, the biggest city and capital of Norway. In this article, we recapitulate from and reflect on our visits to two centres run by religious actors providing humanitarian assistance, social services, and opportunities to exercise religion to migrants in Oslo: the City Mission Centre run by the Lutheran Church City Mission and the Contact Centre run by the Pentecostal organisation Evangeliesenteret. These are only two of a larger number of religious actors that we could have included in this article, not to mention the secular actors. When we focus on these two actors, it is because the modes of inclusion implied by

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<sup>8</sup> Simon Guentner, Sue Lukes, Richard Stanton, Bastian A. Vollmer and Jo Wilding, “Bordering Practices in the UK Welfare System,” *Critical Social Policy* 36, no. 3 (August 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018315622609>; Turid Misje, “Social Work and Welfare Bordering: The Case of Homeless EU Migrants in Norway,” *European Journal of Social Work* 23, no. 3 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2019.1682975>.

<sup>9</sup> Misje, “Social Work,” 406, “The Precarious Inclusion of Homeless EU Migrants in Norwegian Public Social Welfare: Moral Bordering and Social Workers’ Dilemmas,” *Critical Social Policy* 42 (2022): 463, 450, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183211036580>. See also: Cecilia Bruzelius, “Freedom of movement, social rights and residence-based conditionality in the European Union,” *Journal of European Social Policy* 29, no. 1 (February 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928718756262>.

<sup>10</sup> Misje, “The Precarious Inclusion,” 451.

<sup>11</sup> Thorleifsson and Eriksen, “Human waste,” 90.

<sup>12</sup> Misje, “Queuing for Food.”

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their engagements represent a particular contrast to prevailing inclusion concepts, a contrast we find productive when reflecting on what inclusion might mean in the context of intra-European Roma mobility.

In the Norwegian context, the Church City Mission, Evangeliesenteret, and other organisations engaged in Christian social practice are conceived of as diaconal organisations. As faith-based social practice, diakonia can either be understood as the provision of public welfare services or as a Christian and church-related practice founded explicitly on biblical principles. In between these extremes, diaconal actors provide services within welfare state structures while still advocating for Christian values based on a radical commitment to those who are “hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison” (Matthew 25:44). We write this article as a contribution to diaconal studies, an academic field seeking to improve diaconal practice through interdisciplinary studies including empirical research, praxis-oriented theories, and a normative value-base supporting radical commitment to the value and dignity of every human being. We also see the article as a contribution to Romani studies and migration studies in emphasising the role of religious actors in Roma inclusion in the context of intra-European mobility.

In what follows, we will first recapitulate from our visits to the Church City Mission’s City Mission Centre at Tøyen Church and Evangeliesenteret’s Contact Centre in Oslo. We then present three conceptual approaches to inclusion that intersect in our reflections over the visits in the final part of the article: the inclusion concept found in EU policy documents on Roma, representing both a powerful formulation of the concept and a backdrop for our research; the inclusion concept as it appears in the work of the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, which relates both inclusion and religious social practice to social structure; and inclusion as it is understood in diaconal theory, which helps understand inclusion in religious contexts and provides cues to our reflections on inclusion through a taxonomy of different forms of inclusion. In the reflections in the last part of the article, we let the accounts and approaches to Roma inclusion come into dialogue and inform each other.

## **2. Two accounts of Roma inclusion**

We will first recapitulate from our visits to the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre. These accounts are based on notes from our visits to the centres, including transcripts of interviews with some of those we met

there, which we supplement with references to relevant literature.<sup>13</sup> The accounts highlight the perspective and self-representation of the organisations and their employees rather than those of their volunteers or users. They also represent the level of discourse and practitioners' reflections rather than an observation of the activities as they played out. Yet, what the accounts lack in empirical depth, they make up for in theoretical and critical relevance. Our main concern here is how Roma were included in the two organisations, which we take to represent particular modes of inclusion that we can relate to the conceptual approaches to inclusion we will present below.

### *2.1 The City Mission Centre at Tøyen Church*

Founded in 1855 to respond to destitution in Christiania (present-day Oslo), which was industrialising and growing rapidly in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Church City Mission presents itself as “an inclusive, nonprofit organisation, which works in towns and cities across Norway, among people who face challenges in life for various reasons.”<sup>14</sup> Among other initiatives, the Church City Mission operates cafés, meeting places, and activity centres where people get meals, rest, and seek fellowship. The City Mission Centre at Tøyen Church in central Oslo, which we visited in August 2022, is the hub of the organisation's work with Roma migrants.

According to one of the employees we met at the City Mission Centre, the Church City Mission first came into contact with Roma migrants at a café for people using drugs in another location in downtown Oslo shortly after the accession of Romania to the EU. “They came there because it was the one open, available door,” the employee said.<sup>15</sup> At a time when terms such as “Roma people” (*romfolk*), “Gypsies” (*sigøynere*),

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<sup>13</sup> In addition to one visit to each of the centres to conduct the interviews that these accounts are structured around, we have had informal conversations with other people affiliated with the organisations that also inform the accounts. We have also interviewed a sample of Roma migrants, some of whom had used these organisations' services. We do not draw explicitly on the interviews with Roma migrants in this article, although they did provide a backdrop to our questions when we visited the centres and have influenced our reflections.

<sup>14</sup> The Church City Mission, “The Church City Mission,” <https://kirkenbysmisjon.no/about-us/>, accessed 10 August 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with anonymized employees at the City Mission Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte, Stephanie Dietrich, and Annette Leis-Peters, August 10, 2022.

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and “beggars” (*tiggere*) were widely used in public discourse,<sup>16</sup> the Church City Mission started referring to this segment of their users as “destitute migrants” (*fattige tilreisende*). The term highlights their structural position rather than a racialized category or implicit moral judgement and represented a radical reconceptualization at the time. It is still the most widely used term within the Church City Mission, although a more recent focus on anti-Romani sentiments conceptualised as “antiziganism” within the organisation means that attention is also directed towards the racialisation and stigmatisation of Roma migrants.<sup>17</sup> Either way, and in the words of one of the employees who met us at the City Mission Centre, working with destitute migrants in the downtown café posed “a dilemma” to the organisation: “Why should they be together with the drug users?”<sup>18</sup>

The work with destitute migrants was gradually moved from the downtown café to Tøyen Church. Tøyen Church had been running an open church with a café for people with lots of time and little money, as an old slogan had it. It was a drug-free scene. Various activities were started at or relocated to the City Mission Centre at Tøyen Church, which was the hub of the organisation’s work with destitute migrants by 2018. After adjusting their work continuously to respond to the needs they detected among their predominantly Roma users over about fifteen years, the City Mission Centre served meals, offered laundry services and storage lockers for rent, and employed social workers speaking different languages, including Romanian, at the time of our visit. The organisation charged its users small fees for most of the services. For example, a bowl of soup cost kr. 5,- (roughly €0,50) on weekdays. The Church City Mission had also started emergency shelters at Tøyen Church, which were moved to a new address before our visit, and continued to hold weekly services in Tøyen Church.

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<sup>16</sup> See: Silje M. Eriksen, “Rom for sigøynere: Begreper, retorikk og moderne sagn om rom. En kulturhistorisk analyse av romdebatten” [Room/Roma for Gypsies: Concepts, Rhetoric, and Contemporary Legends. A Cultural Historical Analysis of the Debate on Roma.] (Ma. Thesis, University of Oslo, 2016); Maria Tårland, “Tigging i Oslo” [Begging in Oslo] (Ma. thesis, University of Oslo, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> See: Mari Seilskjær and Marit Nybø, eds., *Den aksepterte rasismen: Tekster om antiziganisme* [The accepted racism: Texts about antiziganism] (Oslo: Church City Mission, 2022).

<sup>18</sup> Interview with anonymized employees at the City Mission Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte, Stephanie Dietrich, and Annette Leis-Peters, 10 August 2022.

We noticed that the employees we met at the City Mission Centre referred to their users as “guests” (*gjester*). When we asked about this, they confirmed that any person coming through the door was called a guest, and one of them reflected:

It’s in the walls here because this was supposed to be a place that was not clientifying, it was supposed to be a church and a café for everyone. I think the reasoning was diaconal. This place adopted the terminology of “guests” very early on. It’s very much a part of our identity.<sup>19</sup>

Conceiving of users as guests can be effective in countering clientification, but it does not do away with hierarchies of belonging and power in favour of the implied hosts.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, as Eriksen suggested, hospitality is “a universal sign of openness and respect, a relationship which places a burden not only on the host but also on the guest, and which can easily turn awry when the parties either do not understand or do not respect each other.”<sup>21</sup> Guests are generally expected to be grateful and to leave eventually, while hosts should be attentive to their guests and accept return gifts when they are offered – sometimes in the form of questions or stories. Using the term guest implies high expectations of all parties.

With reference to the destitution among some migrants in Oslo, the researcher Helena Schmidt questioned the applicability of the term guest in a hospitable church offering free meals in Oslo:

... are people who have no real choice when accepting the offer of food in fact guests at all? Is the idea of hospitality based on universal principles, intending to accommodate all those who need this hospitality, losing its intimacy, its embodied attention, and thus producing shameful conditions for survival only? Stripping meals of their inclusive nature, their fundamentally sociable and sacred function leaves a purely physiological act of eating to survive. Subsequently, the guest, treated as just another body, remains a *no-body*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with anonymized employees at the City Mission Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte, Stephanie Dietrich, and Annette Leis-Peters, 10 August 2022.

<sup>20</sup> See: Synnøve K. N. Bendixen and Trygve Wyller, “Conclusion: Rethinking hospitality in the Nordic region,” in *Contested Hospitalities in a Time of Migration: Religious and Secular Counter Spaces in the Nordic Region*, eds. Synnøve K. N. Bendixen and Trygve Wyller (London: Routledge, 2020), 190. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429273773-12>.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Epilogue: Frictions of hospitality and the possibilities of cosmopolitan justice in everyday life,” in *Cosmopolitan Justice and its Discontents*, eds. Cecilia Bailliet and Katja Franko Aas (London: Routledge, 2011), 218.

<sup>22</sup> Helena Schmidt, “What about No-Bodies? Embodied Belonging, Unspecific Strangers, and Religious Hospitality in Norway,” in *Contested Hospitalities in a Time*

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Although it is more contextual and elaborate, Schmidt's critique is broadly in line with the critique of how charitable giving positions those who receive as recipients, which we return to below.

Intriguingly, the second employee we met at the City Mission Centre framed their guests differently by emphasising the fees charged to sleep at the emergency shelter. Many of their guests, she said, were in fact *paying* guests:

At the emergency shelter one is a guest and we have purposely chosen that they pay fifteen kroner (roughly €1,50) to get in because then they can demand that there should be good order and safety and clean linen and everything.

Her colleague, the first employee, pitched in – “Like a hotel, or a motel” – before she continued:

It has an empowering effect, too, that when you pay you can demand that we give you what we have promised. You shall get your money's worth. You are not in debt. We often talk about how we have a lot of power because we run all the services. We try to normalise as well and as much as we can. That's the tone. Have completely informal relations to people. They shouldn't feel they have to shape up before they talk with us and so on. We want to be seen as people even if we work here.<sup>23</sup>

Even if the small sum paid was symbolic and the services were funded through public grants and donations, paying guests do not imply the “intimacy” and “embodied attention” of non-paying guests, to use Schmidt's phrases. They “are not in debt,” as the employee at the City Mission Centre put it. The (implicit, open) invitation does not have to be reciprocated socially since it has been reciprocated directly when paying for a service: paying guests are customers. This may be all the more important in light of how Roma migrants have been refused access to shops and cafés in Oslo and other cities and thus been refused as customers.<sup>24</sup> Against this backdrop, both wanting to be “seen as people” and treating guests as customers reflect the employees' acknowledgement of their guests' inherent value, agency, and dignity as human beings.

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*of Migration: Religious and Secular Counter Spaces in the Nordic Region*, eds. Synnøve K. N. Bendixen and Trygve Wyller (London: Routledge, 2020), 141. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429273773-8>.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with anonymized employees at the City Mission Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte, Stephanie Dietrich, and Annette Leis-Peters, 10 August 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Djuve, Friberg, Tyldum, and Zhang, *When Poverty*, 99–101.

The Church City Mission keeps its humanitarian and social work separate from its religious activities. The organisation employs social workers, as well as priests. Guests at the City Mission Centre, including the predominantly Roma destitute migrants, are welcome into the open Tøyen Church. Many Roma guests light candles, some speak with the priests, but few attend the services held on Wednesdays. Both the social workers and the priests we met were attentive to the denominational differences at play, remarking that their Roma guests are generally Orthodox or Pentecostals and not Lutherans. Perhaps, one of them reflected, Tøyen Church should do more to accommodate a wider range of religious expressions, or perhaps this should not be their concern as a Lutheran church. A few minutes before sharing this reflection, the same employee pondered the potential value and risks of religious inclusion of people in vulnerable situations:

The Church City Mission would say ... you have to distinguish between diakonia and congregational life, or proclamation. But you could also say that you know there are some qualities about that way of including people in communities that save lives ... Then we can dislike it very strongly because it can lead to abuse and ugly things. It just is so complicated.<sup>25</sup>

With this dilemma fresh in mind, we move on to Evangeliesenteret's Contact Centre in Oslo, our second religious actor.

## *2.2 The Contact Centre*

Founded in 1983 by Lise and Ludvig Karlsen – Ludvig incidentally from a Norwegian Romani family<sup>26</sup> – Evangeliesenteret is a Pentecostal organisation running drug addiction treatment centres in Norway. In 2012, Evangeliesenteret started a Contact Centre (*kontaktsenter*) in central Oslo,<sup>27</sup> serving and distributing surplus food to people in need, holding worship

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with anonymized employees at the City Mission Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte, Stephanie Dietrich, and Annette Leis-Peters, 10 August 2022.

<sup>26</sup> Karlsen came from a Romani/Tater family. Norway features different Romani communities and recognizes Romani people/Taters and Roma as distinct national minorities with differing histories. See: Thorleifsson and Eriksen, "Human waste," 93, 101–106; Engebriksen, "Mobile Subjects;" 55–58.

<sup>27</sup> Before opening the Contact Centre, Evangeliesenteret distributed food and clothes and held services from a bus in Oslo. Olav Helge Angell, *Misjon eller terapi i rusomsorga? Tradisjon og modernitet i religiøse behandlingsinstitusjonar* [Mission or therapy in drug treatment? Tradition and modernity in religious treatment centres] (Oslo: Diakonhjemmets høyskolesenter, 1994), 213.

If we Throw the Roma out of the Tent, we Throw Jesus out of the Tent services on Monday evenings, and recruiting people to the organisation's treatment centres. We visited the Contact Centre in November 2021 and were impressed by the scale of the operation. According to a newspaper article published the day before our visit, Evangeliesenteret distributed 318 tonnes of free food in Oslo in 2020, mainly to people using drugs and Roma migrants.<sup>28</sup>

As remembered by the employee we met at the Contact Centre, Evangeliesenteret first came into contact with Roma migrants in 2012, when they were serving hotdogs and waffles – staples of Norwegian public celebrations – in a tent in downtown Oslo to mark the opening of the Contact Centre. The events were staffed with volunteers, many of them former drug users who had gone through treatment and were serving old friends who were still in the drug scene. When some Roma who had loitered nearby came into the tent, attracted by the free, rich food on offer, mutual allegations of theft were levelled between the Roma and the drug users. The situation became tense, prompting action. “We did what Karlsen would have done,” said the employee telling us the story. They prayed, opened a Bible, and pointed at a verse with their eyes closed. He recited from the Bible: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in” (Matthew 25:35). “God has spoken,” they reasoned: “Whoever doesn't want the Roma in the tent can go. Those who want the Roma here can stay.”<sup>29</sup>

The decision to include Roma migrants – referred to as “EEA migrants” (*tilreisende personer fra EØS*) on the Contact Centre's webpage<sup>30</sup> but

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<sup>28</sup> Tobias Schildmann Mandt, “Kutt truer tilbud til rusbrukere” [Funding cut threatens service for drug users] *Dagsavisen*, 23 November 2021. <https://www.vl.no/nyheter/2021/11/23/kutt-truer-evangeliesenterets-tilbud-til-rusbrukere-i-oslo/>, accessed October 4, 2022.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with anonymized employee at the Contact Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte and Stephanie Dietrich, 24 November 2021. Thorleifsson and Eriksen, “Human waste,” 96–97, retell the same story, but the details differ slightly from the story as we heard it. In line with our sense of working with the perspectives and self-representations of the organisations and their employees and the level of discourse and practitioners' reflections, we see the story as a myth in the anthropological sense. Thus, we understand it as a story about how Evangeliesenteret first met Roma migrants, which also justifies and legitimises their continued engagement with Roma migrants. The structure of the story is more important to us than the details.

<sup>30</sup> Evangeliesenteret, “Evangeliesenteret Kontaktsenter Oslo” [Evangeliesenteret Contact Centre Oslo], <https://www.evangeliesenteret.no/avdeling/kontaktsenter-oslo/>, accessed 4 October 2022.

“Roma people” (*romfolk*) during our visit – as a target group for the Contact Centre was controversial: some volunteers quit, and some donors threatened to withdraw their support. Even so, they stood by the decision. “We are not a political organisation,” the employee who told us the story said. “We do not have a view on whether the Roma should come to Norway. But people standing on our front steps asking for food, they will get food.”<sup>31</sup> In this context, the story about the epiphany in the tent contributed a legitimisation of the engagement, which the employee at the Contact Centre summarised using the phrase we quoted in the title of this article: “If we throw the Roma out of the tent, we throw Jesus out of the tent.”<sup>32</sup> The phrase can link to a Christian identity based on a call to serve other people like Jesus served humankind according to the biblical narratives and as underlined in Matthew (25:40, 45): “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me”. It can also be understood as a reflection on the Roma as created in the image and likeness of God and therefore deserving the same respect and dignity as other people.

The engagement with Roma migrants at the Contact Centre soon moved beyond charitable food distribution. Only after the epiphany in the tent, the employee who received us said, did they learn that “many Roma are Pentecostals”,<sup>33</sup> a phrase we have also seen used by other researchers who have visited the Contact Centre.<sup>34</sup> While academic literature has described Pentecostalism as “one of the foremost religious orientations amongst Roma in Europe and beyond,”<sup>35</sup> such generalisations do not account for the relationship between the Romanian Roma and the Orthodox Church, “a relationship of five centuries [that] cannot be hastily judged through today’s perspective, just like the mass conversion to other confessions does not have to be looked at «in a triumphant,

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with anonymized employee at the Contact Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte and Stephanie Dietrich, 24 November 2021.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> Ada I. Engebriksen and Are Vegard Haug, *Evaluering av tilskuddsordningen for humanitære tiltak til tilreisende EØS-borgere som tigger* [Evaluation of the Grants for Humanitarian Efforts for Migrant EU Citizens who Beg]. (Oslo: Nova, 2018), 29, 31. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12199/5213>.

<sup>35</sup> Adrian R. Marsh and David Thurfjell, “Introduction,” in *Romani Pentecostalism: Gypsies and Charismatic Christianity*, eds. David Thurfjell and Adrian Marsh (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014), 7.

If we Throw the Roma out of the Tent, we Throw Jesus out of the Tent superficial tone».<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the emphasis on religious like-mindedness at the Contact Centre contributed to a sense of community – especially compared to the concern for denominational differences we encountered in the Church City Mission. There was also appreciation of the shared genealogy of the Romanian Roma and not only Karlsen, but “many”<sup>37</sup> – once again – of the employees, guests, and volunteers at Evangeliesenteret, whom we were told were of Norwegian Romani descent.<sup>38</sup> These Norwegian Romani employees, volunteers, and guests, we were told, recognised historical analogues between their experiences and those of the Roma migrants as Romani minorities in their respective countries, and their languages were interlegible, at least to some extent.<sup>39</sup> If anything, relations between the Roma migrants and at least some of the employees, volunteers, and other guests at the Contact Centre became friendly.

Services are held in the Contact Centre on Monday evenings. Roma migrants are welcome to join the services, and many do.<sup>40</sup> The services are translated from Norwegian into Romanian by a volunteer translator. Sometimes Roma migrants tell their stories in the services, too, and they

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<sup>36</sup> Alexandru Ioniță, review of *Bafta, Devla și Haramul. Studii despre cultura și religia romilor* [Bafta, Devla, and Haram. Studies on the Culture and the Religion of the Roma], by Mirela Bănică, *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 13, no. 1 (April 2021), 86, <https://doi.org/10.2478/ress-2021-0009>. See also: Tatiana Zachar Podolinská, “Traditional Romani Christianity vs Pentecostal and neo-Protestant Christianity: A grounded picture of religiosity and spirituality among the Roma in the twenty-first century in Slovakia,” *Romani Studies: Continuing Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 31, no. 2 (December 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3828/rs.2021.9>.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with anonymized employee at the Contact Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte and Stephanie Dietrich, 24 November 2021.

<sup>38</sup> Analogously, Ingrid Myklebust, “Å tolke bibelen på romanés: Å artikulere etnisk samvær gjennom pinseteologi. En empirisk undersøkelse av den norske rom-gruppens pinsemenighet,” [Interpreting the Bible in Romanés: Articulating an Ethnic Community through Pentecostal Theology. An Empirical Study of the Norwegian Roma’s Pentecostal Congregation] (Ma. thesis, University of Oslo, 2012), 10–11, 52–53, 64. <http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-32371>, remarked in her thesis on the Pentecostal congregation of the Norwegian Roma in Oslo that Norwegians of Romani/Tater descent described the distinction between the Romani/Tater and the Roma as artificial, while the Norwegian Roma emphasized the same distinction.

<sup>39</sup> As a result of the Norwegianization policy, few Romani Norwegians speak the Norwegian Romani language well today, but many know some words.

<sup>40</sup> Here, our empirical observations depart from those of Thorleifsson and Eriksen, “Human waste,” 90, who wrote that Roma migrants were “receivers of charity but not redemption” at the Contact Centre. The differences may relate to how our observations took place some years apart or how the foci of our research was different.

are translated from Romanian into Norwegian. On a tour of the centre, the employee showing us around told us that some participants kneel, crying in desperation during the services. The floor in front of the pulpit has, on occasion, been “wet with human tears,” he said.<sup>41</sup> Roma migrants have unfulfilled “spiritual needs”, he reasoned, and belonging to a worshipping community strengthens their hope and resilience, helping them cope with the challenges of life. They can receive meals and food packs on Tuesdays and Thursdays, when there are no services, but many come on Mondays and join the services. Some were also baptized in the baptistry at the Contact Centre, as a great event symbolising their full inclusion into the community.<sup>42</sup>

### **3. Three approaches to Roma inclusion**

Before we turn to our reflections on what these accounts can say about inclusion in the context of intra-European Roma mobility, we need to present a backdrop to our reflections. Inclusion is both a political and a theoretical concept used in policy discourse and different academic disciplines, including sociology and theology. We will outline three approaches to inclusion that intersect in our reflections, highlighting the differences between them: the use of the concept in EU policy documents, representing both an influential formulation of the concept and a backdrop for our research; the concept as it appears in the work of the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, which Holte has worked on; and the concept as it is understood in diaconal theology, which is Dietrich's field of expertise. Although Luhmann did not write about Roma specifically, his sociological terminology lets us frame Roma exclusion and the potential of religious inclusion in relation to social structure. A diaconal perspective contributes to understanding the value-framework of the Church City Mission and Evangeliesenteret and to discussing the modes of inclusion their engagements represent.

#### **3.1 EU Roma policy**

According to the political scientists Eva Sobotka and Peter Vermeersch, inclusion became a concern in EU Roma policy following the enlargements

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with anonymized employee at the Contact Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte and Stephanie Dietrich, 24 November 2021.

<sup>42</sup> Earlier belonging to other faith traditions and denominations was not addressed as only believer's baptism is recognised as proper baptism in the Pentecostal tradition.

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in 2004 and 2007, which, as we have noted, turned the relatively large eastern European Roma populations into EU citizens.<sup>43</sup> As the Roma populations of the new EU member states became part of the internal policy agenda rather than an enlargement issue, the conceptual framework of EU Roma policy shifted away from minority and human rights and towards integration and inclusion.<sup>44</sup>

Key EU policy documents published since the 2004 and 2007 expansions of the EU frame the Roma as socially and socioeconomically excluded, a situation prompting policy action in a Europe geared for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth.<sup>45</sup> In *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, the European Commission noted that the “prejudice, intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion” faced by Roma who are also “marginalised and live in very poor socio-economic conditions ... is not acceptable in the European Union (EU) at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>46</sup> In *The social and economic integration of Roma*, an earlier communication, the European Commission framed Roma inclusion in terms of the demographic transition facing European countries: “The full integration of Roma will have important economic benefits for our societies, especially for those countries with a shrinking population which cannot afford to exclude a large part of their potential labour force.”<sup>47</sup> Both documents argued that Roma integration would

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<sup>43</sup> Eva Sobotka and Peter Vermeersch, “Governing Human Rights and Roma Inclusion: Can the EU Be a Catalyst for Local Social Change?” *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (August 2012), <http://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2012.0050>.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, 808–809; Rachel Guglielmo and Timothy William Waters, “Migrating Towards Minority Status: Shifting European Policy Towards Roma,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 43, no. 4 (November 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2005.00595.x>; Joanna Kostka, *Financing Roma Inclusion with European Structural Funds: Why Good Intentions Fail* (London: Routledge, 2019), 22–23.

<sup>45</sup> European Commission, *The Social and Economic Integration of the Roma*, COM(2010) 133 (Brussels, 2010). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0133>, accessed 4 October 2022; *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, COM(2011) 173 (Brussels, 2011). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0173>, accessed 4 October 2022; *A Union of Equality: EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation*, COM(2020) 620 (Brussels, 2020). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0620>, accessed October 4, 2022.

<sup>46</sup> *Idem*, *An EU Framework*, 2.

<sup>47</sup> *Idem*, *The Social and Economic*, 2.

bring social and economic benefits to mainstream society, as well as to the Roma.<sup>48</sup>

The 2011 framework outlined goals in four “key areas” that national Roma integration schemes in the member states should be designed or adapted to meet: education, employment, healthcare, and housing and essential services.<sup>49</sup> In the framework, integration centred around education and labour market participation.<sup>50</sup> In the words of the legal scholar Morag Goodwin and Roosmarijn Buijs, a student, “economic integration as participation in the wage economy precedes social integration and is a precondition for it, not only in raising Romani living standards, but by enabling Roma to gain the acceptance of the general public.”<sup>51</sup> The approach, argued historians and ethnographers Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, presented a catch-22 whereby exclusion would be addressed through a targeted policy that “stigmatises Roma and sets them even more apart.”<sup>52</sup> A new framework from 2020 titled *A Union of Equality* departed from the observation that progress had been limited for the duration of the 2011 framework.<sup>53</sup> In the new framework, the European Commission suggested that “a strengthened commitment is necessary to tackle persistent discrimination, including antigypsyism.”<sup>54</sup> The framework added three “horizontal objectives” to the four key areas from the 2011 framework (which were dubbed “sectorial objectives”), one of which was to “Fight and prevent antigypsyism and discrimination.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Idem, *The Social and Economic, 2; An EU Framework*, 2–3.

<sup>49</sup> Idem, *An EU Framework*, 4–7.

<sup>50</sup> The third paragraph in the framework document, for example, can be read as suggesting that ensuring “equal access to all fundamental rights enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights” and breaking “the vicious cycle of poverty moving from one generation to the next” can be achieved through investment “in the education of Roma children to allow them later on to successfully enter the labour market.” European Commission, *An EU Framework*, 2. See also: Morag Goodwin and Roosmarijn Buijs, “Making Good European Citizens of the Roma: A Closer Look at the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies,” *German Law Journal* 14, no. 10 (October 2013): 2044–45, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2071832200002637>.

<sup>51</sup> Goodwin and Buijs, “Making Good,” 2045.

<sup>52</sup> Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, “European Policies for Social Inclusion of Roma: Catch 22?” *Social Inclusion* 3, no. 5 (September 2015): 29, <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v3i5.241>. See also: Goodwin and Buijs, “Making Good,” 2049.

<sup>53</sup> European Commission, *A Union of Equality*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, 2–4.

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The 2011 framework stated that “the social and economic integration of Roma is a two-way process which requires a change of mindsets of the majority of the people as well as of members of the Roma communities.”<sup>56</sup> The mode of inclusion outlined in the document required that Roma adapt to the requirements of the labour market and the majority population be more open and tolerant to allow the Roma to do so. There was no discussion of structural issues. “The contribution that Roma make within the economic version of integration laid down in the Framework is simply one of additional manpower, not a specific contribution to society and the workforce,” wrote Goodwin and Buijs.<sup>57</sup> Rather than adjusting “the understanding of what it means to be economically active so as to include another economic way of life, one that may not be based upon individual participation in the market economy,” the framework suggested that “Roma must integrate into the formal labour market.”<sup>58</sup> Thus, the activities that sustained – and continue to sustain – many Roma, including the intra-European migration undertaken by the Roma migrants coming to the City Mission Centre and Contact Centre in Oslo, came across as undesirable within the 2011 framework. In Goodwin & Buijs’ words, Roma were framed as “the wrong kind of economic actors”.<sup>59</sup>

Free movement was not mentioned in the 2011 framework. Goodwin & Buijs understood that “the apparent hope is that they [the Roma] will stay put. Thus, whereas all other EU citizens are encouraged to see themselves as such and to activate their rights under that citizenship, Romani EU citizens are not.”<sup>60</sup> Reflecting change in EU Roma policy, “mobility” was mentioned as one of several “personal characteristics” that go into constituting a diversity of Roma in the 2020 framework.<sup>61</sup> Effectively suggesting that receiving countries take more responsibility for Roma migrants, the framework stated: “Member States should ensure that their

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<sup>56</sup> *Idem*, *An EU Framework*, 2. See also: *The Social and Economic*, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Goodwin and Buijs, “Making Good,” 2047.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, 2055.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, 2052.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, 2053. See: also Huub van Baar, “Contained Mobility and the Racialization of Poverty in Europe: The Roma at the Development–Security Nexus,” *Social Identities* 24, no. 4 (2018), 449, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2017.1335826>; Yıldız, and De Genova, “Un/Free mobility,” 427–30.

<sup>61</sup> European Commission, *A Union of Equality*, 7.

strategic frameworks cover all Roma on their territory and reflect the needs of diverse groups through an intersectional approach.”<sup>62</sup>

Comparing the 2011 and 2020 frameworks shows changes in EU Roma policy. The 2011 framework implied an inclusion concept based on market participation facilitated through education and employment. This is a narrow conceptualisation of inclusion, one deemed “awfully close to assimilation” by Goodwin and Buijs, in that it takes “mainstream economic and social norms and practices as the default standard.”<sup>63</sup> Retaining the same goals, the 2020 framework nevertheless acknowledged intra-European Roma mobility and opened new questions about the responsibilities of the receiving countries. However, it did not go into what this might mean in practice.

### 3.2 Luhmann’s sociology

As an alternative to “a general concept of inclusion” implying full membership in a social unit through citizenship, integration, or otherwise, Luhmann suggested that a “growing complexity of society ... appears to dissolve classical, fixed inclusion patterns and to individualise inclusion more strongly.”<sup>64</sup> The inclusion concept he proposed related closely to his overall theory of society. He posited that inclusion in modern society is not regulated by “a central authority” but passed on to what he called “functional systems” and, in turn, organisations.<sup>65</sup> Although Luhmann did not write about Roma specifically, his sociological terminology lets us frame both Roma exclusion and the potential of religious inclusion in relation to social structure.

In Luhmann’s terms, modern society is differentiated into – and composed of – function systems that operate autonomously, even if they are interconnected.<sup>66</sup> Examples of function systems include the economy, politics, and law. The function systems do not exclude people, but meaningful participation in a function system requires access to communication

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>63</sup> Goodwin and Buijs, “Making Good,” 2047.

<sup>64</sup> Luhmann, we should note, argued against “a sociological tradition” from T. H. Marshall to Talcott Parsons. Niklas Luhmann, *Theory of Society*, ed. Mieke Bal, trans. Rhodes Barrett, vol. 2. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 17, see also 21.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, 24. See also: *A Systems Theory of Religion*, ed. André Kierseiling, trans. David A. Brenner. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 167–68.

<sup>66</sup> Idem, *Theory of Society*, 87–88, 108–15.

If we Throw the Roma out of the Tent, we Throw Jesus out of the Tent media, which people generally access through organisations.<sup>67</sup> For example, economic participation requires money, which people generally access as employees of an organisation such as a company, while political participation in liberal democracies depends on voting rights and the right to stand for elections, which are generally granted to the citizens of a state. In a Luhmannian analysis, then, inclusion is effectively a question of people's affiliations, which Luhmann referred to as "membership".<sup>68</sup>

Inclusion in a function system impacts people's affiliations in other function systems to a limited extent: having money does not translate into political influence (although it might make it easier to build such influence) and voting rights do not provide an income. However, in modern society, the inverse is true of exclusion. Exclusion from a function system begets other exclusions:

Without an address, one cannot register for school (India). People who cannot read and write have hardly any chance on the labour market, and serious discussion (as in Brazil) about depriving them of the franchise becomes feasible. People who find no accommodation outside shanty towns enjoy no legal protection in emergencies ... Many examples can be cited, and they demonstrate links across all functional systems.<sup>69</sup>

The situation of many Roma migrants to Norway, which we sketched at the beginning of the article, can be laid out similarly: without formal qualifications or other marketable skills, it is hard to find employment; without employment, it is hard to find a place to live and nearly impossible to register with the authorities; without an address, even migrants from EU countries have few rights in the welfare state, and without registering, they do not have the right to stay permanently in the country.<sup>70</sup> "And, at a certain threshold point," as Luhmann wrote, "all remaining time and energy are taken up with bodily survival"<sup>71</sup> – which is how the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre encounter Roma migrants.

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<sup>67</sup> There is much to be said about Luhmann's organisation concept, but it suffices here to suggest that it should be understood in the broadest possible sense.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, 142–43.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, 25; See also: *A Systems Theory*, 173–74, 218–19; "Beyond Barbarism," *Soziale Systeme* 14, no. 1 (May 2008), 45, <https://doi.org/10.1515/sosys-2008-0104>.

<sup>70</sup> Like Luhmann's own examples, this is merely an illustration and could be expanded further in each direction.

<sup>71</sup> *Idem*, *A Systems Theory*, 174.

Thus, Luhmann's theory shows a relationship between the destitution among these Roma migrants and the prevailing social structures.

Luhmann's sociology also links the potential of religious inclusion to social structure. Luhmann saw religion in modern society as more or less isolated from other function systems in the wake of secularisation – the historical process whereby other function systems differentiated from religion.<sup>72</sup> In his words, religion has “few interdependencies with the inclusion/exclusion regulations of other function systems” and “can blithely ignore any near exclusion from other function systems, such as not having money, an education, an identity card or a chance of being taken seriously by the police or the judge.”<sup>73</sup> For people subject to exclusion, Luhmann asked, “perhaps religion could offer an exceptional opportunity?”<sup>74</sup> This might also provide “opportunities” for religious organisations, he suggested,<sup>75</sup> although he was pessimistic about their prospects of growing their membership or attaining social relevance by engaging people subject to exclusion.<sup>76</sup> What Luhmann did not address, however, was the possibility of an intrinsic theological motivation to do so.

### 3.3 Diaconal theology

Diaconal theology emphasises that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and deserves to be treated with respect.<sup>77</sup> According to *Called to Transformation*, a recent ecumenical publication on diakonia, “[r]ecent developments within diaconal sciences emphasise that there has been a paradigm shift within the understanding of diakonia from humble service, to diakonia as a bridge-building and empowering ministry of the church's «go-between» service in the world.”<sup>78</sup> Ecumenical studies emphasise that diakonia should not primarily be understood as service for people at the margins, but as emanating from the margins, as “diakonia of marginalised people” and “action «from below».”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, 205–206, 228.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*, 220.

<sup>74</sup> Idem, “Beyond Barbarism,” 45.

<sup>75</sup> Idem, *A Systems Theory*, 220.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, 174–75, 220–21; “Beyond Barbarism,” 45.

<sup>77</sup> World Council of Churches, *Called to Transformation. Ecumenical Diakonia* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2022), 15, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/ecumenical-diakonia>, accessed 30 September 2022.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*, 90, see also 43–44.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, 38–40.

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Diakonia has a strong tradition of addressing the needs of people at the margins with their own participation, as agents and subjects of their own life. The scholar Carlos Ham thus argued for a model of “Empowering diakonia” addressing “the needs of the people with their own participation, as subjects, since they experience the power of God manifested in their daily struggle and lives.”<sup>80</sup> Such an understanding of diakonia sees marginalised groups, such as Roma migrants, as agents and people with the right to define their own life. It also emphasises that everyone can need help or be in a position to help at different times and in different contexts.

Within diaconal studies, there is an ongoing discourse on the understanding of diakonia as either acts of charity, mutuality or reciprocity, or transformation.<sup>81</sup> Thus, from a diaconal perspective, inclusion can be understood in different ways.

One is to underline that inclusion implies access to the basics of life, in accordance with human rights.<sup>82</sup> The services provided at the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre address the basic needs of the Roma migrants coming to their doors. Motivated by Christian faith and a call to help those in need (cf. Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 25:31-46), both the Church City Mission and Evangeliesenteret decided to let Roma migrants through their doors. Inclusion, in this sense, can mean supporting people’s basic needs of life through acts of charity.

When it comes to mutuality, both the Church City Mission and Evangeliesenteret sought to meet Roma migrants with respect, but they did so in different ways. At the City Mission Centre, Roma migrants were met as guests and customers, implying a level of mutuality. They were welcome in the services at Tøyen Church, but few participated. At the Contact Centre, on the other hand, Roma migrants participated in the worshipping community, and some also contributed by telling their stories. This can represent a mode of inclusion based on mutuality, but it can also imply a quest for adaptation to the faith practices that are predominant in a Pentecostal context.

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<sup>80</sup> Carlos E. Ham, “Empowering Diakonia: A Perspective From the World Council of Churches,” in *Diakonia as Christian Social Practice*, eds. Stephanie Dietrich, Knud Jørgensen, Kari Karsrud Korslien and Kjell Nordstokke (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 119.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, 109–110.

<sup>82</sup> See: United Nations General Assembly, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” 217 [III] A (Paris, 1948), art. 25.

Neither the City Mission Centre nor the Contact Centre engaged directly in transformation or the empowerment of Roma migrants. Advocacy work and work on a structural and political level is a part of the Church City Mission's agenda, also regarding Roma migrants.<sup>83</sup> The work at the City Mission Centre focused on addressing basic needs and acknowledging their guests' inherent value and dignity as human beings. The prospects of baptism and full inclusion in the community of believers at the Contact Centre may have transformative elements, but on the individual and religious level rather than the structural or political level.

Overall, the inclusion offered by the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre focused primarily on the provision of basic needs, but also on doing so with dignity and respect. It was based on charitable humanitarianism and ideals of mutuality and reciprocity. At the Contact Centre, Roma migrants were also included as believers and members of a worshipping community. This constitutes particular modes of inclusion based on a view of Roma migrants as human beings rather than an economic and social problem to be solved.

#### **4. Reflections on Roma inclusion**

In this final part of the article, we relate the accounts of and approaches to Roma inclusion we have outlined so far to each other, reflecting over the different modes of inclusion represented and how they relate. We do so reflexively, aware that our own research relates closely to what we have identified as EU Roma policy. The funding of a research project on the role of religion and religious actors in Roma inclusion, such as the one we are engaged in, might reflect an interest – or curiosity – among authorities in the role and potential of religious actors in contributing to Roma inclusion – in Romania and in Norway. However, the implied instrumentalization of religion and religious actors to serve EU Roma inclusion policies or governmental objectives more broadly must be understood against the different modes of inclusion intended by the different actors. What modes of inclusion do the authorities envision, and what modes of inclusion can and do religious actors provide? And – importantly – how does this relate to whatever forms of inclusion Roma migrants want or expect?

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<sup>83</sup> See: Seilskjær and Nybø, *Den aksepterte rasismen*.

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European and Norwegian authorities tend to conceptualise Roma inclusion in terms of market integration. In the EU policy documents we have reviewed this was reflected in the four “key areas” of the 2011 framework and “sectoral objectives” of the 2020 framework.<sup>84</sup> Relatedly, the inclusion envisaged for Roma migrants in Norway is based on employment: migrants who do not possess large sums of money can only register and stay permanently in the country if they get employed, even if they come from EU countries. Thus, Roma migrants are included in Norway as European citizens and potential workers, but most are simultaneously excluded from important domains as neither citizens, employed, in possession of funds, nor already living permanently in the country.<sup>85</sup> These migrants are legally present in Norway but only “precariously” or “provisionally” included by non-governmental organisations – including religious actors – and concerned individuals,<sup>86</sup> all of which is broadly in line with what Luhmann described as “more strongly” individualised inclusion and the forms of exclusion compatible with it.<sup>87</sup>

Our Luhmannian analysis departed from an understanding of exclusion as a structural phenomenon, emphasising how exclusions reinforce each other. Thus, migrants who do not have money and do not find employment are also excluded from other domains, such as housing and right to permanent residence. For citizens and those with legal and habitual residence in Norway, the welfare state would offer support with public social welfare aiming to “contribute to social and economic security” for “everyone residing in the realm” as a last resort.<sup>88</sup> However, as we mentioned in the introduction, the social welfare legislation prevents legal migrants who do not have habitual residence in Norway from accessing public social welfare, even if they are legally in the country.<sup>89</sup> Broadly in accordance with Luhmann’s suggestion that religion could provide opportunities for those subject to exclusion,<sup>90</sup> the accounts from the City

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<sup>84</sup> European Commission, *An EU Framework, 4–7, A Union of Equality, 2–4.*

<sup>85</sup> See: Misje, “Social Work,” 406.

<sup>86</sup> See: Idem, “The Precarious Inclusion,” 463; Thorleifsson and Eriksen, “Human waste,” 90.

<sup>87</sup> Luhmann, *Theory of Society*, 17.

<sup>88</sup> Sosialtjenesteloven [Social Welfare Act] (2009), §1, §2. <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2009-12-18-131>, accessed 4 October 2022.

<sup>89</sup> Misje, “Social Work,” 405–407, “The Precarious Inclusion,” 450.

<sup>90</sup> Luhmann, “Beyond Barbarism,” 45.

Mission Centre and the Contact Centre presented modes of inclusion that did not presuppose citizenship, employment, or habitual residence in Norway. However, these engagements did not represent attempts at growing the organisations' membership or otherwise obtaining social relevance but were based on a view of Roma migrants as human beings.

From a diaconal perspective, Roma migrants and other vulnerable people are first and foremost human beings and should be treated as such, which implies a call to address their unmet basic needs. When the Church City Mission offered basic services to Roma migrants in the City Mission Centre and Evangeliesenteret served meals and distributed food at the Contact Centre, they did so because they saw Roma migrants as human beings in need of help. Engaging for Roma migrants and other people in precarious situations can be framed as a Christian duty based on a Christian anthropology of human beings as created in the image and likeness of God and ideals of care for people at the margins.

This was captured well in the phrase we quoted in the title of this article. It relates to the intrinsic value of human beings as a motivation for religious engagement for all people, including those subjects to exclusion. We heard the phrase at the Contact Centre, but it could apply equally to the City Mission Centre.

More than the City Mission Centre, however, the Contact Centre emphasised that their worshipping community welcomed and included anyone wanting to participate. The Church City Mission kept its humanitarian and social work separate from its religious activities. Guests at the City Mission Centre, including Roma migrants, were welcome to participate in the services in Tøyen Church, but remained guests rather than participants even if they did. The guests lit candles, prayed, or sat in silence in the church rather than participating in the services. In welcoming anyone into the congregation, Evangeliesenteret offered inclusion into a community based on a shared Christian identity; in letting Roma migrants tell their stories during services and offering baptisms, the organisation offered them full path to inclusion. The employee who showed us around the Contact Centre emphasised the sameness of the Roma migrants and their volunteers and other users in religious, ethnic, and linguistic terms. While this kind of inclusion can "save lives," as one of the employees we interviewed at the City Mission Centre suggested,

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there is also a danger of proselytising, forced conversion, and abuse when including vulnerable people religiously.<sup>91</sup>

Despite the different modes of inclusion offered by their organisations, the people we spoke to at the Church City Mission and Evangeliesenteret recognized the strengths in each other's approaches: When saying it could "save lives," the employee we interviewed at the City Mission Centre reflected over the value of including vulnerable people in a community of faith. On the other hand, the employee who showed us around at the Contact Centre emphasised that they also gave out food on days when they did not hold services, and that their Monday services were held after the food distribution was over so it was possible to come and receive food without attending the worship services. We cannot resolve this tension between offering full inclusion and the risk of doing harm here, only note that there are broadly recognised limits to the desirability of inclusion.

As a consequence of their engagements, the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre formed part of what Misje called "a parallel social service system" for migrants in which help was "meted out through benevolence, charity, and compassion ... rather than comprehensive, inclusive social rights."<sup>92</sup> Misje was critical of the inferior services provided to migrants in the parallel social service system relative to the public system available to citizens and migrants with habitual residence in Norway. The parallel social service system is not rights-based, the level of provision is lower than that in the public social welfare system, and it "includes no measures for appeal."<sup>93</sup> Overall, Misje concluded, the parallel social service system "takes on a bordering function" and "feeds into the totality of policies ultimately meant to discourage people from coming to Norway or encourage them to leave."<sup>94</sup> Also the diaconal theology presented above framed charity, mutuality, and transformation as distinct "phases or models of diakonia" with charity situated in the past.<sup>95</sup> Another view is that humanitarian support for people in precarious situations is indispensable,

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<sup>91</sup> We cannot discern from our visits whether the inclusion offered by Evangeliesenteret had such problematic sides.

<sup>92</sup> Misje, "Queuing for Food," 106, see also: 113.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*, 113.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem*, 114. See also: Nicolay B. Johansen, "Controlling the Roma in Norway: Governing Through the Administration of Social Distance," in *Punishing the Other: The social production of immorality revisited*, ed. Anna Eriksson (London: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>95</sup> Ham, "Empowering Diakonia," 109; World Council of Churches, *Called to Transformation*, passim.

also in Norway, where the extensive public welfare system does not cover all people in the country. Yet, despite being offered only marginal modes of inclusion, Roma migrants have continued to travel to Norway since the expansions of the EU in 2004 and 2007.<sup>96</sup> Travelling to Norway, the migrants enact their rights as EU citizens.<sup>97</sup> The migration can be framed as a “purposeful and rational” adaptation to their situation drawing on “social capital in the form of family and village networks, which provide people with information, opportunities, resources and support that are vital in overcoming the risks and challenges of migration outside formal institutions.”<sup>98</sup> In other words, Roma migrants are economic actors, even if they may be “the wrong kind of economic actors” from the authorities’ perspective.<sup>99</sup> Migration can be framed as a reflection of their agency – as the conscious use of personal and collective resources, including their right to free movement in Europe as citizens of an EU country. In such a framing, the charitable humanitarian service provision and religious inclusion at the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre can be seen to empower European Roma to employ their resources by migrating. When providing basic needs, the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre did not only alleviate human suffering but also contributed to facilitating the free movement of EU citizens. Rather than assuming hierarchy of diaconal action that distinguishes between charity, mutuality, and transformation,<sup>100</sup> charitable humanitarianism can be seen as empowering if it helps European Roma realise – or make the most of – their rights as citizens of an EU country.

In presenting modes of inclusion that do not presuppose citizenship, employment, or habitual residence in Norway, the accounts from the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre in this article may

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<sup>96</sup> While many individuals stay in Norway only for shorter periods – often engaging in itinerant mobility or circular migration between Norway, Romania, and third countries, either because they are unable to register and stay longer in Norway, because they have commitments in other countries, or a bit of both – Roma migrants have a permanent presence as a particular structural position in Norway.

<sup>97</sup> See: Goodwin and Buijs, “Making Good,” 2052–53; Yıldız, and De Genova, “Un/Free mobility,” 427, 435–36.

<sup>98</sup> Jon Horgen Friberg, “Poverty, Networks, Resistance: The Economic Sociology of Roma Migration for Begging,” *Migration Studies* 8, no. 2 (June 2020), 245, <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mny038>.

<sup>99</sup> Goodwin and Buijs, “Making Good,” 2052.

<sup>100</sup> See: Ham, “Empowering Diakonia.”

If we Throw the Roma out of the Tent, we Throw Jesus out of the Tent

offer indications of what offering services for all Roma within a territory and reflecting the needs of diverse groups – in line with the European Commission’s 2020 framework<sup>101</sup> – can mean in practice. The modes of inclusion offered by these religious actors differ significantly from the modes of inclusion envisioned by European and Norwegian authorities, which are based on employment and longer-term settlement. They also differ from idealised modes of inclusion implied in diaconal and social work theory, which are based on mutuality or transformation. At the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre, inclusion is first and foremost based on a Christian vision of the inherent value and dignity of Roma migrants as human beings. Their services are offered in response to the needs detected while working among migrants over the last ten to fifteen years, based on acknowledgement of inter-European mobility as a right and adaption by Roma as EU citizens and economic actors – rather than a vision of employment and permanent settlement. Yet, from a diaconal viewpoint focussed on perspectives and action from the margins,<sup>102</sup> it would be important to ask what forms of inclusion the Roma migrants are seeking. Without stereotyping or romanticising the Roma as nomads, and while recognising the diversity contained within the broad category, there is an urgent need to ask what modes of inclusion the Roma themselves want – in all their diversity, as migrants and otherwise. This perspective is conspicuously omitted from this article, and research on the perceptions of inclusion among Roma migrants is acutely needed.

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<sup>101</sup> European Commission, *A Union of Equality*, 7.

<sup>102</sup> World Council of Churches, *Called to Transformation*, 38–40.